Exploring the Teaching Practicum Experiences of Saudi Student Teachers of Arabic

Submitted by

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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Abstract

The current study is concerned with exploring the teaching practicum experiences of Saudi student teachers of Arabic and how these relate to what they learn from the university-based part of their course and to other broader experiences. Firstly, it explored the different ways in which Saudi student teachers of Arabic perceive their teaching practicum. Secondly, it investigated how the relationships between Saudi student teachers of Arabic and significant others inform student teachers' experiences of their teaching practicum experience. Finally, it identified the personal, educational, and sociocultural factors which can have an impact on the teaching practicum experience of Saudi student teachers of Arabic.

The research project has been informed by sociocultural theories, situated learning and community of practice as a lens to highlight the importance of the cultural and professional context of the study. A key aspect of the study is that the social and professional context is important in understanding the role of the practicum for student teachers learning to be teachers. Indeed, learning to be a teacher is a sociocultural activity that involves situated learning – the practicum being crucial in that regard – and the concept of a community of practice illuminates important aspects of this process. A mixed-methods approach was used to gather data among a significant number of participants while focusing on the complexity of the issues. A questionnaire was sent to Saudi student teachers of Arabic, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with student teachers and significant others. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed statistically and thematically, respectively.

The findings revealed three primary considerations relating to the impact of the teaching practicum on Saudi student teachers of Arabic and the overarching importance of the teaching practicum. First, the study shed light on the influence of the teaching practicum environment and the challenges encountered by student teachers related to teaching, supervision and administration. These included a lack of care towards them from their supervisors and a lack of coordination with cooperating teachers. Besides, student teachers highlighted the short duration of the practicum and the heavy workload as significant challenges. In terms of the teaching challenges they faced, the student teachers emphasised poor student achievement standards and the lack of respect they received from

their students. Second, the results highlighted the impact on student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum by people whose position or experiences were likely to have a significant effect on the development of their teaching skills. The findings indicated that student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum was influenced by various significant others. For example, positive views were expressed by the study participants about most categories of these significant professional others. However, contradictory views were also expressed by the study participants concerning the university supervisors about whom they expressed both positive and negative opinions. This underlines the importance and role of university supervisors in the teaching practicum, as it seems essential to ensure that university supervisors are not an inhibiting factor for student teachers' progression in the teaching practicum. The third significant finding relates to the broader factors of their life experience that were considered likely to have an impact on the teaching practicum experiences of Saudi student teachers of Arabic. The findings indicated that although these factors overlap in various ways, they could be classified as personal factors (student teachers' professional identity, sense of efficacy, commitment to teaching and ability to reflect on their learning) and educational factors (formal learning experiences and informal learning experiences). These included university education and Quranic sessions and were considered to be components of the broader sociocultural framework, which influenced the student teachers.

This was a limited study that focussed on the experiences of a group of students in a particular ITE programme. Likewise, this study highlighted an important limitation which is its reliance on self-reported data which are prone to bias and subjectivity, from both the researcher and the respondent. The thesis also highlights the importance of the researcher's positionality and its shifting nature, evolving throughout the research process depending on changes in role/position during the study and how this may have been perceived by the participants. This was acknowledged as a complex position that may have affected the data collection. However, the findings have identified issues that may benefit other teacher training programmes in the KSA. For example, as this study found, increasing the length of the practicum is an issue that may need to be implemented in other ITE programmes in the KSA as this has a significant impact on the experiences and development of student teachers of Arabic.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my PhD thesis to my late Dad, who immersed me with his humanistic approach to life, his frankness, and his high morals and ethics. I would also like to dedicate my thesis to my mum, whose prayers helped me complete this thesis.

I would also like to dedicate my PhD thesis to the one to whom I am indebted, as he is known for his lofty morals, his Highness the Royal Prince Abdullah Bin Khalid Al-Saoud who supported me strongly after my father's death.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

PI	Professional Identity
MOE	Ministry of Education
INP	Integrated National Project
GSE	General Secondary Examination
UH	University of Hail
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
M.A.	Master of Arts
GDE	General Diploma in Education
DCI	Department of Curriculum and Instruction
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
USA	The United States of America
UK	United Kingdom
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
TTP	Teacher Training Programme
TPP	Teaching Practicum Programme
TPC	Teaching Practicum Centre
ST	Student Teacher
CT	Cooperating Teacher
US	University Supervisor
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Before delving deep into the details of this study, it is worth mentioning that two main issues prompted me to conduct this study: (1) the perceived lack in the quality of student teachers' professional preparation in the Saudi context and, (2) the lack of holistic experiences for student teachers during their teaching practicum in the KSA.

It is important to highlight that Saudi student teachers of Arabic language seek to gain the required teaching skills and competencies to become effective teachers. Unfortunately, it appears that most novice Saudi teachers of Arabic are not sufficiently prepared to meet the needs of their students (Alghamdi & Li, 2012). Previous research showed that most Saudi teachers of Arabic need to develop their teaching performance and tend to lack professional development programmes. For example, Alrougi (2018) stated that there is a lack of professional development opportunities for Saudi in-service teachers of Arabic and proposed a training programme to develop the teaching competencies of these teachers based on the KSA vision (2030). In this regard, Rajović and Radulović, (2007, p.419) state:

> *"The missing element of teacher education in the region is teachers' competencies of how to identify and deal with problems in a concrete setting – a combination of cognitive and practical knowledge, skills, experiences and strategies, and also emotions, values, motivation and attitudes, referred to as competencies."*

As a result, the lack of proper professional preparation for Saudi teachers of Arabic along with their professional development sheds light on the quality, nature and outcome of their professional preparation, which includes their teaching practicum.

Moreover, a review of the literature in the KSA concerning Arabic language teachers highlights a possible lack of interest in and disregard for the personal and social dimensions of Arabic student teachers' experiences in their teaching practicum (Al-Qahtani, 2012). Furthermore, some research focused on teachers' attitudes, efficacy and effectiveness of the teaching practicum, whereas other research focused on student teachers' experiences and concerns. Whilst 'teacher

attitudes' and 'teacher efficacy' and the 'effectiveness of the teaching practicum' have all been the focus of many research studies, research focusing on student teachers' experiences and concerns is not so common (Mckenzie, 2005; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006; MacMahon, 2006; Özgün-Koca & Şen, 2006; Poulou 2007; Hudson & Millwater, 2008). This represents a notable gap in the literature because student teachers' worries and concerns lie at the heart of the teaching practicum, as they can influence the construction and ultimate success of effective teaching practice in the future.

In addition, student teachers need to gain practical experience of teaching in schools in order to become more able to face the challenges of teaching in the classroom (Beeth & Adadan, 2006). Equally, through their teaching practicum, student teachers have the best opportunity to apply the taught content of theory studied at university to the context of real practical teaching experience. This can lead to the development of all their professional skills, especially with the help of cooperating teachers to shape their identities as teaching specialists (Poulou, 2007). Accordingly, exploring student teachers' concerns about their experience in and with their teaching practicum can give a clear indication of the challenges they face there, as well as highlight the quality, nature and any potential modifications needed in their teaching practicum. In the same way, student teachers' experience reflects their concerns, needs and expectations of the teaching practicum itself. This can help to highlight any change needed to enable the enhanced effectiveness of the student teachers' practicum, thereby developing a more in-depth understanding of their eventual teaching practice (Beeth & Adadan, 2006).

Moreover, little research has been conducted about the teaching practicum of Saudi student teachers of Arabic from a more holistic perspective (Al-Zahrani, 2008; Alzaydi, 2010; Alenezi, 2012; Alkahtani, 2015). A holistic perspective in this current study refers to the investigation of student teachers and other contextual factors included in the teaching practicum. Contextual factors may be another cause of the challenges which student teachers encounter in their teaching practicum. Despite the centrality of the practicum experience and its representation of the authentic educative experience in teacher education, not enough attention has been given to the context of pre-service teachers (Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 2008, p.100). Additionally, little attention has been given to

the significance of the relationship between student teachers and significant others as an essential part of the contextual factors of a student teacher's teaching practicum (Hastings & Squires, 2002; Haigh & Ward, 2004; Sanders et al., 2005).

Many different theories of learning emphasise the important role of contextual factors of learning in achieving the required targets and expectations of effective student teachers' teaching practicum. For example, 'social-constructivism', 'sociocultural theories' of learning, the 'situated theory' of learning and 'community of practice theory' (Wenger, 2004) all acknowledge the significance of the social context in teaching and learning. These ideas about learning are useful to the study because they emphasise the importance of the context in the learning process and that learning does not occur in isolation but is a meaning-making process that exists within the individual and in society through the interactions of learners and teachers and all member of the communities where learners and teachers evolve. In addition, the experiences of the student teachers can be framed in terms of these theories because their experiences, social or educational, are shaped not only by their knowledge but also by their social interactions within and outside the practicum.

Moreover, the holistic perspective includes having significant others as a part of the contextual factors of the teaching practicum. As explained further in the study, significant others seem to play an essential role in student teachers' practicum, and they can, in turn, train student teachers to face the challenges of teaching and become effective teachers (Ten Dam & Blom, 2006). Moreover, the term significant others in the context of this study refers to and includes the cooperating teachers at schools or university teacher educators at the universities who work collaboratively with the student teachers and institutions to apply the theoretical content of teacher education to the reality of practical training during the teaching practicum (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). It is vital for significant others to adequately train student teachers because student teachers need to be knowledgeable, intellectually flexible leaders and 'change facilitators' (Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005). Indeed, as a teacher's role is constantly changing the quality of teacher training is quintessential in facilitating effective teaching by able and talented individuals, especially as teachers are no longer, *'technician, consumer,*

receiver, transmitter, and implementer[s] of other people's knowledge' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 1999, p.16).

Few studies have focused on the beliefs, concerns and perceptions of stakeholders, nor have they considered the opportunities, impacts, assessment and challenges of student teachers' teaching practicum (Boz & Boz 2006; Watson, 2006; Lambe & Bones, 2007; Wang et al., 2008; Özturk, 2008; Nilssen 2010; Trent 2010; Windschitl et al., 2010; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010; Loizou 2011; Deed et al., 2011; Kirbulut et al., 2012; Senom et al., 2013; Sunde & Ulvik, 2014).

Moreover, in addition to the previously mentioned studies, and based on my personal experience as a student teacher of Arabic, in-service teacher, and a university supervisor of student teachers of Arabic, the current research is underpinned by the strong conviction that the teaching practicum experience is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it is fair to say that the teaching practicum can often constitute the first real contact which student teachers have with the real school world, about which they have accrued theoretical knowledge from their university studies. Secondly, the experience of being in a school allows student teachers to understand more comprehensively how different academic, financial and administrative departments link and work together within a school. Moreover, the teaching practicum represents the student teachers' professionally situated setting for their training, as well as often their future workplace after graduation. During the teaching practicum, student teachers can form new and lasting relationships with key others, including pupils, other practicum fellows, regular classroom teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors. Equally important is the idea that what student teachers learn at university needs be complemented with the new applied professional knowledge, skills and experience they gain during their teaching practicum. Finally, any collaboration between cooperating teachers and university supervisors ought to be supportive and enriching for student teachers' holistic experience of their teacher training.

In addition, through reflecting upon this past experience, as a student teacher, I was placed in one of the best schools in the region, and I greatly benefitted from my academic supervisor, which, I believe, reflected on my teaching practice. In addition, this supervisor was often meeting with all student teachers and acted as a guide to us. He also conducted class visits on a regular basis to monitor and

support student teachers during their practice. I believe that his sense of commitment and organisation had a positive impact on my perception of the profession and on my teaching practice above all. However, I also recall that the cooperating teacher in my practicum school was not as supportive as I had expected. Making contact with him was challenging, and this was a source of real concern as he was, in principle, the main contact for me at school. In addition to this feeling of isolation, I felt that there was a lack of communication between all the parties involved in my formation as a student teacher. As a supervisor myself, later in my career, with more experience and maturity, I became more aware of the needs and challenges experienced by student teachers in their initial training. Finally, through conducting this research, I believe that I managed to investigate these issues in a more formal and empirical manner. Also, it allowed me to meet and discuss these issues with a range of actors involved in the ITE programme. As a researcher with more experience and insider knowledge, I feel that student teachers are in great need of coordinated support rather than isolated initiatives from a teacher or a supervisor.

Therefore, a key inspiration for this thesis lies with the investigation of the role of significant others, namely, cooperating teachers, university teacher educators at the universities, teaching practicum fellows, cooperating teachers, university supervisors and school headteachers, in the Saudi teaching practicum context. The teaching practicum needs to be considered by both policymakers and educators alike and at schools and universities as a central process in the development of preparing effective teachers (Alsup, 2006). It must also include consideration of student teachers' experience and the perspectives of significant others as related to the various contextual factors of the educational setting and society in the KSA. Hence it was thought to be necessary to examine the views of these significant players in pre-service teacher training, as compared with those of the student teachers themselves, concerning the lived experience of their teaching practicum.

The above introduction has briefly shed light on the rationale for conducting this study; the thesis now moves on to focus on the problem raised by this research and the key issues that need to be borne in mind as a premise to the study.

1.2 Research Problem

As Saudi student teachers of Arabic perceptions of their teaching practicum seems somewhat neglected, unexplored or unclear in the Saudi context, it is essential to carefully consider how they view their teaching practicum. In addition, studying the nature of the relationship between Saudi student teachers of Arabic and the significant others involved in their teaching practicum plays an important role in understanding the extent to which these significant others may also affect the formation of Saudi student teachers of Arabic, as future teachers. Finally, examining the factors which may impact on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum can be valuable in interpreting the different contextual factors which help to shape Saudi student teachers of Arabic. In this respect, it is important to research in more depth the cultural and educational factors commonly believed to have an impact upon Saudi student teachers throughout their teacher training at university, in their teaching practicum and beyond in the broader community. Understanding these contextual factors may help Saudi student teachers become more well-developed and better teachers in the future.

Based on the above premises, this study focuses on the teaching practicum component of the education and training of student teachers of Arabic. As explained earlier, relatively little is known about the role that the practicum has on the development of student teachers of Arabic despite it being known that the teaching practicum plays a vital role in training student teachers to become effective teachers.

The teaching practicum is one of the main components of teacher education programmes across the world (Chou, 2017). For many educational researchers, it is a vital induction to the teaching profession "both to improve teachers' skills and to extend the body of knowledge on effective teaching practices" (Collinson et al., 2009, p. 9). This is possibly because a well-developed teaching practicum can help student teachers to be critical and reflective about different teaching practices in others and subsequently their own practice (Zhu, 2011). Besides, it can increase student teachers' confidence regarding teaching in the classroom (Kline, White & Lock, 2013). Furthermore, a successful practicum experience can enable student teachers to feel more committed and motivated towards the actual teaching process (Sinclair, 2008). Student teachers also start to form their personal, academic and professional identity through their educational teaching

practice, as they make the transition from being a university student to becoming a practising teacher and educator (Beijaard et al., 2004).

The teaching practicum is a significant step in preparing student teachers to apply and link their theoretical knowledge with the practical experience required to develop both their professional and personal teaching skills (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005; Shulman, 1987). The latter includes the generic skills needed for teaching, such as self-control and self-regulation, time and stress management, communicating effectively with the significant others connected with their teaching practice (e.g. teaching or study colleagues, students, cooperating teachers at their placement, supervisors or institutional support staff) and inter-personal sensitivity such as empathy (Yan & He, 2010). In addition, it has been posited that the teaching practicum can strengthen fundamental practical skills for student teachers such as working in cooperation with other trainees in the schools, sharing knowledge and experience, developing appropriate values and attitudes, solving problems independently or working jointly with other teachers (Ramsden, 1992). Moreover, a lengthy teaching practicum can substantially expose student teachers to the practices of more experienced teachers (Zeichner, 2006).

It could be argued that a judicious combination of theory and practice constitutes an essential aspect of the educational process. However, student teachers may encounter challenges and difficulties when they try to use their theoretical knowledge in practical teaching situations in the classroom (Burn, 2007). In this regard, Laursen (2007) highlights the gap between both practical and theoretical approaches in terms of the experience of educational classroom practice amongst student teachers. Following Laursen's study, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has endeavoured to teach students of education how to put theory into practice through a range of different university courses. Nevertheless, research still seems to suggest that Saudi student teachers of Arabic often experience a gap between the theoretical knowledge acquired and the teaching situations encountered (Alghamdi, 2015; Al-Momani, 2016).

Consequently, many student teachers, in the KSA and other countries as well, can struggle to apply theoretical knowledge to classroom practice effectively. In addition, Blaise (2006) states that student teachers are often confused when experienced teachers do not necessarily encourage them to apply what they have

learned at university into authentic educational practice in the classroom. It should be emphasised here that student teachers can only meaningfully put their theoretical knowledge into practice during their teaching practicum in 'real' classrooms.

Furthermore, the quality of the teaching practicum can, in turn, influence the development of the student teachers. For example, student teachers' application of practical skills can make a significant difference in increasing their general ability and competence. Also, the quality of teacher education itself, both in terms of theory and practice can substantially influence student achievement. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2005) (OECD) explains that students' achievement and outcomes can be strongly influenced by the ability and talents of the teachers themselves and the teaching education they receive. Developing the talents and ability (i.e. the calibre) and the actual number of teachers can be considered as a critical starting point for Initial Teacher Education (ITE), whereby the teaching practicum also plays a central part. It is also important to have an adequate supply of well-trained and able teachers, especially as there is a great demand for them in society. However, creating an ideal balance between the number, the calibre, and the talents of the teacher should also be carefully considered (Musset, 2010).

Partnerships and good relationships between schools and other educational institutions (e.g., colleges and universities) are crucial for the successful initial education of student teachers (Bezzina, 1998) and subsequently for providing high-quality teaching practice.

Nonetheless, there are some notable problems with ITE programmes in the KSA. For example, research in the Saudi context tends to suggest that these programmes do not really equip student teachers with independent learning skills. One of these skills is critical thinking skills to which Allamnakhrah (2013) referred as lacking in the secondary pre-service teacher education programmes in Saudi Arabia. This, in turn, seems to prevent them from adapting to the needs and requirements of a changing curriculum. As a result, it may be hard for them to take into account the social or educational factors that may influence the curriculum and its implementation. In addition, most programmes in the KSA do not really attach importance to the practical aspect of ITE. For example, in a study by Almazroa (2020), Saudi student teachers referred to the drawbacks in their

preparations in terms of practical training and reported facing three major challenges in their teaching practicum: lack of support in the teaching practicum, lack of supervision and challenges with classroom management. Indeed, there seems to be an overemphasis on theoretical knowledge in preservice teacher training, which may negatively affect student teachers' commitment to teaching. Moreover, another notable issue with preservice teacher training in the KSA relates to the supervision and evaluation of student teachers (Al-Ghamdi, 2012; Al-Abdelmoneim, 2012; Al-Shahry and Mohamad, 2013).

Thus, this signals a need for a more thorough review and monitoring of these programmes at the colleges of education. This current research study, therefore, focuses on the experiences of student teachers in their teaching practicum as an essential component of ITE, as it provides Saudi student teachers with school-based experience and knowledge of teaching and schoolwork in 'real' school settings. Given that the focus of this study is on student teachers of Arabic, it is important to focus on issues that directly relate to the Arabic language, as explained in the following sections.

1.3 Arabic Language

As explained later in the thesis, the Arabic language has two varieties: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the High form of Arabic, and colloquial Arabic, the Low form of Arabic. These varieties differ in their form, distribution and function (Albirini, 2014). The High form of Arabic is used uniformly in all the 22 Arabic-speaking countries, and in formal education, formal businesses and printed media, whereas, the Low form of Arabic is mainly used at home, in day-to-day informal conversations and in natural speech. Also, the High form of Arabic is very close to Classical Arabic, mainly used for religious purposes and in classical literary texts. Based on my personal experience, most Saudi citizens use the Low form and not the High form of Arabic for communication purposes in their everyday life. In reference to teaching, most Saudi teachers of Arabic use the High form of Arabic in teaching Arabic at schools, but they may resort in some cases to the use of the Low form of Arabic if students do not understand certain issues. However, nearly all Saudi professors at University use the High Form of Arabic in their teaching at university with no resort to using the Low form of Arabic. Kaye (1994) emphasises that Arabs do not use the High form of Arabic in their informal communication purposes; they use a low form instead.

Furthermore, this may cause a diglossic situation where the High form is used in formal situations while discussions and informal communication occurs in the local, Low form of Arabic. Hence, this situation may, at times, be complex for Arabic language teachers as they are vectors of the High form of Arabic and need to help students acquire the language skills necessary to operate in formal situations. However, as individuals and local Saudis, they use the Low form of Arabic in their everyday speech as their prime form of social communication. As a result, this diglossic situation is sometimes hard for Arabic teachers who are always required to uphold high linguistic standards through the exclusive use of the High form of Arabic in the classroom. Nonetheless, it may be necessary, for the sake of facilitating students' understanding, to resort to the Low form of Arabic.

Several problems may occur at the level of the classroom as a result of this diglossic situation. For example, at the lexical level, students often deal with unfamiliar High form of Arabic words that they do not use in their everyday speech. Teachers, as a result, may resort to the Low form of Arabic using words from a similar origin, root or form to explain the meanings of these words. This is because most words in the Low form of Arabic are derived from the High form; therefore, using a colloquial form derived from an unfamiliar High form of Arabic word usually facilitates students' lexical understanding. This question is discussed in more detailed in Chapter Two, Section 2.4.2

Following these important introductory considerations about the Arabic language and the diglossic situation in the country, which is essential to gain a better understanding of the study, the following section focuses on the specific aims and questions of this research.

1.4 Research Aims and Questions

This study is informed by sociocultural theories, the community of practice concept and situated learning as an overall conceptual framework. Sociocultural theories consider learning as a dialogic process that arises from the active interactions between learners and their sociocultural contexts (Kelly, 2006). This theory explains how student teachers interact with others to achieve their learning (Viczko & Wright, 2010; Trent, 2010). Thus, learning is viewed as the outcome of learners' social practices and interactions in their communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Situated learning, on the other hand, refers to learning that is

related to the situation when and where it occurs (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Greeno et al., 1992). This involves connecting to the activity, context, and the culture of the learning (Brown et al., 1989). Furthermore, the concept of community of practice relates to both 'sociocultural theories of learning' and 'situated learning theory' as they both emphasise engagement with others in the learning context. Wenger et al. (2011, p.9) also define the concept of the community of practice as a "learning partnership among people who find it useful to learn from and with each other about a particular domain".

Based on the above theoretical premises, this study seeks to contribute to and fill an existing gap in the literature on this relatively new research domain in the field of ITE in the Saudi Arabian context specifically, and in the Arab World in general. Furthermore, the proposed theoretical framework of sociocultural theory in which 'situated learning theory' (Hanks, 2001) and the concept of 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 2001) are two examples of its application, represents a relatively new research approach to addressing the experience of student teachers in their teaching practicum in the Saudi context.

Thus, based on the above aims, the research questions that the study seeks to address can be formulated as follows:

1. How do Saudi student teachers of Arabic view their teaching practicum?

2. How do significant others impact on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum?

3. What factors influence Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, from the perspective of student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors?

Following the above aims and research questions, it is worth clarifying several key issues that relate to the researcher focusing on my positionality as a researcher and its importance in this study.

1.5 My role and position in this research

The notions of *insider* and *outsider* in research are typically used to emphasise the positions that have been embraced by researchers within diverse methodological or theoretical traditions (Fleming, 2018; McNess et al., 2015). Through conducting this study, I have become more aware of the limits of these boundaries. I believe that it is essential to avoid polarization of the notions of insider and outsider in relation to different settings and research contexts (Crossley, Arthur & McNess, 2016). This is because the researcher and the subjects of research are not fixed and static elements, because as human beings, we constantly shift with regard to our individual and collective existence.

Nonetheless, it is noteworthy here that I was previously a student teacher in the same institution where the study was conducted and later a university supervisor as well. In this respect, I position myself as an insider researcher. Insider research refers to the research that is conducted within a community, group or organisation in which the researcher also happens to be a member (Fleming, 2018). This position helped me understand the viewpoints of student teachers and significant others. Being an insider provided me with a certain sense of comfort and also a perception of connection with the context and the participants. Some researchers deem distance as necessary for valid research, drawing from a positivist tradition; research carried out by an outsider can be deemed as a way of achieving objectivity. However, my role as an insider need not necessarily be considered as a limitation or a source of bias but does raise concerns as highlighted by Kanuha (2000: 444),

> being an insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding a population that may not be accessible to a non-native scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised because perhaps one knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied.

My position as an insider researcher can be justified for the following reasons. First, certain researchers argue that there are advantages to the insider researcher in understanding the issues being studied because the researcher has mutual knowledge of the life, problems and challenges of the sample of the research (Kanuha, 2000; Asselin, 2003; Khaliza, 2017). Being well aware of and familiar with the study context, I was able to reduce formalities in getting contact

with the participants, as stated by Asselin (2003). Additionally, this research employed mixed methods while collecting data to ensure triangulation. Thus, understanding the context and the background of the sample of the study as well as the background of the significant others, especially the university supervisors, might add more privileges to my role in data analysis in terms of depth. As an insider, I could also develop research questions more easily given my knowledge of the situation. I could also gain significant insights which might not be easily uncovered by an external researcher or outsider.

Despite the above advantages, it important to stress that we are all in some respects strangers or outsiders. As researchers, we are neither here nor there, and in practice, we are ideally somewhere in the middle (Fleming, 2018). That is why I have had to constantly reconsider my position in this research. Indeed, it is possible for a person to be an insider and still feel like an outsider or be perceived as an outsider by the participants. The first issue to consider is the power that can be exercised from within in the same way in which outsiders exercise power. Even though I tried to create a sense of safety and connection with the participants, it is possible that my position was a source of tension or that they felt that I was enforcing my values. For example, although I felt that the participants were open to share detailed information and discuss issues with someone who understood their issues and context, the opposite might also have occurred. It is possible that some participants refrained from sharing information for fear of being stigmatised, criticised or for having their position jeopardised. Collecting data from those who lacked power relative to my position as a member of staff (students, for example) raised ethical and methodological issues. Hence, it was essential to establish trust and uphold strict ethical standards throughout the research process. In terms of other ethical issues, I was aware that there could be issues related to ensuring the anonymity of the institution. However, as explained later in the thesis, this issue was soon addressed as the university gave me full permission to mention the name of the institution in the thesis. I felt that preserving the anonymity of the institution was not possible given that it was known that I was a member of staff of the university and that the identity of the institution could be revealed through the author of this research. Hence, disclosing the name was justified within the process of ethics approval. In addition, caution was required to ensure that the details and descriptions I provided of the context of the study did not reveal the identity of the participants.

Therefore, my position as an insider and the detailed description of the context helped in the transparency of the methodology but was also a source of an ethical dilemma for me.

I have also become increasingly aware of the fact that challenges may occur in the future, given my position as an insider researcher as I will continue to work alongside participants from the same institution. Some participants shared private information with me, which can potentially impact on future activities and relations at work. Therefore, I do understand that this research may have extended implications that go beyond the course of the research study itself.

Also, I have had to really question my position as a *real insider*. I had been away for a long time on doctoral study leave, and while I re-joined a setting that was familiar to me, I felt like an outsider at times. For example, some people I knew before were no longer there and aspects of the surroundings had changed. Nonetheless, I had the perception that I still had in-depth knowledge of the research setting and the institution where I conducted the research.

As far as my position is concerned, as an academic member of staff, I was an insider in the university system of teacher education that I was researching. This provided insights that an outsider might not have and enabled me to approach interviews with colleagues in a similar position to myself with shared knowledge about the system. However, I was not really an insider in relation to other communities who were investigated in the research (students and co-operating teachers). That is why my position was more fluid throughout the research process and could be considered as a *semi-insider*. My multiple identities and positions played out differently in diverse circumstances. I was in-between, neither inside nor outside; rather, I had to balance between these positions.

As an insider, I got the sense that the participants were keen to discuss issues that could help develop the ITE programme at university. However, as a member staff at university, I noticed that some new colleagues from the department seemed hesitant to share their ideas. In this sense, my role as both an academic in the department and as a researcher meant that they might have considered that anything they might say could be used in ways that might reflect badly on them or be used to criticise them. They might respond to questions in ways that did not convey their actual views. Thus, I tried not to be influenced by how I could be perceived by my participants differently, as I was conscious that this could

have influenced how they respond in terms of either not being critical or being very critical. Nonetheless, the new colleagues from the department asked for more clarification, and after clarifying these issues, I managed to establish a relation of trust with them, especially during the interviews.

In order to gain a better understanding of the way the thesis has been constructed; a summarised overview of each chapter has been highlighted in the following section.

1.6 Overview of the Thesis

Chapter One has focused on the overall background to the research, the rationale underpinning it, its underlying aims, questions and general significance.

Chapter Two provides details on the research context and background. It sheds light on Arabic teacher education in the KSA and the expected norms of Arabic pedagogical, cultural and academic components. The chapter also highlights some practical courses on teaching practicum.

Chapter Three reviews the literature review and related studies. Some of the more important aspects of this chapter relate to the definition and significance of the teaching practicum, the factors impacting on student teachers' attitudes towards their teaching practicum experience and previous Saudi studies on the subject of teaching practicum.

Chapter Four focuses on the research methodology, data collection methods, data analysis, ethical issues and potential research difficulties.

Chapter Five presents quantitative and qualitative research findings.

Chapter Six discusses the research findings as related to key issues highlighted in the literature, as well as considering the Saudi educational and cultural contexts specifically.

Chapter Seven concludes the study shedding light on how the experiences of Saudi student teachers in their teaching practicum could be better understood and interpreted, ultimately to develop well-trained and more effective future teachers. Recommendations and suggestions for further research are also provided.

Chapter Two: Context and Background

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the context and background of the study in the KSA. It introduces the nature and philosophy of the educational system and teacher education in the KSA. It also focuses on the teaching of Arabic at pre-university stages of education in the KSA, Arabic teacher education at the University of Hail and prospective Arabic teacher education in terms of the pedagogy used in training and the systems in place to acquire general knowledge in the teaching practicum. It is worth noting here that I received the approval of the University to conduct this research and mention its name in the thesis (see Appendix 12).

2.2 Nature and Philosophy of the Educational System in the KSA

Initially, the first starting points for education were connected to Arabic language and religious education through Kuttab (i.e. Quranic schools where students learn basic reading and writing skills and memorise the Quran getting neither an official certificate nor a transcript). Kuttab took place in the mosques and played a critical role in early education in the KSA (Saleh, 1986). The Islamic religion is the influential primary factor in the Saudi educational system (Al-Harbi & Al-Mahdy, 2011). All Saudi teachers are expected to actively follow Islamic values and seek knowledge, behaving with tolerance and doing good work for their community. The Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) has recently unified the materials, textbooks and curricula for both genders, despite segregating girls from boys in their schools (MOE, 2013).

2.2.1 The National Strategy for Education

The philosophy of the education system in the KSA is based on Islam, and the first verse of the Quran is a request for human beings to read. Islamic literacy commands every male and female Muslim to be responsible for the obligation of learning (Saleh, 1986). Although there is a well-established and ancient educational philosophy, educational outcomes have progressed since the KSA was originally founded. To clarify further, free formal education is provided across the country for all people. Adult literacy has increased amongst women and men

since primary schools have been established, and a better quality of educational services has been achieved for both girls and boys. However, some challenges and needs remain, such as improving information distribution, increasing access to and the use of information technology, and improving communication (Tatweer, 2012).

The Saudi MOE aims to provide students in the 21st century with an opportunity to improve their skills, creativity, talent and competitiveness so that they will be able to interact effectively with the rest of the world. King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz established a Public Education Development Project (PEDP) called 'Tatweer'. Some education experts in the Saudi MOE have also devised a new strategy and vision which sets out a positive outlook for the future for the education system of the KSA. In response to constant challenges and demands, the MOE has recently tried to improve the quality of education by developing a network of educational projects in conjunction with experts in education from Saudi Arabia and Arab scientists from other countries (e.g. the USA, Europe, and Canada). This project has developed a new vision and strategy to improve the process and outcome of the education system by making students and their learning, the central objectives of the educational process. This vision and strategy can be implemented effectively by empowering students, parents, teachers, headteachers, supervisors, and local communities by offering them enhanced resources (the MOE, 2013).

At the same time, Roy (1992) maintains that strong traditions and habits about education in the Saudi community still affect the general level of improvement in education. For example, some families might force their children to study any subject at random at high school or university, even if these subjects are not suitable for them; possibly as a way of protecting the family from having members without educational qualifications.

2.2.2 Aspects of the Saudi Educational System

The primary educational objective of the KSA is to enable students to understand Islam well, to equip them with the values and all the required skills and knowledge in order to develop themselves and their community socially, economically, and culturally (MOE, 2013). The Saudi education system consists of three leading authorities: the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Higher Educational Policy Committee (HEPC) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE).

2.2.2.1 The Ministry of Education (MOE)

The MOE was founded in 1952 and is responsible for developing and supervising all educational stages from reception and primary up to the secondary level in both the governmental and private sectors. All students are separated by gender at each stage of their educational levels, and they come under the direct supervision of the MOE. The Saudi MOE aims to provide the most comprehensive and effective educational services to pupils and students in all private or governmental schools. Equally, the MOE has raised the educational requirements for schoolteachers to a minimum requirement of having an undergraduate degree.

2.2.2.2 Higher Education

In 1963, the Higher Education Policy Committee (HEPC) was founded, which is now considered and positioned as the most important educational authority. The King of the KSA chairs the HEPC, and he is in overall charge of defining the general education policy in the KSA. He is also responsible for approving educational strategies and plans, as well as for allocating funding.

2.2.2.3 The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE)

In 1975, the MOHE was founded to take responsibility for all higher educational institutes in the KSA, including colleges and universities, whether private or governmental. In addition, the MOHE is responsible for the management of the relationship between both international and local universities. Higher Education in the KSA has made considerable advances in numerous fields of education. The MOHE is supported by large budget allocations, distributed to support university education which has, in turn, led to the creation of new colleges and universities. In 2013, there were ten private universities and twenty-seven public universities in Saudi Arabia (the MOHE, 2013). In 2015, both the Ministries of Higher Education and of Education were merged into one entity, the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Website).

Following the above contextual information relating to the education system and its administrative structure in the KSA, the thesis moves on to focus in more detail on teacher education in the country.

2.3 A brief overview of Teacher Education in the KSA

Teacher education plays an essential role in the learning and teaching process. The teacher education system in the KSA adopts both the *integrated* and the *consecutive* models of teacher education (Sukariyah, 2009). In the *integrated* system, students study both academic and specialisation modules jointly with educational modules during their four years at university. The *consecutive* model, however, applies to graduate students who have a first degree in a specific academic specialisation such as Arabic, mathematics, English or science. Based on their first academic degree, students can join the College of Education to study for one year to be prepared educationally. Besides, the MOE seeks to provide effective training for pre-service and in-service teachers in order to improve the productivity and performance level of schoolteachers. The MOE helps teachers to develop and improve their teaching skills and knowledge and benefit from new information and technology (the MOE, 2013). As the study's primary focus in on Arabic language student teachers, it is important to examine in more detail the place of the Arabic language in the country, as highlighted in the following section.

2.4 The Place of the Arabic Language in the KSA

Arabic is the official language of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and the first language of nearly all native Saudi Arabians. Saudi Arabia accounts for 70% of the total number of people in the Arabian Peninsula, which is generally acknowledged as the 'cradle' of the Arabic language and the original home of the Arab peoples (Alkhalifa, 2004). This has made Arabic an essential and central aspect of Saudi identity and existence. Furthermore, Arabic is the formal language of 21 Arab countries within the Middle East and North Africa, with Arabic also being an important language for Muslims all over the world because it is the language of the Quran. The language of the Quran is classical Arabic which includes the semantic and grammatical rules of Arabic.

Saudi Arabia is one of the most active Arab countries in using and teaching the Arabic language; for example, specialised colleges and departments for Arabic are abundant in the KSA with more than twenty Arabic language teaching centres and seven university institutes for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers (Benkharafa, 2010). Each year, thousands of expatriates, other university institutes in foreign universities, and more than ten departments for teaching Arabic are active at various international universities. All the previously outlined

activities are considered as part of an active movement to consolidate the linguistic heritage of Arabic and of the KSA.

Saudi proactivity and the KSA's role in increasing knowledge and awareness of the Arabic language on the internet is the most prominent in the Arab world, and during the reign of King Abdullah pilot projects were launched in Saudi Arabia to bolster the language. These included King Abdullah's initiative for promoting and increasing Arabic content on the Internet, a substantial project promoting Arabic in different areas on the internet. These projects and endeavours form the basis of an integrated vision for the future role of the Arabic, such as transforming the King Abdullah Center into a public body for Arabic, expanding its mandate, and establishing a language complex to protect the existing integrity of Arabic and develop the language further. A visualisation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the future also forms a major part of this project (Tatweer, 2010).

Arabic is a major international language (Al-Qahtani, 2012), but there seems to be a unique and special relationship between the Arabic language and the people in the KSA (Elyas, 2011). Elyas argues that the Arabic language plays an essential role in everyday life, especially in education, in the KSA, because the Saudi society is mainly conservative and affords Arabic much respect as the language of the Holy Quran. This is why it has a particular place in the education system, as explained below.

2.4.1 Arabic Language Teaching in the KSA

Good command of the Arabic language is one of the most important ways of achieving the key goals of each school in the KSA because it constitutes the main medium of communication and understanding between learners, their teachers and the environment beyond the school. It could be argued that mastery of the Arabic language is one of the most important factors in the learning and teaching process in the KSA. It is also clear that any school activity requires a command of listening, speaking, reading or writing, therefore if learners have the necessary linguistic skills in Arabic, this will help them to acquire skills in other subjects (the Centre for Educational Development, 2006). This in-depth learning of a language could also help in the acquisition of other languages, such as English, following Singleton's and Aronin's (2007) 'theory of affordances'.

2.4.2 Diglossia in Arabic

As indicated in section 1.3, two varieties of Arabic co-exist in the KSA. On the one hand, there is the High form of Arabic, which is used in formal speeches, lectures and in the news media. On the other hand, the Low form of Arabic is used in everyday speech in informal situations between both formally educated and less educated Arabs (Al-Sharoni, 2007). This results in a diglossic linguistic situation concerning the Arabic language, that is, a *"phenomenon of co-existence of two distinct language varieties in the same speech community, each of which is used for specific linguistic and communicative purposes by its speakers"* (Ferguson, as cited in Al-Sobh et al., 2015, p.274). This causes problems not only in society but also in the area of education, where the contrast between the High form of Arabic and the Low form of Arabic is often prominent. In addition, most aspects of the educational process can often suffer on account of this diglossia. For example, using the Low form of Arabic involves less sophisticated vocabulary being used without applying the appropriate linguistic and grammatical rules nor correcting mistakes (Al-Nadri, 2005; Al- Sharoni, 2007).

Native speakers of Arabic use code-switching from the Low form of Arabic to enhance their communication with others such as mixing the use of the High form of Arabic and the Low form of Arabic in Friday prayer sermons to communicate more effectively with others (Bassiouney, 2013). This tension between these two types of Arabic can also have an adverse effect on the language and the process of teaching, especially regarding oral language skills (Al- Sharoni, 2007). The long-term usage of the Low form of Arabic during the early years of a student's life can make a natural acquisition of standard Arabic challenging during the teenage years (Bani Yaseen, 2010). Moreover, this could represent one of the reasons why there is currently a low rate of enrolment at Holy Quran schools (Al-Rafii, 2002). It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that this is also one of the reasons behind the relatively low proficiency level of students in Arabic (Anis, 2003) and some students may not have high levels of fluency in the High form of Arabic in speaking and in vocabulary (Madkour & Howeidi, 2006).

Most Arabic teachers use the High form of Arabic in teaching, and many teachers of other subjects other than Arabic consider themselves to be teachers of the Arabic language indirectly (Hilal, as cited in Al-Brri et al., 2015). Based on my personal experience as a Saudi student, lecturer and university supervisor, it can

be argued that most Saudi teachers of Arabic use the High form of Arabic in teaching Arabic at schools, but they may resort in rare cases to use Low form of Arabic in their teaching if students did not understand some issues well; nearly all Saudi professors use the High form of Arabic in their teaching at university with no resort to using the Low form of Arabic.

Teachers face challenges to improve the standard of students due to this diglossic situation as students acquire the Low form of Arabic in the first instance, then learn the High form of Arabic in formal settings (Daoud, 2001). These two forms of the Arabic language constitute a complex challenge to Arabic language teachers as their students speak the Low form of Arabic outside their school and the High form of Arabic is used for much teaching inside the school. Therefore, teachers try hard to unravel these complexities of language use to their students in the class.

As seen above, the Arabic language is a key subject within the curriculum, and the teaching occurs at various levels of the education system, as explained in the following sections.

2.4.3 Arabic Teaching at Pre-University Stages

The educational system in the KSA is mostly inspired by Islamic teachings and attaches great importance to values such as tolerance, knowledge and engagement with the community (Alzaydi, 2010). The educational system in the KSA can be divided into five separate stages according to children's ages:

1. Pre-schooling (reception) for children aged between 3 and 6 years old.
2. Primary schooling for children aged 6 to 12.
3. Intermediate schooling for children aged 12 to 15.
4. Secondary schooling for children aged 15 to 18. At the end of this stage, most students graduate and join a college or university.
5. Higher education for students who have successfully passed the secondary graduation exam (similar to A-levels in the United Kingdom) entitling them to go into higher education.

The education system in the KSA aims to use the following strategies in teaching Arabic, namely strategies involving: a) imitation; b) investigation; c) discovering; d) problem-solving; e) project-based learning; f) acting and role-playing; g)

cooperative learning; h) joint research; i) dialogue and discussion (Al-Qahtani, 2012). In addition, the Arabic language curriculum at Saudi schools encourages all teachers and students to focus on the following fundamental activities: using technology effectively in the learning and teaching process (Hamed, 2012) and using educational aids and various modern teaching strategies, e. g. self-directed learning or co-operative learning (Alghamdi & Li, 2012).

For example, at the beginning of the primary stage, specifically the first year, the teachers tend to focus on memorization, repetition and imitation, because most of the teaching hours for the first grade are the Holy Quran and its language which is Arabic. For instance, using some Qur'anic texts, the student is asked to memorize them as they are and likewise to memorize letters. As for role-playing, students may be asked in the course of studying a dialogue to role-play the dialogue in addition after memorizing a text. In addition, especially in the primary stage, students often take part in drama plays presented during assembly, which requires significant Arabic speaking skills (in Classical/MSA).

Education policy for Arabic teaching in the KSA especially seeks to develop reading skills and tries to encourage a positive attitude towards reading, thereby building on students' ability to express thoughts and feelings correctly by using language appropriately. This enhances linguistic skills in all possible ways to support language development and an appreciation of the value of classical Arabic and seminal texts in Arabic (Al-Jabri, 2010).

More specifically, the first grade coursebook, "My Language" (لغتي), is made of units divided into smaller sections, each of which focuses on a group of letters, words and corresponding images. In the first unit, titled "My Family", aims to develop the following skills:

- Listening, which relates to the distinction between different letter sounds

- Speaking, for example, to express the content of an image related to family members (the father, the mother etc.)

- Reading, such as reading letters with vocalisations and short/long sounds

- Writing, such as writing letters (with vocalisations) and forming words

- Linguistic structures including pronouns and demonstrative adjectives

In addition to the above skills, the book aims to instil values that relate to each unit, such as the value of respecting the elders and washing hands before eating. Each unit finished with a set of activities to be completed in class or at home.

As for the intermediate and secondary stages, students use a book called لغتي الخالدة ("My eternal language"). Likewise, the book is divided into separate units, but topics are more specific. Grammatical concepts are dealt with in greater depth, such as types of sentences or types of subjects and their functions in the sentence.

The MOE seeks to promote reading skills and develop linguistic ability in various ways to strengthen the command and knowledge of Arabic. The MOE actively encourages both learners and teachers to attentively pay attention to directly experiencing the Arabic language in order to realise its beauty in ideas and style (the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 2006). This principle is to be followed at all four stages of the education system in the KSA, namely: at pre-school; at primary school; intermediate school and secondary school.

2.4.3.1 Pre-School

Pre-school represents two types of educational institutions, i.e. nursery and reception schools. Nursery school starts with children aged one to three years, and reception starts with children aged three to six years. Attendance at nursery and reception is not compulsory. Added to this, the majority of these educational institutions are privately-owned and run. The teaching Arabic at this stage aims to enrich children's vocabulary so that they can use expressions to convey suitable information.

2.4.3.2 Primary and intermediate schools

According to the Centre for Educational Development (2006), the general objectives of teaching the Arabic at primary and intermediate stages are to:

a) Gain a good repertoire of vocabulary, linguistic structure and style in order to enable learners to understand the Quran and Islamic heritage and any new information and technology.

b) Enable learners to understand language output at home, school and in society in general.

c) Strengthen the four fundamental language skills, i.e. listening, writing, reading, and speaking.

d) Enable Arabic language learners to use their language correctly to the correct level of formality and in the right register.

e) Enable Arabic language learners to use their language for the following purposes: knowledge; discovery; self-expression; communication with others; influencing others, contributing some benefit for the greater good; achieving personal aims; creativity and meditation.

Primary schools have pupils aged six to twelve, grouped depending on their age and on their exam results from levels one to six. In primary schools, the High form of Arabic is taught to students, although, as explained earlier (see Section 2.4.2), teachers may resort to the Low form of Arabic to facilitate comprehension. At this stage, the focus is on developing the fundamental skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking. Al-Silmy (2011) reports that the MOE at the beginning of 2010 began conducting the Integrated National Project (INP) for developing the school curriculum and its textbooks. The INP aims to set up integrated and coherent sub-modules in each subject. Following this initiative, the sub-skills of Arabic, namely: grammar, reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, listening and speaking have all been combined in one textbook (My Language- لغتي) for each grade for the first three years of the primary school, as briefly explained above. For grades four to six of the primary school stage, the Arabic textbook for each school grade is called "*My Beautiful Language*' (لغتي الجميلة). Primary school students are allocated a different number of class sessions weekly to learn Arabic. For example, students in grade one are allocated 11 sessions a week; students in grades two and three are allocated nine sessions, and students in grades four to six are allocated eight sessions weekly to learn the various aspects of Arabic language through one textbook.

The intermediate stage lasts three years and caters for students aged 12-15 years. The curriculum at this stage covers a mixture of practical skills and different subjects such as Islamic studies, Arabic, maths, and science. At intermediate school, students also start learning foreign languages. Arabic teaching in intermediate schools aims to develop linguistic skills in all areas. Students are given plenty of time to practise reading and establish positive habits in reading. In the intermediate school for grades seven, eight and nine, students are taught using the Arabic textbook *My eternal Language* (لغتي الخالدة). Intermediate school

students have six sessions weekly and learn about various aspects of the Arabic language through that textbook.

2.4.3.3 Secondary Schools

Students in secondary schools are between 15-18 years old and continue studying the subjects they began at the intermediate stage in addition to new subjects such as information technology (IT). After students complete their examinations, they are then ready to move forward to colleges or universities. If students pass the General Secondary Examination (GSE), which is equal to A-Levels in Britain, they can move forward to university, but this is not mandatory. Factors such as personal choice and their GSE score allow students to be admitted to higher education. However, some students may go on to study at technical institutions if they pass their GSE with a low score (Al-Qarni, 2010).

Secondary school students spend three years learning about various aspects of Arabic language at an advanced level such as grammar, eloquence, poetry, literacy, reading and comprehension, writing, and rhetoric. The main objectives for teaching the Arabic language at the secondary school stage are to:

- enable students to expand their knowledge of Arabic vocabulary

- strengthen the full integration of the fundamental aspects of language, i.e. reading, writing, listening, and speaking

- be able to understand advanced texts such as the Quran

- actively enjoy learning and to keep practising Arabic (Al-Qarni, 2010)

   Added to this, the MOE has now made the same textbook accessible for both male and female students. In the past, male students in the KSA used to have different textbooks from female students (the MOE, 2013).

Although, as explained above, the Arabic language has a prominent place in the curriculum, the English language is gaining preponderance in the education system, which may be problematic, as highlighted in the section below.

2.4.4 The growing importance of the English language

The Saudi government has introduced English language teaching over the last few decades (Al-Kahtany et al., 2016) and English is now often used as the only medium of instruction at some Saudi universities without duly considering

stakeholders' opinions nor taking official Saudi language policy into account, which states that Arabic should be the only medium of instruction at all levels of the Saudi education system (Alamri, 2008). This has caused many problems in the area of Arabic language teaching as many students often have less motivation to study Arabic at school because English is often the dominant language prevailing in different Saudi universities as the medium of instruction, especially for perceivably high-value subjects such as science, technology, engineering and medicine (Alamri, 2008). Furthermore, the generally low level of Arabic linguistic fluency and competency amongst students poses a considerable threat to the Arab identity of Saudi students as well as to their Islamic identity. Furthermore, scant attention has been paid to the transformation of scientific knowledge into the Arabic language as it is not generally considered to be the language of textbooks nor the language to be used as a medium of instruction. This may, in turn, be detrimental to the translation movement promoting the translation from English to Arabic which enriches the Arabic repertoire of advanced science, technology, engineering and medicine both in terms and in concept (Pennycook, 1994).

2.5 Higher Education in the KSA

In the education system in the KSA, higher education is provided by colleges and universities which offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The duration of an undergraduate degree is normally four years in the humanities and social sciences; five years in the sciences such as pharmacy or engineering and seven years in medicine (Al-Aqaily, 2011).

Higher education programmes have been enhanced and improved to upgrade the overall level of subsequent graduates as the Saudi government allocated a large financial budget to the education sector in 2018 with the aim of totally eradicating illiteracy and improving literacy and educational opportunities in the KSA. Based on a report from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2019), Saudi Arabia was shown to have an overall literacy rate of 94.4 % with a 5.4 % reduction in illiteracy (See Figure 2.1). In addition, there are increasing numbers of students in elementary, preparatory and secondary schools over the whole of the KSA.

%

**Literacy rate among the
population aged 15 years and older**

● Male   ● Female   ● Total

%

**Literacy rate among the
population aged 15-24 years**

● Male   ● Female   ● Total

%

**Literacy rate among the
population aged 65 years and older**

● Male   ● Female   ● Total

Literacy rate (%)	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	
15-24 years	99.22	99.3	99.14	(2013)
15 years and older	94.43	96.53	91.37	(2013)
65 years and older	51.39	64.96	36.6	(2013)
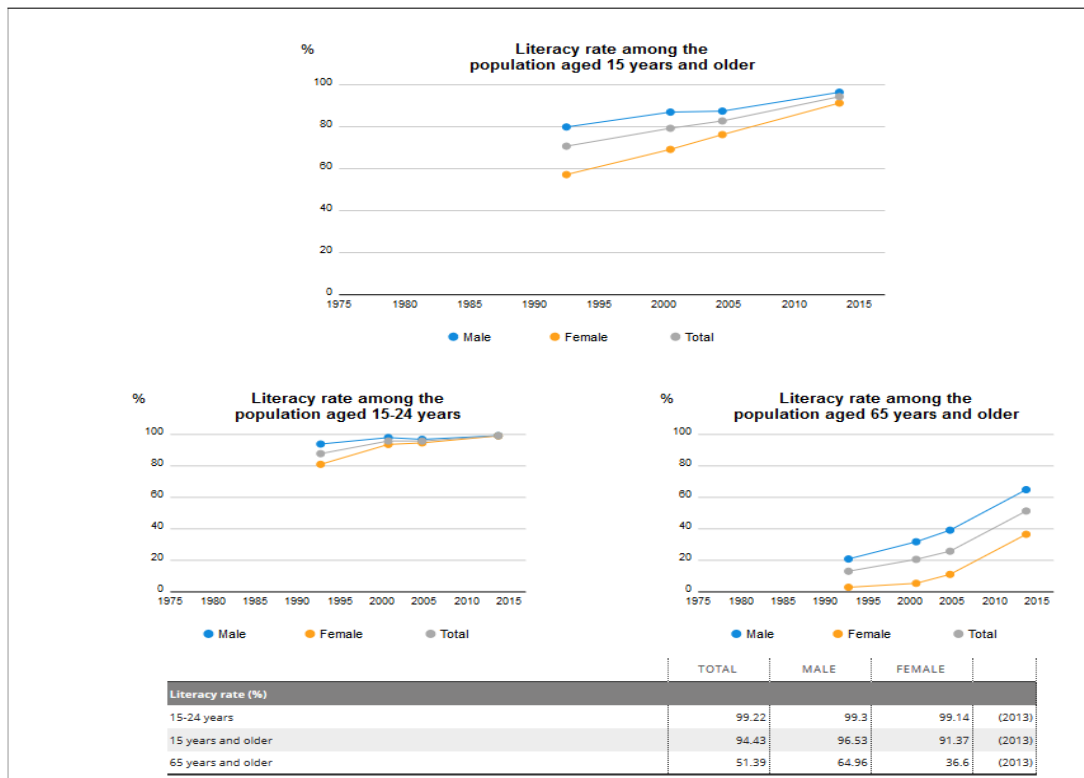
Figure 2.1 Literacy Rates in Saudi Arabia (UNESCO, 2019)

As shown in Figure 2.2, the number of university students in Saudi Arabia who progressed to higher education was about 1.7 million students in 2016, up from 850,000 in 2009 and less than 650,000 in 2006. There are 28 public universities in the KSA and ten private institutions. Private universities have increased from 6% in 2014 to 12% projected by 2020. Most higher education students (approximately 40 %) were enrolled to take an average diploma in 2015. There are low numbers of admissions in the postgraduate studies sector, and approximately 25% of graduates are in higher education in the KSA.

Higher education enrolment and college-aged population of Saudi Arabia, actual and projected, 2010–2020. Source: PwC
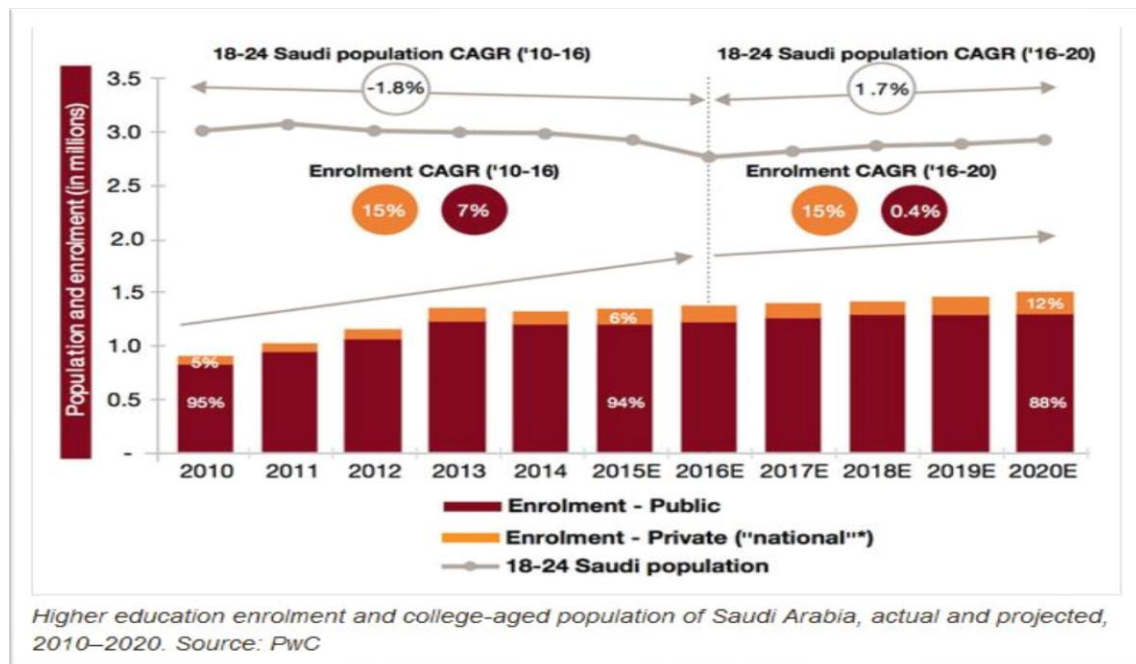
Figure 2.2 Higher Education Enrolment and College-Aged Population in the KSA (the PwC Middle East report, 2017)

2.5.1 The Context of the Study: the University of Hail

I, as the researcher, work as a university supervisor and lecturer in the Curriculum & Instruction Department at the College of Education, the University of Hail (UH) in Saudi Arabia. The next section presents some detailed information about the University of Hail (UH), the College of Arts, and the Department of Arabic Language at the UH. All the information presented below is taken from the UH website (2013) which is in English.

The University of Hail (UH) is a Saudi public university located in Hail city in the KSA. UH is supervised by the Ministry of Education (the MOE). The UH was established in June 2005 by Royal Decree. The official mission of UH is to promote learning, teaching and research skills up to the level of leadership and excellence in order to contribute to building a thriving academic community. UH aims to provide distinct education and pioneering research towards developing society by generating an attractive learning-teaching environment and a good partnership between the UH and society. The UH has the following thirteen faculties: Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Public Health, Sciences, Engineering, Computer Science, Arts, Community, Education, Business Administration, Law and Sharia (Islamic) Law. Further details are provided below

about the College of Arts, Arabic Language Department as the participants in the current study are graduates of this college.

2.5.1.1 The College of Arts and Sciences

The College of Arts and Sciences consists of four departments: Tourism and Archaeology, Arabic Language, English Language, and Social Sciences (University of Hail, 2017). This college aims to provide students with all the required information, knowledge, research and skills to be in line with the values, culture and demands of Saudi society. Furthermore, this college aims to achieve the following: develop its departments and improve the professional skills of the academic and administrative staff; to provide undergraduate and postgraduate programmes; to prepare specialist professionals in various areas of language; literacy; social work; tourism guidance; history and antiquities; research and consultancy.

2.5.1.2 The Department of Arabic

The Department of Arabic at the UH is part of the College of Arts. This department has been successfully providing essential education and teaching in the KSA for more than a decade. The mission of this department is to provide high-quality and distinctive academic programmes and to conduct scientific research into the Arabic language and literature. However, the main aims are also to teach Arabic to a high proficiency level; to produce rigorous scientific research; to pay due attention to the Arabic language as the language of the Holy Quran; to provide qualified graduates with high academic and professional standards; to maintain the national identity of the KSA and to develop the practice of Arabic when using modern technology.

Graduate students from the Department of Arabic can work as Arabic teachers at all school stages, as media specialists or as agents in publishing companies, reviewing Arabic heritage, providing linguistic consultations for research centres, and doing research. This department can issue Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees in Arabic Language and Literature, and the length of the academic BA programme is four years, with 127 credited hours. The Master of Arts (MA) programme focuses on two tracks: a) language and grammar; b) literature and criticism.

2.5.1.3 The College of Education and the General Diploma in Education

After graduating from the Arabic language department, College of Arts, graduates are academically ready to work in any area related to their expertise, except teaching in schools. Therefore, if these graduates wish to teach the Arabic language in schools, they must study for a year at the College of Education in order to be qualified. This additional year of study, which is supervised by the Department of Curriculum & Teaching Methods (DCTM) at the College of Education, is called the General Diploma in Education (GDE).

The GDE consists of 16 courses, with 38 credit hours (one credit hour equates to one hour of tuition per week) taught over two semesters. The purpose of the GDE is to equip graduates who are not majoring in education with the pedagogical and teaching skills required to teach at Saudi state schools. Also, the GDE enhances the teaching and pedagogical performance of education graduates who are working as in-service teachers. The GDE develops in-service teachers' experience and skills, which helps them to perform their assigned teaching tasks more professionally. For more details about the GDE and the different courses and their credit hours, see Appendix 1.

The GDE involves cooperating teachers in Saudi schools who are graduates of the Faculties of Education. University graduates who are not graduates of the Faculties of Education must enrol on the GDE to work as teachers in schools. They are trained to be teachers in a one-year programme at various Faculties of Education in order to receive the GDE. The cooperating teachers are part of the supervisory team in the teaching practicum schools where student teachers are trained in the practical part of the GDE.

2.5.1.4 The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction has the following aims, which are to:

- Develop university students' ability to understand the theories and information related to curriculum and teaching methods.
- Provide university students with the principles of effective teaching.
- Prepare university students to be good schoolteachers by developing their academic, social and professional identities.

- Encourage university students to be able to use modern theories and educational aids in the classroom.

- Contribute to finding solutions for problems in the educational process through conducting research and field case studies. (See Appendix 1 for more information on the course description and transcript of the GDE).

2.5.2 Preservice Arabic Teacher Education at the UH

Research suggests that it is important to develop adequate programmes to prepare teachers of Arabic in Saudi Arabia (Alghamdi and Li, 2012; Al-Thebaity, 2016). These researchers highlight the different challenges surrounding pre-service and in-service teachers in the KSA such as the gap between theoretical teacher education and teaching practice in schools; a lack of clarity with the objectives in the General Diploma in the education programme, and general weakness in the pedagogic and academic preparation of teachers.

2.5.2.1 Pedagogical and general knowledge modules

General knowledge modules refer to the courses that general diploma students study to gain general knowledge about non-specialised courses such as School Administration and Educational Supervision, Principles of Research and Education, and Educational Psychology. On the other hand, pedagogical knowledge modules refer to specialised courses that general diploma students study to gain specialised pedagogical knowledge in teaching Arabic such as Special Teaching Methods and Teaching Practicum.

The study of pedagogy and general knowledge both serve to enhance the level of a teacher's professional performance. Such study aims to guide teachers on how to follow professional principles and to understand the duties for their role as teachers. This can also help them to understand the personality of aptitude of their own learners, along with the latter's specific needs. Most importantly, this increases their overall knowledge of teaching methods and methodology, which are normally based on empirical educational research (Al-Agel, 2010).

The pedagogical component should provide students with a sound foundation in teaching methods and teaching practicum experience, which can enable student teachers to feel confident about and responsible for their own classroom teaching (Alshuaifan, 2009). Al-Agel (2010) explains that pedagogical education for

teachers takes place at the College of Education in the KSA and consists of four key areas:

- *Educational Dimension* - This seeks to provide student teachers with all the required philosophical and social principles in the educational process.

- *Psychological Dimension* - This aims to make student teachers more aware of the relevant aspects of general psychology, educational psychology, and developmental psychology.

- *Materials and Modules* - Student teachers should be taught some essential modules such as educational assessment and testing, educational aids, curriculum development and teaching methodology and methods.

- *Teaching Practicum* - Theoretical knowledge and preparation at the university for preparing good teachers is insufficient; student teachers should practise their knowledge at the teaching practicum schools.

At the University of Hail where student teachers study their GDE, there are 16 courses taken over two semesters. Twelve courses prepare student teachers pedagogically, and four courses provide student teachers with general knowledge (See Appendix 1). The twelve courses assigned to prepare student teachers pedagogically constitute 29 out of the 38 Credit Hours (76.31% of the total percentage of the GDE), bearing in mind that one Credit Hour equates to one hour of tuition per week. More specifically, the University of Hail Guide (2008, p.15) defines the credit hour as "each of the weekly lectures, with a duration not less than 50 minutes or a laboratory session or field study of not less than 100-minute duration". This means that in each course, the university teachers meet their students twice (75 minutes each) or three times (50 minutes each) for a total of 15 weeks per semester. The student teachers start their practicum during the semester. They are in placement school two days a week and spend the remaining days at the university completing their courses.

Student teachers study a wide range of courses including i) School Administration and Educational Supervision; ii) Curriculum and General Teaching Methods; iii) Introduction to Teaching; iv) Principles of Research and Education; v) Educational Measurement and Evaluation; vi) Psychology of Childhood and Adolescence; vii) Educational Psychology; viii) Foundations of Guidance and

Counselling; ix) Principles of Education for Gifted Children; x) Special Teaching Methods; xi) Production & Use of Educational Aids, and xii) Teaching Practicum.

On the other hand, four courses provide student teachers with general knowledge such as i) The Education System in Saudi Arabia; ii) Foundations of Islamic Education; iii) Computer Uses in Teaching and Education Technology & iv) Communication. These courses constitute nine credit hours (23.68% of the total percentage of GDE).

2.5.2.2 The Teaching Practicum

It is challenging for student teachers to become effective teachers without having some practical experience in teaching their subjects. The Teaching Practicum is the only practical course for student teachers of Arabic at the UH College of Education. In this course, student teachers are trained in their last semester before graduation in a Saudi state school, which could either be in a primary, intermediate or secondary school. The frequency of the practicum is twice a week for a whole academic semester.

Student teachers are assigned a university supervisor who acts as a representative of the College of Education, UH and a cooperating teacher at their placement school who is normally selected as someone with substantial classroom teaching experience. Practical courses aim to enable student teachers to understand the teaching process in real-life situations and contexts. In addition, student teachers learn about lesson plans and evaluation *in situ* in their teaching practice (Al-Aqaily, 2011). Approximately 15 weeks are provided for the student teachers' teaching practice experience, which supports them in their working application of pedagogical theory (Al-Jabri, 2010). It is important to note that the teaching practicum component at the GDE at the UH constitutes five credit hours (13.15% of the total percentage of GDE). For further details about the teaching practicum, see Appendix 2.

Moreover, to facilitate the teaching practicum, an office oversees the process and is responsible for assigning student teachers to a specific teaching practicum and liaising between the university and the school. In addition, this office facilitates university supervisors' school visits and arranges payment to administrative staff and schoolteachers who cooperate in the teaching practicum.

Finally, as the school placement is only for two days each week, there is a certain lack of continuity in their teaching practice. This may be challenging for the student teachers, who may not feel they are part of the community of practice in their placement school. This might have significant implications for their formation as professional teachers, as explained later in the thesis. Spending only two days a week in their placement schools, student teachers may find it hard to interact meaningfully with other members of the school community, whether in formal or informal ways. In addition to this lack to belonging, it may be hard for them to properly experiment and put in practice the teaching of all the skills involved in the Arabic language. As the teaching of Arabic involves a range of specific skills, including speaking, listening, grammar or vocabulary, for instance, two days a week may be insufficient time for student teachers to get practical experience with a range of skills.

Having provided details about the academic context of the study in general and the specific context of the UH where the study was conducted, it seems important to focus on the wider sociocultural context of the study as this may have a significant impact on key actors of the teaching practicum, student teachers.

2.6 The Saudi Socio-Cultural Context

The cultural milieu of Saudi Arabia is rooted in the principles of a religious nature as well as principles associated with tribalism. Since the sites of the Two Holy Mosques are located on its territory, Saudi Arabia enjoys a singular status within the Islamic world. Saudi culture is therefore dominated by Islam, which shapes social behaviours, customs, responsibilities and practices. At the same time, people's social standing and their ability to succeed in various ventures continue to depend on notions of kinship and tribalism. Indeed, the latter has a particularly significant influence on people's work opportunities (Al-Shehry et al., 2006).

The moral tenets and behaviours that people are expected to uphold are outlined in the Holy Book of the Qur'an and in the compilation of sayings and practices attributed to the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him (the Sunna), which are the cornerstone of Islam, the foremost layer of Saudi culture. The Qur'an has been instrumental in fostering the development of cultural cohesion and a universal legal system (Sharia) applicable in all Muslim countries. The Muslim society is thought of in terms of brother/sisterhood, so all individuals are given the same status, irrespective of other considerations, such as wealth. Furthermore,

as religion is broadly considered to be the basis of morality (Hofstede, 1998), Saudi society has a highly conservative character, and every aspect of life, including family life and education, is shaped by Islam. Being brought up with such principles, Saudi students and teachers must take into account these cultural considerations in educational practice, rather than simply adopt ready-made educational approaches from Western countries. This is necessary in order to avoid incompatibilities between educational approaches and Saudi cultural and social features.

In line with what is advocated in the Qur'an and the Sunna, family plays a central role in all Muslim communities, regardless of whether they are Bedouin, rural or urban communities, and regardless of individuals' level of education. Thus, family interests are prioritised over individual interests (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002). There is an expectation for people to maintain positive ties with their family members and put greater emphasis on their welfare than the welfare of strangers. Hence, by promoting family affiliation instead of autonomy and individuality, such interconnection of familial relationships constitutes a source of security for people. In a workplace context, such values can result in leaders adopting a patriarchal role and prioritising family members and relatives for work opportunities and benefits. This has sparked criticism of unethical behaviour in a large number of cases of leaders offering advantages to subordinates, despite the latter having a poor work performance. Due to their role, leaders are also expected to address personal issues facing family members, such as enabling them to secure a certain work position (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002).

Another important part of the Saudi socio-cultural context is the Majlis, which can be understood as an informal gathering which is usually held weekly. These gatherings are not held with a specific agenda in mind unless there is an important issue that occurred in the community. They are usually held at the home of the host of the Majlis; they are not mixed, but a separate Majlis is held for male and female members of the community. In the Majlis, guests are typically offered beverages and have a communal meal, usually dinner. Hosts take turn in holding these Majlis and attendees are often either the local residents or the relatives of the host, in addition to any special guests not usually attending the Majlis.

The Majlis, also called the *Diwan* can be defined as the place where Saudi people learn "the manners and ethics of their community, dialogue and listening skills, and respect for the opinion of others" (UNESCO, 2015 para. 1). Based on my personal experience, the Majlis helps all its members to share and discuss their everyday social problems and situations and their reactions to them. In the Majlis, members discuss their different views on the same topic by exchanging their experiences. This social space has a significant impact on people's lives and can be regarded as "a place of decision as well as of social intercourse" (Weir, 2008, p. 256). The Majlis is also a place where members can interact and learn in a meaningful way through exchanging knowledge and information and acquiring and practising important life skills. In addition, the Majlis reflects many of the cultural characteristic and specificities of the wider context as it mirrors, and reinforces the already strong social norms of the family, kinship and neighbourhood that are central to Islam.

Student teachers, being part of the community, often attend these Majlis. Thus, in the presence of a student teacher, members of the Majlis often address issues that relate to either the school or, more specifically, to the practical aspects of teaching. Hence, student teachers may be often questioned about their experience in the school or their relationship with the school community or their university context. This often leads to discussions, and student teacher may seek advice from retired teachers, if present in the Majlis, or elderly members of the community. The notion of Majlis relates to the community of practice as members of a community can network and develop strong relationships in this social space. Hence, this may play an important role in the life of student teachers.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has given an overview of the Saudi context and background. It addressed the nature and philosophy of the educational system in the KSA, focusing on the national strategy, the aspects of the Saudi educational system. The chapter also highlighted the teacher education models in the Saudi context: the integrated model and the consecutive model. Likewise, the chapter emphasised the place of the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia, focusing on how it is taught, bearing in mind some of the implications of the diglossia in Arabic. The chapter also briefly examined the teaching of Arabic at the pre-university and university stages. It was also noted how the growing place of English in the

education system could be perceived as problematic due to the spread of English as a medium of instruction in Saudi universities. In addition, this chapter reviewed the higher education system in the KSA focussing specifically on the context of the study: the teacher education programme at University of Hail with a special emphasis on preservice Arabic teacher education and the teaching practicum.

The above contextual information is essential to gain a better understanding of the issues that surround the experiences of Saudi students and teachers of Arabic language in their practical training. In addition, this chapter provided an important background to better understand the Saudi context in which the present study is conducted. The above contextual issues are intended to help the reader gain an in-depth understanding of the results of the study and the issues being investigated. This is because the background information presented in the above chapter is essential to explore how Saudi student teachers of Arabic view their teaching practicum and investigate the nature of existing relationships between Saudi student teachers of Arabic and the significant others. In addition, the above can shed light on the impact of the various socio-cultural factors influencing Saudi student teachers experience of their teaching practicum, such as the Majlis.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature pertaining to the teaching practicum and highlights some key underlying factors and theoretical concepts. It is divided into six main sections which complement each other, and which have helped in the design of the research instruments. The chapter also provides the theoretical background to the study, both in terms of content and methodology. The first section is concerned with the conceptual framework of the study, while the second section deals with various approaches to teacher education. The third section focuses on the role of the teaching practicum. The fourth section explores the literature on student teachers and the teaching practicum, and the fifth section deals with significant others and teaching practicum. Finally, this chapter is concluded with the rationale behind the conceptual framework underpinning the current study.

3.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This thesis draws on a social perspective to investigate student teachers' experiences in their teaching practicum and the impact of significant others on their experiences, bearing in mind the significance of the social context in learning (Claxton, 1996) in light of several theories. The following sections focus on theories which were considered key to gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of the teaching practicum and the influence of contextual factors on its effectiveness. The theories used to look at student teachers' experiences, and the contextual factors that affect these learning experiences are sociocultural theories of learning (Kelly, 2006), the situated learning theory (Hanks, 2001) and the community of practice theory (Wenger, 2004) which all acknowledge the significance of the social context in learning. Hence, this study was informed by these theories that served as a lens to highlight the importance of the cultural and professional context of the study. In this regard, a key aspect of the study is that the social and professional context are important notions that need to be taken into consideration in order to understand the role of the practicum for student teachers learning to be teachers. Indeed, the study is based on the assumption that learning to be a teacher is a sociocultural activity that involves situated

learning –the practicum being crucial in that regard– and that the concept of a community of practice illuminates important aspects of this process.

3.2.1 Sociocultural Learning Theory

The social-cultural theory of learning considers learning as occurring through a dialogic process arising out of the active interactions between learners and their socio-cultural contexts (Kelly, 2006). Lev Vygotsky, the founder of sociocultural theory, argues that:

> *"all cognitive functions originate in, and must, therefore, be explained as products of social interactions, and that learning [is] not simply the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it was the process by which learners [are] integrated into a knowledge community" (Vygotsky, as cited in Cremin & Burnett, 2018, p.77).*

Vygotsky adds that learning is a collaborative process where learners develop higher cognitive levels when promoted by others to fill the gaps between their thinking and problem solving,

> *The level of actual development is the level of development that the learner has already reached and is the level at which the learner is capable of solving problems independently. The level of potential development (the "zone of proximal development") is the level of development that the learner is capable of reaching under the guidance of teachers or in collaboration with peers. The learner is capable of solving problems and understanding material at this level that they are not capable of solving or understanding at their level of actual development; the level of potential development is the level at which learning takes place. It comprises cognitive structures that are still in the process of maturing, but which can only mature under the guidance of or in collaboration with others. (Vygotsky, as cited in Cremin & Burnett, 2018, p.78).*

Accordingly, sociocultural theories of learning provide a significant explanation as to how student teachers achieve their learning in association with significant others in several social cognitive processes (Viczko & Wright, 2010; Trent, 2010). Learning is the outcome of learners' social practices and interactions in their communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

3.2.2 Situated Learning Theory

The idea of *'situated learning'* (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Greeno et al., 1992) is a theoretical explanation of learning in a *'community of practice'* where learning is related to the situation when and where it occurs. Therefore, based on this view, there is a disparity between distinctive school situations and "real world" situations and the problem of connecting what is learned at university with the experience of the practicum.

Situated learning involves connecting to the activity, context, and the culture of the learning (Brown et al., as cited in Patton et al., 2018). Essential characteristics of situated learning environments have been researched in several studies (Herrington & Oliver, 2000; Chu et al., 2010; Herrington & Oliver, 1999) whereby situated learning environments have been shown to include realistic contexts and activities and assessment, training opportunities with experts by sharing and exchanging roles and standpoints in a collaborative, reflective context with scaffolding and support from a more proficient other (Vygotsky, as cited in Hennessy, 1993). In this respect, a situated learning environment offers training and support at critical times where the instructor affords the students, skills and strategies that they need to complete a task (Griffin, 1995). The main core of situated learning is that learning is a form of participation in a culture of learning rather than a cognitive task (Wertsch, 1990). In the same vein, Greeno (1997, pp.7-11) explains:

> *The trajectory of participation" that can take place within "communities of practice" as students engage in the form of learning that is "more personally and socially meaningful and [allows] students to foresee their participation in activities that matter beyond school.*

This is the basis behind the focus on situated learning in the activities of training, thinking, and cooperation (Brown et al., 1989) .

Situated learning entails more than just experiential learning or "learning by doing." Tennant (1997, p.73) explains that the concept of situatedness as hypothesized by Lave and Wenger entails individuals being full participants in creating sense. With regard to new entrants, Lave and Wenger (1991: 108-109) state, "...the purpose is not to learn from talk [but] to learn to talk". This situation

results in a definite benefit of attracting attention to the need to comprehend learning and knowledge in context.

3.2.3 Relating Situated Learning Theory and Sociocultural Learning Theory

'Situated learning' relates to Vygotsky's '*sociocultural theory'* of learning insofar as both frameworks emphasise the importance of social learning. Their similarities lie around three basic ideas, i.e. that learning: i) occurs in real-life; ii) is social and takes place through human communication and that iii) learning takes place from others through modelling and supervision.

From a *'sociocultural learning'* perspective, the social environment influences learning through its 'tools', namely the cultural objects or artefacts, which are important to understanding learning (Geary, 1995; Schunk, 1996); language, which is an essential tool to comprehend learner behaviour (Vygotsky, as cited in Doolittle, 1995) and social institutions. In addition, social interaction and collaboration are essential factors of situated learning as an activity, while context and culture are the sources of learning.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, as cited in Chaiklin, 2003 p. 40). It is the skill level just above where the student currently is. Vygotsky scaffolding is a teaching method that uses instructors and more advanced peers to help students learn. Vygotskyan scaffolding and the related concept of the zone of proximal development are teaching methods that can help students learn information more quickly than they would with traditional instruction. From a sociocultural learning perspective, Vygotsky (as cited in Hennessy, 1993) explains that the *'zone of proximal development'* allows learners to extend their knowledge and build upon it with the help of another more informed or experienced person. Student teachers and the significant others can work together on tasks which student teachers find difficult through sharing knowledge within their cultural context (Bruner, 1984; Daloz, as cited in Rice, 2008). Regarding 'situated learning', Brown et al. assert that the development of learners is a continuous social process in different contexts, and they explain further:

Cognitive apprenticeship supports learning in a domain by enabling students to acquire, develop and use cognitive tools in authentic domain activity. Learning, both outside and inside the school, advances through collaborative social interaction and the social construction of knowledge. (Brown et al., as cited in McLellan,1996, p.39)

The idea of *'learning transfer'* has been defined as *"the carry-over or generalisation of learned responses from one type of situation to another"* (Mish, 2004). Segall et al. (1990) assert that such a transfer occurs *"when the progress obtained in the course of learning a certain form of activity involves an improvement in the performance of a different, more or less related, activity".* Ip (2003) also posits that *"teaching for transfer is, not just for a test, but for a lifetime"* (P.7).

Dorn & Soffos (2001) propose the idea that teaching should offer learners chances to transfer current knowledge, skills, strategies to new problem-solving activities through various contexts. At the same time, I believe that the core aim of learning is not only the transfer of learning but the transformation of learners into individuals who can react creatively and positively to new conditions and find solutions to problems.

The concept of learning transfer differs between the two theories. Situated learning suggests that transfer will not occur if learning does not take place in its authentic context. Socio-cultural learning suggests that the situational factors which have an impact on learning transfer such as learning through observing the mistakes and successes of others can be applied to other situations and at other times. Therefore, the concept of 'learning transfer' differs from the two theories discussed in the last section. In *'situated learning'*, the realistic context of learning is the main condition for the transfer of learning. If learning does not take place in its authentic context, the transfer is not expected. While learning transfer for '*sociocultural theory',* situational factors have a greater impact on learning transfer as the transfer from one community to another depends on the standards and kinds of problems and aims which occur in those communities. Equally, the realistic context of transfer, as well as the types of problems and aims (learning and working) of communities are the conditions for learning transfer in both 'sociocultural learning theory' and 'situated learning theory'. Accordingly, I was

prompted to investigate the contextual factors which have an impact on student teachers' teaching practicum as they are essential factors influencing the ultimate effectiveness of this practical experience.

3.2.4 Community of Practice

'Community of practice' is a concept which relates to both 'sociocultural theories of learning' and 'situated learning theory' as they both emphasise engagement with others in the learning context. The idea of the community of practice was first posited by Lave & Wenger (1991, p.49), who claim that learning is not just receiving information but relates to *"increasing participation in communities of practice"*. In addition, the notion of the community of practice refers to *"a collection of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor"* (Eckert, 2006, p.1). Wenger et al. (2011) also define the concept of the community of practice as a "learning partnership among people who find it useful to learn from and with each other about a particular domain, [using] each other's experience of practice as a learning resource" (2011, p. 9). Moreover, Wenger highlights the different concepts included in the community of practice:

> *"the domain, the community, the practice, participation and reification, Joint Enterprise, Mutual Engagement, and Shared Repertoire, legitimate peripheral participation, identity development of student teachers, the participation of student teachers and value creation". (2004, p. 3-4)*

There are three areas to consider when considering the concept of 'community of practice'. Firstly, the *"domain"* refers to the area of knowledge bringing the community together, imbuing it with its identity, and defining the main issues which its members must address (Wenger et al., 2011). Secondly, the notion of *"community"* refers to relevant group members for the domain; the quality of their interaction and how they interrelate together with how well defined the boundary is between their group on *"the inside"* with the world on *"the outside"*. The final dimension for consideration refers to the *"practice"*, which Wenger et al. define as *"the body of knowledge, methods, tools, stories, cases, documents, which members share and develop together….to address recurring problems in their specific context"*.

Likewise, the notions of *"participation"* and *"reification"* constitute vital factors in the community of practice, as illustrated by Wenger et al., who maintain that the community of practice *"requires both participation and reification to be present and in interplay"* (2009, p. 57) because participation involves performing and cooperating whilst reification includes presenting the abstract ideas into a series of authentic experiences. Joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire are all to be developed by the participants of the community of practice through participation and reification whereby participants develop, *"a set of criteria and expectations by which they recognise membership"* (Wenger, 1998, p.180). He also goes on to outline the central tenets required for the creation of a learning community or maintaining an active one, which depends on *"a dynamic combination of engagement, imagination, and alignment"* (p. 228).

When linking this conceptually to the current study, it is necessary to define Wenger's notion of *"legitimate peripheral participation"* (1998, p. 100) as involving the participation of student teachers in the class and school communities as new members of the community of practice. He expands this idea by emphasising that the community of practice must engage newcomers from the outset, bringing them into the fold, irrespective of their initial level of involvement and induct them in the ways in which the community operates. Consequently, student teachers can develop their professional identity and have a sense of the *"process of becoming"* a teacher, by not just accumulating skills and technical information but also by appreciating the type of person they *should* become or avoiding becoming the persona they should not (p.215). Therefore, student teachers' participation in an active community requires a deep-seated knowledge of the community itself in order to fulfil the target of the community of practice. In order to achieve this, student teachers need to share and exchange knowledge, experiences with their colleagues and significant others in the community of practice. As a result, the acquired dynamic knowledge can be both *"obvious and implicit [and] social and individual"* (Wenger et al., 2002). Furthermore, *"value creation"* occurs as a result of the community of practice members' activities and interactions with others in informal networks. The primary recipients of this value are the participants of a community of practice, but the value may also accrue to other stakeholders, such as the organisations in which the community of practice operates and sponsors who invest resources (Wenger et al., 2011).

The community of practice has a significant role in the development of learners and higher learning outcomes. Hoadley, for example, contends that:

"Communities of practice typically have a degree of informality (low to moderate institutionalization, making them a community and not an organization), and high connectivity (rather tight social relationships between members of the community, and a relatively high degree of identification with the group". (2012, p. 299),

Additionally, a community of practice builds and enhances confidence between the learner and the community, supports insights, promotes learners' trust, increases work satisfaction, and fulfils the learners' goals and contributions to the community (Wilding et al., 2012; Daniel et al., 2013; Friberger & Falkman, 2013). Moreover, Wenger (1998) adds that communities of practice provide five critical functions: i) gathering and exchanging information about the practice; ii) forming communications and cooperation amongst colleagues; iii) supporting the learners in their learning through discussion and sharing, and iv) promoting the learner in transferring their new knowledge to their work contexts to solve their problems and v) sharing the solutions within the community.

Furthermore, a community of practice promotes the performance of the learners (Dalkir, 2005) through achieving more commitment among stakeholders, refining the effectiveness of processes, and stimulating innovation through improved sharing of best practice. Moreover, following Cambridge et al., joining a community of practice is significant as a professional learning strategy because it can achieve the following objectives:

"Connect people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to interact, either as frequently or at all; provide a shared context for people to communicate and share information, stories and personal experiences in a way that builds understanding and insight; enable dialogue between people who come together to explore new possibilities, solve challenging problems, and create new, mutually beneficial opportunities. Stimulate learning by serving as a vehicle for authentic communication, mentoring, coaching, and self-reflection; capture and share existing knowledge to help people improve their practice by providing a forum to identify solutions to common problems and a process to collect and evaluate best

practices; introduce collaborative processes to groups and organisations to encourage the free flow of ideas and exchange of information; help people organise around purposeful actions that develop tangible results, generate new knowledge to help people transform their practice to accommodate changes in needs and technologies". (2005, p.145),

The central importance of the idea of *"community of practice"* and recognition of the impact of communication and dialogue between different parties involved in the teaching practicum, strongly motivated me to investigate student teachers' teaching practicum.

The current research investigates the broader scope of student teachers' teaching practicum, as well as considering other contextual factors, through including, not only the student teachers' views but also the impact of significant others on teaching practicum, i.e. their peers, the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors as well as any other contextual factors that have influences on the teaching practicum.

Following the above, the thesis moves on to examine and discuss the theories that have influenced and shaped initial teacher education with a particular focus on the different models that have emerged from these influences. Particular attention is paid to the notions of professional learning and teacher's knowledge.

3.3 Theoretical influences on Initial Teacher Education

As explained above, this study is informed by socio-cultural theories, the community of practice concept and situated learning. Therefore, a fundamental idea that this study embraces is that learning is a process that occurs through the interactions between learners and within their contexts (Kelly, 2006). This study also assumes that learning is the outcome of learners' social practices and interactions in their communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). In addition, it is argued here that this process involves connecting to the activity, context, and the culture of the learning (Brown et al., 1989). With this in mind, this study explores one aspect pertaining to the field of ITE in the KSA, the practicum. More specifically, particular attention is paid to the experiences of Saudi student teachers of Arabic in their teaching practicum and the impact of significant others in this process. Likewise, since the social and professional contexts are viewed

as critical aspects shaping these experiences, the investigation focuses on the range of contextual factors influencing Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum.

The teaching practicum is an integral part of ITE, which represents the entry point into the profession of teaching, as student teachers are trained theoretically and practically to become qualified teachers. Hence, student teachers have to make complex decisions that rely on many different kinds of knowledge and judgement, and that can involve high stakes outcomes for students' future. ITE has developed over the years and has been shaped by theories regarding the nature of teacher knowledge and professional learning as they apply to the preparation of teachers; should they be trained to be technicians, reflective practitioners or transformative practitioners (Kumaravadivelu, 2003)? Therefore, to gain insights into the experiences of student teachers of Arabic in their professional learning journey in the practicum in the KSA, there is a need to understand the main theories that have informed teacher education. This section presents a concise but critical review of the main theories of professional learning and teachers' knowledge.

3.3.1 Teachers' Knowledge

Teachers' professional knowledge has increasingly been portrayed not only in terms of teachers' thinking and cognition but also in terms of the practical knowledge of teachers. In this regard, teacher practical knowledge is used in reference to the insights and knowledge underlying a teachers' practical actions. This knowledge is not the opposite of theoretical knowledge. Instead, it is possible to have theoretical knowledge becoming part of teachers' practical knowledge, which needs to be taken into account when looking at professional learning (see Section 3.1.1).

Although the notion of teachers' professional knowledge is complex to define (Edelfelt, 1980), it has a fundamental importance in teacher education in deciding provision of pertinent learning experiences where the individuality of teachers and the different contexts in which they work interact (Barge, 2013). It has been suggested that teachers need three types of knowledge to enhance their learning as teachers: (1) pedagogical knowledge, (2) content knowledge, and (3) pedagogical content knowledge. (Hill, Schilling, & Ball, 2004; Weaver, Burgess,

Childress & Slakey, 2016). Shulman (1987, p.8) developed the following domains and categories of teacher knowledge:

- content knowledge

- general pedagogical knowledge, with special reference to those broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter

- curriculum knowledge, with a particular grasp of the materials and programs that serve as 'tools of the trades' for teachers

- pedagogical content knowledge, that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their special form of professional understanding

- knowledge of learners and their characteristics

- knowledge of educational contexts, ranging from the workings of the group or classroom, the governance and financing of school districts, to the character of communities and cultures

- knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds

When talking of the practical knowledge of teachers, there are several categories and domains of teacher's knowledge which together constitute what has come to be referred to simply as pedagogical content knowledge (Weaver, Burgess, Childress & Slakey, 2016). Apart from content knowledge, there is general pedagogical knowledge which refers to the broad strategies and principles of managing and organizing classes. The third category is curriculum knowledge that focuses on the programs and materials used as teachers' 'tools of the trades.' The fourth category is pedagogical content knowledge which refers to the special class of combination of pedagogy and content that is unique to teachers' professional understanding. The fifth category is the knowledge of learners alongside their characteristics. The sixth category is the knowledge of educational contexts which includes the financing and governance of schools, the workings of the classroom or group, and the character of cultures and communities. The seventh category is the knowledge of educational values,

purposes, and ends together with their historical and philosophical grounds (Pearson, 2016).

Even though Shulman's (1987) view is generally acceptable and widely used, it may not be a true representation of all the categories and/or domains of teachers' knowledge. If even if it does, one can expect some differences in knowledge between student teachers and experienced teachers. It is fair to expect that student teachers will have some more limited knowledge compared to experienced teachers because the latter will have amassed significant experience through their practical classroom teaching while the former are usually still reliant on what they are taught in their class. While this does not mean that student teachers only have theoretical knowledge, it suggests that their practical knowledge is more likely to be limited. The one limitation that student teachers have but which experienced teachers lack is that they have to draw their knowledge solely from their knowledge acquired from their colleges, university courses or from their educational history. Therefore, different categories of knowledge may actually apply to different teachers based on their level of experience. If not, the depth of the different categories and domains of knowledge differs between these two types of teachers.

Another way of contextualizing teachers' knowledge has been in terms of practical arguments. In this context, teachers' knowledge is described as the formal elaboration of practical reasoning and entails giving out different reasons to justify arguments or views and linking these reasons to concluding action. Practical reasoning could also be used to describe the inclusive and practical activities of thinking followed by the forming intentions and then taking action (Fenstermacher, 1986; Fenstermacher & Richardson, cited in Pearson, 2016).

The importance of student teachers being able to form arguments needs not to be overemphasized. Apart from the fact that practical arguments somewhat ensure that the learning environment of student teachers is "fed" with relevant theory, elicitation and reconstruction of arguments also help the teachers to be more responsible for whatever actions they take. For teaching to be good, there needs to be practical reasoning (Pendlebury, cited in Pearson, 2016), which implies that teachers need to be at the forefront in generating practical arguments because they are leaders and role models for their students (Korthagen et al., 2006). However, better practical reasoning on the part of teachers may not be

necessarily dependent on improvements in the practical arguments of teachers. Instead, it depends more on situational appreciation which is better generated from stories than formal arguments (Pendlebury, 1995, cited in Pearson, 2016).

Golombek (1998) discussed teachers' content knowledge as viewed by expert teachers and explored teachers' personal practical knowledge based on four main themes: knowledge of self, subject matter knowledge, knowledge of instruction, and context knowledge. He viewed knowledge of self as teachers' identities when they recounted their experiences while knowledge of subject matter refers to knowledge used by teachers when teaching their subject matter in the classrooms. Knowledge of instruction embodied the pedagogical knowledge upon which teachers draw while teaching and dealing with students. Finally, Golombek perceived knowledge of the different contexts affecting the teaching process, such as those related to institutions, and social and political contexts.

Furthermore, Barge (2013) has highlighted four main aspects of teachers' professional knowledge: knowledge of the subject matter, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, and learner knowledge. First, knowledge of subject matter relates to the content s/he teaches to students. This content has to be accurate and profound. Second, knowledge of pedagogy refers to the different teaching and learning strategies that the teacher uses in his/her teaching. These strategies have to be effective to improve students' achievement, understanding and learning as a whole. In addition, curricular knowledge signifies knowledge of the curriculum the teacher uses with its goals, objectives, assessment, etc. Finally, knowledge of learner pinpoints the main characteristics of learners such as their ages, learning styles, and the different contexts affecting their learning.

3.3.2 Professional learning

Different beliefs have emerged about effective professional learning in ITE in response to the lack of substantial understanding about what teachers learn relative to what they ought to learn. Tang, Wong & Cheng (2012) summarises some important features of student teachers' professional learning within the context of ITE. First, in their teaching practicum, student teachers acquire a combination of knowledge that links content, pedagogy, and reflection. Second, student teachers need to adopt an active role to gain professional learning

through the help of other teachers who facilitate their learning and create opportunities for dialogue, discussion, and reflection during the ITE coursework. Third, student teachers' pre-training experiences are believed to positively impact their beliefs about the nature of classrooms and teachers. Abdal-Haqq (1995) also argues that teachers' professional development is only effective to the extent that it:

> *"[1] is ongoing, [2] is school-based and embedded in teacher work, [3] is collaborative, [4] focuses on student learning, [5] is rooted in the knowledge base for teaching, [6] recognizes teachers as professionals and adult learners, [7] provides adequate time, and follow-up support, [7] is accessible and inclusive".*

In reference to the context and the focus of this study, it is argued here that the purpose of ITE is to empower student teachers with the knowledge of pedagogy and teaching skills needed to become, competent, professional teachers.

Moreover, it can be said that teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and prior experience are important elements in their professional development. Supporting this point, Ball (1996) highlights:

> *"What teachers bring to the process of learning to teach affects what they learn. Increasingly, teachers' own personal and professional histories are thought to play an important role in determining what they learn from professional development opportunities" (p.501).*

In addition, other issues closely relate to effective professional development, especially in the context of ITE. As argued by Putnam and Borko (1997), teachers ought to be treated as active learners capable of constructing their understanding. Likewise, they state that teachers need to be treated as professionals and empowered. Also, the authors emphasise the fact that teacher educators need to treat teachers in the same way that they expect the teachers to treat students. Finally, Putnam and Borko suggest that the education of teachers has to be situated in classroom practice.

The above, therefore, tends to suggest that the type of interactions and the relationships between teacher educators and teachers, including pre-service teachers, are of critical importance, especially in the context of the practicum. Hence, these issues relate to two aspects that this study investigates: (1) student teachers' views of their own professional development within the practicum and (2) the impact of significant others on their development as pre-service teachers.

How student teachers make sense of these experiences considering the context and their interactions in the practicum is, therefore, a key focus on this study.

Furthermore, another essential component of being a professional teacher is the notion of professional practice, which has been defined as "a (learning) environment – with, tools and actors – in which a profession is practiced" (Oonk, 2009, p. 20). Considering the context of this study, in the context of ITE, professional practice refers to the teaching practicum where Saudi student teachers of Arabic learn the basics and survival tools needed by future teachers. More specifically, professional practice includes student teachers' personal interpretation of their roles; professional orientation, task orientation, self-efficacy of teachers; and commitment to teaching (Canrinus et al., 2008).

Finally, bearing in mind the conceptual framework of this study and in light of theories of workplace learning and professional learning, it can be said that several factors can inhibit or support the learning of student teachers within their practicum. In this regard, Atwal (2013) further divided these factors into three levels of influence: factors related to the government, the institution and the individual. First, at the government policy and regulations level, schools need to promote collaboration and learning instead of competition to reach performance targets. This would help maximise the informal learning opportunities at the workplace. Second, at the institution level, the school leadership makes conscious and unconscious decisions that can positively or negatively impact the learning culture. Therefore, formal, or informal learning opportunities that promote teacher professional learning need to be supported by the school leaders through the provision of coaching and mentoring, observation of others, collaborative work to take risks and make mistakes. These learning opportunities will enrich prospective teachers' professional learning. The third tier of factors is related to the individual teacher. Student teachers are impacted by a number of individual factors that impact their professional learning. These factors include student teachers' past experiences and dispositions to learning at the teaching practicum. Another individual factor relates to the agency that helps student teachers engage in their work practices. In addition, student teachers' personal attitudes to learning and the tacit professional skills that they gain from their daily experiences and interactions within the teaching practicum are believed to affect their professional learning. These points closely relate to a critical aspect of this

study, that is, the factors that influence Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, as perceived by student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors.

An important issue that relates to ITE is whether teachers have to be trained based on existing teacher education theories or on the context-specific needs and requirements of the teaching environment. When it comes to the issue of teachers' roles, in particular, different models advocate for different approaches to teacher education and by extension, different roles for teachers (Reid, 2011).

3.3.2.1 The teacher as technician

Technicist teacher education focuses on training teachers to become technicians. As technicians, teachers are effectively be prepared as tools or instruments to pass on the knowledge generated by experts without as much as questioning the reliability, validity, and purpose of such knowledge or even taking into consideration the context of the school where teaching is to take place (Reid, 2011). This suggests that according to this view, teachers ought to focus on learnable skills, behaviours and performance. The view of the teacher as technicians can be attributed to technical rationalism whose core assumption is that it is possible to manage people like machines or as though they behaved like machines. Subsequently, the technicist approach to teacher education considers and regards teacher training and education as systematic production processes similar to the assembly line. Because control, efficiency, and quality are important in technical rationality, the education system is usually divided into manageable units with specific tests, procedures, and objectives all to make the system controllable from top to bottom (Vick & Martinez, 2009).

Therefore, trainee teachers are prepared on how best to perform these small parts, making both the trainers and the trained teachers more like widgets that maintain the system (Tezgiden Cakcak, 2017). Put differently; teachers are seen as and trained to be controllable technicians as opposed to people capable of independent decision-making. Subsequently, a teacher's teaching is considered gauged based on how well the teacher uses the available teaching techniques with teachers that use the techniques being deemed to be the better than those who cannot effectively use the techniques available (Wilson & Berne, 1999). The implication is that if learning fails to take place within the classroom, it is mainly due to teachers' failure to use prescribe teaching techniques which are

considered to be the "right" methods of teaching (Reid, 2011). This is as opposed to factors such as the technique used not being suited to the learning environment. In fact, the technicist view assumes that all learners use the same technique of learning irrespective of their socioeconomic background or background knowledge. This is why they are usually subjected to highly standardized curricula and teaching methods (Phelan & Sumsion, 2008).

This model is arguably one of the most questionable in that teachers cannot be expected to act like machines. If this were to be the case, then teachers would cease to have a mind of their own. Unlike machines, teachers are human beings with a mind of their own and therefore capable of making conscious decisions based on the needs of the moment and the situations they find themselves in (Tezgiden Cakcak, 2017). Unlike machines which can be programmed to do things in a repeated manner over long periods of time, humans beings are prone to changing the way they do things and perform tasks based mainly on their perceptions of the benefits that accrue from performing tasks in one way and not the other or using one mythology as opposed to the other (Ball & Forzani, 2011).

The same applies to teachers who tend to think and act rationally. While it is true that teachers have been prepared using this approach for a long time in different places, the results have been catastrophic because outcomes of such teaching ignore important realities. For instance, it is a reality that different learners learn differently. Factors such as the socioeconomic status and background knowledge of the learner influence how well learners can learn (Pearson, 2016). Therefore, expecting that all learners will learn effectively and improve their academic achievement using a standardized teaching approach is, at best misguided. Differentiated instruction is today at the core of learning such that different learners get educated based on their learning needs. Because different learners have different learning needs even if they are of the same age, gender, socioeconomic status, and knowledge background, it follows that differentiated rather than standardized instruction should be the approach used in teaching (Tezgiden Cakcak, 2017).

While it may still be important for objectives, procedures, and tests to be used, these should be individualized and not generalized. Moreover, preparing teachers for the role of maintaining the system is not proper because this is a role that should never be for teachers and their trainers. If the system has to be

maintained, then this role should be assigned to relevant people who are definitely not teachers and trainers. Finally, the model seems to assume that all professional problems can be addressed using scientific facts, procedures, and rules. While scientific research indeed helps in solving many problems affecting society and especially the education system, such research cannot be expected to answer all practical educational problems.

The technicist view seems to fail to consider teachers' existing notions regarding what makes for effective teaching, assuming instead that student teachers have deficiencies in context knowledge. While this may be true for some student teachers, it is not true for all of them. The reality is that many student teachers go to teacher education programmes already having an idea of what makes for effective teaching (Tezgiden Cakcak, 2017).

3.3.2.2 The teacher as a reflective practitioner

The reflective view of teacher education provides that teachers are generators of knowledge who provide solutions to problems in their specific settings. This view emerged largely in opposition to the technicist view and mostly critiqued the perceived shortcomings of the technicist view (Tezgiden Cakcak, 2017). According to the reflective view, teachers should be trained to evaluate every aspect and ideas presented to them through critical reasoning as opposed to unquestionably accepting whatever is presented to them. Moreover, teachers are trained to find different solutions based on the needs and demands of a given situation. This makes teachers responsible for their actions and/or inactions instead of encouraging them to act without thinking about the consequence of the action. By extension, teaching is portrayed not as a routine sequence but rather as a result of the innovativeness of teachers that is driven by meeting context-specific needs (Grossman, Hammerness & McDonald, 2009).

The implication is that teachers are prepared to consciously seek and find the best teaching strategies and methods for different learning situations (Pearson, 2016). By virtue of teachers being free and able to seek innovative solutions to day-to-day problems, the teaching process cases from being a routine sequence of pre-determined tasks and instead becomes a creative intellectual activity that is sensitive to the context. Three characteristics define and set apart reflective teachers from the rest (Pearson, 2016). First, they are open-minded, meaning that they tolerate different ideas instead of considering such ideas as posing a

threat to them. Second, they are responsible, meaning that are ready to take ownership of the consequences of the actions they take. Third, they are wholehearted, meaning that they are usually devoted to improving their situations to help their students learn more effectively (Tezgiden Cakcak, 2017).

Even though it is true that the reflective view regarding teacher education may be a major improvement on the technicist view, it has its shortcomings. Specifically, it has not been as widely practised. Instead, it seems to be a mere slogan that is used without any accompanying practical results. This may, in part, explain why it has become harder to understand the true meaning of reflective teaching. Finally, the reflective view seems to overlook or underestimate the value of classical techniques employed in the teaching of skills such as imitating and modelling.

3.3.2.3 The teacher as a transformative agent

The critical view regarding teacher education provides that teachers are transformative intellectuals who play a proactive role in the preparation of curricula instead of merely implementing the curricular programs (Tezgiden Cakcak, 2017). Moreover, teachers are viewed as being active participants in the process of ensuring that curricular programmes are designed in ways that best enhance the learning of different learners. In this regard, the curricular programmes are differentiated instead of being standardized (Foucault, as cited in Graham, 2011). Rather than relying on preconceived methodologies and subject matters in teacher preparation, this view emphasizes the need for student teachers to discover for themselves what they think is the best methodology to use in different contexts (Tezgiden Cakcak, 2017).

It is indeed true that teachers ought to be trained and prepared to become transformative agents. This is because teachers encounter different problems in different contexts and need to respond to these challenges differently based on the context and needs of each learning situation (Pearson, 2016). It is only when teachers have been trained to take transformative action in such situations that they can truly rise and meet the challenges when they arise. However, it is also important to add that it is hard to clearly distinguish the critical view from the reflective view because the two have certain similar provisions.

Sometimes, the use of the term "transformative intellectual" in the critical view tends to cause confusion in terms of meaning (Tezgiden Cakcak, 2017).

Sometimes, the notion of the teacher as a transformative agent seems to suggest that teachers are change agents who do not use old or prior beliefs in their teaching. As was noted before, teachers ought to be able to embrace both traditional and emerging beliefs and principles if they are to effectively help students. When teachers are portrayed as being transformative, there is always the risk of mistaking them for being anti-establishment or even as not being team players (Tezgiden Cakcak, 2017).

While having the autonomy to change certain issues and take independent action is important, it is argued here that teachers also need to be trained to embrace certain aspects that they do not necessarily agree with instead of seeking to change everything to fit their worldviews. Hence, student teachers are expected to acquire skills and competencies that are essential for teacher professionalism.

The above conceptions of professional learning, as well as the conceptual framework of this study, can be used to gain a deeper insight into the actual professional practice of teachers and, more importantly, the professional development of student teachers at their practicum.

3.3.2.4 Professional *learning* in the practicum

It has been argued that teachers' collaboration and reflection can have a positive impact on their professional development and learning (e.g. Hargreaves 1992; Hodkinson & Hodkinson 2005). In addition to what has been highlighted earlier (see Section 3.2), Lave & Wenger (1991) have contributed to the development of professional learning theories from the perspective of a situated theory of learning as a social activity. Indeed, situated learning is critical as it can help address the problems arising from traditional learning theories based on a view of the learner as a vessel to be filled up with knowledge (Fuller et al. 2005). This theoretical shift, therefore, has put a greater emphasis on professional *learning* rather than on professional *training*. This is because it is argued here, training is characterised by formal opportunities where student teachers learn new skills. However, the emphasis on *learning* suggests that learning opportunities that may not necessarily be formal in terms of structure.

Nonetheless, it is fair to assume that these learning opportunities, at the workplace, or at the practicum in the case of student teachers, are influenced by several contextual factors. That is why it is essential to look at the problem of ITE in Saudi Arabia in general and the practicum of student teachers in particular from

a situated learning perspective. Indeed, it is assumed here that the social and professional context is important to understand the role of the practicum for student teachers learning to be teachers. The process of learning to be a teacher is a sociocultural activity that necessarily involves situated learning and the practicum is, therefore, a crucial element in this regard.

Political decisions can have an impact on the professional learning at the workplace (Evans et al. 2006; Hodkinson & Hodkinson 200) and with respect to teacher learning, the notions of competition and accountability are examples of such impact (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005). Indeed, these two conceptions clearly lack the social aspect that situated learning calls for as they assume that teachers have weaknesses in their knowledge and skills which can be tackled through formal training. This idea, hence, tends to align with the above-mentioned conception inspired by the technical rationalist model (see Section 3.2.1). This also resonates with the target-driven approach whereby teachers' professional development is based on a statutory curriculum and not on teachers' actual needs (Evans et al., 2006).

Therefore, the political, institutional, and organisational factors that affect student teachers' professional learning at the workplace suggest that student teachers' professional learning during their practicum cannot be maximised if practicum schools do not involve student teachers in collaborative and reflective practice activities. On the contrary, a practicum experience that does not promote collaboration and reflection may indirectly promote ineffective teachers' learning and a culture that marginalises the role of collaboration. Ultimately, this may significantly impact on student teachers' experiences of their professional practice and the perceptions of their professional development (Marsick, 2009).

Furthermore, on a more practical level, the school practices, culture and systems can also have a critical impact on developing student teachers' learning during their practicum. In this regard, the notion of belonging to a "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is helpful to understand how student teachers can develop a sense of identity as they engage in learning themselves during the practicum while contributing to the learning of their students. Likewise, a collaborative practicum can facilitate professional learning opportunities. This, therefore, also suggests the importance of professional and collegial relationships as they can positively influence learning opportunities within student

teachers' working communities. More specifically, the social community of the student teacher is viewed here as critical due to its role in enhancing their professional learning during the practicum. Among that community of significant others, as seen later in the thesis (see section 3.5), headteachers are key in maintaining that positive, supportive and collaborative community (Furlong & Salisbury 2005). This is because they can impact on the school culture and promote collaboration.

Of course, student teachers themselves are part of this context and do play a preponderant role in their professional learning during the practicum. For instance, their experiences and attitudes to learning can influence their own learning (Burns & Haydn 2002; Pedder et al. 2005). Likewise, as seen below, their beliefs, skills, attitudes to work, and competencies can impact on their learning during the practicum (Fuller et al., 2006). Other personal factors may also include their social and cultural backgrounds (see section 2.6).

The above therefore suggests that the interplay between all the above factors can shape student teachers' learning opportunities during their practicum. In addition, it seems essential to look at the practicum from a situated learning perspective as this issue cannot be understood in isolation from student teachers' immediate and wider context. This, also, helps understand how collaboration and the concept of the community of practice and can promote the experiences of student teachers within their practicum. The next section discusses certain essential competencies required of student teachers and how they can be assessed and evaluated with particular respect to Saudi student teachers of Arabic.

3.3.3 Student Teachers' Competencies

The notion of teachers' competencies refers to the "knowledge, skills, attitudes and values expected of prospective teachers […] specified in advance as a set of learning objectives" (Fraser, 2001, p.52). According to Ismail et al. (2009, pp.166-167) teachers' competencies have two major factors, namely a) the "behavioural factors" which refer to the behavioural objectives connected with them and b) "the performance factors", which involve the actual skills and experience that student teachers must master in order to carry out their duties and professional life successfully. Hence, this suggests that the notion of

teachers' competencies mainly relates to the knowledge, skills and creative and productive capacities that must be acquired by teachers.

With this in mind, several research studies have stressed the inability of teacher education programmes to prepare student teachers adequately for the teaching process (Wild, 1995; Zgaga, 2006; Pantić & Wubbels, 2010). This lack of preparation may be due in part to some difficulty in identifying and classifying the competencies which expert and well-trained teachers have, and also some neglect of the important aspect of dealing with the challenges of class teaching in teacher education. In this regard, Rajović & Radulović state:

> *"the missing element of teacher education in the region is teachers' competencies of how to identify and deal with problems in a concrete setting – a combination of cognitive and practical knowledge, skills, experiences and strategies, and also emotions, values, motivation and attitudes, referred to as competencies" (2007, p. 419).*

The identification of teachers' competencies is not the only critical issue here. Indeed, the implementation of teachers' competencies is also a complex process because teacher educators often focus exclusively on developing the content of any teacher education programme and expect the student teachers to develop the desired competencies and attributes automatically (Kimaryo, 2011).

At this stage, it is important to explore in more detail the competencies that student teachers should acquire in order to be successful Arabic teachers in the future. In this regard, several studies have highlighted the lack of specific competencies in the teaching practicum in the Saudi context (e.g. Al-Babtain, 1995). Also, other authors (e.g. Al-Dosari & Al-Thinian, 2012) have highlighted that Saudi student teachers need to be able to better differentiate the instruction they deliver and receive more training in specific teaching skills in the teaching practicum. Moreover, other studies have focused on the use of instructional technology and the internet in teaching (e.g. Al-Hassan, 2009, Al-Balwi, 2010) while other research studies have detailed the needed competencies for teaching Arabic during the teaching practicum (e.g. Abdul Rahim, 2003; Khalid, 2004; Alkahtani, 2015).

More specifically, two studies have explored Saudi student teachers' lack of the required competencies in the teaching practicum. Firstly, Al-Babtain (1995) reported in his study conducted at the Faculty of Education at King Saud University that student teachers significantly lacked the fundamental five required

educational competencies to further their academic and professional growth. These were comprised of: a mastery of teaching methods; classroom management; human relationships, evaluation of the outcomes of classroom teaching, and lesson planning. Secondly, Al-Dosari & Al-Thinian (2012) discuss two issues concerning the teaching practicum of student teachers in the KSA: (a) student teachers need to learn how to deal with individual differences at all the educational stages from primary school to secondary school, and (b) student teachers need to be provided with more training in terms of the delivery of the lessons.

In addition, Al-Hassan (2009) investigated the level of competencies and skills in using internet communication technology (ICT) amongst student teachers during their teaching practicum in the classroom. The results showed that the latter had some basic skills in using a computer, such as Microsoft word processing. However, they lacked other basic skills such as renaming folders, setting up a table, saving files, using pictures and highlighting words. Consequently, Al-Hassan proposed that student teachers should be provided with effective professional ICT training in order to enable student teachers to integrate ICT into their teaching at school, which could improve the quality of their teaching.

In addition to the central role that the internet has to play in teaching and learning, other studies conducted in the KSA have highlighted the importance of different media and other educational resources (Lal, 1999; Al-Balwi, 2010). For example, Lal (1999) investigated 120 student teachers and confirmed the importance of the provision of educational resources, laboratories and all the required tools and equipment. Lal recommended providing a specific training programme for student teachers to assist them in designing and producing educational equipment.

In a further study, Al-Balwi (2010) investigated 200 student teachers from various specialisms across the university, and his findings show that student teachers are interested in using the internet because it is useful for acquiring information, making it easy to communicate with others. The importance of such educational aids seem to be unquestionable from the students' points of view, but it is also important to investigate the views of educational experts about such educational resources to confirm the importance of mastering the skills to use the latter as essential teaching competencies and components for an effective teaching practicum.

Consequently, a general lack of research regarding student teachers' competency in specific areas has been noted, despite the previously discussed three studies. Moreover, there seems to be a scant number of research studies in this area, highlighting the need for further investigation to identify the required teaching competencies from the perspective of student teachers themselves and as well as that of educational experts.

Moreover, there are also questions as to the research methodology employed when investigating the teaching practicum and the competencies required of student teachers. For instance, Alkahtani (2015) explored Saudi teachers of Arabic's knowledge and skills in teaching reading to primary students (i.e. planning skills, presentation skills and evaluation skills). Using three questionnaires, content analysis checklist, and classroom observations, the study collected data from 60 Saudi Arabic language teachers, 30 Arabic language supervisors and 30 university supervisors. The findings revealed that Arabic teachers' planning skills in terms of teaching reading were fair; the presentation of Arabic reading was good and that the evaluation skills in reading were poor. However, Alkahtani's study neglected important contextual factors such as the location (the classroom) and the institution (the school) which can have a considerable impact on student teachers' acquisition of knowledge and skills in the teaching practicum.

Therefore, it is essential to understand the required competencies needed to improve the calibre of student teachers in the Saudi context so that these may be acquired and applied adequately during the teaching practicum (Yahya et al., 2017). Hence, in line with the above discussion, the decision was made to include in the current research study the views and opinions of student teachers about current knowledge, skills, attitudes and values expected of expert teachers and the validity of the assessment of student teachers during their teaching practicum, as well as their perceptions of their experience of the teaching practicum overall. Table 3.4 below briefly highlights the methods used in some previous studies in the Saudi context to show that these studies are mostly quantitative, unlike the current study, which uses a mixed-methods research design.

Table 3.1 methods used in the previously mentioned studies

Studies	Methods
Al-Babtain, 1995	This is a quantitative study that used a questionnaire in Arabic
Al-Dosari & Al-Thinian, 2012	This is a quantitative study that used a questionnaire in Arabic
Al-Hassan, 2009,	This is a quasi-experimental study
Al-Balwi, 2010	This is a quantitative study that used a questionnaire in Arabic.
Alkahtani, 2015	This is a mixed-methods study that used questionnaires and classroom observations
Yahya et al., 2017	This is a review of the literature

3.3.3.1 Student Teachers' and Educational Experts' Views of Teachers' Competencies

There has been a growing debate about the value of student teachers' views and the views of the educational experts in terms of the content of expert teacher competencies in the teaching practicum in general. While it can be difficult to specify these competencies accurately, certain standards can be set in order to identify the commonly accepted competencies among professional educational experts about quality teaching (Broad and Evans, 2006).

Nonetheless, the professional standards advocated by educational experts can be said to undermine the effectiveness of student teachers' teaching practicum, as Mulcahy (2012, p.121) argues:

> *thinking performativity without social and individual views will cause a gap between knowledge and practice, the deterioration of teacher professional learning, and the neglect of important factors which promote teacher quality".*

In addition, imposing standards recommended by educational experts may overlook student teachers' individual views, needs, and interests.

From another perspective, student teachers' views concerning the content of the quality teacher competencies and the teaching practicum, in general, have been argued to be essential to a high-quality teaching practicum. This is because student teachers can reflect on their theoretical and practical experiences of the teaching practicum through voicing their views, comments and concerns. Student

teachers' views of the students and 'real' class teaching are determining in terms of the importance of learning the practice through an apprenticeship model 'on the job'.

Additionally, they may reveal teachers' needs, concerns and problems which may be a valuable source of knowledge ITE programme designers. Furthermore, student teachers may gain more knowledge, skills and experiences through mutual interactions amongst participants of communities of learning practice. Accordingly, the views of student teachers concerning their teaching practicum have become increasingly valued and appreciated.

In their research, Busher et al. (2015) have critically discussed the importance of teachers' views of their practicum: a) at the Turkish language department at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey; b) at the Faculty of Education at Gazi University in Ankara, and c) at the English School of Education at the University of Leicester in the UK. Four hundred and eighty teachers in these three universities in Turkey and England between 2010 and 2011 expressed their views through a questionnaire about the quality of their university's teacher preparation programme and about the factors which had a positive impact on the teaching practicum in each case and in what way each programme helped to develop them professionally as teachers. It was found that participants reported that the practicum succeeded in promoting student teachers' practical teaching skills and classroom management; meeting students' varied learning needs; in identifying a range of student standpoints and in promoting their overall understanding of what it means to be high calibre, expert teacher. Moreover, the researchers stressed the importance of paying attention to student teachers' voices to develop the practicum as a central characteristic and element of teacher professional development.

Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to indicate a number of shortcomings in Busher et al. 's research study. Firstly, it just focused on two universities in Turkey and one from England, which could affect the objectivity and the generalisability of the results, due to limited contextual and cultural factors. Additionally, the sample was not large enough or homogenous enough to be representative of the whole sample in each university. Choosing more than one university did not give the researchers enough chance to investigate more deeply student teachers, their significant others, nor any other contextual factors that may have an impact on

student teachers' teaching practicum. Finally, the only method of data collection used was a questionnaire which deprived the research study of rich, in-depth data that could have been obtained through using additional qualitative data collection tools such as interviews.

Consequently, in the current study, it was thought essential to investigate student teachers' views concerning their teaching practicum through using not only questionnaires but also semi-structured interviews. In addition to this, the various contextual factors were also taken into account to build a more comprehensive picture of student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum.

Having highlighted the importance of competencies ITE, the question of assessment of student teachers' competencies is a critical element in teacher education, especially during their teaching practicum.

3.3.3.2 Assessment of Student Teachers' Competencies

Given the importance of these competencies, some assessment practices and methods have been suggested to evaluate the development of student teachers in real teaching settings, which provide their university supervisors and cooperating teachers the opportunity to monitor the professional development of student teachers and guide them through this professional experience. For instance, student teachers can be assessed according to the rating of professional university supervisors and cooperating teachers against various rubric and criteria relating to lesson planning, instruction, thinking, and academic language (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013). These professional and personal standards are generally assessed by university supervisors and cooperating teachers by focusing on student teachers' personal characteristics as a measure of their teachers' competencies (Eisenberg et al., 1996).

Assessing student teachers' skills during the teaching practicum is a strong subject of debate under development (Smith, 2010) and research studies in this domain remain limited. In addition, the influence of assessment on the duties of the student teachers can be regarded as problematic, and there often seems to be a mismatch between the course content and assessment procedures (Brooker et al., 1998; Seferoğlu, 2006). Furthermore, there seems to some dissatisfaction with current professional assessment procedures (e.g. Mattsson et al., 2011).

Indeed, there appears to be little consensus regarding the most suitable way of conducting the assessment procedures nor as to the basic elements required for its construction. For example, Tillema et al., (2011) note that Dutch and Norwegian student teachers and supervisors have different views about the main components and the most appropriate way of conducting student teacher assessment in the teaching practicum. A further example is provided by Canadian student teacher candidates who have expressed concerns about the fact that the assessment of their performance in the teaching practicum is neither objective nor realistic in terms of lesson preparation and teaching times for example (Parker & Volante, 2009). Likewise, Chireshe & Chireshe (2010) have raised concerns about the subjective nature of assessment because of the lack of precise assessment criteria to evaluate the performance of Zimbabwean student teachers in their teaching practicum.

Moreover, Mattsson et al. (2011) point to the impossibility of connecting traditional assessment procedures with student teachers' expected learning outcomes which these authors regard as a major problem in student teachers' assessment in the teaching practicum. In the same vein, Vietnamese student teachers added that their cooperating teachers' feedback was unclear, too theoretical and perplexing (Canh, 2014). Assessment instruments such as observation, written work, peer-teaching, cooperative teaching, and university supervision were often seen to cause much stress to the student teachers (Coşkun, 2013; Merç, 2011).

Moreover, Merç (2015) explored this issue further in a study focusing on the satisfaction of student teachers about the assessment of their performance in their teaching practicum. One hundred seventeen participants responded to a questionnaire about assessment procedures in two practicum courses at Anadolu University, and 12 of them were interviewed to support the quantitative findings. The findings showed that the majority of the participating student teachers expressed their satisfaction with their grades who participated in the teaching practicum and other procedures such as the assessment by university supervisors of their planning, preparation and general organisation. On the other hand, however, most of the student teachers were found to be dissatisfied with their assessment by cooperating teachers, carried out through written observations and reflection reports. In addition, student teachers stated that their assessment by peer teachers was the least effective factor of all. The researcher

suggested several modifications of the assessment procedures and made recommendations to university supervisors, cooperating teachers, student teachers, and all other parties involved in the teaching practicum.

Furthermore, Merç (2015) points to the importance of organisation and preparation for teaching as necessary criteria for high-quality practice. Significantly, Merç adds that cooperating teachers need better professional qualifications to be reliable in assessing student teachers' performance. Likewise, university supervisors should guide student teachers throughout the teaching practicum duration and specify clear assessment standards (Merç, 2015; Al-Shamekh, 2003; Bakhsh, 2000). In this regard, Merç asserts that although peer teachers can be considered as reliable sources of feedback, they are not always taken into consideration in the assessment process. This finding is echoed by Daniel et al. (2013), who emphasised the valuable experiences of teaching practicum fellows in teaching and critical reflection. Merç (2015) also notes the role of the observation as a useful assessment tool, unlike written reports that are often not that effective in providing informative assessment evidence. Finally, the study indicates the importance of regular attendance and the use of portfolios as essential in the assessment process of student teachers.

Despite the insight gained from these results, there are a number of issues regarding Merç's study. Firstly, the study findings could be regarded as neither generalisable nor transferable to another context, as the research considered the assessment of only two practicum courses. Secondly, this study focuses on practicum assessment from the student teachers' viewpoints alone, without considering the views of significant others or taking into consideration the influence of any further contextual factors which may have influenced the teaching practicum in this case. Thirdly, the sample of the study was not large enough to be representative of the complete two practicum courses. Fourthly, the methods of data collection could have been enhanced by the use of focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the student teachers' satisfaction in certain areas. Finally, the power relationship between the student teachers and the university professors may have affected the former's views of their assessment.

Nonetheless, other researchers have proposed an analysis of the assessment framework for student teachers in the teaching practicum. In Hong Kong, for

example, Tang et al. (2006) propose an analysis of the assessment framework following a research study focusing on the following points and requirements:

- highlighting the importance of determining standards of the assessment framework

- sharing a clear explanation of these standards to promote student teachers' professional learning

- creating assessment tasks which support professional learning

- creating circumstances which assist the use of standards-referenced assessment to support professional learning

Moreover, in the European context, Newby's (2012) research study proposes an analysis of the assessment framework and concludes that student teachers need to be encouraged to be autonomous learners with tools of self-assessment and to be professional practitioners with clear teacher competencies. Newby also specifies the importance of the aims of the theoretical and practical parts of the teaching practicum and the significant role of the teaching practice.

Likewise, in the Netherlands, research by Tigelaar & van Tartwijk (2010) suggests conducting an analysis of the assessment framework by designing assessment tasks and standards with significant validity and reliability. In the US context, Peterman (2005), proposes an analysis of the assessment framework, which includes aims and standards which are responsive to the different challenges and requirements of the teaching context. Peterman also emphasises the fact that the assessment system should include different student teachers' performance standards, including some of their work over the training duration in different employment contexts. In addition, Peterman further maintains that providing an appropriate capacity structure for conducting the assessment tasks is essential. Finally, based on the findings of his study, Peterman argues for the promotion of a socioculturally-based assessment system in which student teachers work with others in their teaching community by sharing their experiences, knowledge and skills in reflective dialogue about teaching, learning, and learning to teach.

In the Australian context, Al-Malki & Weir (2014) recommend analysis of the assessment framework using standards to develop student teachers' classroom performance and promote social and professional relationships in and outside schools, thereby giving student teachers more confidence about their competency as teachers. Equally, they stress the importance of encouraging

student teachers to be reflective practitioners and express their opinions in the assessment process. Finally, their study highlights the positive role of using portfolios and class observations as reliable assessment tools that allow student teachers to demonstrate their development and improve their critical reflective thinking skills.

In addition, the above competencies seem to two essential domains of the student teachers' development: (a) the psychological domain, including the commitment to teaching and sense of efficacy, and (b) the professional domain, that is, professional learning and practical experiences during the practicum. In this respect, the views of student teachers themselves and those of significant others could be considered to constitute an informative lens through which to view this phenomenon in greater depth and detail.

3.3.3.3 Psychological competencies

A number of studies have stressed the fact that the teacher is a significant player underpinning students' success in the classroom (Bricker, 2000; Silverman, 2007; Pijl & Frissen as cited in Gedzune, 2015). It can be argued that an individual's psychological operation is the result of a person's active and mutual interaction, learning experiences, and the environment (Moses, 2017). Therefore, two important psychological traits seem to be particularly significant for student teachers in the teaching practicum, namely, 'self-efficacy' and 'commitment'. Self-efficacy appears to be an important factor contributing to how student teachers view themselves (Arnold et al., 2011). Commitment, too, is believed to be an important psychological trait for student teachers, as Somech and Bogler assert:

> *"teacher commitment to the teaching profession involves an affective attachment to the profession that [is] associated with personal identification and satisfaction in working as a teacher" (2002, p. 556)*

3.3.3.3.1 Teacher commitment

Teacher commitment to work can be described as a key psychological link between the teachers and their work as a teacher; it is a dedication to the teaching process, which affects teaching, communication with students, colleagues, and others in the school (Day, 2004). Moreover, teachers' commitment to teaching indicates their psychological connection to their work as teachers (Van Huizen, 2000) and can be regarded as an essential element influencing job performance and the quality of education in general (Tsui & Cheng, 1999). This is because

committed teachers are generally seen as positive workers in the teaching field. In the same vein, Tabuso (2007) claims that committed teachers work confidently in their teaching, which is why teachers' commitment is considered as an important aspect of a teacher's quality performance and as an indication of his or her professionalisation.

Consequently, this attribute can have a meaningful impact on school success and, in turn, on the effectiveness of educational systems (Huberman 1993) and students' learning outcomes (Ackerman et al., 2006). By highlighting the importance of teacher commitment, Park explains further:

> *"First, the commitment was an internal force coming from within teachers themselves who had needs for greater responsibility, variety, and challenges in their work as their level of initial education had grown. Second, external forces coming from the educational reform movements seeking higher standards and greater accountability required teachers' sustained efforts and their commitment to their students, their schools and their work as teachers" (2005, p.461–462).*

It can be argued that committed teachers have strong psychological bonds with their school, their students, and their teaching, which is a fundamental element in the success of the teaching process.

Furthermore, as discussed earlier, teaching practicum experience offers student teachers the chance to apply the theoretical aspects of their studies and improve their teaching skills with the support of more experienced educational experts (Haigh & Ward, 2003). Unfortunately, it could be argued that the opportunities offered by teaching practicum are not always necessarily completely effective.

It is clear that student teachers face a number of challenges that are implicit to the training context (Tang & Chow 2006). Other direct challenges include:

> *"classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing students' works, relationships with [students'] parents, the organisation of classwork, insufficient and/or inadequate teaching materials and supplies, and dealing with problems of individual students" (Veenman, 1984, p. 143).*

In addition to these tasks and issues, student teachers need to deal with miscommunication problems, power disparities or the negative impact of the traditional model of supervision involving cooperating teachers and university professors (Wilson, 2006). Consequently, the teaching practicum can be a source

of considerable concern for student teachers and may adversely affect their commitment.

Despite this, it can be observed that, overall, little research has been conducted into the influence of the teaching practicum on student teachers' commitment (SarÕçobana, 2010). Accordingly, it seems essential to empirically investigate the impact of the teaching practicum on student teachers' commitment by allowing them to directly voice their experiences and views regarding their teaching practicum. The intentional aim of such enquiry is to highlight the importance of the impact of teaching commitment on the quality of teachers' practice, their job performance and the overall quality of the education provided.

3.3.3.3.2 Self-Efficacy

The notion of 'self-efficacy' refers to a person's "belief... in [their] capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p.3). Equally, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2007) refer to teacher' self-efficacy as embodying teachers' judgement of their capability to successfully reach the desired outcomes for students, motivating students towards attaining their goals, even when students are challenging. Other writers too suggest that students' learning outcomes have a strong connection with teachers' self-efficacy (e.g. Guo et al., 2010; Shoulders & Krei, 2015).

Furthermore, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2007) highlight the notion of teacher efficacy as encompassing "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organise and execute courses of action required to accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context". This concept of self-efficacy as the teacher's belief in being able to carry out the teaching well and effectively is also echoed by Moulding et al. (2014).

As far as student teachers are concerned, the notion of self-efficacy is essential for them to develop into professional and successful teachers. In this respect, the teaching practicum seems to represent an essential aspect of their teacher training. For example, as highlighted by Atay (2007), an improved sense of self-efficacy during the teaching practicum allows student teachers to maintain high levels of motivation throughout the early years of their teaching career. Moreover, it has been found that teachers' self-efficacy can promote student teachers' commitment to teaching and enhance their teaching skills (Gedzune, 2015).

This sense of self-efficacy can benefit the teaching and learning environment considerably. For example, Pan (2014, p.17) notes several characteristics of teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy, arguing that:

> *"Teachers with high self-efficacy […] design interesting and challenging programs to motivate students, create a better learning atmosphere for students' learning process, set different teaching objectives and adjust the difficulty level of the curriculum for students".*

In addition to this, teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy are more able to control the class in a professional manner (Woolfolk et al., 1990); can often attain higher learning aims (Wolters and Daugherty, 2007) and can develop students' individuality (Woolfolk et al., 1990). Likewise, according to Woolfolk-Hoy, "teachers with a strong sense of efficacy are more enthusiastic, more open to new ideas, and more willing to use complex strategies" (as cited in Moulding et al., 2014, p. 61).

However, as the notion of 'self-efficacy' is relatively abstract, it is interesting to consider an empirical approach. Hunter's (2016) empirical study identified factors affecting the development of Canadian student teachers' self-efficacy during their teaching practicum in inclusive settings. The study employed questionnaires as a data collection tool, and the sample was composed of participants involved in teacher education programmes at eleven Canadian higher education institutions. Content analysis was used for data analysis, and several themes emerged from the responses which support student teachers' feelings of efficacy. Behaviour administration was found to be an effective factor in teachers' sense of self-efficacy whilst academic achievements, other adults within the school, relationships, diagnoses, individual education plans and resources were found to be factors impacting on the effectiveness of student teachers' practicum.

Nonetheless, Hunter's (2016) study could be considered to have several methodological flaws. Firstly, only one data collection tool was used (a questionnaire) although the notion of self-efficacy is often better investigated using qualitative data collection tools such as interviews or focus groups. Indeed, such tools can help gain more in-depth and comprehensive data as well as a greater understanding of this issue through the lens of teachers' views, for example. Furthermore, the data collected by Hunter also only covered perceptions, attitudes and beliefs that might alter over time. Therefore, the

duration and content of the courses were analysed but were shown to be influential in the development of teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Also, it is likely that his results might be subject to bias as many of the participants of the research disagreed in principle with the concept of 'inclusive schooling'. Another limitation of this study is that the data were collected among Canadian student teachers, which constitutes a problem in terms of the generalisability of the results and the wider implications for interpretation in different contexts. Furthermore, no demographic data were collected nor information concerning the attitudes; the beliefs, the personal or professional experiences; which may have influenced the views of the sample participants.

Furthermore, although several research studies have been conducted about the academic qualifications of teachers about improving their sense of self-efficacy, few studies have focused on the impact of student teachers' teaching practicum on their sense of self-efficacy (Specht et al., 2015).

Therefore, through this study, it was deemed important to investigate the influence of the teaching practicum on student teachers' sense of self-efficacy, through the lens of student teachers and significant others. It addresses some of the aims of the study, namely, the development of student teachers, their classroom performance and student learning outcomes as well as offering student teachers the opportunity to develop their sense of self-efficacy. In this regard, because the teaching practicum comprises several challenges to student teachers (Sharma et al., 2008), it is important to suggest strategies to help them cope with these challenges in a way that can have a substantial positive influence on their sense of self-efficacy and beliefs.

3.3.3.4 Professional competencies

This study focuses on the 'professional domain' of student teachers in the teaching practicum, that is, the place and application of their pedagogical content knowledge and practical experiences in the practicum. However, it is important to note here that the actual nature of practicum content remains a complex issue (Mokoen, 2017), mainly because teacher education content presenting the professional knowledge does not necessarily produce qualified student teachers prepared for real classroom teaching (Loughran et al., 2001).

Several issues have been raised with regards to teacher education content over recent years. For example, for Cochran-Smith (2004), three problems are

inherent to the content of the teaching practicum. Firstly, teacher education, he argues, has a training problem in terms of the teaching of competencies and skills needed by student teachers. Secondly, teacher education has a content problem in terms of teachers' knowledge and practical pedagogy. In addition, teacher education has recently faced a policy problem whereby students' outcomes have become the main target for teachers. There is a need to consider student outcomes in the class; the theoretical and the practical content of student teachers' teaching practicum, as well as identifying the needed competencies of the student teachers and subsequently working at modifying them through the teaching practicum training.

The content of the teaching practicum, which relates to student teachers' practical experiences, has also been the subject of intense debate in the field of teacher education. Research studies focusing on student teachers' practicum content have tended to focus more on student teachers and associate teachers' attitudes than upon *"what prospective teachers learn"* (Wilson et al., 2002, p.197). Later studies on practicum content have clarified issues regarding student teachers' learning during their practicum. This includes not only the practical classroom experience of student teachers but also, the social, cultural and political worries that influence both the personal and the professional domains of student teachers during their teaching practicum. Additionally, it has been claimed that teaching practicum cannot achieve its target of producing highly- qualified teachers without socialising student teachers in the different contexts in school and outside the classroom boundaries (Loughran et al., 2001).

Accordingly, studies which have focused on initial teacher education have stressed the following: professional knowledge together with practical experiences (Chiang, 2003); student teachers' former learning experiences (Vélez-Rendón, 2006); student teachers' understanding of their subject (Nelson & Harper, 2006); early teaching practice and the role of supervisors (Street, 2004) and different aspirations in wanting to teach (Kyriacou & Kobori, 1998).

Furthermore, learning how to teach can be regarded as a difficult process involving not only theoretical knowledge and practical experience, but also social interactions within a school context (e. g. Liou, 2001; Farrell, 2003; Kelly, 2006 Vélez-Rendón, 2006). However, as Fairbanks et al. (2000, p 111) argue; learning to teach, like teaching itself, is far from being either uncomplicated or clear-cut.

Consequently, although many research studies have been conducted on the student teachers' teaching practicum, few have investigated the impact of student teachers' practicum on professional knowledge and practical experiences in the classroom and school contexts, (Hudson et al., 2008).

As discussed above, learning to teach in the context of ITE is a key issue. It is now essential to investigate the professional knowledge and practical experience of student teachers as they fulfil their duties and responsibilities as real teachers inside the class during the teaching practicum.

3.4 The Teaching Practicum

The teaching practicum is a key focus of ITE that this study investigates. As explained earlier, as ITE has been shaped by several theoretical perspectives, it is fair to conclude that it is impacted by several socio-cultural and professional contextual factors. An important focus of the study is that the social and professional context are critical in understanding the role of the practicum for student teachers who are learning to be professional teachers. The process of learning to become a teacher is viewed as a sociocultural activity that involves situated learning where the practicum plays a preponderant role.

Hence following the previous theoretical premises about the nature of teacher's professional learning, it seems important to delve into the key elements of the teaching practicum. Therefore, this section first briefly defines the student teachers' teaching practicum in general and with particular respect to the Saudi context in addition to its purposes and significance. This section also sheds some light on other important aspects of the practicum, such as its timing and duration. Following this, the thesis examines how student teachers can be evaluated during the practicum in addition to addressing some of the problems and challenges of the teaching practicum.

3.4.1 Definition

The term *teaching practicum* generally refers to the practice component of teachers' professional preparation in pre-service teacher education programmes (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Wilson, 2006), also known as 'teaching practice'. The practicum refers specifically to the teacher placement course, which is part of a programme for initial teacher preparation (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2010). In this respect, Marais & Meier (2004, p.221) also note that the teaching practicum

> *"represents the range of experiences to which student teachers are exposed when they work in classrooms and schools". In addition, Kiggundu & Nayimuli (2009, p.347) define the teaching practicum as "a form of work-integrated learning that is described as a period when students are working in the relevant industry to receive specific in-service training to apply theory in practice".*

More specifically, in the Saudi context, as this is the focus of the study, the teaching practicum entails student teachers conducting classroom lessons and carrying out the duties of regular teachers at school. It is expected that student teachers apply their knowledge base and the content of the theoretical courses acquired at university. In doing so, Saudi student teachers observe the cooperating teachers and follow their university supervisors' instructions for carrying out subsequent practical activities in the classroom. Afterwards, student teachers assume full responsibility (as teachers do in 'real' everyday classrooms) for aspects such as lesson-planning; using proper teaching methods and strategies; controlling and managing classrooms and applying different assessment techniques. Frequent assessment and observation of student teachers' classroom performance take place involving the assigned cooperating teachers and university supervisors. Finally, a comprehensive summative assessment is conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of student teachers in real-life classroom settings.

3.4.2 Purposes of Teaching Practicum

It seems that little attention has been paid to investigating the different purposes of the teaching practicum. Indeed, the rationale behind the teaching practicum seems to have not been thoroughly investigated in the literature. Therefore, it was thought important to investigate the rationale for implementing student teachers' teaching practicum from the views of student teachers themselves and the

relevant significant others. It is also worth bearing in mind here that the teaching practicum can differ widely, depending largely on different teacher education models, which reflect local requirements of the context and culture of practices (Stephens et al., 2004; Uljens, 2002). The table below offers a summary of the main purposes of the teaching practicum. It is important to note that there are (mixed) situations where the purposes of the teaching practicum may be multiple in one teaching practicum.

Table 3.2 Purposes of the Teaching Practicum

Studies	Purposes
1. (Price, 1987).	• To link theory with practice through regular structured and supervised opportunities • To apply and assess knowledge, skills and attitudes.
2. Menter (1989)	• To facilitate the evolution of roles from that of the student to that of the professional teacher.
3. Daresh (1990)	• To offer a workshop to generate more commitment to teaching.
4. Schön (1990).	• To identify challenges which activate the exploration of connected theory and the importance of reflective practice by student teachers.
5. Daresh (1990, p. 30)	• To apply knowledge and skills in a practical setting; develop competencies through participation in varied practical experiences. • To test student teachers' commitment to his or her career, gain insights into professional practice. • To monitor progress and identify areas where further improvement is needed.
6. Beck & Kosnik (2002)	• To provide student teachers with the opportunity to experience varied contexts and learners.
7. Leshem & Bar-Hama (2007), Bezzina & Michalack (2008)	• To present a real context for applying taught knowledge.
8. Nancy (2007), Kiggundu, & Nayimulill (2009)	• To offer insights into the context of professional understanding.
9. Salvatori (2010)	• To integrate theoretical, practical, and experiential knowledge of student teachers to understand and resolve professional issues.
10. Cavanagh & Prescott (2010)	• To connect to theory, student teachers have been taught at university to the practice in the teaching practicum.
11. Al-Oyouni (2003).	• To equip non-education specialist students with pedagogical and teaching skills. • To enhance the teaching and pedagogical performance of education graduates. • To develop in-service teachers' experience and skills, to help them perform their assigned teaching tasks more professionally.

It is noteworthy here that the above-mentioned purposes of the teaching practicum do not make *explicit* reference to sociocultural theories or to the specific ideas of 'situated learning and communities of practice. Therefore, this justifies the need to investigate the purposes of the teaching practicum from the perspective of these theories. This, in turn, would contribute to better understand

student teachers' experiences of the teaching practicum in the Saudi context, given the collectivist nature of the Saudi culture.

The literature addresses different purposes of the teaching practicum for student teachers, but two purposes seem to be evident throughout the reviewed scholarship. One of the main purposes of student trenchers' teaching practicum is to apply and link theory to practice. For example, the purpose of teacher practicum and the relationship between theory and practice is highlighted by Price, who mentions the following general consensus:

> *"The major purpose of the practicum is to link theory with practice by providing regular structured and supervised opportunities for student teachers to apply and test knowledge, skills and attitudes, developed largely in campus-based studies, to the real world of the school and the school community" (1987, p.109).*

In the same vein, Daresh (1990) refers to the purpose of teaching practicum as:

> *"an opportunity for students to apply knowledge and skills in a practical setting; progressively develop competencies through participation in a range of practical experiences; test their commitment to a career; gain insight into professional practice, and evaluate progress and identify areas where further personal and professional development is needed" (p. 28).*

Therefore, introducing the *real* classroom context represents one of the main purposes of the teaching practicum, namely, to connect the theory, taught in the university, to practice (Kiggundu, 2007; Cavanagh & Prescott, 2010).

The other major purpose of the teaching practicum focuses on student teachers' preparation. For example, the purpose of teaching practicum is thought to facilitate the transition from being a student to a professional teacher (Menter, 1989). Also, the teaching practicum is an opportunity for student teachers to enhance their professional commitment to teaching (Daresh, 1990). Moreover, Schön (1990) argues that the purpose of the practicum is to identify the challenges linked to the effect of associated theory and strains on the role of professional practice as an essential aspect of teacher education. In addition, the purpose of the practicum is to provide student teachers with the opportunity to experience varied contexts and exposure to a wide range of learners with different abilities and needs (Beck & Kosnik, 2002).

In addition, Nancy (2007) and Kinggundu & Nyimuli (2009) state that the teaching practicum offers insights into the professional context and provides student

teachers with the opportunity to experience varied contexts and exposure to a wide range of learners with different abilities and needs. Salvatori (2010, p.6) adds that teaching practicum enables the student teacher "to integrate theoretical, practical, and experiential knowledge in the understanding of and resolution of professional issues". It is also worth noting here that developing reflexivity and reflective practice as part of the rationale behind student teachers' teaching practicum has also been emphasised elsewhere in the literature, notably by Yan & He (2010) and the Laurentian University (2011).

With respect to the immediate context of the current study, the purpose of the practicum and the GDE is to equip non-education specialist students with the pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills to enable them to become professional teachers. Also, this enhances the teaching and pedagogical performance of education graduates who are working as in-service teachers. In this regard, the practicum can develop in-service teachers' experience and skills and help them to perform their assigned teaching tasks more professionally. Moreover, to fulfil student teachers' training needs, the Teacher Training Programme (TTP) is under the supervision of the Department of Curriculum & Teaching Methods DCTM at the College of Education, University of Hail, KSA.

The DCTM works towards providing professional training for student teachers to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to attain the appropriate qualifications and teach in schools in the KSA. Hence, the department aims to develop student teachers' understanding of curriculum theories and issues, teaching methods and the principles of effective teaching, to prepare them to be effective schoolteachers. Through the practicum, student teachers develop their academic, social and professional identities and are encouraged to adopt modern theories and employ educational resources in the classroom.

3.4.3 Time and Duration of Teaching Practicum

It is generally assumed that student teachers need to spend a sufficient amount of time in the teaching practicum in order to get familiar with the experience of being a teacher out in the field. However, the timing of the teaching practicum varies from one teacher education programme to another. Traditionally, the teaching practicum takes place during the final year of a programme because student teachers have accumulated most of their knowledge base and the theoretical groundings by this stage, which enables them to then practice these

theoretical aspects through real-life experience in schools. On the other hand, it has been argued by Dunn et al. (2000) that student teachers need to take the teaching practicum over several semesters at different stages within a four-year programme, instead of just in the final year of the programme. This is because student teachers might have forgotten certain theoretical aspects of the four-year study by the final term when they undertake the practicum (Brady et al., 1998).

Other researchers advocate the need to apply the theoretical part of the course immediately by initiating the teaching practicum at the start of the programme (Jimenez-Silva et al., 2011). Therefore, it appears that the timing of the teaching practicum is a matter of considerable debate and depends on many contextual factors. This study has endeavoured to investigate the views of student teachers and significant others concerning the appropriate timing of the teaching practicum and the contextual factors affecting it.

In addition, establishing the duration of the teaching practicum, that is, the amount of time deemed suitable to conduct the teaching practicum can be challenging to most providers of ITE programmes. Similarly, student teachers can find it hard to adapt to the teaching practicum environment due to the challenges they encounter relating to the location, the teaching methods, and the facilities (Yan and He, 2010). Indeed, some student teachers have complained that the duration of the teaching practicum was insufficient to help them develop professionally (Queensland School, 2001). Other issues with student teachers' practicum have been addressed in several studies (Wang & Ren, 2002; Wang & Gao, 2007; Wang & Xu, 2008; Fei, 2007) and highlight some inadequacy with the duration of the practical training, which can, in turn, have a negative impact on the effectiveness of supervisory practices (Turney et al., 1982). In the same vein, Neville et al. explain that:

> *"The richness and value of the clinical experience vary depending on the quality of the supervisor and the amount of time she or he spends monitoring and coaching the student. In Education, clinical experiences are often reported to be limited, disconnected from university coursework, and inconsistent". (2005, p. 13).*

Furthermore, several reasons underlie the difficulty of ascertaining the most suitable duration for the teaching practicum. Firstly, it has been argued that providing opportunities to connect field experience to the theoretical knowledge of the student teachers requires dedicating sufficient time to it and it also needs

to be conducted strategically (Le Cornu & White, 2000). Furthermore, student teachers need time to grow accustomed to class teaching and, more importantly, to the school culture and context (Freeman & Richards, 2002; Wang & Xu, 2008). Equally, ITE programmes tend to focus heavily on theory, sometimes to the detriment of useful, practical skills. What can worsen the situation is that the theoretical modules of some programmes sometimes include theories which are neither truly transferable nor applicable to the reality of classroom teaching (Liston et al., 2006). Therefore, student teachers appear to need a considerable amount of time to practise their teaching skills and use and modify their theoretical repertoire to be able to face the challenges of effective teaching successfully.

Moreover, the duration of the teaching practicum appears to be affected by factors variables, which not only depend on the expected needs of the student teachers but also on the standards and the aims of the educational policies to overcome any deficiencies of the theoretical part of ITE programmes. Consequently, the duration of the teaching practicum requires careful consideration, paying attention to achieving the intended aims of pre-service teacher training in terms of the quality of the teaching practicum.

The teaching practicum structures differ in terms of their duration and timing in Canada, the USA, Scotland, Singapore, China, South Africa, Australia and in the KSA. The table below provides an overview of the different durations and timing of the teaching practicum in several countries. There is clearly a variety of teaching practicum structures in place across the world. The structure of the teaching practicum differs in terms of its duration, timing and the expected learning outcomes of these programmes. Generally, the clearer the theoretical framework of the purpose underpinning the teaching practicum as well as the high clarity of the expected learning outcomes of the programme, the more effective and well-designed the structure of the teaching practicum tends to be.

Table 3.3 Different timing and duration of different teaching practicum globally

Programmes	Requirements	Degree
1. Laurentian University Teaching Practicum, Canada (2018).	Six credits in pre-service programme, with three stages: • First stage - 120 Pre-Practicum Placement (PPP) hours with different host teachers - 40 hours per academic year for three years of Bachelor of Education programme. • Second stage - 4-week Initial Practicum (IP) with assistant instructor in assigned school when student teacher completes undergraduate degree and course classroom component • Third stage - two Professional Year Practicum (PYP) sessions, with various teaching assistants. Total - 12 weeks in designated schools in senior year of Bachelor of Education Programme.	**Bachelor of Education Programme (B.Ed.)**
2. Georgia State University Teaching Practicum, USA (2018).	Fourteen weeks at designated school where BSE student teachers spend 16 hours weekly and MAT students - 20 hours weekly. • Teaching Practicum 1 - classroom planning and instruction. • Teaching Practicum 2 - 40 hours per week for 14 weeks with student teachers entirely responsible for classroom teaching guided by assigned mentor teacher at the school. • Student teachers spend approx—900 hours in teaching practicum.	**Initial Teacher Preparation (ITP)**
3. University of Glasgow Teaching Practicum, Scotland (2018)	**Different stages:** • Years *one and two* - teaching practicum for six weeks during May and June focusing on literacy, child development, mathematics, and school experience, also theory and practice. • Y*ear three* - six-week school training in the second semester. • Y*ear four*- a ten-week practicum course selecting further core courses Honours level including 10,000-word dissertation	**Primary Education with Teaching Qualification**
4. The National Institute of Education Practicum Handbook, Singapore (2018).	**Four different sections:** • *School experience f*or two wee*k*s - before the first semester of year 2, • *Teaching assistantship -* 5 weeks of teaching practicum before the first semester of year 3. • *Teaching practicum I -* 5 weeks teaching practicum before the first semester of year 4 • *Teaching practicum II -* 10 weeks teaching practicum in second semester of year 4.	**The BA/BSc (Ed) programme**
5. University of Hong Kong Teaching Practicum, China (2016).	• Teaching practicum (1) - 3 weeks in the second year with eight credits. • Teaching practicum (2) - 8 weeks in fourth year with 12 credits. • Teaching practicum (3) - 8 weeks in the fourth year with 12 credits.	**B.Ed. programme**
6. University of Cape Town Teaching Practicum,	Three phases in three different placement schools: • Observation phase - two weeks before registration. • Teaching Practicum (I) - for five weeks at beginning of second school.	**Postgraduate Certificate in Education**

	South Africa (2018)	• Teaching Practicum (II) - for six weeks during the third school term.	
7.	University of Canberra Teaching Practicum, Australia (2018)	• First semester of year 1 - 15 days at school. • First and second semester of year 2 - 15 days at school • First and second semester of year 3 - 15 days at school	**Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Arts**
8.	The University of Hail, KSA (2008)	• GDE - 16 courses, with 38 credit hours, for *two* semesters • T*eaching Practicum* - Five credit hours in the second year.	**General Diploma in Education (GDE)**

However, the main aim of all these different permutations of the teaching practicum is to strengthen the ties between authentic teaching experience in the classroom and theoretical university studies. Some of the above teaching practicum programmes are the practical part of the Bachelor of Education Programmes, which lead to the achievement of a Bachelor of Education degree. It is worth noting that before undertaking the GDE at the University of Hail, pre-service teachers completed a Bachelor of Education degree in conjunction with a subject specialism in the Teachers' Colleges. Since 2005, Teachers' Colleges across the country were gradually integrated within the Faculties of Education at the university (University of Hail, 2013).

Equally, it is noteworthy that the justification for the structure chosen is frequently unspecified or uncertain, and any reliable evidence of its effectiveness is often lacking (Ryan et al., 1996). Additionally, a growing number of researchers have expressed their concerns about the effectiveness of the teaching practicum in higher education, as it appears to be poorly understood in terms of structure and does not necessarily encourage student teachers to apply methods and strategies acquired through teacher education programmes (Wilson et al., 2001; Clift & Brady, 2005; Nilssen, 2010). Furthermore, little research has focused on the influence of the structure, duration of time, and the type of training on the eventual effectiveness of student teachers (Hewson et al., 1999; Çakmak, 2008; Rozelle & Wilson, 2012).

There is an apparent gap in the knowledge concerning the extent to which organisational logistics such as the timing, duration and structure can have an impact upon teaching practicum and upon all the stakeholders involved with it in the Saudi context.

3.4.4 Significance of Teaching Practicum

The teaching practicum plays a vital role in training student teachers to become efficient teachers because it constitutes the main practical component of all teacher education programmes across the world (Chou, 2017). The practicum is vital as an induction to the teaching profession, "*both to improve teachers' skills and to extend the body of knowledge on effective teaching practices*" (Collinson et al., 2009, p. 9). Moreover, a well-developed teaching practicum can help student teachers to become critical and reflective about different teaching practices and enhance their confidence in teaching in the classroom (Kline et al., 2013).

In addition, a successful practicum experience can enable student teachers to feel more committed and motivated towards the teaching process itself (Sinclair, 2008) as trainee teachers start forming their personal, academic and professional identity through this transition from being a university student to becoming a professional teacher in the practicum (Beijaard et al., 2004). Ultimately, the experience of professional education training for student teachers can help them to develop their professional identity as schoolteachers (Kogan, 2000) as they acquire implicit skill and implicit knowledge (Smith, 2001).

The teaching practicum also represents a significant step in the preparation of student teachers and in linking their theoretical knowledge with practical experience to develop their professional and personal skills (Smith and Lev-Ari, 2005; Yost et al., 2000; Shulman, 1987). These skills include self-control; time and pressure management; communication skills with people and interpersonal sensitivity, i.e. empathy (Yan & He, 2010). In addition, Ramsden (1992) claims that the teaching practicum has the potential to strengthen further necessary practical skills for student teachers such as cooperation with other trainees in the school and sharing knowledge and experience; developing values and attitudes; solving problems independently or working collaboratively with cooperating teachers. Moreover, a lengthy teaching practicum can substantially expose student teachers to the practices of more experienced colleagues in schools (Zeichner, 2006; Smith, 2001).

This combination of theory and practice is essential. However, student teachers can often encounter challenges and difficulties when they try to use their theoretical knowledge in practical teaching situations in the classroom (Burn,

2007). In this regard, Laursen (2007) and Darling-Hammond (2009) point to the gap between practical and theoretical approaches to the educational classroom practice amongst student teachers. Despite teaching students how to put theory into practice through the different courses at university, Saudi student teachers of Arabic have reported a gap between theoretical knowledge and teaching situations (Alghamdi, 2015; Al-Momani, 2016). In this regard, many student teachers can struggle to apply their theoretical knowledge to classroom practice. Likewise, Blaise (2006) states that student teachers are often confused to discover that experienced teachers do not necessarily encourage them to directly apply what they have learned at university into actual educational practice in the classroom. It should be noted here that student teachers can only put their theoretical knowledge into practice during their teaching practicum.

Despite the central importance of the teaching practicum as previously mentioned, some student teachers can find it an obstacle, as well as a discouraging and sometimes even terrifying experience, if they are not well-prepared for it. It could also be argued that student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum can affect their subsequent attitudes towards their teaching practice in schools (Qazi et al., 2012). This inspired me to explore teaching practicum in the Saudi context to explore the nature of teaching practicum qualitatively through the views of student teachers and significant others to reveal the nature of KSA teaching practicum.

When viewed through the lens of a sociocultural theory of learning and the notions of situated learning and communities of practice, the teaching practicum is given a new layer of significance as it becomes synonymous to learning and teaching within a community of practice whereby Saudi student teachers may feel that they belong to a community of practitioners with shared knowledge, concerns and cultural understandings. Within the practicum, their professional learning becomes situated and contextualised taking into consideration the shared understanding of certain Saudi cultural specifics; at the same time, student teachers are able to learn how to teach from significant others (i.e., university supervisors, cooperating teachers, regular teachers and practicum fellows).

3.4.5 Teaching Practicum Evaluation

Several research studies from across the world have evaluated the teaching practicum. In the USA, Darling-Hammond highlights "the clinical side of education

[as often being] fairly haphazard, depending on the idiosyncrasies of loosely selected placements with little guidance about what happens in them and little connection to university work" (2010, p. 40). At the same time, Kirby et al. (2006) note the tension between the new ideas and innovation prevalent in education reform and the apparent lack of objective evaluations.

> *In the same vein, Cochran-Smith & Zeichner (2005, p.5) bemoan the dearth of larger and longitudinal studies due in part, to the lack of funding for educational research, which is not always deemed as a high research priority. However, in China, there is more focus on theory in teacher training with less focus on dedicating time to classroom practice (Zhou, 2002; Guo, 2005).*

In addition to this, there seems to be a general shortage of reflective and cooperative practices with the teaching practicum (Guo & Pungur, 2008). In Germany, Legutke et al. contend that:

> *"School-based experience not only appears to be incompatible with academic curricula but also seems difficult to implement given institutional constraints and cross-institutional incompatibility. More often than not, the practicum is just an appendage that is unrelated to relevant coursework on issues of second language teaching and learning". (2009, p. 213)*

With regards specifically to the Saudi context, the focus and context of the current study, certain studies have focused on the evaluation of the teaching practicum. For example, Bakhsh (2000) explored perceptions of female Saudi student teachers towards the teaching practicum programme, which highlighted deficiencies in the evaluation and supervision procedures in the teaching practicum programme. The female student teachers involved in the study were reported to face challenges such as a lack of appropriate facilities; a poor collaboration between them and the school administration, which not only significantly affected the personal relationships and but also often biased any subsequent evaluation of the student teachers' teaching performance. The author adds that student teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the impact of the teaching practicum programme and its inability to enrichen their teaching skills. They also complained about having an extended teaching practicum, which they reported as focusing on the quantity rather than the quality of the teaching experience. Furthermore, these student teachers also lamented having to deal with university supervisors of different subject specialism.

However, Bakhsh's (2000) study has some limitations as it only focuses on female student teachers, neglecting to consider supervisors and cooperating teachers or any other stakeholders in the teaching practicum. The study was also conducted exclusively on fourth-year student teachers during the second semester of the academic year, which could influence the generalisability or reliability of the results as the investigation did not include student teachers from other years of the teaching practicum programme. Their concerns and worries with the teacher practicum are also relevant but remain unexplored in this study.

Similarly, Al-Bisher's (2005) study assessed the quality of the teaching practicum programme from the student teachers' perspective at the faculty of education at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The findings show that these participant student teachers often suffered from the divide and the disparity between what they learned at university and the experience of the teaching practicum at school. They expressed the opinion that their university course did not adequately prepare them to succeed in their first experience of teaching practice. These student teachers also reported on their struggle to apply their theoretical knowledge into practice at schools due to several factors, such as the lack of cooperating teachers' support, their supervisors' lack of trust and a negative attitude towards the value of the theoretical knowledge acquired by the student teachers at university. These findings serve to highlight the frequent and considerable gap between theoretical study at university and the practical experiences of teaching in the Saudi context.

Consequently, it should be noted that the current study has the potential to fill a gap in the literature concerning the evaluation of student teachers' practicum in the Saudi context. This is achieved in the current study not only by exploring this topic solely through the perspective of student teachers but also by considering the opinions and views of significant others and exploring the contextual factors which can have an impact on the quality of the teaching practicum.

3.4.6 Challenges of the Teaching Practicum

One of the most common, and perhaps key, challenges of the teaching practicum is that a coherent philosophy of teaching and learning directing the theoretical course and the practicum is often missing due to weak links between the academic course and the practicum (Darling-Hammond 1999; Zeichner 1990, 1996; Goodlad 1990). In this respect, Goodlad (1994) observes that connecting

the disparate areas of teacher education, namely the theoretical and the practical dimensions, and linking the interests of the different stakeholder groups, often results in deficient and less than successful outcomes.

Studies have also reported upon the various challenges faced by student teachers during their teaching practicum, as related to student teachers' interaction with others, such as the cooperating teachers and the supervisors (e. g. Riesky, 2013; Hamaidi, 2014; Jusoh, 2011). One specific challenge relates to the nature of the support received by student teachers throughout the teaching practicum (Falkenberg & Smits, 2010; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Loughran, 2006). Also, Hamaidi (2014) highlights the inadequate support and guidance afforded to student teachers by their teaching practicum supervisors and cooperating teachers, as being a major challenge for student teachers, along with poor communication between the different groups.

Moreover, several writers (e.g. Wang & Ren, 2002; Wang & Gao, 2007; Wang & Xu, 2008; Fei, 2007) have identified further challenges with the teaching practicum. These include:

a) inadequate time for practical training

b) lack of an integrated and coherent curriculum

c) insufficient amount of reliable and trustworthy supervision

d) the limitation of student teachers' professional development for its inappropriate timing by the end of the year, which is at odds with the usual timing of university exams for student teachers

e) poor communication between the placement schools and the universities

f) a lack of precise objectives and opportunities for teaching practice

With regard to the teaching practicum in the KSA, it can be argued that it suffers from several deficiencies which are reflected in the lack of general understanding and appreciation of the nature and the core work of student teachers, university supervisors and cooperating teachers. This is mainly due to poor communication between schools and universities and the tendency not to involve all significant others in the induction sessions for the teaching practicum. For example, student teachers often do not receive enough visits from their university supervisors whilst cooperating teachers have been found to demonstrate a lack of care of and

support for student teachers (Al-Qow, 2001; Al-Zahrani, 2002). Similarly, university supervisors often maintain that their involvement in the supervision of student teachers is a routine task which does not require much preparation or commitment and depends solely on their evaluation and formal assessment of student teachers' work, without any further serious effort or dedication to improving student teachers' performance (Al-Qow, 2001). Furthermore, Al-Balwi (2010) highlights the importance of cooperating teachers' awareness of their duties and tasks whilst supporting student teachers. In this regard, his study also shows that the school administration does not always seem to value the student teachers' role. Equally, some university supervisors have shown to be lacking in their commitment to visiting their student teachers regularly, thereby demonstrating a lack of support of and provision of feedback to their trainees.

In the KSA context, Al-Buhairi (2011) researched the problems facing student teachers specialising in Islamic studies at King Khalid University. The findings showed that there was a general mismatch between the time allocated to lecturers at the university and the allotted time for teaching practicum attendance. Likewise, Al-Dakheel & Al-Mazroi (1997) investigated 195 student teachers to explore the problems encountered in their teaching practicum. Their findings showed that student teachers suffered from a negative attitude on behalf of the school administrative staff and from the challenges of trying to understand complex administrative procedures at the school. Equally, Al-Dakheel & Al-Mazroi's study showed that student teachers complained about the negative attitude of cooperating teachers towards their university study workload. At the same time, this was often coupled with unsupportive behaviour and a lack of understanding on the part of the university supervisors concerning their student teachers' workload as cover teachers in the teaching practicum. It is reasonable to conclude that there is a lack of general consideration for and a certain tension involved with student teachers being both full-time university students and part-time teachers in the teaching practicum.

However, these previous two studies were conducted exclusively with quantitative methods (i.e. a questionnaire), and a qualitative approach may have yielded richer data to build a more compelling narrative about the composite nature and impact to all stakeholders of the teaching practicum and all its associated issues and challenges.

Furthermore, Talafhah (2003) conducted a study amongst 66 student teachers, 13 university supervisors and 19 school headteachers specifically to identify the strengths and weaknesses of teaching practicum programmes. His findings suggest that university supervisors believe that the positive aspects of their interaction and work with student teachers outweigh the negative ones. At the same time, Talafah's study reported headteachers expressing the view that the positive areas of their dealings with student teachers were equal to the negative parts. As a result, Talafhah proposes conducting a comprehensive review of all aspects of teaching practicum programmes at all university faculties of education. However, one notable omission with Talafah's study is that the university supervisors' views about the quality of the teaching practicum were ignored, although their involvement is an essential component of the teaching practicum. Likewise, the impact of the classroom and the school contextual factors were also not considered in this study.

In addition, other researchers have investigated the relationship between student teachers and the school administration with regards to teaching practicum in the KSA. For example, Al-Habbad & Ibraheem (2008) conducted a study among 157 student teachers in the KSA and found that the headteachers' role was the weakest of all parties in developing and supporting student teachers during their practicum as compared to the role of university supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Al-Ajami (2006) also highlights a frequent lack of communication between student teachers and the school administration, and between the university and the schools. In addition, student teachers were found to complain about the lack of support and encouragement from the school environment, which was not conducive to creativity. Therefore, it seems appropriate to explore this issue further focusing on the views of other stakeholders within the teaching practicum and taking into consideration the impact of contextual factors, in order to elucidate the reasons behind poor relationships between the school and student teachers.

Research in Saudi Arabia has also highlighted several challenges and difficulties that can affect the quality of this partnership and hinder the overall educational process. For example, Al-Mihaisin (1997) reported that many practicum programmes in the KSA suffer from a weak and unstable relationship between the school and the university, with student teachers often arriving at school with

a significant lack of theoretical knowledge, in addition to a lack of practical experience in any aspect of teaching.

Moreover, infrequent visits by university supervisors were found to constitute another problem (Al-Qow, 2001; Al-Balwi, 2010) in addition to a lack of understanding between university supervisors and student teachers about their required needs (Al-Qow, 2001). Furthermore, the negative impact of poor communication and cooperation between school and university is a source of concern for researchers (Al-Balwi, 2010; Talafhah, 2003; Al-Ajami, 2006; Al-Shahri, 2006) in addition to the disparity of timings and timetable clashes between days at the teaching practicum and attending lectures at the university (Al-Balwi, 2010).

Also, the lack of respect toward and support for student teachers was observed in some schools on the part of cooperating teachers and headteachers (Al-Buhairi, 2011). It was also noted that the headteachers played the weakest role in terms of supporting student teachers during their practicum (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005; Al-Habbad & Ibraheem, 2008; Al-Buhairi, 2011). Therefore, the relationship between schools and universities needs to be effective and needs to function in a systemic partnership to improve the ITE programme.

Some writers have proposed ways to strengthen the relationship between the parties involved in this partnership. For example, Abed-Alminam (2012) suggests establishing clear criteria for choosing university supervisors and using formative, continuous assessment to improve the programme. In addition, he recommends having the practicum for one full semester (14 weeks) and, perhaps more importantly, also considering the views and needs of student teachers in choosing the cooperating schools. Equally, to support student teachers and to improve the relationship with all parties, the study further recommends preparing a working manual to describe the roles and tasks of student teachers, cooperating teachers, headteacher and university supervisors, clearly detailing the aims, importance and stages of the practicum programme, and outlining the principles and the skills required.

In addition, through a study involving 70 university supervisors and 279 Ministry supervisors, Al-Amery (2013) showed that classroom visits were the main methods of supervision amongst all the participant supervisors. Therefore, Al-Amery recommends improving the role of the dedicated teaching practicum

centre at the university. Another important suggestion was to encourage female and male supervisors to cooperate with each other and agree on certain models of supervision, along with detailing the criteria and norms required to select teaching practicum supervisors.

For example, Al-Qow (2001) investigated 40 male and female student teachers and 30 male and female cooperating teachers to ascertain which problems student teachers experienced during their teaching practicum, together with some of the reasons behind these. Al-Qow found that the most common problems encountered by student teachers were a lack of respect and acknowledgement of their role as teachers from students, unsatisfactory and poor support from cooperating teachers and conflict between university course timetabling and school lessons. However, Al-Qow's study contains several flaws. For example, university supervisors were not included in the investigation, although they represent an integral part of the teaching practicum supervision. Additionally, the social, cultural and educational contexts were not taken into consideration.

Moreover, Al-Thabiti (2002) investigated 113 student teachers to identify the factors contributing to the enhancement of student teachers' skills, as well as exploring the most significant problems facing student teachers. The findings identified 34 factors supporting the development of student teachers' skills. One such crucial factor was the notion of allowing student teachers to choose their practicum schools, as well as them having had a positive experience of working with cooperating teachers. The most pressing problems facing student teachers were a lack of care towards and about them and their fear of standing and talking in front of students. However, Al-Thabiti's study could be considered limited as the focus was solely upon the student teachers themselves, without considering the important significant others involved.

Similarly, Hamdan (2015) explored the challenges that Saudi pre-service science teachers face in higher education programmes, following the recent implementation of educational reform initiatives to develop critical thinking, inquiry-based learning and problem-solving. Despite being generally satisfied with their teacher education programme, some pre-service teachers pointed to a theory-practice gap between their university and their teaching practicum experiences, with the same applying to supervisory practices.

It was, therefore, suggested to reform current teacher preparation programmes and to directly address pre-service teachers' concerns. However, this study could be considered as not truly representative, as its sample was limited to male students due to the cultural difficulties in the Saudi context of a male researcher interviewing female participants. This limitation can affect the generalisability of the results and the effect of gender (males and females) views in the teaching practicum. Any quality assurance measures of the teaching practicum may not be effectively applied without exploring the critique of and ultimate satisfaction of male and female student teachers with the practicum. Hamdan's study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods because he used open-ended questions in the questionnaire to elicit additional comments to help in improving the practicum. However, this written data may not be sufficient to delve more deeply into the complexity and nuances of participants' satisfaction with and views about the practicum. The use of semi-structured interviews or focus groups to obtain richer interpretations of the responses to the questionnaire could have yielded richer information.

In the same vein, Al-Momani (2016) researched various practicum challenges at a faculty of education from the perspective of both supervisors and student teachers. Two questionnaires were administered to 71 student teachers attending teaching practicum and 18 supervisors at Najran University. The findings reveal the following challenges in the practicum from the student teachers' perspectives: i) large class sizes and many student teachers; ii) educational IT and technological resources being unavailable; supervision and administrative workload. In addition, the following teaching practicum challenges were reported by supervisors: i) mistreatment of student teachers by the school; ii) limited understanding of the subject matter; inadequacy of training period; iv) participation in extracurricular activities; v) fear of teaching; vi) communication skills and vii) the gap between theory and practice.

Al-Momani's study has, however, a number of limitations, namely the sample composed of only female teachers' participants at Najran University without students. The study was also only conducted on eight students during the second semester of the academic year 2014/2015. This small-size sample makes the generalisation of the results problematic and less feasible. Moreover, there were no clear criteria for choosing the sample of supervisor participants.

Based on the above-reviewed studies, it can be reasonably argued that Saudi student teachers frequently encounter a range of challenges during their teaching practicum. These studies provide comprehensive background information for the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the teaching practicum in the KSA context, thereby allowing a greater appreciation of the challenges which student teachers and the significant others frequently encounter in the teaching practicum. In addition to the above challenges, it is worth focusing on the place of student teachers in the practicum as they can be considered as the prime purpose a focus of ITE.

As a result, several researchers have made suggestions and recommendations aimed at strengthening the relationship between all parties involved in the teaching practicum. For example, Al-Shahri (2006) proposes that university supervisors should hold regular discussions with their universities, the school administrators and student teachers to establish the optimum ways to make the required resources and equipment available for student teachers' use. Equally, Al-Balwi (2010) suggests that regular reports about the cooperation between the school and the student teachers should be sent to the university and the university should avoid involving schools with a poor record of student teachers' support. Al-Balwi also stresses the importance of micro-teaching in supporting the student teachers' learning, as well as the need for student teachers to use modern information and communication technology (ICT) in their training, e.g. the internet or computer software, in the practicum programme. Al-Balwi's study also draws attention to the importance of educating cooperating teachers about the aims of the teaching practicum programme. Bogas & Baraidah (2006) make the further suggestion of ensuring that the roles and tasks of university supervisors, headteachers, cooperating teachers and student teachers are all clearly defined in the practicum.

In sum, a sound relationship between the school and the university is essential in order for the teaching practicum programme to develop successfully (Bogas & Baraidah, 2006; Al-Balwi, 2010). In addition, the role and level of participation of both the school and the university should be clear, strategic, cooperative and agreed between all parties, acknowledging the specific roles of student teachers, cooperating teachers, headteachers and university supervisors in this partnership.

In light of a sociocultural approach, with reference to the ideas of situated learning and communities of practice, these practicum challenges might result in some unfavourable outcomes. First, student teachers would not feel as part of a community of practice in their teaching practicum. Second, collaboration and cooperation among student teachers, university supervisors and cooperating teachers, may be missing. Finally, student teachers' learning does not seem to be *situated* as student teachers seem to be learning in isolation, with unfavourable attitudes that promote lack of cohesion in the community of practice within the teaching practicum. In contrast, a key aspect of the study is that the social and professional context are important to understand the role of the practicum for student teachers learning to be teachers. That is, learning to be a teacher is a sociocultural activity that involves situated learning, where the practicum plays an essential role, and the concept of a community of practice is useful to understand important aspects of this process.

3.4.7 Student Teachers' role in the Teaching Practicum

Student teachers are at the heart of the teaching practicum as they embody the main reason for its existence and construction. In addition, through the practicum, student teachers can gain practical experiences in school teaching, which can enable them to understand the challenges they may face as future teachers (Beeth & Adadan, 2006). Furthermore, student teachers can gain the opportunity to apply the taught theoretical content which they have studied at university in the context of real practical teaching. This can, therefore, lead to the development of their skills with the support of mentors to construct their identities as teachers (Poulou, 2007). Many research studies related to the teaching practicum have focused mainly on student teachers (Caires et al., 2012; Lee 2011; Nilssen 2010) whereas other studies have examined school-based mentors (Hudson et al. 2010; Koç 2012; Sempowicz & Hudson 2011). As a result, there has been a strong focus on the perspectives of student teachers, more than on teacher educators or school-based teacher mentors' views .This indicates the importance of student teachers' perspectives in the teaching practicum. This is because student teachers' perspectives reflect their concerns, needs and expectations of the teaching practicum which, in turn, can enhance the effectiveness of the teaching practicum and a general understanding of teaching practices (Beeth & Adadan, 2006).

Student teachers' role in the teaching practicum has changed considerably over recent decades. The "latest educational theories argue that 'realistic' teacher education starts with student-teachers' experiences rather than with the theories to be found in literature" (Korthagen, 2001, p. 53). On the other hand, the role of student teachers has often been a passive one in the practicum, insofar as they have often acted as receivers of what supervisors may think are the competencies of quality teachers (Ewing & Smith, 2003). Pre-service teachers were traditionally assessed on their teaching performance by supervisors who were *"critical"* in *"a process intended to help teachers improve instruction"* (Nolan & Francis, 1992, p. 52).

However, at the same time, there has been a shift from this technical view of the teaching practicum to a professional conception of the teaching practicum. The role of student teachers has therefore changed to become more based on their reflective professional decisions about their practice; they use, in theory, their reflections to improve their practice in a deeper manner and supervisors have become facilitators of the reflective practice of the student teachers (Peters & Le Cornu, 2006).

In more recent times, the student teachers' role has shifted towards a collegial learning focus which includes professional learning communities as a shared learning and joint construction context. Student teachers, in this way, work with their colleagues, cooperating teachers and university supervisors in mutual learning relationships and through stronger participation in the learning process (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). In the same vein, Mule confirms that *"the notion of a learning community contrasts the 'sink and swim' and 'do it yourself' (Britzman, 2003) view of student teaching in the typical practicum"* (2006, p. 216).

Based on the notions of the community of practice and situated learning, the student teacher's role in the teaching practicum can be viewed as different from that of a passive recipient; instead, from this perspective, the student teacher is encouraged to become a reflective practitioner and an active member of communities of learning practice, where other student teachers, colleagues, cooperating teachers and university supervisors all participate. Consequently, the views and opinions of student teachers should be considered as valuable as they can contribute to enhanced reflective practice. Their thoughts and contribution now tend to be far more appreciated as active members in communities of

learning practice. Likewise, their roles within the practicum evolve depending on the different types of practicum, which, in turn, contribute to shaping their experiences.

3.4.8 Teaching practicum models

As explained earlier in the thesis (see section 3.3), theories and approaches have shaped the field of teacher education in general and ITE in particular. As a result of these influences, several teaching practicum models have been suggested. The following table summarises three teaching practicum models that are deemed the most relevant to ITE in relation to the conceptual framework, research focus and questions of this study.

Table 3.4 The models of the teaching practicum

Teaching Practicum Models
Rationalist model of teacher training.
The integrative model of teaching practicum.
The inquiry-based practicum model.

3.4.8.1 The Rationalist Model

This model involves student teachers being taught by experts in the field regarding the theoretical concepts underpinning pedagogy, followed by student teachers applying their acquired knowledge practically, with what educational experts consider essential for them to master their profession. However, student teachers do not seem to have the opportunity to fulfil their academic needs nor have their expectations and training needs met in the teaching practicum following such a model. Yan & He (2010) applied the 'rationalist model' using reflective writing as a method to explore 210 student teachers' viewpoints. The results of their study identified six problems in the TP linked to the rationalist model: i) the tension between expectation and reality; ii) the unsuitable time length of the TP; iii) a climate of mistrust in the TP; iv) the lack of supervision; v) the students' lack of effort in preparing lessons and vi) the lack of a comprehensive assessment system. The authors stress the need to alter the existing model of teaching practicum, arguing for the development of a new model focusing on the importance of frequent interactions between the theoretical and practical parts of the teaching practicum course, and improving partnerships

between universities and schools to allow for student teachers' professional development.

However, teaching and learning being human processes do not only operate at the individual level but are deeply embedded in human interactions, which therefore suggest that it is a social process. Hence, ITE has also been deeply influenced by theoretical perspectives that view the learning process as such, that is, shaped by social interactions.

3.4.8.2 The Integrative Model

The integrative model is "a systematic approach that includes that the learner gains pedagogic, content, pedagogic content, and support knowledge through a variety of experiences and activities" (Day, 1991, p.10). The integrative model also involves teaching student teachers how to use the knowledge and skills acquired from different disciplines. The idea of integration between the educational theory and practice endorses student teachers professionally in the teaching practicum. Additionally, "in the integrative pedagogy model, theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and self-regulation (reflective and metacognitive skills) are merged" (Heikkinen et al., 2011, p.123).

However, it should be noted that providing student teachers with such different types of knowledge, both theoretically and practically, does not necessarily guarantee that the acquisition of learning takes place. This may be due to the fact that the reflective practice element of student teachers explicitly looking back at their learning and their performance is conspicuously absent from the integrative model. In this regard, Zhu (2011) emphasises the importance of involving student teachers in 'reflection in action' and deeper reflective practices in the practicum. Likewise, Richards and Lockhart assert that reflective practice "involves examining teaching experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision making and as a source of change" (2005, p. 4).

During the late 1980s and the following 1990s many constructivist, social constructivist and sociocultural studies focused on sustaining student teachers' learning (Wertsch, 1998; Wells, 1999). This has had an impact on the development of ITE because, as Wood (1995) suggests, "the alternative perspective that constructivism offers by defining learning as a process of personal construction of meaning offers a potentially powerful way to rethink teacher education" (1995, p. 17).

3.4.8.3 The Inquiry-Based Practicum Model

The inquiry-based model is often referred to in different terms in the ITE literature such as the problem-based learning (Du, Kirkebæk, 2012), the transformative learning (Taylor, 2006), the experience learning (Jackson and Caffarella, 1994), the experiential learning, the active learning (Settles, 2012), the learning based on examples (Gog and Rummel, 2010), or the cooperative learning model (Grisham, Molinelli, 1995). The inquiry-based instruction model is an approach that includes stimulating methods, different organisation forms, and the teacher presents knowledge as a problem to be solved by asking questions. This is a significant element for improving student-teachers' problem-solving skills, as well as their ability to deal with uncertainties and acquire situated and effective learning out of their practical experiences (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Beck, 2001).

This ITE model also involves the diagnostics of the prior knowledge of student teachers about a certain issue and the recognition of the knowledge conflict with the given idea. In order to solve knowledge conflict, the individual has to construct new solutions. This relates to the constructivist principle of understanding occurring as an interpretation of new information in the light of the current knowledge and also as a process where the individual mentally constructs the meaning of the prior knowledge and the newly acquired knowledge (Dofková & Kvintová, 2019). This model focuses on a reflective and reflexive process to explore student teachers' beliefs, values, views and concerns, along with the other members of the learning community (i.e. student teacher peers, the practicum supervisors and the cooperating teachers), to ultimately enhance all stakeholders' knowledge, practices, relationships, and practicum experience (Nguyen, 2009). This model aims to help all member of the learning community (i.e. student teacher peers, supervisors and cooperating teachers) to identify and critique their experiences, practices, assumptions, and beliefs and explore the teacher-learner exchange, the school culture, and social relationships. Through this model, student teachers can develop as lifetime learners, ready to engage in discussions to constantly question their deeply rooted assumptions about teaching and learning with other members of the learning community. This model also assumes that is essential for all members of the school/learning community to engage in "negotiating the agenda, sharing power and decision making,

representing the work of the group, and dealing with the inevitable tensions of individual and collective purposes and viewpoints" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998, p.295). As a result, they may be able to share their viewpoints, strengths, and limitations, have agreed perspectives on different issues, respect each other's opinion and expand their cultural, social, and political repertoire.

Subsequently, the focus of teaching practicum research in recent years has been on "student teacher learning during teaching practicum, a collaboration between student teachers and their peers, support by cooperating teachers and supervision during teaching practicum" (Ong'ondo & Jwan, 2009, p.1).

The above practicum models have features that are relevant to the conceptual framework of the study along with the research context and focus. Firstly, the rationalist model focuses on the notion of learning to teach at a theoretical level from experts at university – learning *about* pedagogy – while the teaching practicum is assumed to be where they put in practice what they have learned at the university. This approach can also relate to one of the key functions of Wenger's communities of practice (1998), that is, promoting the transfer of new knowledge to work contexts in order to solve problems. This model calls for transferring the knowledge gained by experts at university to their teaching practicum. Likewise, the integrative model can be understood from the perspective of another key aspect of the community of practice, the gathering and exchanging of information about practice. Based on this model, student teachers gather and exchange information from different disciplines about the teaching practicum through their acquisition of pedagogic content, and support knowledge through a variety of experiences and activities. Finally, the inquiry-based practicum model is the most pertinent to this study and its conceptual framework as it relates to two key aspects of the community of practice: forming communications and cooperation among colleagues; and supporting learning through discussion and sharing. This type of practicum can help student teacher be part of a community of practice where they identify their teaching practicum experiences, practices, beliefs and explore their social relationships with significant others.

Having examined and discussed several types of teaching practicum, it is worth focusing on a central aspect of this study, that is, the significant others in the practicum. Using their views as a lens to investigate this topic and make

suggestions for improvement is in this respect, a key issue. Hence, in addition to student teachers themselves, the related significant others are the pivotal element in this learning process, as explained in more detail in the following section.

3.5 Significant others and the Teaching Practicum

Significant others play an essential role in the student teachers' practicum as they train and assist student teachers in facing the challenges of teaching and becoming effective teachers (Ten Dam & Blom 2006). Generally, the term *significant others* refers to cooperation between mentors at the placement schools and university teacher educators, who work collaboratively to apply the theoretical content of teacher education to the reality of the practical training of student teachers during their teaching practicum (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). In this respect, significant others have a very important role to play and hold key responsibility for student teachers' training.

Therefore, they need to be knowledgeable, intellectuals, leaders and change facilitators (Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005). This is because the teacher's role has changed considerably and is constantly changing. Also, the quality of teachers' preparation has now become essential to providing effective teaching as teachers are no longer the mere *"technician, consumer, receiver, transmitter, and implementer of other people's knowledge"* (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999, p.16).

With regards to scholarly work in this area, it appears that most of the reviewed studies here relate to student teachers': perspectives, attitudes, expectations, learning process and experiences. Significantly, through a review of the relevant literature, it is clear that few studies have focused on investigating the beliefs, concerns and perceptions of the stakeholders and the opportunities, impact, assessment and challenges of the teaching practicum. Therefore, this indicates a gap in the knowledge about the teaching practicum with particular respect to the Saudi context. As a result, it seems appropriate to empirically investigate, the role of significant others in the Saudi teaching practicum context by comparing their views and perspectives regarding their experience of the teaching practicum to those of the student teachers. Table 3.5 below summarises the research studies that investigated the teaching practicum to justify the focus of the current study on examining the perspectives of Saudi student teachers of Arabic about the teaching practicum as well as those of significant others.

Table 3.5 Research studies focusing on the teaching practicum

The focus of the studies	List of studies	The main focus of the study
1. Perspectives, attitudes, expectations, learning process and experiences of student teachers.	(Caires, Almeida & Vieira 2012: Koç 2012)	Perspectives of student teachers about teaching practice.
	(French, 2004; He & Cooper, 2011; Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006; MacMahon, 2006; Mckenzie, 2005; Özturk, 2008; Senom, Zakaria, & Shah, 2013; Sunde & Ulvik, 2014; Wang, Odell, & Schwill, 2008; Watson, 2006; Windschitl, Thompson, Stroupe, Chew, & Wright, 2010)	Newly qualified teachers' difficulties in the teaching practicum.
	(Lambe & Bones 2007)	The effect of school-based practice on student teachers' attitudes.
	(Boz & Boz, 2006; Kwan & Lopez-Real 2010; Loizou, 2011; Trent, 2010)	Experiences of student teachers in mentoring at the teaching practicum.
	(Kirbulut, Boz & Kutucu, 2012; Deed, Cox & Prain, 2011; Nilssen 2010)	Preservice teachers' expectations and experiences in the school experience course.
2. Investigating beliefs, concerns and perceptions of the stakeholders.	(Hudson & Millwater 2008; Ng, Nicholas & Williams, 2010)	Mentors' beliefs and concerns of the teaching practicum.
	(Hagger & Malmberg, 2011; Poulou, 2007)	Concerns of stakeholders.
3. The opportunities, impacts, assessment and challenges of teaching practicum.	(Myles, Cheng & Wang 2006; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Allen 2011; Fransson, 2010)	The effect, challenges and assessment of field experience on preservice teachers.

From a situated learning perspective, and in order for student teachers to feel part of a community of practice, these significant others play a major part in shaping the experiences of student teachers. This is because they are an embodiment of the cultural specifics, especially given the collectivist nature of the culture in Saudi Arabia which puts a great deal of emphasis on cooperation,

collaboration, and positive interactions within the same community of practice. In addition, significant others can play the role of the expert within the community of practice to support novice practitioners within that community. Hence, the thesis now critically discusses the role and importance of significant others (cooperating teachers and university supervisors) in the teaching practicum. The key aspect of supervision is addressed first, including a critical overview of the different models of teaching practicum supervision and various supervisory practices in the teaching practicum. In addition, the following sections address the role and importance of cooperating teachers and university supervisors in the teaching practicum in the KSA.

3.5.1 Supervision

The supervision of student teachers during the teaching practicum is a fundamental part of their teaching practicum. Neville et al. maintain that *"the richness and value of the clinical experience vary depending on the quality of the supervisor and the amount of time she or he spends monitoring and coaching the student"* (2005, p. 13). Moreover, Yarrow asserts that the practicum is *"the single most powerful intervention in professional preparation"* (1992, p. 2). Supervision is acknowledged to be a key and central part of the teaching practicum process (Yarrow, 1992), which should not be isolated from the complicated and multifaceted nature of teaching itself.

In the light of the sophisticated and challenging nature of teaching, the main responsibility of a supervisor is to support and guide novice teachers during their teaching practicum because their experience can often be *"intense, conflicting, dynamic and fragile"* (Intrator, 2006, p. 234). In such highly charged and complex settings, the role of the supervisor should be that of a facilitator, monitoring student teachers and giving them support, rather than just indicating their deficiencies or correcting mistakes (Beach & Reinhartz, 2000).

3.5.1.1 Supervision Models

Therefore, a wide range of models of supervision has been proposed to support and monitor student teachers' development in their teaching practicum, with somewhat differing approaches. These various models include:

i) the '*inspection approach.'*
ii) the '*social efficiency* model.'

iii)   the *'democratic model.'*

iv)   the *'scientific model.'*

v)   the '*leadership model.'*

vi)   the *'clinical supervision'* model

vii)   the *'amicable supervision'* approach.

The *'inspection approach'* model is one based on supervisors acting as monitors of student teachers' teaching practice to ensure that the required standardised practices are successfully applied in class (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Moreover, the *'social efficiency model'*, involves bureaucratic control of these inspectors of student teachers to ensure that the former perform efficiently using a specific rating scale to assess their practice and performance (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). With a further supervision model, the *'democratic model'*, trainee teachers collaborate closely with university supervisors and cooperating teachers to develop the teaching (Reiman & Thies Sprinthall, 1998). However, with the *'scientific model'*, the role of the supervisor is viewed from a different perspective, as explained by Barr (cited in Sullivan and Glanz, 2000):

> *"supervisors must have the ability to analyse teaching situations and to locate the probable causes for poor work with a certain degree of expertness; they must have the ability to use an array of data-gathering devices peculiar to the field of supervision itself; they must possess certain constructive skills for the development of new means, methods, and material of instruction, they must know how teachers learn to teach; they must have the ability to teach teachers how to teach, and they must be able to evaluate. In short, they must possess training in both the science of instructing pupils and the science of instructing teachers; both are included in the science of supervision" (p.16).*

Furthermore, with the 'leadership model', supervisors provide leadership to student teachers by "developing mutually acceptable goals, extending cooperative and democratic methods of supervision, improving classroom instruction, promoting research into educational problems, and promoting professional leadership" (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000, p. 18).

A different model, the *'clinical supervision'* model, involves supervisors discussing the planning of the lesson and/or classroom observations with student

teachers; with this usually being followed by a post-observation meeting centring upon a critical analysis of the class and a discussion of possible ways to improve the lesson (Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). In this regard, Kent (2001) claims that the essence of clinical supervision is the acknowledgement that there must be a willingness and a capacity to reflect upon teaching practice and implement change. Furthermore, there is a fundamental ethos here of *"collegiality, long-term observation and reflection"* (p. 229).

Another approach to supervision is posited by Costa and Garmston (1994), namely, *the 'learner-centred model'*, whereby supervisors have three major roles and act as:

> *"cognitive coaches [by] (1) establishing and maintaining trust, (2) facilitating mutual learning (by student teachers and coach/supervisor); and (3) enhancing growth toward "individuals acting autonomously while simultaneously acting interdependently with the group" (1994, p. 3).*

Another seemingly tolerant and democratic model of supervision proposed is the '*amicable supervision approach'*, whereby supervision is based on the concept of guiding and helping student teachers in teaching and learning activities (Amornwiwat, 2002).

These different models of supervision strongly suggest that the suitability of a specific student teacher's supervision model during the teaching practicum seems to depend on numerous factors such as the target of the teaching practicum; the specific programme requirements; the standards and teaching competencies required and the expected outcomes for each individual student. In addition, different contextual factors inherent to the class and the school environment can have a considerable impact on the outcome of the teaching practicum and the efficiency of teaching practicum supervision. Accordingly, this research also involves student supervisors and cooperating teachers as significant others as their views about the teaching practicum and their roles in this process dominant the central discussion.

More specifically, in a research study involving 222 student teachers, Fayne (2007, p. 53) addresses this issue focusing on three fundamental issues: the value of the student teaching experience, the roles played by supervisors and the student teachers' perceptions of good supervision. The findings revealed that university supervisors play an essential role in the teaching practicum by making

evaluative judgments about student teachers' practices. Likewise, the study shows that cooperating teachers tend to encourage student teachers to adopt different teaching strategies by promoting feedback, demonstrating the former and providing educational materials. This study highlighted the important role of supervisors in the practicum and the necessity to involve them in a dialogic relationship with student teachers throughout the teaching practicum development.

Nonetheless, Fayne's study has several drawbacks. Firstly, it should be noted that only one data collection tool was used (a quantitative survey) to investigate the perspectives of student teachers. This, therefore, can be a problem as it could be argued quantitative surveys are generally not the most appropriate data collection tool to investigate such complex topics. Consequently, to obtain more in-depth and richer data, the use of other qualitative data collection tools such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups would have provided richer insight. Furthermore, the process of data collection lasted five years, which means that changeable circumstances may have affected the findings and variables of the study over time. As a result, this may affect the ultimate objectivity and transferability of the study results. In addition, the follow-up interviews with four supervisors via e-mail to explore the extent of agreement between their views and those of the student teachers may not necessarily indicate the reliability of the study, as email interviews do not necessarily provide the researcher with participants' in-depth perceptions of phenomena. With email, as with any other written method of ascertaining of establishing participants' views and opinions, the paralinguistic dimension, i.e. body language and nonverbal communication are missing, to the possible detriment of the richness and texture of the data.

3.5.1.2 Supervisory Practices

Previous studies in the Saudi context have investigated the supervisory experiences and practices of Saudi student teachers in the teaching practicum focusing on topics such as supervisors' evaluation criteria; supervisor-student teachers' relationships and the practicum challenges from supervisors' perspectives (Al-Zahrani, 2002, Al-Shamekh, 2003; Al-Omry, 2008; Al-Doughan, 2011; Al-Sayyari, 2011; Al-Shahary, 2013).

For example, Al-Zahrani (2002) reported that Saudi female supervisors encountered several challenges during their teaching practicum. Likewise, her study indicated that the participant supervisors in her study spent little time supervising student teachers because of a heavy workload at their universities. Moreover, amongst other challenges facing these student teachers during their practicum was their apparent inability to link theoretical knowledge and methodology in the classroom. Equally, the supervisors in question found the task of arranging tutorial meetings with student teachers onerous and complicated and having many student teachers to manage did not necessarily lead to appropriate supervision. However, Al-Zahrani's (2002) study is problematic in that she only focused on female Saudi university supervisors' views and did not investigate cooperating teachers or other stakeholders in the teaching practicum such as parents or school principals. Furthermore, Al-Zahrani did not take into consideration student teachers' views and the impact of different contextual factors upon the supervision of student teachers' teaching during the practicum.

From a different perspective, Al-Shamekh (2003) investigated student teachers' views about the role and impact of supervisors on their teaching practicum. The study showed that supervisors do not always inform their student teachers about the evaluation criteria in their training during the teaching practicum. Equally, Al-Shamekh indicated that these student teachers frequently complained that their supervisors only paid attention to the shortcomings of their teaching practice rather than to their strengths. Overall, the study suggests that supervisors do not necessarily provide their student teachers with adequate guidance, instructions and feedback to help the student teachers go on to teach effectively and that student teachers tend to only remember the supervisors' voicing of concerns and criticism. The main issue concerning Al-Shamekh's study relates to an apparent lack of rigour with the review of the literature. Although the findings of the study present student teachers' perceptions of the supervisory role and the impact of student teachers on the teaching practicum, it would have been more credible and more meaningful if the author had reviewed and referred to the relevant literature on the topic of supervision in educational training and its place and importance in the teaching practicum, in relation to the study's findings.

A further study was conducted by Al-Omry (2008) in the Saudi context of supervisors from Umm Al-Qura University and the Ministry of Education to

evaluate the techniques used during the teaching practicum. Al-Omry showed that participant supervisors' most commonly used techniques for interacting with student teachers were individual conferencing and classroom visits. The author adds that the supervisors at the Ministry of Education focused primarily on classroom visits. In addition, the findings show that there was a distinct lack of cooperation between the university and the Ministry of Education, possibly the main factor hindering the quality of supervision of student teachers. However, in Al-Omry's study, the researcher just presented the views of the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers without due consideration of the views of the student teachers themselves, including their thoughts and opinions about their classroom teaching in their practicum. Furthermore, the various contextual factors influencing the effectiveness and ultimate success of student teachers' teaching practicum were left unexplored.

Al-Doughan (2011) too, conducted a quantitative study investigating the impact of assessment criteria used by female Saudi supervisors to evaluate the teaching performance of student teachers at the Faculty of Education at King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia. Al-Doughan reported that these female Saudi supervisors used five major criteria to assess the quality of student teachers' teaching: (1) process of assessment; (2) personal and human communication; (3) continuation of teacher professional development; (4) management and communication between university and schools related to the training for and implementation of the educational practicum and (5) supervisory practices in the field, in placements. The first and most important factor for the study respondents was the topic of management and communication between university and schools related to the training for and implementation of the teaching practicum, whilst the second most important factor was found to be the supervisory practices in the teaching practicum. However, this investigation focused solely on female supervisors, which could affect the generalisability of the results due to different gender and cultural issues in Saudi Arabia. To have achieved a more balanced presentation of the findings of supervisory practice in the teaching practicum in Saudi Arabia, more data acquired from more male student teachers and male supervisors would have provided more insight.

Another Saudi study, carried out by Al-Sayyari (2011), explores the importance of planning and cooperation in the teaching practicum by investigating the views

of student teachers and their female educational supervisors at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. Al-Sayyari highlights the importance of planning for the teaching practicum at schools through paying careful attention to the training of female student teachers, linking each university module to teaching practice at schools, and facilitating the performance of each planned educational activity. However, as previously discussed, Al-Sayyari's findings may not be totally generalisable as the study only had female participants. Moreover, it could be argued that the importance of planning and cooperation also relates to the teaching practicum designers, whose views were also absent from this study, even though they could have provided another essential source of data about the details and operational aspects of planning and cooperation in the student teachers' teaching practicum.

The previously mentioned studies inspired me to include stakeholders associated with the practicum in the current research examining student teachers' experience of the practicum. Also, it was critical to involve the supervisors in this study due to the importance of their role in the teaching practicum. Additionally, taking into consideration student teachers', supervisors' and cooperating teachers' views in this research was deemed essential to get an in-depth understanding of the nature of student teachers' experiences of their teaching practicum.

3.5.2 Cooperating Teachers

There has been much debate about the importance of the role of cooperating teachers in the teaching practicum. Previous studies, conducted in the KSA, have mainly focused on the role of cooperating teachers, university supervisors and headteachers in supervising and advising student teachers. The findings relating to the quality of relationships between those involved in the teaching practicum, as well as of their level of satisfaction with it are variable.

For example, Bogas & Baraidah (2006) claim that the positive contribution of cooperating teachers meets one of the most important requirements of student teachers, followed by the contribution made by headteachers. However, Al-Dakheel & Al-Mazroi (1997) suggest that cooperating teachers should not intervene in student teachers' practice during their practicum unless it is deemed absolutely necessary. Similarly, Mansour & Al-Harbi (2011) found that the major problem facing student teachers was caused by the level of involvement of

cooperating teachers. Based on this, Al-Thabiti (2002) recommended that Saudi schools select cooperating teachers carefully for the teaching practicum, arguing that integrated systems need to be developed for the teaching practicum through clearly identifying the duties and responsibilities of all parties involved in this process.

Moreover, Al-Ajaji's (1997) indicates that 16% of cooperating teachers were satisfied with their current role monitoring, preparing and guiding student teachers, compared to the 31% of cooperating teachers who were not satisfied with this role. At the same time, 46% of cooperating teachers believed that their relationship with the university supervisors was not favourable. Al-Ajaji adds that cooperating teachers were found to be positively involved in improving and supporting student teachers, although the study found that cooperating teachers were frequently mistreated by university supervisors, which tended to discourage them from supporting student teachers. It should, however, be noted, that Al-Ajaji's study focused solely on cooperating teachers' satisfaction with their roles in others' teaching practicum and neglected the views of the other stakeholders involved in the teaching practicum, such as headteachers and university supervisors. Exploring relationships and the nature of the teaching practicum from the perspective of the two latter groups could have provided a larger-scale investigation and breadth of vision of the role of cooperating teachers and their interaction with other key participants in the teaching practicum, as well as a view of all players' satisfaction with the process. A broader exploration of the relevant contextual factors would have also been enlightening.

In another study conducted among 220 student teachers at the Faculty of Teachers at the University of Umm Al-Qura in Makkah City, Attar & Kinsarah (2005) reveal that student teachers tend to benefit and learn from cooperating teachers' experience regarding the use of traditional educational resources such as whiteboards, textbooks, drawings and posters. However, student teachers do not tend to learn from more experienced or long-service teachers about how to use modern IT equipment such as computers and the internet (Attar & Kinsarah, 2005). At the same time, their findings show that teachers with significant experience in schools can contribute significantly to developing student teachers' knowledge and skills. It is noteworthy that, as with other studies previously discussed in this section, Attar & Kinsarah's study focuses solely on student

teachers' views about the role of cooperating teachers in the teaching practicum, neglecting to take into account the views of other stakeholders there, such as headteachers, university supervisors and cooperating teachers. This single perspective approach means that in-depth analysis and appreciation of the roles that all stakeholders, and here, especially the cooperating teachers, play in the teaching practicum remains elusive. The contextual factors which could affect the effectiveness of cooperating teachers' roles were also not fully considered.

In conclusion, it is clear that a more rigorous approach to developing and applying specific criteria for choosing cooperating teachers (Bogas & Baraidah, 2006) and also for choosing practicum schools (Al-Thabiti, 2002) is necessary. Another consideration in this regard is to establish in clear terms the level and time that student teachers are allocated for classroom teaching practice because it has been found that Saudi headteachers often believe that student teachers should have more time available for classroom teaching practice (Shamo, 2001). Likewise, a pleasant environment at school and a positive and supportive part played by cooperating teachers and headteachers can enable student teachers to develop their teaching skills and prepare them for a successful career (Bogas & Baraidah, 2006; Attar & Kinsarah, 2005). Also, experienced cooperating teachers are a vital factor in providing a positive and effective model for student teachers to follow (Al-Thabiti, 2002), even though the former may sometimes intervene negatively and not always recognise student teachers' efforts in their teaching. This may especially be the case when student teachers adopt different teaching methods to cooperating teachers (Mansour & Al-Harbi, 2011; Al-Dakheel & Al-Mazroi, 1997).

The cooperating teachers are, therefore, part of the stakeholders due to the importance of their role in the teaching practicum. This suggests their views in this research may allow gaining a deep understanding of the nature of the teaching practicum. Besides, putting into consideration the classroom instructional context and the challenges that student teachers face in their teaching practicum is essential.

3.5.3 University supervisors

The university supervisor is another key player in the teaching practicum. Al-Dosari and Al-Thinian (2012) differentiate between university academic supervisors, who focus on the content of the teaching module and its importance, and university pedagogic supervisors who focus on teaching methods and educational skills. Al-Dosari and Al-Thinian add that, in the KSA, academic supervisors have replaced pedagogic supervisors in the supervision of student teachers in their teaching practicum because of an overall shortage of supervisors, which has negatively affected the quality of student teachers' supervision.

Several studies have investigated the qualities and roles of supervisors in the teaching practicum in the Saudi context. For example, Eid (1996) investigated the views of 56 student teachers regarding the characteristics and roles of supervisors in the teaching practicum, concluding that it is vital for university supervisors to be pedagogically, academically and professionally qualified. In addition, Eid's study suggests that university supervisors should maintain a positive relationship with student teachers based on respect, flexibility and patience. Similarly, Shamo (2001) confirmed the importance of the following: university supervisors' visits; student teachers' involvement in marking pupils' exam papers and actively preparing lessons during their training in the teaching practicum. In addition, Al-Shahri (2006) maintains that university supervisors should carefully consider all aspects of the teaching process and treat student teachers respectfully and appropriately.

Concerning university supervisors' level of satisfaction about student teachers, Al-Yahia (2003) claims that university supervisors are generally satisfied with student teachers' performance but that the supervisors in his study expressed some dissatisfaction with some of the administrative procedures involved in student teachers' supervision. Similarly, Al-Ajami (2006) indicated that many student teachers at the Faculty of Education in Abha City (KSA) believed that the designated teaching practicum centre at the university is ineffectual and incompetent in following up student teachers' complaints, addressing their concerns and meeting their needs.

Therefore, in order to assess how supervisors are performing, it is essential to consider the roles of all the significant others. Investigating the views of the

student teachers alone is insufficient in providing an accurate picture of the teaching practicum. The perspectives of the school principal or headteacher, the administrative staff at the school and university along with those of the cooperating teachers must all be investigated to build a fuller picture of the level of satisfaction with supervisors' roles. In addition, contextual factors should not be ignored in the data gathering as it could be argued that they have a significant impact on the performance of university supervisors.

With reference to assessing student teachers, Abed-Mustafa and Abu-Saleh (2006) researched 22 male and female supervisors to explore how they assess their student teachers. The findings showed that 46% of the study participants believed that the aims of the Teaching Practicum Programme (TPP) had been achieved to a moderate level; with another 31% stating that the aims of the TPP had been achieved to a great level, and with 21% believing that the TPP's aims had been achieved to a low level. However, it is worth noting here that Abed-Mustafa and Abu-Saleh's study only considered supervisors' views about assessment, rather than researching the views of all involved in the process of assessment. Besides, incorporating the views of student teachers about their experiences in Abed-Mustafa and Abu-Saleh's study could have resulted in a much more comprehensive evaluation of student-teacher assessment. In addition, cooperating teachers and school principals and heads contribute majorly to the assessment process of student teachers, which is why their opinions need to be taken into consideration.

Nonetheless, some studies have reported that student teachers also acknowledge the valuable role of universities in supporting and developing their theoretical learning and helping student teachers to improve their teaching performance (e.g. Shamo, 2001). However, student teachers have also been reported as complaining about the deficient and limited role of university supervisors (e.g., Al-Ajami, 2006; Abed-Mustafa & Abu-Saleh, 2006; Al-Shahri, 2006).

In summary, regarding the Saudi context, the literature suggests student teachers are not entirely satisfied with the effectiveness of university academic supervisors, as they tend to mainly focus on the content of the student teaching and pay less attention to teaching methodology (Al-Dosari & Al-Thinian, 2012). Also, it has been suggested by several Saudi researchers that university

supervisors should be fully qualified in three fundamental areas: academically, pedagogically and professionally (Eid, 1996). Hence, the above suggests the importance of university teachers' role in the teaching practicum and the classroom instructional context where student teachers evolve during their teaching practicum.

3.5.4 Head Teachers and the School administration

The practices of headteachers in Saudi Arabia when dealing with the technical and administrative problems facing student teachers at Saudi public schools has been the subject of research studies. For example, Al-Shahary's (2013) investigated the techniques and practices used by headteachers with regards to interacting with student teachers coming to their school. Al-Shahary listed the following: i) personally *welcoming* student teachers to the school; ii) allowing the student teachers to *relieve their stress* and to *talk freely*; iii) *giving student teachers a tour* around the school; iv) *explaining about school systems and procedures* to them; v) providing *guidance* to student teachers about *time management* in the classroom; vi) *inviting them to attend a model lesson* by an experienced teacher in the school or vii) *inspecting or monitoring student teachers' work* e. g. during the signing of their lesson preparation notebooks.

This is significant because, in the KSA context, headteachers are at the very core of the administrative domain of the student teachers' teaching practicum. However, other stakeholders in the teaching practicum, such as cooperating teachers and university supervisors, are all important contributors to the teaching practicum, and not only with the pedagogical dimension but also with regards to administrative aspects. In the Saudi context, headteachers tend to remain the most important aspect at the heart of the relationship between the school administration and the University.

Indeed, the relationship between the school administration and the university is necessary for developing and improving student teachers. As far as the KSA is concerned, few studies have investigated the relationship between schools and universities in this regard. Nonetheless, this is one reason why some of the aspects of this pivotal and key relationship are discussed in the next section.

One study highlighting the issue of positive university – school cooperation is that by Al-Mihaisin (1997) who investigated ten female and ten male student teachers

from each different specialism (Islamic studies, Arabic language, English language, life sciences, maths, art education and family education) within the college of education at King Abel-Aziz University in Saudi Arabia. The overall number of participants was 140 student teachers who reported a healthy and positive relationship and cooperation between the school and the university in a wide range of perspectives from different participant groups.

This suggests the importance of the relationship between the school administration and the university, which is investigated in this study, insofar as it impacts the quality teaching practicum and the extent of the challenges that student teachers face during their teaching practicum.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the main issues that pertain to the focus of the study in light of the relevant literature. In doing so, the chapter has discussed existing theories informing teacher education in general and ITE in particular with particular respect to professional learning and teachers' knowledge. Indeed, in addition to briefly reviewing the main learning theories that have had a significant impact on ITE models, the chapter has built on key sources regarding theories on the nature of teacher knowledge and professional learning as they apply to the preparation of teachers with the main theories that informed this research being reviewed in light of the aims of the study. Hence, the sociocultural learning theory, situated learning theory and the community of practice were deemed useful to make sense of the experiences of the participants of this study as they take into consideration the importance of the social and professional context of the teaching practicum.

It is worth noting here that the sociocultural learning theory applied through the notions of situated learning and community of practice addresses the importance of the social and cultural contexts of teaching and learning and can lead to a more developed understanding of and better insight about student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum. Additionally, significant others play an essential role in the student teachers' practicum and can have considerable influence as members of the community of practice concerning the experience which student teachers have of their teaching practicum.

The chapter also discussed the teaching practicum itself, focusing on its definition, significance and purposes in the Saudi context. Besides, the time and duration of the teaching practicum were examined in light of international and Saudi studies. Furthermore, some of the challenges faced by student teachers in the practicum were addressed in addition to the role of student teachers in the practicum as they are the main focus of the study. The chapter also highlighted two key aspects of the practicum for student teachers and ITE, that is, professional and psychological competencies. Some of the challenges related to the evaluation and assessment of student teachers were also discussed in this respect.

Thus, the chapter emphasised that investigating and understanding in more depth student teachers' perceptions, views and experience of their teaching practicum is essential. Therefore, through their participation, it is possible to gain a better appreciation of both the psychological and the professional domains of the teaching practicum and teaching practice in general. However, it is imperative that the role, views and influence of all those involved in the teaching practicum, are fully considered.

Therefore, as student teachers are not the sole focus of the study, other important aspects that may impact the teaching practicum were also examined. Indeed, it appears that, based on reviewed studies, in the Saudi context, several significant others occupy a very significant place in the practicum, such as university teachers and cooperating teachers. As this relationship between student teachers and significant others is at the core of supervision, the chapter reviewed different models of supervision as well as the supervisory practices in the Saudi context.

In all, based on the review of the literature, it seems that student teachers' personal views and evaluation of their teaching practicum from a qualitative perspective have been somewhat ignored, unexplored or unclear in the Saudi context. Moreover, the impact of significant others on student teachers and the relationships between them have not been extensively considered. Few studies on the teacher practicum have focused on separate and discrete areas (e.g. supervisory practices; assessment; supervisory models or relationships between the school) the teaching practicum location and the university. Also, most research, however, about student teachers' opinions and views of their

experience of their teaching practicum in the KSA has tended to adopt a quantitative methodology in the data gathering and analysis. In the same way, any in-depth investigation of the contextual factors influencing student teachers' experience in the teaching practicum has been minimal.

Therefore, it seems appropriate to explore thoroughly how student teachers of Arabic in the KSA view and perceive their teaching practicum. Besides, studying the nature of the relationship existing between the student teachers and significant others (primarily, cooperating teachers and university supervisors) involved in the teaching practicum can reveal the extent of the impact of such significant others upon Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. Finally, examining the various contextual factors which influence Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum can generate valuable, meaningful insights into this issue.

As a result, following the research aims, the study raises three main questions which can be formulated as follows:

1. How do Saudi student teachers of Arabic view their teaching practicum?
2. How do significant others impact on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum?
3. What factors influence Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, from the perspective of student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors?

The research questions were articulated based on previous studies and literature on how student teachers of Arabic in the KSA view and perceive their teaching practicum. These questions guided the choice of the exploratory approach and in designing the tools for gathering the required information.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of the study, its research design, an outline of the study sample and methods of data collection and analysis. It also discusses the trustworthiness and reliability of the research instruments and the potential challenges, limitations, and ethical issues.

4.2 Philosophical and Theoretical Assumptions

This study emphasises that multiple, socially constructed realities are not governed by natural laws. Therefore, such realities are constructed by individuals through a meaning-making process based on their subjective experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). This approach to inquiry places a great deal of emphasis on the notion of human understanding of the social world and the significance of peoples' interpretations of social phenomena (Crotty, 2003). The reality is constructed and acknowledged in context (Nunan, 1986).

In light of this argument, an exploratory qualitative methodology was adopted in this research to investigate the student teachers' experiences of their teaching practicum. Through this research, I have attempted to reach reality through seeking information regarding the views of the student teachers of Arabic in the KSA and then negotiating the meaning of these views about teaching practicum with them.

In addition, in the current study, sociocultural theory has provided a lens to analyse the experiences of Saudi student teachers of Arabic. This was done by examining the experience of the student teachers in relation to all the essential factors surrounding and affecting them. These factors include the teaching practicum with all its components, significant others (whether professionally, or inside an individual's family or friends or within an individual's outer circles of significant people), and the personal, educational, religious and cultural factors which interrelate together. This can help the reader understand the different layers of meaning behind the formation and professional development of Saudi student teachers of Arabic.

4.3 Research Design

In this research, I sought to investigate the reality of student teachers of Arabic views of their teaching practicum following an exploratory approach. This was conducted in a way where "significant features of the culture are allowed to emerge" (Holliday, 1997, p. 213). I decided to use an exploratory methodology in this study for the following key reasons. Firstly, the goals of this study appear to be somewhat different from what has been explored before in other studies in the KSA context. Secondly, it is difficult to start the study by precisely defining its concepts because of the gradual procedure of gathering data. Hence, this methodology started with preliminary notions of the focus and context of the study; then, these concepts gained definition and pertinence during the research (Creswell, 2009). Fourthly, it can be argued here that an exploratory study helped me focus more precisely on my personal theories and concerns. That is to say, the exploratory design has been adopted in this research to specifically provide an understanding of the meaning that teaching practicum has on Saudi student teachers of Arabic involved in this study, and the perceptions that inform their actions (Maxwell, 2005).

The current design was deemed appropriate for gaining an in-depth understanding of Saudi student teachers of Arabic and their experiences of the teaching practicum and the role played by the significant others in the process. This design was also underpinned by the belief that researching the views and perceptions of significant others, as well of those of student teachers, would elucidate different aspects of the teaching practicum of Saudi teachers of Arabic. This, in turn, would enrich and broaden general understanding of the nature, essence and associated issues concerning teaching practicum in the Saudi context, to merge different perspectives and views to provide information to be able to improve and develop the teaching practicum in the KSA.

Consequently, the current study used a mixed-methods approach employing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect quantitative and qualitative data relating to the teaching practicum of student teachers of Arabic in the KSA. The study started with the administration of a close-ended questionnaire, and quantitative data were analysed statistically. Qualitative data were obtained from open-ended questions in the questionnaire and semi-

structured interviews. These tools were used to provide insights from different perspectives and allowed cross-validation of the data through triangulation.

Following Greene et al. (1989), this study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach to gain more advantages through triangulation, complementarity, initiation, development and expansion of the collected data. Mixed methods can help achieve triangulation and gain a more precise and more in-depth understanding of reality through the combination of quantitative and qualitative data, which can bring additional strength and robustness to data collection and analysis (Punch, 2009). Similarly, triangulation techniques involving quantitative and qualitative data can enhance the strength and richness of understanding through acknowledging the complexity of human behaviour (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Based on these writers' endorsement of the importance of triangulation of data; the use of mixed research methods can help obtain a deeper understanding and generate a more detailed picture of the phenomenon of the teaching practicum for student teachers in the KSA. In the current study, this was achieved by using a questionnaire and conducting interviews to collect relevant data from Saudi student teachers of Arabic and significant others.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection affords more benefits to this research for obtaining in-depth insight into the research questions. This could be because the selection of the data collection tools is closely related to the nature of the questions asked, as stated by Punch:

> *"rather than either-or thinking about the qualitative-quantitative distinction, or tired arguments about the superiority of one approach over the other [...], the methods and data collection used (qualitative, quantitative or both) should follow from and fit in with the question(s) asked" (2009, p.4).*

Moreover, using a mixed-methods strategy of quantitative and qualitative methods is viewed as a complementary approach that fits the research questions and the type of research rather than focusing on making philosophical debates which can reduce the researcher's ability to adequately answer their questions (e.g. Seale, 1999; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Additionally, the use of a specific research method should match the researcher's epistemological position, and depends on what researchers seek to investigate, and how their approach reflects the paradigmatic nature of the work (Verma & Mallick, 1999).

With regards the validity of using a mixed-method design in the current research, it can be argued that this approach has enabled me to collect and analyse the data and reduce any potential negative effects of interference from my subjective perspective. Using a mixed research design is acceptable in the social sciences as it can bring additional benefits to the research outcomes since it involves the interweaving between the researcher's technical skills, known as *phronesis,* whereby s/he attempts to understand the participants' views and actions through an ethical lens, and the *praxis*, that is, the researcher's deliberate choice and decisions regarding the required research procedures (Maxcy, 2003).

Similarly, other researchers agree with the general need for multiple research methods to facilitate objectively investigating knowledge and other related issues about schoolteachers (Calderhead, 1996; Verloop et al., 2001). Accordingly, a mixed-methods design promotes the triangulation of data which reduces the impact of the researcher's individuality and subjective perspectives by supporting the internal validity of the data as well as revealing different aspects of the investigated issues. Verloop et al. (2001) highlight that the internal validity of the research requires a multi-method triangulation through which the researcher can cover not only the different aspects of teacher knowledge but also the transient aspects.

4.4 The Role of the Researcher

The study involved three groups of participants: student teachers, cooperating teachers in schools and university supervisors. It is noteworthy here that, I, the researcher of this study, was previously a student teacher at the same institution where this study was conducted and later, a university supervisor. Hence, this position as an insider has enabled me to understand first-hand the viewpoints of both student teachers and significant others. However, as explained earlier in the thesis (section 1.5), to understand my position and role in this research, it was essential to go beyond the insider-outsider dichotomy. Indeed, in some respects, I was also an outsider, a researcher having spent several years outside the institution and Saudi Arabia. This role shifted depending on my identity as a researcher and as an academic member of staff and also based on the participants' perceptions. My participants' perceptions of my position were complex as my position was floating within this insider-outsider spectrum.

With the academic supervisors, my role shifted depending on the situations and the individuals. For example, as a member of staff at the University of Hail, I was familiar with some of them who were colleagues. In this case, my position as an insider researcher was salient through our collegial relationship and our mutual work and cooperation in teaching before I left to the UK on a scholarship. However, I was not familiar with some of them as there were some new colleagues whom I had never met or worked with. Hence, they might have seen me as a stranger, that is, as an outsider in some respects although they knew that I was part of the institution. In this sense, I was likely perceived more as a researcher rather than a colleague. Some university supervisors and cooperating teachers were rather hesitant to speak freely at the beginning, perhaps because they were reluctant to reveal some of the critical issues about the realities and challenges of the teaching practicum. In this sense, my role and position as an insider might have impacted on their initial reactions. They might have thought that the reality of speaking openly might harm either their school or the university. To address their concerns, I did my best to convince them that their reported data would be kept anonymous, private and confidential.

As far as my relationship with the cooperating teachers is concerned, it was less complex as I had had no previous contacts with them. In this respect, I could also have been perceived as an outsider researcher given that we had no professional or collegial relationship. Nonetheless, being from Saudi Arabia, and from the region of Hail, I may have retained in their eyes a sense of belonging to their wider community.

With the student teachers, this relationship was also floating between this insider-outsider researcher continuum; it was not straightforward. Having been introduced to them as a researcher from the University of Hail, and a researcher from the UK, my position was ambivalent. Nonetheless, since I had had no previous encounter with them, either in my capacity as a teacher at the university or on a personal level, for the participating students, I was more of an outsider researcher. Indeed, the first time I met with the students was when I distributed the questionnaires. At the same time, being known as a member of staff, that is, a colleague of their teachers, this perception of strangeness may have been attenuated, and I could have been perceived as a semi-outsider.

Some researchers have argued that there are advantages to being an insider. For instance, I believe I had a reasonable level of similar first-hand knowledge of the daily life problems and challenges of the research participants (Asselin, 2003; Khaliza, 2017; Kanuha, 2000). Therefore, being aware of and familiar with the study context, I was able to dispense with some of the formalities and time needed in either contacting or building workable relationships with the research participants (Asselin, 2003).

I do understand, however, that this insider position may have interfered with the research and the interpretation of the data (Kanuha, 2000). Thus, I was fully aware, from the initial stages of the research, of the implications of being a part of the investigation, which meant questioning biases and judgements at every step of the research and taking nothing for granted. However, in contrast to these initial anticipations, this insider position potentially granted me more acceptance and cooperation on behalf of the participants, who may have been more open with me since they understood that my research was intended to improve the system in which we were all participants.

With regard to the development of the research questions, I felt that my position as an insider researcher was a major advantage due to my prior knowledge of the wider and immediate context of the study. This enabled me to formulate research questions based on an in-depth understanding of the key issues of concern for the present study in relation to the teaching practicum. This also ensured and enhanced the appropriateness and relevance of the questions raised. Moreover, in terms of design, as an insider researcher, the main challenge I faced related to the "rigour and transparency in the methods of data collection" (Fleming, 2018). I was fully aware of the potential bias due to my position and how this could impact on the participants' responses. For example, the way I could be perceived by the respondents, whether inside or outside the research context may have influenced our relationship and their answers during the interviews. Therefore, it was important, especially during the qualitative stage of the research, not to share my experiences of the practicum with the participants to remain as neutral as possible and minimise the influence of my bias and subjectivity. This was particularly challenging as I did not want this to affect the trust and rapport I had managed to build with the participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Mercer, 2007).

This research and the ongoing reflection upon my position in this research in relation to the context and the participants clearly showed me the complexity of the notions of insider and outsider and that they needed to be understood outside these boundaries. This reflexive process involved a careful examination of my beliefs and practices as a researcher in this research and how my position and my relationship with all three groups of participants might have influenced the research process and outcome. As a result, I became increasingly aware of the need to question well-grounded assumptions, including assumptions about my positionality. Rather than looking at my role as either an insider or an outsider, I needed to go beyond the "definitions of the outsider as detached and objective, and the insider as culturally embedded and subjective" (McNess et al., 2015, p. 295). The position of a researcher as either an insider or an outsider should be revised because researchers can be both insiders and outsiders, that is "members of some groups and not of others by reason of gender, language, cultural/professional background, nationality, ethnicity and age" (McNess et al., 2015, p. 295).

I ensured that the research was conducted with care, rigour and in a trustworthy manner to limit the potential negative impact of my personal biases. Hence, as explained later in the thesis in greater details, I did my best to guarantee the trustworthiness of the research ensuring its credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) while researching in an ethical manner. Additionally, to mitigate any charges of insider bias, this research project employed mixed methods whilst collecting the data to ensure triangulation. Understanding the context and the background of the student sample, as well as appreciating the nature of the background of the significant others, especially the university supervisors, may, in fact, have enhanced and privileged my role as a researcher, especially in terms of the depth of the analysis of the collected data. My inside knowledge was also beneficial when analysing the data collected in this research because I was able to interpret the findings based on my prior knowledge of the context and my experiences.

4.5 Data Collection Procedures

This research involved two data collection stages: a quantitative stage (using a questionnaire) and a qualitative stage (using semi-structured interviews). All the participants involved in the current research were selected from those involved in the teaching practicum school in the General Diploma, whilst all the university supervisors participating in this research were responsible for these placement schools as part of their duties. Before collecting the data, ethical approval had to be obtained from the University of Exeter (See Appendix 3), the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education and the University of Hail. Once all of the necessary permissions were sought and granted, both phases of the fieldwork were conducted over three months during the academic year 2014 - 2015, from January 25th to April 23rd, as explained in the following table:

Table 4.1 Phases of the study and timeline

	Phases	Timeline
First phase	The quantitative study	25th Jan – 1st March 2015
Second phase	The qualitative study	5th March - 22nd April 2015

4.5.1 Questionnaire Respondents

This study was conducted in some of the teaching practicum schools, which collaborated with the college of education at the University of Hail in Saudi Arabia. This study used *'convenience sampling'* for ease of access to the participants, the university and the schools involved in this research (Silverman, 2001). Table 4.2 describes the type of sample used in the current study and the number of the respondents to the questionnaire and the number of the interviewees of student teachers, university supervisors and cooperating teachers. The sample was composed of 113 student teachers aged between 23 to 24 years old. Of these, 32 students withdrew from the study, whilst six students deferred their study to the following year. As a result, the study involved a total of 75 participants, of whom ten students were used for piloting, and four students for interview trial runs. Consequently, the final remaining number of participants in the main study was 61 student teachers, including 41 female student teachers and 20 male student teachers. However, as two female student teachers did not fill in the questionnaire, a total of 59 students completed the questionnaire (i.e. 39 female

student teachers and 20 male student teachers). I obtained a formal letter of approval from the University of Hail to access this sample to adhere to the ethical and administrative guidelines in place in Saudi Arabia (see appendix 9).

Table 4.2 Study sample description

No of Participants	Sampling process
32	Withdrew from the study after registration.
6	Deferred their study to next year.
10	Participated in the piloting.
4	Participated in the Interview trials.
61	41 females and 20 males
2	Female participants did not fill in questionnaires
7	University supervisors of different specialisations in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction, College of Education, University of Hail.
7	interviews with cooperating teachers of Arabic.
59	Responded to the questionnaire (39 females, 20 males).

Student teachers were selected using *'homogeneous sampling'* to investigate and analyse this particular group in more depth (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006), taking the following four criteria into consideration:

a) Specialised in teaching Arabic.

b) Arabic language graduates from the College of Arts studying the teaching practicum component at the College of Education, University of Hail.

c) Conducting their placement at schools in the Hail region.

d) Curriculum and Instruction Department at the College of Education-University of Hail supervising student teachers at the placement school

Using homogeneous sampling, all participants were chosen because they had or shared similar traits. The idea of homogeneous sampling involves the selection of people from similar backgrounds and experiences. It also decreases dissimilarity, facilitates analysis, and helps group interviewing. The above criteria enabled participants to be selected, who shared the same specialisation (Arabic teaching) and were conducting their teaching practicum at schools in the Hail region. In addition, they were Arabic language graduates from the College of Arts studying the teaching practicum component at the College of Education.

4.5.2 Interview Respondents

Collecting data just from the core participants, i.e. the student teachers, was not deemed enough to be able to draw a detailed picture and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Although student teachers were believed the key participants, approaching other participants associated with the process of teaching was also crucial for understanding the influence of other factors of the research, such as the administration (the cooperating teachers) and the supervision (university supervisors). Significant others play a pivotal role in accounting for the complexity of the reality of the teaching practicum and their perspectives have contributed to illuminating other factors which influence Saudi student teachers of Arabic experiences of their teaching practicum.

As explained above, the first stage of the research included a quantitative phase with 59 student teachers completing a questionnaire. For the second stage of this research, 20 student teachers were chosen from those who participated in the first stage (questionnaires) to conduct semi-structured interviews. In addition to this, seven university supervisors and seven cooperating teachers took part in this qualitative stage of the study. Cooperating teachers who had responded to the questionnaires were selected from the seven different schools receiving student teachers in Hail, KSA. University supervisors were selected according to the location of the placement school of the student teachers involved in the study. The university supervisors selected came from the same college where I work, i.e. the Curriculum and Instruction Department at the College of Education at the University of Hail.

The qualitative stage of the research allowed participants to offer more in-depth information by allowing participants to freely express their attitudes, according to their views about the teaching practicum. Although questionnaires constitute a suitable method for reaching a large number of participants, they often provide limited information about the phenomenon under investigation, so interviews were used as they were an effective tool to enhance the depth, richness and overall quality of the data collected.

It is worth bearing in mind that Saudi Arabian cultural and religious customs and norms did not afford the opportunity to allow female student teachers' participation in the semi-structured interviews, although female participants responded to the questionnaire. I do not think that being a male researcher has

had any impact on the nature of the female students' responses as I was not allowed into their campus. The head of the female campus received the questionnaire copies and distributed them among the female participants and returned them back to me when they were completed. In addition, this issue was attenuated by the anonymity of the responses as the name was optional in the questionnaire.

I tried hard from the very beginning to involve female student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors in the data collection process. However, the head of the female campus refused to allow the collection of data from their side. I also tried to hire a female research assistant to help me with the data collection, but this proposal was also rejected.

4.6 Research Instruments

As this study was based on a mixed-methods design, two different instruments were used: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, as highlighted in the following sections.

4.6.1 Questionnaires

It is widely acknowledged that the majority of research projects in the behavioural and social sciences involve the collection of some questionnaire data (Dornyei, 2003) at one stage or another. Questionnaires were used as an instrument of data collection in this research for the following reasons: Firstly, it is considered as a quick technique for obtaining information from a large number of participants in a short period (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Secondly, questionnaires are often considered as important instruments for collecting data in educational research (Oppenheim, 2001 p.10) as they offer the possibility of clarifying the structure of the research and facilitating the process of data analysis (Wellington, 2000; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Thirdly, in the questionnaires, there is no 'interviewer effect' on the answers of the participants (Grix, 2004, p. 129). Therefore, responses can be kept anonymous, and any potential bias that might be caused by the interviewer subjectivity could be avoided (Bell, 1999). That is, using questionnaires allow the participants to express their opinions freely without being influenced by the researcher (Foddy, 1993, p.127).

The student teachers' questionnaire used in this research was developed and based on the relevant literature and the questions raised by this investigation (e.g. Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Lamote & Engels, 2010). Previous questionnaires about student teachers' teaching practicum were also taken into consideration and adapted to suit the Saudi Arabian context (See Appendix 4). This questionnaire included 40 closed questions and six open questions. In this respect, Jackson & Trochim (2002) claim that open questions tend to generate responses in participants' words, while closed questions are more rigid and measurable.

The questionnaire was developed based on a 5-point Likert type scale. The validity of the questionnaire was tested before conducting the pilot study; *'face validity'* was guaranteed by administering the questionnaire to several colleagues to ensure that its categories and questions were relevant to the focus and the research questions of the study. Then, the questionnaire was piloted among ten participants to enhance its reliability.

Using the questionnaire before the interviews was useful to obtain information to gain a good understanding of the research topic before going more deeply into the topic through interviews. Conducting the questionnaire first facilitated the design and development of the interviews based on the initial findings of the quantitative study. In addition, it was also effective to get to know the participants and check their willingness to take part in the interviews.

Another reason for using the questionnaire was the limited number of participants who could be interviewed. Also, the use of the questionnaire was an important aspect of the process of triangulation. It is common among researchers to use questionnaires to investigate educational issues; for example, Meijer et al. (2001) used questionnaires to investigate diversity and similarities among 69 language teachers in high schools.

The questionnaire was designed based on a 1-5 scale of agreement: "strongly agree" (5), "agree" (4), "neutral" (3), "disagree" (2) and "strongly disagree" (1). This type of scale is widely used in questionnaires to gather data from participants. For example, Oppenheim (2001) argues that questionnaires based on Likert-type scales can provide precise information about the level of disagreement or agreement of the participants about specific issues. In this research, the student teachers' questionnaire consisted of 43 questions divided

into three main sections: (1) introduction, (2) demographic information and (3) aspects of the student teachers' teaching practicum.

The first section introduced the main guiding idea behind the questionnaire and reminded the participants about the confidentiality of the information and their freedom of expression of their feelings, views and opinions. This part of the questionnaire also informed the participants that there was no correct or incorrect answer and that the questionnaire was not a test which would be used to assess or evaluate the participants.

The second part of the questionnaire covered participants' demographic information, including their name (optional); age; email address and contact number. Finally, the third part focused on the content of the research topic per se and covered the following five aspects of ST' teaching practicum experiences: (1) commitment to teaching, (2) student teachers' sense of efficacy (3) student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, (4) student teachers' practical experiences and (5) supervision in the teaching practicum. This section included closed questions along with open-ended questions about the experiences of student teachers in the teaching practicum. Table 4.3 summarises the questionnaire categories and the number of the corresponding items.

Table 4.3 Questionnaire categories and the number of corresponding items

Questionnaire Category	Number of Questions
a) Student teachers' commitment to Teaching	7 close-ended items and 1 open-ended question
b) Student teachers' sense of efficacy	9 close-ended items and 1 open-ended question
c) Student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge	8 close-ended items and 1 open-ended question
d) Student teachers' practical experiences	10 close-ended items and 1 open-ended question
e) Supervision in the teaching practicum.	6 close-ended items and 2 open-ended questions

Finally, open-ended questions were also applied in this instrument to give each participant the opportunity and freedom to add their comments, express their thoughts, and talk about their views about the teaching practicum in KSA away from any possibility of the interviewer's subjectivity. Consequently, the participants were encouraged to write down their opinions, spontaneously, which is important as a basis for new investigations (Oppenheim, 2001).

This questionnaire was developed based on several sources: similar data collection instruments from the literature (e.g. Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Lamote and Engels, 2010), colleagues' input and

suggestions to validate the questionnaire together with my personal and professional experience as a supervisor in teaching practicum at the University of Hail.

Having developed the draft questionnaire, it was piloted to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument and the data collected. According to the outcome of the pilot study, this questionnaire was subsequently amended and refined before it could be used in the main study with the selected sample. Table 4.4 below summarises the sources used for the design of the instrument by category.

Table 4.4 Sources used for the design of the instrument by category

Questionnaire Categories	Sources from the Literature
Commitment to Teaching	• Yıldız, Gecikli, & Yeşilyurt (2016) – Sts in Turkey Turkish Prospective English Teachers' Reflections on Teaching Practice. *Universal Journal of Educational Research.* • Ukeredzi, Tabitha. (2014) Re-envisioning teaching practice: Student teacher learning in a cohort model of practicum in a rural South African context. *International Journal of Educational Development.*
Sense of Efficacy	• Oh, Sunjin, "The sources that influence student teachers' sense of efficacy" (2010). Graduate Theses and Dissertations. 11781. http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/11781 • Poulou, M. (2007). Personal teaching efficacy and its sources: student teachers' perceptions. Educational Psychology, 27(2), 191-218.
Student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge	• Schoeman, Sonja & L Mabunda, P. (2011). Teaching practice and the personal and socio-professional development of prospective teachers. *South African Journal of Education.* • Rakicioglu-Soylemez, Anil & Eroz-Tuga, Betil (2014). Mentoring Expectations and Experiences of Prospective and Cooperating Teachers during Practice Teaching. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education.*
Student teachers' practical experiences	• Naylor, D. A., Campbell-Evans, G., & Maloney, C. (2015). Learning to Teach: What Do Pre-service Teachers Report. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(11). • Zeichner, K. (2010). Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education.*
Supervision in the teaching practicum	• Ong'ondo, C.O. & O Jwan, Julius (2009). Research on student-teacher learning, collaboration and supervision during the practicum: A literature review. *Educational Research and Reviews.* 4. 515-524. • Masadeh, Thouqan (2017). Opportunities and Barriers to Practicum from the Perspectives of English Language Student, Teachers. *Universal Journal of Educational Research.* • Mahmoudi, Farzaneh & ÿzkan, Yonca (2016). Practicum Stress and Coping Strategies of Pre-service English Language Teachers. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences.*

4.6.1.1 Main insights from the piloting

The piloting of questionnaires is a common practice before its actual application in the main data collection phase, as it provides an opportunity for researchers to test the items contained in their instruments, the validity of these, along with the ways of improving them. Although the piloting is an additional step in the overall research procedure, it provided an interesting and valid aspect of this research project as it enabled me to assess the viability of conducting the questionnaire within the allotted time. I conducted a pilot study of the questionnaire with ten students, and several participants suggested removing some items as the questionnaire was deemed slightly too long to complete. In total, three items were removed from the questionnaire. As suggested by some participants, some items overlapped with other items, so they were removed. The items "I can help students develop students' Arabic vocabulary repertoire", "I know how to develop students' Arabic pronunciation skills" and "I can make students responsible for learning" were removed from the questionnaire. For example, I felt that the item about vocabulary was addressed within two other items about reading and writing skills ("I know how to develop students' Arabic reading skills" and "I know how to develop students' Arabic writing skills"). In addition, the item about pronunciation seemed to overlap with the item about speaking skills ("I know how to develop students' Arabic speaking skills"). Finally, the item about students' learning was close to items about student's engagement and collaborative learning ("I can engage students in learning" and "I can help students work collaboratively"). This ensured that, after modification, the questionnaire was appropriate and workable for the chosen respondents (see Appendix 4). A section was also added at the beginning of the questionnaire to request students' participation in an interview. Those willing to take part in a follow-up interview could write their contact detail on a space provided.

I piloted the interview questions with two cooperating teachers, and no amendments were made to the schedule. Two student teachers participated in the pilot interview, which resulted in two amendments. First, I added more clarification to Q. 3 (i.e. How does the teaching practicum school help you *to become accepted in the school environment*?). Second, I added Q. 12 (How do you respond to the supervisors' feedback?) to the interview schedule. In addition, interview questions were piloted with two university supervisors, which resulted

in two amendments to the interview questions. First, I added 'Why' to Q.4 to know the reasons behind the challenges that face student teachers in the teaching practicum. The other amendment was adding a new question (Q.12) asking about student teachers' reaction to their supervisors' feedback. Finally, the piloting of the interviews allowed me to estimate that 30 minutes would be sufficient to conduct an interview (see Appendix 5 and 6 for interview questions).

4.6.1.2 Translation of the Questionnaire

The developed questionnaires were translated into Arabic because the participants of the current study were all from the KSA and were native speakers of Arabic. The questionnaire was translated by two bilingual professional translators specialised in educational translation to ensure that the targeted meanings of the questionnaire items were accurately translated into Arabic.

The interview questions were also translated into Arabic, as the participants were native Arabic speakers. In doing so, the process of *"back translation"* was used whereby the original copy was first translated from Arabic into English (my translation); this copy was then translated from English into Arabic by two independent translators. Following this, both translators compared the two translated versions to check the accuracy of the translation. As a result, no significant issues arose from the two different versions of the translation and the translation was deemed accurate. For a copy of the Arabic questionnaire, see Appendix 13.

4.6.1.3 Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered amongst students at the College of Education, at University of Hail between the 25th January and the 1st March 2015. The student teachers were asked by their professors to participate voluntarily in the study by completing the questionnaire. As the participation was voluntary, some students declined to participate, but most of them accepted. The student teachers expressed their willingness to participate in the study voluntarily. I as the researcher was available when the male participants completed the questionnaire to answer any questions relating to this. Most of the student teachers who were present completed the questionnaire, and a few of them asked questions about specific items that were unclear to them; these items were explained verbally. Some students indicated their willingness to participate voluntarily in the interview, as well.

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In this research, questionnaires are insufficient for collecting valid and rich data as respondents may not be completely honest and objective with their answers. This can happen for several reasons, including social desirability, bias and protection of their privacy. It can also be difficult to infer any feelings or attitudes from the respondents through a questionnaire. In addition, questionnaire data do not tend to differentiate the individuality of the respondents and their unique personalities. Moreover, Pring's asserts that there is a certain *"claimed uniqueness of each respondent's understanding of an event or activity"* (2004, p. 40). Equally, some questions can be difficult to understand without additional explanation, and others may be omitted for a variety of reasons. Therefore, as highlighted in the following section, to overcome the limitations of only using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews have also been used to gather richer and more textured data to gain a deeper understanding and construct a more detailed and comprehensive picture of the investigated research topic: namely student teachers' experiences of the teaching practicum.

4.6.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview data were gathered from semi-structured interviews with different types of participants, namely, 20 student teachers, 7 university supervisors and 7 cooperating teachers to investigate how different participants would interpret the same phenomenon from different perspectives. This is also one of the justifications for adopting a multiple-research methods approach. Hence, both quantitative and qualitative data have informed the results of the study.

The interviews were conducted with all the study participants in Arabic for several reasons. First, Arabic was the participants' mother tongue, and none of them was fluent in English. For this reason, student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors preferred to conduct the interview in Arabic as they felt more at ease when speaking in Arabic. Finally, Arabic was preferred as the language of the interview because all participants were specialists in the Arabic Language, and the interviews often required the use of specific terminology.

Using the interviews with the questionnaire as data collection tools lends further credibility and depth to the study. It allows the researcher to cross-validate the data and capture different dimensions about the same phenomenon. For example, the use of interviews as a further data collection method allows research into multiple perspectives, thereby allowing for triangulation and

reducing the risk of researcher bias by encouraging the participants to freely express their thoughts and feelings (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). In this regard, Kajornboon (2005, p. 6) claims that *"the researcher can prompt and probe deeper into the given situation and can explain or rephrase the questions if respondents are unclear about the questions"*.

Furthermore, interviews may provide analyses of the subjective meaning and the practices as well as the different contextual factors. As illustrated by Flick (2014, p. 542): *"qualitative research is interested in analysing subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardised data and analysing texts and images rather than number and statistics"*. Consequently, the use of interviews as a further data collection tool can offer the opportunity to explore the influence of sociocultural factors on participants and reveal more detailed meaning during the interpretation and analysis of the data. As a result, interviews can act as a powerful tool to enhance the quality and variety of the data collected from participants and allow more significant insights into the research questions (Lamb, 2007).

4.6.2.1 Development of the Interview Schedule

In this research, the interview was the primary research instrument and was an essential tool to allow interviewees to freely express their feelings and experiences (Brown & Dowling, 1998). Interviews are useful to enrichen the data and generate a clearer understanding of the teaching practicum of student teachers of Arabic within both professional and cultural contexts (Snape & Spencer, 2003).

The current study used semi-structured interviews as it fits its purpose and focus. Semi-structured interviews, in this regard, started with a set of general topics to encourage the participants to talk about their experiences and thoughts about a specific phenomenon (Radnor, 1994). In addition, Kvale (2007) states, that a research interview is "not an open and dominance of free dialogue between egalitarian partners, but a specific hierarchical and instrumental form of conversation, where the interviewer sets the stage and scripts in accord with his or her research interests" (p. 485). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted in this research to allow "flexibility to decide the range and order of questions within a guide or framework" (Wellington, 2015, p. 141). This technique of interviewing was especially useful in this study as it allowed to maintain the

desired focus of the research while providing the flexibility of non-structured interviews at the same time (Harris & Bell, 1994). Hence, semi-structured interviews were used to describe the teaching practicum in KSA from the student teachers' points of view. This instrument is also used to explore what thoughts and experience student teachers have about the challenges they face in their teaching practicum. In this respect, using semi-structured interviews facilitated deeper insight and understanding of the views of student teachers about their teaching practicum and its components, in addition to understanding both the positive and negative, personal and environmental factors, which student teachers perceive as having an impact on their teaching practicum.

The participants were invited voluntarily to express their views openly about the issues raised in the questionnaire about teaching practicum. The student-teachers appeared slightly worried, with some of them reluctant to fill in the questionnaire. I asked the professors to help to encourage the student teachers to fill in the questionnaire by reassuring them of the importance of voicing their opinions explicitly and expressing their concerns. It was made clear to the student teachers that the results of the questionnaire would help in improving the programme and would address any concerns or issues about their teaching practicum, thereby potentially raising the standards of pre-service Arabic teaching.

While collecting data from questionnaires, I had the chance to talk in Arabic with many student teachers informally and get acquainted with them. I told them about the purpose of my research and that I needed their help to complete the questionnaire and conduct interviews with some of them. In addition, most students seemed to be motivated by the fact that I was a faculty member at the same university, but on a study leave. This is because it is widely acknowledged that there is a kind of familiarity between the university supervisors and the student teachers in the KSA. This also relates to my positionality as a researcher, as explained earlier in the thesis (Section 4.4). I also asked some professors at the Curriculum & Instruction Department to take part voluntarily in interviews. They volunteered to take part as they wanted to share several issues with me. This allowed me to discuss many of the student teachers' concerns with them and help them to express their implicit meanings by framing the questions of the interview differently so that they understood better.

Several interview questions were adapted from other research studies and added into the schedule (See Table 4.5). For example, certain questions focusing on some of the influencing factors on the teaching practicum were inspired by different research studies. In addition, I sought to include theoretical aspects and practical dimensions in the schedule to consolidate the questions and elicit participants' views, opinions and experience of the teaching practicum in their context. Also, it was essential to consider the potential flaws and shortcomings of the interview in terms of the students wanting to please me by giving answers they might have thought I wanted to hear. Consequently, it was necessary to assess how far this was the case and to mitigate this potential risk (this aspect is explained in more details later in this chapter).

The interview schedule was developed based mainly on two sources: research questions in the current study, and those in previous studies (e.g. Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Lamote & Engels, 2010). However, encouragement for the Student teachers to expand further or provide more clarification or explanation was done through the use of regular prompts and probing. Table 4.5 and Table 4.6 illustrate some of the prompts and supplementary questions used to facilitate the interviewee's understanding of the questions and elicit rich responses to the interview questions.

Table 4.5 Student teachers – sources for interview questions

Student teachers' interview questions	Source used for the question
1. **What do you think of your preparation programme at university ?Probe: Teaching methods course, pedagogical Courses,…etc. Why do you think so?**	Al-magableh, F. (2010). An evaluation of English practicum at Yormuk University from cooperating teachers and student-teachers' perspectives. *International Journal of Language Studies,* 4, 263–300.
2. **What role do you think the cooperating teacher/university supervisor plays in the teaching practicum?**	Arnold, P. (2002). Cooperating teachers' professional growth through the supervision of student teachers and participation in a collegial study group. *Teacher Education Quarterly,* 29, 123–132.
3. **How does the teaching practicum school help you to become accepted in the school environment? Probes: school administration, cooperating teachers, university supervisor, facilities & services,**	Broad, K., & Tessaro, L. (2010). Authentic voices from the field. In T. Falkenberg & H. Smits (Eds.), Field experience in the context of reform in Canadian teacher education programs (pp. 79–90). Winnipeg: Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. Retrieved from http://www.umanitoba.ca/education/TEResearch/Conference2009.html

	teachers' understanding of ST' needs .	
4.	**What challenges/difficulties do you experience in the teaching practicum? Why?**	Hamaidi, D., Al-Shara, I., Arouri, J., & Abu Awwad, F. (2014). Student-teachers' perspectives of practicum practices and challenges. *European Scientific Journal*, 10, 191–214.
5.	**How do you overcome these challenges?**	Pinder, H. (2008, September 3–6). Navigating the practicum: Student teacher perspectives on their learning. Paper presented to the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh.
6.	**What kind of support do you receive in the teaching practicum ? Probe: professional responsibilities pedagogical strategies- instructional strategies - classroom management - classroom environment - assessment techniques- Relationship with colleagues.** **Which of these are most useful? Why?**	Gebhard, J. G. (2009). The practicum. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education* (pp. 250–258). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
7. How have your experiences in life affected your views about the role of a teacher? Probes: Prior experience as a student, previous teaching experience, previous teachers, family, culture, religion…others.		Ewing, R., & Le Cornu, R. (2010). From practice teaching to practicum to professional experience. In R. Ewing, T. Lowrie, & J. Higgs (Eds.), *Teaching communication: Rethinking professional experience* (pp. 31–41). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
8. How does the teaching practicum help you in your teaching of Arabic? Probes: Lesson plan, teaching vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, speaking…etc.		Hamaidi, D., Al-Shara, I., Arouri, J., & Abu Awwad, F. (2014). Student-teachers' perspectives of practicum practices and challenges. *European Scientific Journal,* 10, 191–214.
9. What do you think about your relationships with others involved in the teaching practicum? Probes: Headteacher, cooperating teacher, university supervisor, student teachers, pupils at the school.		Patrick, R. (2013). "Don't rock the boat": Conflicting mentor and pre-service teacher narratives of professional experience. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 40,
10. Are you willing to take extra classes? Why?		This was added as an important issue about the teaching practicum arising out of my experience with the student teachers.
11. What issues do you discuss in the supervisory meetings?		Huling, L. (1998). Early field experiences in teacher education (ERIC Digest, *ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED429054)*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education.
12. How do you respond to the supervisors' feedback?		Martin, D., Snow, L., & Franklin, T. (2011). Navigating the terrain of third space: Tensions with/in relationships in school-university partnerships. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62.

Table 4.6 Cooperating teachers' and university supervisors' interview questions & sources used

Cooperating teachers and university supervisors' interview questions	Source used for the question
1. What do you think about student teachers' preparation program at the university? **Probe: Why do you think so?**	Freking, A. (2006). Missing voices: Beginning teachers' experiences and perspectives on the mentoring relationship (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Illinois State University, Normal, Il.
2. What are student teachers' duties and responsibilities, in your opinion?	Grove, K., Strudler, N., & Odell, S. (2004). Mentoring toward technology use: Cooperating teacher practice in supporting student teachers. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 37(1), 85-109.
3. How do you support student teachers in the teaching practicum? **Probe: 'Why are these areas important?'**	Sawchuk, S. (2012). Student-teacher mentoring targeted. *Education Week*, 32(13) DOI 02774232.
4. What difficulties/challenges do you think student teachers might experience in the teaching practicum? **Probe: Why?**	Goodfellow, J. (2000). Knowing from inside: Reflective conversations with and through narratives of one cooperating teacher. *Reflective Practice*, 1(1), 25-42.
5. How do you as a supervisor helps student teachers overcome the challenges, they face in the teaching practicum?	Henry, A., & Weber, A. (2010). *Supervising student teachers: The profound way.* (7th ed). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
6. How do you prepare student teachers in the teaching practicum? **Probes:** ▪ **professional responsibilities** ▪ **pedagogical strategies** ▪ **instructional strategies** ▪ **classroom management** ▪ **classroom environment** ▪ **assessment techniques** ▪ **relationship with colleagues**	He, Y., & Levin, B. (2008). Match or mismatch? How congruent are the beliefs of teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and university-based teacher educators? *Teacher Education Quarterly,* 35(4), 37-55.
7. What factors do you think contribute to the construction of student teachers' experience of teaching practicum? **Probes: Prior-knowledge, previous teaching experience, past and present teachers, family, culture, religion…others.**	Dooley, M., Dangel, R., & Farran, K. (2011). Current issues in teacher education: 2006-2009. *Action in Teacher Education,* 33(3), 298-313.
8. How does the teaching practicum help student teachers in their teaching of Arabic? **Probes: lesson plan, teaching vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, speaking…etc.**	Caires, S., & Almedida, S. (2007). Positive aspects of the teacher training supervision: The student teachers' perspective. European Journal of Psychology of Education, 22(4), 515-528.
9. What do you think about the relationships that student teachers develop with others involved in the teaching practicum?	Leshem, S. (2012). The many faces of mentor-mentee relationships in a pre-service teacher education programme. Creative Education.

Probes: Headteacher, cooperating teacher, university supervisor-student teachers, students at the school.	
10. Are student teachers willing to take extra classes? Why?	This is added as an important issue of teaching practicum rising out of my experience with the student teachers.
11. What issues do you discuss with your student teachers in the supervisory meetings?	Fantozzi, B. (2012). Making meaning in student teaching. *Action in Teacher Education,* 34(2), 146-158.
12. How do student teachers respond to the supervisors' feedback?	Dooley, M., Dangel, R., & Farran, K. (2011). Current issues in teacher education: 2006-2009. *Action in Teacher Education,* 33(3), 298-313.

4.6.2.2 Data collection procedures

The data collection process went through some procedures. First of all, I arranged a meeting with the Vice President for Research at University of Hail to inform him that I needed to collect data from the participants in the College of Education and the assigned teaching practicum schools. Accordingly, he informed the Dean of the College of Education to facilitate the data collection process. In addition, he informed the Director of Education at Hail City to facilitate the data collection at the teaching practicum schools. Second, I sought the official permission from the Dean of the College of Education to collect data from faculty members at the Curriculum & Instruction Dept. and student teachers of Arabic at the teaching practicum. I met with the Head of the Curriculum & Instruction Dept. and colleagues at the same department in their monthly departmental meeting to inform them about the process of data collection from faculty members and student teachers of Arabic. Thirdly, I communicated with the faculty members who have supervisory duties at some assigned teaching practicum schools to request their voluntary participation in the research study. I gave them the information sheets and ethical approval in Arabic and English to read and sign. Moreover, I contacted the university supervisors to arrange appropriate times and place to conduct the interviews. These university supervisors were experienced researchers and familiar with conducting interviews. Only two university supervisors were too busy to conduct the interview with me due to their administrative duties, but later they were able to invite me to their office to conduct the interview with them. All university supervisors were pleased to know that my research focus was on the teaching practicum as they wanted to improve the current status at the teaching practicum schools. They read the information sheets in Arabic (See appendix 17) and signed them voluntarily. I ensured them

that the collected data would be anonymous, confidential and for research purposes only.

The interview schedule consisted of twelve questions to be asked to student teachers, cooperating teachers and supervisors (see Appendix 5 and Appendix 6). The interview schedule covered the following topics:

1. Teacher preparation programme at the university
2. Supervisors' role in the teaching practicum
3. Teaching practicum school
4. Challenges in the teaching practicum
5. Support in the teaching practicum
6. Experiences in life and the role of a teacher
7. The teaching of Arabic in the teaching practicum
8. Relationships with significant others in and out of the teaching practicum
9. Supervisory meetings, issues and challenges
10. Supervisors' feedback

As explained in section 4.6.1.1, interview questions were piloted with two university supervisors to check the clarity of the questions. Having completed the piloting of the interview questions, I scheduled meetings with the other university supervisors. There was initial reluctance by some supervisors to participate perhaps due to my shifting, ambivalent positionality and identity as an academic researcher from the UK and an academic member of staff (a semi insider/outsider). This was addressed by ensuring ethical protocols were strictly adhered to (see section 4.4); as a result, participants replied to my interview questions in depth.

The students that I interviewed did not know me as I had been away from the university for some years while completing my Ph.D. degree at the University of Exeter. Hence, I believe that because I was not able to impact the students' assessment or grades, for instance, my presence was not a cause for concern or improper power relation. This might have been a source of concern if I had been working within the department at the time of the data collection. Nonetheless, power issues should not be ignored and were acknowledged given my ambivalent positionality. It was, therefore, essential to establish a friendly relationship with the students right from the start and eliminate any source of unequal relationship

that might have influenced their responses. I also relied on the help of colleagues at the university to clarify my position to their students and ask them to take part in the study voluntarily. I was able to invite the participants by seeking help from the university professors and supervisors who also knew that I was a faculty member on study leave. It was of utmost importance to clarify, explain and answer all the questions that arose from students and teachers to ensure that it was safe for them to express their views openly with me as I may have appeared to them as an outsider. As explained, earlier in this thesis (Section 1.5 and 4.4) my positionality was shifting within the insider-outsider continuum depending on my relationship with the participants and my identity as an academic member of staff and a Saudi researcher from the UK.

I also went to the teaching practicum school, where student teachers of Arabic were being trained and supervised by their cooperating teachers. I met with the school headmaster to obtain permission to collect data and have access to the cooperating teachers and student teachers. I had a meeting with the school cooperating teachers to inform them about the focus of this research and requested them to participate in the study voluntarily. They read the information and signed the consent sheets voluntarily. I ensured them that the collected data would be anonymous, confidential and for research purposes only. All cooperating teachers were helpful and willing to conduct the interview with me.

Following this, I piloted the interview questions with two cooperating teachers. However, no amendments were made to the interview questions as they were deemed clear and precise by the pilot participants. Having completed the piloting of the interview questions, I scheduled meetings with the other cooperating teachers in other schools to conduct the interview. The interviewing process was smooth and conducted in Arabic with all cooperating teachers. Interviewees were encouraged to choose a suitable and comfortable venue at the school for themselves to conduct the interview. In addition, confidentiality issues were clarified, and permission was sought to record the interview. With the verbal consent of the interviewees, a digital voice recorder was used to record the interviews. The time and date of each interview were clearly stated and recorded at the beginning of each interview.

After completing all the interviews, three steps were followed to ensure data safety and security. First, all recorded data were transferred for back-up to a

personal computer. Second, the data were transferred from the personal computer to a USB memory stick. Finally, the data were saved on the secure university servers and external hard drives.

To have access to student teachers, the head of the Curriculum & Instruction Dept. provided me with their names and assigned teaching practicum schools. After that, I contacted the university supervisors in charge of supervising these student teachers to get to know these student teachers at a suitable time and location. The university supervisors invited me to their classes to give me a chance to tell student teachers about this research study and the data collection procedures. I gave them the information sheets and ethical approval in Arabic and English to read and sign. Some student teachers were willing to participate in the study voluntarily, while others refused. For those who accepted to take part in the study, I conducted a pilot study of the questionnaire with ten students, as explained earlier in the thesis. The students who agreed to take part in an interview were requested to provide their details in the spaces provided in the questionnaire. After that, I distributed the questionnaires during the university lectures and collected them from those who had agreed to participate, an hour later. Fifty-nine student teachers out of 75 registered students returned the completed questionnaire. After reviewing student teachers' responses to the questionnaire, I found out that only 20 student teachers were willing to be interviewed.

As explained in Section 4.6.1.1, I piloted the interview questions with four student teachers. Having completed the piloting of the interview questions, I scheduled meetings with the twenty student teachers of Arabic. Based on student teachers' preferences, some of these interviews took place either at the teaching practicum, the university or at the library. It was a smooth and easy interview process. Each interview lasted for 30-40 minutes in Arabic.

Despite having inside knowledge and being from the same culture and background, I tried hard to remain neutral in the data analysis. I ensured that data was trustworthy by emailing the interview transcripts to all interview participants to double-check that what they had said corresponded to what had been transcribed. Additionally, I applied triangulation by using more than one data collection tool. Moreover, I adopted a reflexive approach when collecting and analysing data by deeply reflecting on the procedures of the whole research

project, inspecting the external factors which could influence the research process. Therefore, by employing the audit trail and applying reflexivity, I was able to ensure my unbiased status of analysing the data.

Interviewees were permitted to choose a suitable and comfortable venue at school for themselves to conduct the interview. In addition, confidentiality issues were clarified, and permission was sought to record the interview. With the verbal consent of the interviewees, a digital voice recorder was used to record the interviews. The time and date of each interview were clearly stated and recorded at the beginning of each interview.

The interviews lasted for approximately half an hour, but the duration of the interview was extended if a participant was keen to talk more and provide more detailed responses. The interview was conducted with all study participants in Arabic based on the participants' preferences to facilitate the ease of communication and intended meaning. An Arabic copy of the interview schedule for student teachers is available in Appendix 14, and a copy of the interview schedule for cooperating teachers and university supervisors is available in Appendix 15. Participants were encouraged to elaborate their answers and ask questions if needed. This enabled interviewees to express their views and feelings in more depth. The interview schedule of questions was used as a guide when asking participants to ensure ease of flow and relaxed body language and eye contact were maintained. The interviewer endeavoured to treat interviewees respectfully by listening to them carefully, elaborating the discussion when required and clarifying details as necessary.

4.7 Data Analysis

This section describes the approach adopted in the data analysis process before detailing the procedures and steps followed in the analysis of the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. This includes the justification for the choice of codes to facilitate the reader's understanding of the interpreted data. Hence, this section shows how the data were prepared, analysed, categorised, and presented into themes and sub-themes to ease the interpretation and discussion of the findings with the help of a coding scheme (Creswell, 2007).

4.7.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The respondents' responses to the close-ended items were coded by using 1-5 scores of the Likert type scale. An Excel file was used to store the numerical data and transferred to SPSS to conduct statistical tests and descriptive statistics. Percentages and frequencies for each category of the data in the questionnaire were calculated and presented as tables.

4.7.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse participants' responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. '*Thematic content analysis'* was used to analyse the data and classify them into different themes and sub-themes. Thematic Analysis offered the opportunity to have a broader understanding of each theme (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Furthermore, thematic content analysis has the aim of drawing the reader's attention to the important and essential themes in the data. Blacker (2009) argues that a detailed thematic description of the entire data can assist the reader in getting to a sense of *"the predominant and important themes"* (2009, p.83) from the data. The thematic analysis also facilitated deeper analysis of the data, in line what Namey et al. observe as the essence of *'thematic content analysis:'*

> *Thematic moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas. Codes developed for ideas or themes are then applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis, which may include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code co-occurrence or graphically displaying code relationships." (2008, p.138)*

With regards to the interviews, they were all transcribed in Arabic and sent back to the participants via email to validate their content (i.e. member checking). Once the participants had approved the written transcript of their interviews, they were then translated into English. A professional Arabic/ English translator translated the transcript from Arabic into English to avoid any possibility of bias. This meant that university supervisors, student teachers and cooperating teachers received their answers in the form of written transcripts in Arabic to ensure and verify the accuracy of the transcriptions. All participants confirmed that their interview transcripts matched what they wanted to say during the interviews, i.e. '*respondent validation'* Radnor (1994).

At the beginning of the interview analysis process, I was asked by the research supervisors to submit a sample interview analysis for a student teacher, a cooperating teacher and a university supervisor. Both research supervisors read and discussed the samples, added a few changes with regards the names of the themes and sub-themes and their categorisation. After that, the supervisors requested a sample analysis of the interview data based on the three transcripts. As the supervisors approved the analysis procedures, the analysis process was applied to all the remaining transcripts following a thematic content analysis approach (for a sample analysis of a student teacher's interview, see appendix 11).

The three steps suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) for qualitative data analysis informed the current process of data analysis: (1) data reduction; (2) data display and (3) conclusion verification. Firstly, the qualitative collected data were reduced by decreasing the repeated data and focusing on the meaning rather than the words, by using coding and labelling (Radnor, 1994).

Following this, data were reduced to small meaningful chunks by coding and labelling the participants' responses obtained from the semi-structured interviews and the open-ended items of the questionnaire. Secondly, the steps of thematic analysis were followed to present the data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) and designed thematic charts by identifying all relevant data and fitting them into categorised patterns in the form of themes and sub-themes to articulate a coherent argument (see appendix 10).

In this research, the following steps were adopted, as suggested by Radnor (2001, p. 68) to create thematic charts. I first ordered the topics based on the sequence of the interview questions and then read the data multiple times for content and put the keywords in the sentences. After that, themes and sub-themes were applied to the data, while the unanticipated data were used as emerging themes and sub-themes.

To check the rigour of the qualitative data analysis, the following steps were adopted: Firstly, the identified themes and sub-themes were written on cards of different colours and with corresponding quotes written on different cards. Secondly, I asked two doctoral students at the Graduate School of Education at Exeter University to arrange the themes and sub-themes themselves. Thirdly, these two colleagues matched the chosen quotes with their corresponding

themes, making some suggestions for clarification. The required changes were made, and they confirmed that the quotes were more precise and relevant (for more details, see appendix 10).

Finally, '*conclusion verification'* was achieved through combining the data, commenting on the data and creating an argument with a thick layer of description conveying the participants' insightful views (Holliday, 2002), to achieve a more profound understanding of Saudi student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum.

4.7.2.1 Coding Scheme

Deductive coding was used at the beginning of the data analysis process, which was derived from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview data. The deductive coding was initiated with pre-set themes/codes/categories suggested by both the research literature and the research questions. The data analysis based on these deductive codes aimed to reflect the study aims and research questions. However, deductive codes can be subsequently be complemented by more inductive codes derived from new issues arising from the data.

As a result, and in addition to deductive coding, *'inductive coding'* was conducted, which was valuable in supplementing, intensifying, qualifying or even contradicting my original assumptions. In all, the study started with fundamental codes grouped under general headings which broadly reflected the topics investigated during the data phase. More emerging themes and categories using new codes were added to the coding process under general headings. The data were then coded carefully in order not to neglect any uncoded data. The coded data were then classified, grouped under more than one code, to all the suitable codes.

Table 4.7 Coding scheme

Type of participants	Symbol used	Data collection instrument
Student Teachers	ST (participant number)	Semi-structured interview
Questionnaire Respondent	WR (participant number)	Open-ended questionnaire item
Cooperating Teachers	CT (participant number)	Semi-structured interview

University Supervisors	US (participant number)	Semi-structured interview

4.7.2.2 Data Transcription Challenges

Transcribing the Arabic oral informal language into written formal Arabic was somewhat difficult and time-consuming. However, this challenge was overcome by the fact that the transcriber was both interviewer and researcher and therefore had more control. Also, the written transcripts were sent back to the participants to ensure that their spoken words during the interviews had been accurately transcribed. Transcribing and translating the data from Arabic to English was also challenging. All interviews were transcribed in Arabic and sent to a professional team of translators who translated them from Arabic into English. These transcriptions were analysed and then checked by the supervisors, and I carried on the analysis of the transcripts in English. Ultimately, the report was written and produced in English, including quotations from the participants. Nonetheless, interpreting the participants' interviews and expressed thoughts whilst avoiding bias was also a problematic issue.

4.8 Quality Considerations

4.8.1 Validity and Reliability

The preliminary questionnaire was developed based on reviewing previous studies, and its *'content validity'* was checked by administering it to five faculty members of the curriculum and instruction department at the college of education at the University of Hail. The content validity was achieved by a rational analysis of the instrument by experts acquainted with the targeted investigated research (DeVon et al., 2007; Polit & Beck, 2006). Equally, educational experts checked the questionnaire items for readability, clarity and comprehensiveness and agreed on the items to be included in the final questionnaire (Sangoseni et al., 2013).

However, one of the main disadvantages of content validity is its relative subjectivity (Anderson et al., 2002). Nonetheless, the use of content validity can be justified by the fact that educational experts have more knowledge and experience about the teaching practicum field. As a result, this procedure enhanced the validity of the selected questionnaire items, as they subsequently represented a comprehensive view of the phenomenon of the teaching practicum from specialist experts in the field of education. In addition, this study combined

more than one form of validity to increase the strength of the validity of the questionnaire. For instance, *'face validity'* has been combined with '*content validity'.* The face validity was checked, and the experts evaluated whether each of the measuring items matched any given conceptual domain of the phenomenon under investigation.

Furthermore, the questionnaire was piloted to ensure its *'reliability'* to ensure that there is the consistency of scores over time. Barman et al. (2012) maintain that reliability is the constancy or steadiness of scores over time or across raters. Therefore, a pilot study was conducted amongst ten student teachers by using Cronbach Alpha reliability scale. The result of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient assesses the questionnaire's internal consistency and reliability was 0.981, so the questionnaire was ready to be filled in by participants. Following this, the quantitative questionnaire data were analysed statistically using SPSS, while the open-ended questions were analysed using thematic content analysis.

4.8.2 The trustworthiness of the study

For the qualitative data collection and analysis, a trial run was conducted, as advised by Dornyei (2007), before the actual interviews with participants. It was deemed important to try to conduct some interviews with a small number of participants to ensure that the questions were appropriate and relevant and to make changes as required. In the current study, the pilot was conducted with four student teachers, two cooperating teachers and two university supervisors. Some modifications, such as rephrasing or rewording questions and adding some probes, were made to the interview schedule to ensure clarity and credibility. After that, the interview schedule was translated from English into Arabic because the participants were student teachers of Arabic; the cooperating teachers specialised in the Arabic language, and the university supervisors specialised in Arabic language curriculum and instruction.

After completing the interview trials and ensuring that the qualitative instrument was approved and accepted, semi-structured interviews were conducted amongst 20 teachers, 7 university supervisors and 7 cooperating teachers. These participants were interviewed based on specific criteria: the willingness and availability of all participants to take part in the study, and the student teachers' completion of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. The interviews were conducted in Arabic, which is the first language of all participants. Following

this, all interviews were transcribed and translated by professional bilingual translators from Arabic to English. Finally, thematic content analysis was implemented to derive themes and sub-themes guided by the research aims (Radnor, 2001).

Bryman (2008) defines trustworthiness as *"a set of criteria advocated by some writers for assessing the quality of qualitative research."* (Bryman, 2008, p. 700). In the qualitative phase, which involved semi-structured interviews, four fundamental issues needed to be addressed to ensure the trustworthiness of this research: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Bryman, 2008; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Given, 2008). These four criteria initially posited by Guba (1981) are essential in ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research and have now been widely accepted as valid by many qualitative researchers.

4.8.2.1 Credibility

The credibility of the research was assured through the following procedures: Firstly, I connected the findings of the research with my own and my colleagues' experiences in the practicum to demonstrate the truth of the research study's findings. This was achieved by using participant feedback/member checking. This technique allowed the participants to clarify their intentions, correct errors when needed, and provide additional information if necessary. Eisner (1991) refers to this *'member checking'*, as *"consensual validation"*, whereby the interpretation is checked by participants to confirm the *"rightness"* of what is reported. The participants' comments in the current study were considerably helpful to check the viability of the interpretation with the interview transcripts emailed to all interview participants to double-check that what had been said corresponded to what had been transcribed.

I, as an insider researcher, was another way of ensuring the credibility of the research as that I could ascertain the extent of the *'truthfulness'* of the collected data, based on academic or institutional criteria or information. Additionally, I applied triangulation by using more than one data collection tool.

4.8.2.2 Transferability

The notion of transferability relates to the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other similar studies. I used *'external validity'* and

'generalisability' to assess the *'transferability'* of the study. These were achieved by providing substantial contextual detail about the study and making comparisons to other contexts in relation to the phenomenon under investigation.

This was done through an in-depth description of the research context and settings, which in turn provided a rigorous and detailed account of the participants' experience of their teaching practicum. This occurred through the investigation of the teaching practicum from different standpoints, namely from the student teachers' perspectives and that of the significant others. The connections between the focus of the study and the cultural and social contexts were made explicit by investigating other factors which influence student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum. In addition, it was enlightening and helpful to be able to transfer and refer the information gleaned from the participants' observations and comments expressed through the research interviews, back to the context of the surrounding social and cultural environments of the research study. This allows other researchers and readers to make judgements about the transferability of the study themselves.

4.8.2.3 Dependability

The notion of *'dependability'* relates to the idea that repeating the work of a study conducted in a similar context, with similar methods and participants will generate the same findings. *'Dependability'* allows for overlapping methods and provides a more profound methodological description, thereby allowing the study to be repeated.

This is also essential to the '*trustworthiness'* of the research because it ensures research findings are consistent and repeatable. Dependability was achieved in the current study through an outside researcher who conducted an inquiry check on the research study. This inquiry check involved external researchers who investigated the processes of data collection, data analysis, and the results of the research study. This was done by a fellow doctoral researcher at the University of Exeter to confirm the accuracy of the findings and ensure the findings were supported by the data collected. All interpretations and conclusions were examined to determine whether they were supported by data or not. The inquiry check was helpful because it allowed an outside researcher to study, investigate, and experiment how data analysis and interpretation occurred. This also assured the accuracy and rigour of the research, helped enhance coherence in reporting

the findings in a way in which to accentuate the data effectively, highlighting the most salient points.

4.8.2.4 Confirmability

With regards to the confirmability of this research, it was essential to ensure that the research instruments used were not dependent solely on my perception. The notion of confirmability relates to the idea that the findings are formed by participants more than by the researcher(s). Consequently, an audit trail was applied to achieve confirmability, whereby I meticulously recorded the process of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data. I recorded the incidents which happened during data collection, his ideas about coding and clearly articulated the rationale and explanation of how themes emerged. Additionally, I adopted a reflexive approach when collecting and analysing data by deeply reflecting on the procedures of the whole research project, inspecting the external factors which could influence the research process. I ensured the confirmability of the decisions made in the research study through the audit trail and applying reflexivity.

4.9 Ethical Issues

Considering ethical issues is very important in research since, as Robson (2006: 66) argues, *"control over what people do has a moral dimension, and ethical dilemmas lurk in any research involving people".* Hence, several ethical issues and guidelines were considered, as recommended by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018). Firstly, participants were approached to seek their voluntary participation in this study. Participants all signed an informed consent form (see Appendix 7) before any further action was taken. In doing so, they were all made aware verbally and in writing about the purpose of the research, risk assessment, procedure of involvement, stages of research, confidentially and their right to withdraw at any time without justifying their reasons. Ethical approval forms were also obtained from the Ethics committee at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Exeter (see Appendix 3). In addition, permission to mention the name of the University of Hail was granted from the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs (See Appendix 12).

An important ethical consideration to bear in mind here is that, given that I was known to be a faculty member working for the University of Hail, I believe it was

tough to guarantee the strict anonymity of the research context. Whilst this is something I could not completely guarantee, protecting the anonymity of my participants was of paramount importance in addition to being achievable as strict ethical protocols were followed. For example, all the participants filled in the questionnaire and some of them agreed to be interviewed voluntarily. Moreover, participants were informed that their personal details would not be revealed to anyone except my two supervisors and me and that all their information and data would be treated confidentially and anonymously. Also, the student teachers were referred to by numbers and codes to keep their information confidential and private, as suggested by Pring (2000). All data collected from participants were stored electronically in at least two safe and secure places, and the participants were informed that only I and the supervisors would have access to these data. All the data were stored securely in my personal computer and then transferred onto the university servers and in an external hard disk. Furthermore, participants were directly asked to allow me to quote their interview responses in the thesis as evidence for the issues raised in this study. Finally, the participants were all informed that they could withdraw their responses from the questionnaire (the data) at any time and any stage of the study.

Moreover, I maintained continuous communication links with the participants, which is a major hallmark of ethical research. Glesne & Peshkin (1992, 125) explain *"the only way of making sure that research is as ethical as possible depends on the researcher's continual communication and interaction with the informants involved".* I tried to build a good relationship with the participants, to be engaged in a caring way, thereby being more able to deal with their potential fears and concerns. Besides, being a colleague of the university supervisors allowed me to raise some of their concerns and views more appropriately. Table 4.8 below shows how the research questions are aligned with the research aims, the research instruments and the research participants.

Table 4.8 Research questions, research instruments and participants

Research Questions	Research Aims	Research Instruments	Participants
(1) How do Saudi student teachers of Arabic view their teaching practicum?	To investigate and understand how Saudi student teachers' view their teaching practicum	Student Teachers' Questionnaire	59 Student Teachers
		Semi-structured Interviews.	20 Student Teachers
(2) How do significant others impact on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum?	To study and uncover the nature of the impact of significant others involved in the teaching practicum (e.g. teaching practicum fellows, cooperating teachers, university supervisors and school students) or in general (e.g. teachers in the family, previous teachers, peers)	Student Teachers' Questionnaire	59 Student Teachers
		Semi-structured Interviews.	20 Student Teachers, 7 Cooperating Teachers, 7 University Supervisors
(3) What factors influence Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, from the perspective of student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors?	To investigate the various factors that influence positively or negatively on Saudi student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum.	Semi-structured Interviews.	20 Student Teachers, 7 Cooperating Teachers, 7 University Supervisors

4.10 Limitations of self-reported data

Another important limitation of the study is its reliance on self-reported data. Self-report is probably one of the most popular types of data collection (Gonyea, 2005), and in this research, they involved questionnaires and interviews. For this study, the self-report instruments involved the participants sharing their experiences about the teaching practicum, which means that I was not a witness of these experiences, but merely collected data about their experiences. Self-report data, however, comprise several limitations. For example, with regards to the questionnaires, I was aware of the potential problems with filling out questionnaires quickly, thereby leading to invalid answers. As explained in this chapter, several steps were taken in terms of reliability and validity. As for interviews, I am fully aware that self-reported data can be influenced by bias and

subjectivity, from both the researcher and the respondent. This, as explained earlier, also relates to my positionality as a researcher (see section 4.4). Indeed, self-reported data might be problematic if my position, and my expectations as a researcher, affected the conduct of the interview, the way questions were asked and even the way the interviewees responded. There is always, with this type of data, the possibility of the participants interpreting the questions "differently" or the interviewer misinterpreting their answers. Through collecting self-reported data, the study participants might have given me socially acceptable answers. While this might be true for some cases, responses to the questions resulted in some participants criticising their teaching practicum experiences and others praising their experiences. This suggests that a balanced and robust account was achieved. In addition, as the wording of the questions might have been confusing to the participants, to avoid misinterpretations, I piloted the questionnaire and the interviews; this ensured any unclear wording of the questions was removed.

Self-reported data may have affected an aspect of the data, namely, the discrepancy between the questionnaire and the interview results with regards to supervision (see Chapter Five, section 5.3.2.3.2). As suggested by Marton & Pong (2005) and Pajares, (1992), individuals may hold conflicting beliefs which can impact their responses or cause them to answer questions inconsistently. I guarded against any possible bias through reading the data several times and checking for trustworthiness by returning the interview transcripts to the participants to avoid any confusion or inaccuracy.

Chapter Five: Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the questionnaires and the participants' semi-structured interviews. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the findings showing how the themes from the qualitative analysis and the quantitative results relate to the research questions. Table 5.2 summarises the participants' details to contextualise their responses in the findings.

Table 5.1: overview of the results in relation to the research questions

Research Questions	Quantitative Results	Qualitative results	
		themes	**sub-themes**
		Student Teachers' Views of their Teaching Practicum	
1. How do Saudi student teachers of Arabic view their teaching practicum?	1. Student Teachers' Commitment to Teaching 2. Student Teachers' Sense of Efficacy 3. Student Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge 4. Student Teachers' Practical Experiences Teaching **5.** Practicum Supervision	**Importance of the Teaching Practicum**	▪ Providing a role model for student teachers ▪ Linking theory to practice ▪ Developing student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge ▪ Developing student teachers' practical experience of teaching
		The Teaching Practicum Environment	▪ New and unfamiliar environment ▪ A flexible environment ▪ A friendly & helpful environment
		Teaching Practicum Challenges	▪ Teaching challenges ▪ Supervision challenges

		▪ Administrative challenges
2. How do significant others impact on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum?	**Significant Others**	▪ Head Teachers ▪ Regular School Teachers ▪ Cooperating Teachers ▪ University Supervisors ▪ Practicum Fellows
	Contextual Factors Influencing Student Teachers' Experience of their Teaching Practicum	
3. What factors influence Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, from the perspective of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors?	**Personal Factors**	▪ Student teachers' self-reflection ▪ The impact of student teachers' commitment to teaching ▪ Student teacher's sense of self-efficacy ▪ Student teachers' professional identity
	Educational Factors	▪ Formal higher education ▪ Informal education
	Cultural Factors	▪ The culture of collectivism ▪ The culture of Majlis

Table 5.2 Participants' details

Participants' Codes	Total Number	Males	Females	Specialisation	Questionnaires	Interviews
Student Teachers (ST)	59	20	39	Student Teachers of Arabic	59	20
Cooperating Teachers (CT)	7	7		In-service Teachers of Arabic		7
University Supervisors (US)	7	7		Department of Curriculum & Instruction, College of Education, University of Hail.		7

5.2 Quantitative Research Results

5.2.1 Analysis of Student Teacher Questionnaires

This section explicates the data generated through the questionnaire. The primary aim was to explore Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. The questionnaire investigated five dimensions about Saudi student teachers' professional life: their commitment to teaching and sense of efficacy, which are included in the psychological domain; their pedagogical content knowledge and practical experience (i.e. the professional domain); and their supervision in the teaching practicum.

5.2.1.1 Student Teachers' Commitment to Teaching

Respondents were asked about their 'commitment to teaching', and it was clear from the 7-item scale that most respondents considered themselves committed, as shown in Table 5.3. Responses to all the items showed that the lowest scoring item had an agreement percentage of 88% and the highest scored an agreement percentage of 97%. The mean score of the total agreement of student commitment to teaching is 90.7%.

Table 5.3 Frequency in percentages across all items in student teachers' commitment to teaching

No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total of agreement
1.	I play an important role in the teaching process.	1.7	1.7	5.1	45.8	45.8	92
2.	Teaching is my favourite future profession.	5.1	5.1	1.7	32.2	55.9	88
3.	Teaching helps me discover my capabilities.		1.7	1.7	44.1	52.5	97
4.	I can develop myself regularly while teaching.		3.4	8.5	42.4	45.8	88
5.	I am satisfied with teaching.	3.4	3.4	5.1	35.6	52.5	88
6.	Teaching is meaningful to me.		3.4	5.1	32.2	59.3	92
7.	I like teaching my students.		6.8	3.4	35.6	54.2	90

5.2.1.2 Student Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

Student teachers' 'sense of efficacy' was measured through 9 items, all of which showed high overall agreement, as shown in Table 5.4. This indicates that respondents reported a high degree of efficacy overall. The highest-ranked items were the 'ability to help students work collaboratively in pairs or in groups' at 99% and the 'ability to check students' comprehension' at 99%. The lowest-ranked item was the 'ability to teach students with different abilities' at 78%.

Table 5.4 Frequency in percentages across all items in the student teachers' sense of efficacy

No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total of agreement
1.	I can deal with difficult students in the class.	3.4		16.9	49.2	30.5	80
2.	I can help students engage in classroom discussions.		5.1	11.9	45.8	37.3	83
3.	I can help students work collaboratively (in pairs and in groups).			1.7	35.6	62.7	99
4.	I can teach students of different capabilities.	1.7	6.8	13.6	49.2	28.8	78
5.	I can give more than one example to explain a point.		1.7	6.8	42.4	49.2	92
6.	I can ask students good probing questions		5.1	3.4	42.4	49.2	92
7.	I can respond to my students' difficult questions.			10.2	66.1	23.7	90
8.	I can check my students' comprehension.			1.7	45.8	52.5	99
9.	I can use good classroom management strategies.		1.7	6.8	49.2	42.4	92

5.2.1.3 Student Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Table 5.5 Frequency in percentages across all items in student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge

No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total of agreement
1.	I can give clear task instructions.		5.1	6.8	61	27.1	88
2.	I can engage students in learning.		1.7	3.4	49.2	45.8	95
3.	I can help develop students personally.		1.7	5.1	52.5	40.7	94
4.	I can help develop students' Arabic grammar skills.		5.1	10.2	44.1	40.7	85
5.	I know how to develop students' Arabic reading skills.	1.7	1.7	3.4	50.8	42.4	94
6.	I know how to develop students' Arabic writing skills.		1.7	5.1	42.4	50.8	94
7.	I know how to develop students' Arabic listening skills.		3.4	8.5	54.2	33.9	88
8.	I know how to develop students' Arabic speaking skills.			8.5	44.1	47.5	92

Respondents' pedagogical content knowledge was measured through an 8-item scale. Table 5.5 shows all eight items along with the scores. Overall, it can be concluded that respondents reported a positive professional knowledge with a high percentage of respondents agreeing with the statements.

5.2.1.4 Student Teachers' Practical Experiences

Table 5.6 shows that student teachers' practical experiences were measured through 10 items and in common with the previous scales; a high agreement was shown on all items reflecting 'good levels of task orientation'. The highest-ranked item reflected the 'ability to engage students in learning' at 95% followed by respondents' 'knowledge of how to develop students' Arabic reading and writing skills and 'help them in their personal development'. The lowest-ranked item reflected the 'ability to make students responsible for their learning' at 75%.

Table 5.6 Frequency in percentages across all items in student teachers' practical experiences

No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total of agreement
1.	I exhibit professional conduct with colleagues and supervisors.		1.7	1.7	30.5	66.1	97
2.	I cooperate with colleagues at the teaching practicum.		1.7		20.3	78	99
3.	I take substitute classes as required by the school.		6.8	11.4	42.4	39	82
4.	I collaborate with parents.		5.1	6.8	40.7	47.5	89
5.	I seek continuous professional development opportunities.		1.7	3.4	30.5	64.4	95
6.	I contribute to creating a positive school climate.		3.4	5.1	47.5	44.1	92
7.	I deal with my pupils appropriately.		1.7	3.4	28.8	66.1	94.9
8.	I assure confidentiality of all information related to the teaching profession.			6.8	25.4	67.8	94
9.	I adhere to local school policies.		1.7		33.9	64.4	99
10.	I maintain professional appearance appropriate to the teaching profession.				28.8	71.2	100

5.2.1.5 Teaching Practicum Supervision

Lastly, respondents were asked about supervision in the teaching practicum, which was measured using six items (see Table 5.7). There was a high agreement across all items, indicating that they reported receiving appropriate supervision. The highest-ranked item reflected respondents 'being evaluated objectively by their supervisors' at 94% and the lowest-ranked item was the item relating to 'perceptions of whether supervisors provided effective classroom management strategies' at 85%.

Table 5.7 Frequency in percentages across all items in supervision in a teaching practicum

No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total of agreement
1.	My teaching practicum supervisors help me with my lesson planning.	3.4	3.4	3.4	50.8	39	90
2.	My teaching practicum supervisors provide me with effective teaching strategies.	1.7		10.2	42.4	45.8	89
3.	My teaching practicum supervisors provide me with effective classroom management strategies.	1.7	5.1	8.5	42.4	42.4	85
4.	My teaching practicum supervisors enrich my knowledge of assessment practices.	3.4		5.1	47.5	44.1	92
5.	My teaching practicum supervisors evaluate me objectively.			1.7	5.1	47.5	45.8	94
6.	My teaching practicum supervisors give me constructive feedback.		5.1	5.1	42.4	47.5	90

5.2.2 Questionnaire Reliability

This section reports the reliability of the constructs. It gives descriptive statistics for each of the five dimensions mentioned above and outlines the relationship between these dimensions. The questionnaire was tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha test, which ranges in value between 0 and 1. The higher the value, the more reliable the scale/construct is. It is generally accepted that a reliability score of 0.7 or more is considered enough to indicate reliability. After examining reliability for each of the scales, it was evident that all dimensions had a high Cronbach's Alpha (above 0.88) and the scales are considered reliable. Table 5.8 below shows that the most statistically-reliable dimension was 'supervision in the teaching practicum' with a reliability score of (0.96), followed by the dimension of 'sense of efficacy' (0.94), followed by the dimension of 'practical experience' (0.92), and the last reliable dimension with the lowest score was 'professional knowledge' with a score of (0.88).

Table 5.8 Reliability scores through Cronbach's Alpha

Scale	Number of Questionnaire Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Student teachers' commitment to Teaching	7	0.92
Student teachers' sense of Efficacy	9	0.95
Student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge	8	0.88
Student teachers' practical experiences	10	0.94
Supervision in the teaching practicum	6	0.96

5.2.3 Measures of correlation

The sample can be considered small (N=59), and the data were found to be not normally distributed as most respondents' answers were either 4 or 5 on a 5-point agreement scale. The data were considered as non-parametric, and a non-parametric correlation coefficient was applied to measure the relationship between all five dimensions and correlation with the age of the participants (22-29 years old). Table 5.9 below illustrates that there are positive and significant correlations between any two of the five scales ($p<0.01$), indicating that if respondents score highly on one, then they are more likely to score highly on the other. However, when measuring the correlation between age and the scales, it

was evident that age had a significant negative correlation with a commitment to teaching (rho= -0.256, p=0.05) and professional knowledge (rho= -0.281, p=0.03). This indicates that the older the participant is, the more commitment they have towards teaching and professional knowledge.

Table 5.9 Spearman's RHO correlation coefficient between all scales and age

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.256[*]	-.281[*]	-.255	-.247	-.205
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.050	.031	.051	.059	.120
2. Student teachers' commitment to Teaching	Correlation Coefficient	-.256[*]	1.000	.606[**]	.443[**]	.459[**]	.364[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050	.	.000	.000	.000	.005
3. Student teachers' sense of Efficacy	Correlation Coefficient	-.247	.459[**]	.634[**]	.826[**]	1.000	.533[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.059	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
4. Student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge	Correlation Coefficient	-.281[*]	.606[**]	1.000	.575[**]	.634[**]	.504[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
5. Student teachers' practical experiences	Correlation Coefficient	-.255	.443[**]	.575[**]	1.000	.826[**]	.502[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.051	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
6. Supervision in the teaching practicum	Correlation Coefficient	-.205	.364[**]	.504[**]	.502[**]	.533[**]	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.120	.005	.000	.000	.000	.

In summary, the responses to the questionnaire items indicate that most respondents indicated a commitment to teaching, had positive responses to 'professional and task orientations' as well as a well-defined 'sense of efficacy.' They were also positive about the way they were supervised in the teaching practicum. When examining the correlation between all five scales, a positive correlation was observed while age showed a negative correlation to a commitment to teaching and professional orientation.

5.3 Qualitative Findings

The research findings were guided by the three research questions in the current study:

1. How do Saudi student teachers of Arabic view their teaching practicum?
2. How do significant others impact on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum?
3. What factors influence Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, from the perspective of student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors?

5.3.1 Classifying and Identifying Emergent Themes

Firstly, research findings are presented in the form of the themes and sub-themes which have emerged from the data analysis of the participants' responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the interview questions. The views of all participants in the current study, i.e. Student Teachers (ST), Cooperating Teachers (CT) and University Supervisors (US) are presented under each emergent theme. Secondly, a short section combines the qualitative and quantitative data where appropriate and relevant. This gives the reader a comprehensive view of each entire separate theme and sub-theme as addressed from different perspectives.

Data were read iteratively from the different responses of the study participants; namely, 20 student teachers, 7 cooperating teachers and 7 university supervisors as well as the qualitative responses written by the 59 student teachers to open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

In the following section, the process of identification and categorisation of the themes and the sub-themes of the study are outlined, and examples are given. Firstly, it is necessary to state that the three research questions were used as a guide in the data analysis process. Accordingly, and within the framework of the research questions, the participants' responses to the different interview questions and the open-ended responses to the questionnaire were used as a starting point to identify themes and sub-themes.

Secondly, recurring themes occurring in the data were categorised into themes and sub-themes. For example, the first research question *"How do Saudi student*

teachers of Arabic view their teaching practicum?" was used as a guide and accordingly all interview questions with the participants' responses, along with the open-ended responses to the questionnaire were categorised under the following main theme: 'Saudi student teachers' views about their experience of the teaching practicum'. Within these main themes, recurring sub-themes emerged from the data such as the sub-themes shown in Figure 5.1: i) 'the importance of the teaching practicum'; ii) 'the teaching practicum environment', and iii) 'the teaching practicum challenges'. For example, within iii) 'teaching practicum challenges', challenges were found in relation to teaching, supervision and administration. Therefore, these three challenges were created as new sub-themes of the teaching practicum challenges.

The data analysis was guided principally by social constructivism. More specifically, sociocultural theory as related to situated learning and the concept of community of practice have informed the current study. Social constructivism can help the reader understand more comprehensively how humans and society come together into an interactive, interrelated and complex relationship through the exchange of meaningful communication. In the current study, sociocultural theories have provided a lens through which to analyse the experiences of Saudi student teachers of Arabic. This has been done through an iterative process of meaningful communication between student teachers and all the essential factors surrounding and affecting them in the teaching practicum such as significant others, in addition to the personal, educational, religious and cultural factors which interrelate together. This can help the reader understand the different layers of meaning behind the formation and professional development of Saudi student teachers of Arabic.

5.3.2 Student Teachers' Views of their Teaching Practicum

Three interlinked themes emerged from the interviews which relate to Saudi student teachers' views of their teaching practicum experience: i) the importance of the teaching practicum; ii) the teaching practicum environment, and iii) the teaching practicum challenges in the areas of teaching, supervision and administration.
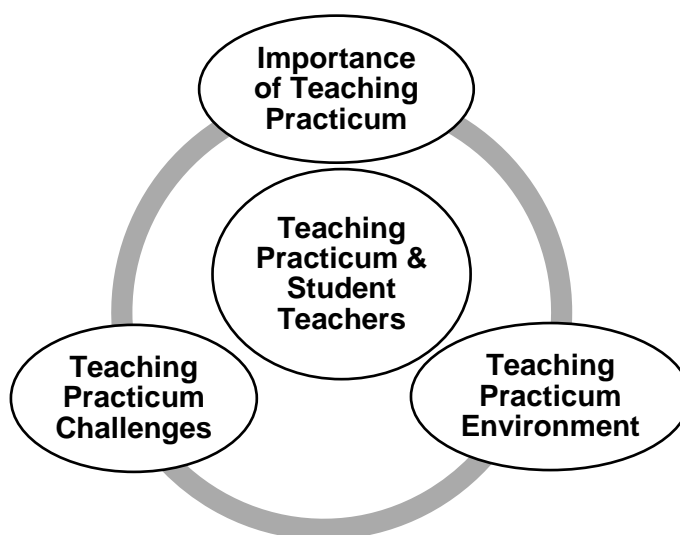
Figure 5.1 The teaching practicum and student teachers

5.3.2.1 Importance of the Teaching Practicum

Seventeen student teachers reported finding the teaching practicum as important for the following reasons: (1) to provide role models; (2) to link theory to practice; (3) to develop teachers' pedagogical content knowledge; and (4) to develop student teachers' practical experience of teaching.

5.3.2.1.1 Providing a role model for student teachers

The idea of a role model was referred to as important in participants' responses. For example, five student teachers referred implicitly to the importance of a role model. The following quote is indicative of this view:

> *"As a student teacher, I observe many regular teachers at the teaching practicum to see how they teach pupils in the classroom and learn from these experienced teachers. It is inspiring to learn a new teaching technique from each schoolteacher." (ST16)*

5.3.2.1.2 Linking theory to practice

Some participants viewed the importance of teaching practicum in helping student teachers to find links between theory and practice. For example, one

student teacher highlighted how he thought teaching practicum links theory to practice:

> *"The teaching practicum is the cornerstone of the general diploma through applying for the theoretical courses. It is a translation of this theoretical side into practical reality." (ST 10)*

Another student teacher compared university education to theory and teaching practicum to practice, thereby finding a link between theory and practice:

> *"The teaching practicum enables us to apply the concepts, the theories and the knowledge studied at university. It is more useful than what we have studied in the theoretical courses at the university." (ST1)*

Similarly, another student metaphorically described the teaching practicum as being like driving a car:

> *"If you studied information about how to drive a car and came to drive a car for the first time, you would feel you studied nothing. Training is so important to become a car driver, and teaching practicum is important to become a teacher of Arabic." (ST16)*

It is interesting to note here that the analogy between training to be a car driver and to be a schoolteacher indicates the idea of a skill being improved and developed through practice. This, therefore, indicates this student teacher's understanding of teaching and of the kind of professional learning required.

Another written response by a student teacher to the open-ended questionnaire supporting the same point was that:

> *"Teaching practicum helped me find the missing link between the theory that I studied in different university courses and the practice that I can engage [with] in my classroom teaching and collaboration with cooperating teachers and teaching practicum fellows. This is awesome." (WR21)*

What is being said here about the nature of learning to be a teacher, i.e. linking separate ideas and activities to make meaningful connections resembles the notion of teachers as *"bricoleurs"* (Honan, 2004).

One of the two written responses supporting the same point explained that *"the teaching practicum helped me apply the different theories, teaching strategies to develop specific skills in each lesson." (WR18)*

5.3.2.1.3 Developing student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge

'Professional knowledge' generally refers to all the essential cognitive knowledge for creating effective teaching and learning environments for student teachers. However, the findings of the current study primarily focus on 'pedagogical content knowledge' as having an influential impact on student teachers teaching practicum. Some student teachers viewed the teaching practicum as the place where they develop as a teacher. As an example, the following written response from a student teacher asserted that *"Teaching Practicum helped me develop myself as a teacher, my teaching skills and practical experience." (WR24)*

Another student teacher pinpointed the benefits of teaching practicum in the form of the useful teaching skills he listed:

> *"I like the teaching practicum; I acquire some teaching skills that help me develop as a real teacher. These skills include identifying students' needs; lesson planning; preparation of teaching aids, applying classroom management techniques in reality; the art of dealing with the students as an efficient teacher; fulfilling the required duties and dealing with the practical problems." (ST5)*

The development of student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge during their teaching practicum was reported as helping student teachers specifically to develop their language teaching skills. Student teachers' responses to the questionnaire items about teaching Arabic skills in their teaching practicum revealed mainly positive views. For example, analysis of the quantitative data shows that the teaching practicum helped student teachers with developing their teaching of Arabic grammar (85%), Arabic reading (94%), Arabic writing (94%), Arabic listening (88%) and Arabic speaking (92%). Learning Arabic was reported as one of the most difficult languages to learn, especially concerning Arabic grammar.

5.3.2.1.4 Developing student teachers' practical experience of teaching

Student teachers' positive responses regarding the impact of the teaching practicum on developing their Arabic teaching skills are noteworthy. For example, two student teachers indicated that the teaching practicum helped them to develop their speaking skills. One elaborated further:

> *"The teaching practicum encouraged me to break my speech barrier. To be honest, before teaching practicum, I could not speak as I do now. Also, most teachers blame the teachers of Arabic if they are not fluent." (ST14)*

The second student teacher referred to the teaching practicum as helping him to develop the *"skills of speaking eloquently in Arabic and training the students to be familiar with it."* (ST8)

Another student teacher indicated his belief that his teaching practicum helped him to acquire different language teaching skills:

> *"The teaching practicum helps me teach vocabulary, and the rules of reading, writing and listening." (ST7)*

Likewise, one student teacher seemed to consider the teaching practicum important to the development of his teaching strategies in relation to the different language skills by asserting that:

> *"The teaching practicum helped me develop my teaching of different skills: writing, listening, class management, planning, dealing with poetic stories and reciting skills… etc." (ST8)*

In addition to the language teaching skills, the qualitative data suggest that the teaching practicum played an important role in developing the ST's practical experience of teaching Arabic.

Student teachers responded to the questionnaire items about the impact of teaching practicum on 'developing students' teaching skills' as follows: 83.1% agreed that they were now 'able to engage students in classroom discussion'; 78% of student teachers agreed that they could now 'teach students of different capabilities'; 92% of student teachers agreed that they could now 'teach by giving more than one example'; 92% of student teachers agreed that they could 'ask students good probing questions'; 90% of student teachers agreed that they could 'respond to students' difficult questions'; and 98.3% of student teachers agreed that they could 'check their students' comprehension'.

Regarding the development of their language teaching skills, two student teachers explicitly expressed their views about how the teaching practicum had helped them to teach Arabic.

The importance of teaching practicum for another student teacher lay in learning how to use the board, one student teacher explained:

> *"The teaching practicum enabled me to know how to use the board, organise it effectively and in an attractive way." (ST 2)*

Another student teacher highlighted the support received from the supervisors in the teaching practicum in terms of lesson planning:

"Supervisors help me plan the lesson especially under the guidance of the cooperating teacher due to his extensive experience." (ST 6)

For another student teacher, the importance of teaching practicum was linked to the lesson planning on different language skills:

"The teaching practicum helps me plan the different sections of the Arabic language, prepare for and be creative in the dictation and the Arabic grammar rules." (ST 4)

In a written response to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, one respondent supported the idea that the teaching practicum had assisted him in acquiring cooperative learning strategies:

"The teaching practicum helped me engage with my students in cooperative learning through pair work and group work." (WR37)

Likewise, one questionnaire respondent supported the benefits gained from the supervisors' expertise in teaching strategies; he wrote:

"Teaching Practicum helped me learn from experienced supervisors and teachers in teaching and take advantage of their expertise in using different teaching strategies inside the classroom." (WR6)

In the course of the interviews, one student teacher referred to the importance of the teaching practicum in terms of learning new teaching methods:

"The teaching practicum helps with teaching methods, as you add to your knowledge how to teach, or how to write behavioural objectives, whether from others' expertise, your experience in life or the approach you find beneficial to the students or learners." (ST13)

In addition, the open-ended questionnaire data showed that one respondent also stressed the importance of the teaching practicum for learning new ways of teaching, writing:

"The teaching practicum helped me adhere to the schedule and use modern teaching methods and classroom management techniques." (WR27)

Moreover, when talking about the diverse teaching methods and strategies, during the interviews, one student teacher addressed the different teaching skills practised in the teaching practicum in the following way:

"The teaching practicum helped me through working as a teacher in a real teaching context in class. I can teach real students and not only to my colleagues." (ST13)

Also, the importance of the teaching practicum in applying the different teaching methods learnt at university on the teaching methodology course was also indicated:

> *"The teaching practicum assisted me in using some different teaching methods such as problem-solving, cooperative teaching strategies such as pair work and group work." (ST10)*

In terms of class teaching quality, the findings of the interview data and the written responses by three different questionnaire respondents reinforced the idea that the teaching practicum taught them how to provide high-quality teaching. The skills required for effective teaching and referred to by these three respondents included: managing the class well; distributing class time properly *(WR25);* knowing about teaching methods and lesson planning; providing valuable information and managing class time properly *(WR53).*

Three other student teachers underlined the central place of the teaching practicum in helping them to gain self-confidence in their teaching, which supports their teaching quality as follows:

> *"Teaching practicum is the practical application of teaching. Teaching practicum increases my confidence. In fact, the school and the teaching practicum team are the ones who make the school acceptable. We cannot forget the role of the supervisor, which makes you acceptable." (ST18)*

> "When I deal with students, I become more confident as I feel more knowledgeable than they do." (ST12)

> "Teaching practicum develops my self-confidence, especially while standing in front of students. This increases my self-confidence in the future when I become a fully-rounded teacher of Arabic." (ST10)

Equally, the written response given by one student teacher in the open-ended question section of the questionnaire showed explicitly how the teaching practicum had helped him to gain more self-confidence:

> *"The teaching practicum helped me break the barriers between my students, teachers, headmaster and supervisors". In addition, another student teacher said: "the teaching practicum has broken the barrier of distrust in my ability to teach especially in the first few weeks of the practicum." (WR 46)*

This section has shown the importance of the teaching practicum, and the data suggest the pivotal and important role of the cooperating teachers and university supervisors in providing student teachers with knowledge skills in the different

areas of pedagogical content knowledge in terms of: new and diverse teaching techniques; using the board; writing lesson plans and effective class management applying the different teaching methods which student teachers have learnt at university on the teaching methodology module of their teacher training course.

5.3.2.2 The teaching practicum environment

The data analysis has revealed that student teachers, university supervisors and cooperating teachers all reported that they generally consider the teaching practicum environment to be useful. Data from the semi-structured interviews and the open-ended responses to the questionnaire highlight that the participants viewed the teaching practicum as a) new and unfamiliar; b) flexible and c) a friendly and helpful environment.

5.3.2.2.1 New and unfamiliar environment

Many student teachers commented on the nature of the new environment, for example:

> *"We feel shy and alienated at the beginning of the teaching practicum. Therefore, I wish we [could] have visited the teaching practicum in our first semester at university to get used to it psychologically at least." (ST11)*

Three other student teachers commented on the unfamiliar teaching practicum environment:

> *"I was not at ease at the beginning in the teaching practicum as many teachers looked at me and asked about my specialisation. In addition, school students also looked weirdly at us. Later, we got used to this." (ST13)*

Written responses to the open-ended questions supported the same point, with one participant commenting that:

> *"The teaching practicum familiarised me to the new classroom and school environment and being involved in the educational process." (WR44)*

5.3.2.2.2 A flexible environment

When describing the environment, two student teachers described the teaching practicum environment as *"flexible",* as in the following:

> *"Cooperating teachers and university supervisors were flexible and not strict with us. For example, the classes of the diploma are in the*

evening. Thus, they kindly organise the teaching practicum in the morning. They helped us much in this regard." (ST 5)

"The cooperating teacher helped me to rearrange my teaching schedule to start after the second period because I live far away from the school." (ST 10)

5.3.2.2.3 A friendly & helpful environment

Other student teachers highlighted the friendly and helpful atmosphere at the teaching practicum as follows:

"I have not faced any difficulties in the teaching practicum so far; on the contrary, cooperating teachers were sympathetic and patient with us because they treat you as brothers and not strict teachers. We take advantage of their experience, opinions, advice and things that matter to us, especially in the field of learning." (ST13)

"Everyone in the school helped me, especially the cooperating teachers and university supervisors, in the beginning, I mean the first few weeks, and if I asked anyone else, he or she welcome it." (ST14)

5.3.2.3 Teaching Practicum Challenges

The data analysis also illuminated some of the key challenges facing Saudi student teachers. According to the participants, these challenges mainly relate to teaching, supervision and administration at the teaching practicum.

5.3.2.3.1 Teaching challenges

With regards to teaching challenges, the data analysis revealed that participants viewed the practicum as challenging in terms of: (1) the complex nature of teaching the Arabic language specifically at early grades at primary school, (2) the challenges of student teachers' communication with pupils, which tended to consist of a lack of school students' interaction with student teachers, (3) pupils' disrespect to student teachers, (4) learners' knowledge being wanting, and often (5) students' low achievement level.

One of the main challenges reported by the participants concerned the generally complex nature of teaching the Arabic language, which involves many intricate skills which student teachers need to master.

Five student teachers also reported the difficulty of teaching Arabic grammar, dictation and spelling, expressing their views as follows:

"Teaching and understanding Arabic grammar simply and easily is known to be challenging to teach. Besides, correcting students' mistakes is sometimes problematic." (ST6)

"Sometimes, I face some challenges to improve students' performance in dictation and enhancing their spelling level." (ST18)

Moreover, teaching Arabic with early grades at primary school was reported by eight student teachers as one further challenge which they faced in the teaching practicum. For example, one student teacher explained:

"I encounter some difficulties in teaching first, second and third primary grades. Some of them want to disturb my teaching by asking to go to the toilet for several times, others misbehave, and others need to be disciplined." (ST 10)

The student teacher participants reported a wide range of communication problems with pupils in class in their teaching practicum. Such challenges regarding direct contact with the pupils included: a frequent lack of and resistance to interaction with the student teachers on the part of the school pupils; disruptive or disrespectful pupils; student teachers' young age being seen as a lack of authority; a general lack of content knowledge from the pupils together with a frequently low level of attainment on the pupils' behalf.

Some student teachers expressed their concerns about the lack of pupils' interaction with them:

"Frankly speaking, two pupils only interact with me in the class, and the rest are in a sphere of their own. I am not aware of the health conditions of some pupils as some are tired pupils and others are sick ones. This is due to the lack of regular contact with the pupils. Also, regular contact enables me to identify pupils' learning styles and to modify my teaching methods according to their responses." (ST12)

Likewise, disruptive pupils presented another challenge which some student teachers reported facing:

"Pupils at schools had some bad and disruptive behaviour, utter some bad words and speak in a low style to their student teachers. The students are hyperactive inside class, and they need a teacher who can manage class management perfectly." (ST10)

In addition, the data analysis revealed that participants often felt that pupils treated student teachers disrespectfully. For example, one student teacher explains:

"The most important thing is that pupils should treat me as a regular teacher. Regular classroom teachers inform students that I am a student teacher, which marginalises my role as their teacher and results in a lack of respect. Pupils do not do the homework I assign

them because they see it as not important due to it being ungraded."
(ST5)

Another student teacher explained the reason for having no authority on the pupils in the class is that he was unable to assess and grade the pupils who would not necessarily respect the student teachers, as echoed by another student teacher:

> *"Pupils in the class are aware that I do not have any authority for their grades. I only teach two classes 1 for teaching the class, the students would respect us." (ST12)*

Moreover, managing reluctant students was also reported as another challenge by student teachers, for example:

> *"I found organising the class and making students responsive a bit difficult. I did not know how to do this. Thus, I started to use several new ways and checked their usefulness in this regard, but all this ended up in vain." (ST12)*

Another challenge that was significant in the data was the lack of content knowledge on the pupils' part. In this regard, one student teacher stated:

> *"I think that I did not have my right as they gave me two or three classes a week. I came to the assigned class, and I do not know anything about the pupils. I need to know pupils' needs, weaknesses and points of strength. This can enhance pupils' achievements. This type of assessment needs to be based on regular feedback to be able to identify the types of pupils. How can I do this regular feedback and I come to school for a day or two!" (ST11)*

Another teaching challenge mooted was students' low achievement level. For example, student teachers, both during the interview and in their written responses to the open-ended questions, expressed views of this as follows:

> *"Pupils' low achievement level is originally due to the lack of solid knowledge bases in their previous stages." (ST10)*

> "In the supervisory meetings, we discussed students' low achievement level and how to improve their language skills." (WR1)

This section has elucidated some of the key challenges which student teachers face during teaching, focusing specifically on the relationship between student teachers and their pupils. It has highlighted issues for student teachers in this regard such as: pupils' disrespect and disengagement; pupils' low achievement and insufficient knowledge base; student teachers' low age affecting their

authority in the classroom, especially with them not being allowed to assess or grade pupils' work.

5.3.2.3.2 Supervision challenges

The findings suggest that there are several supervision challenges which student teachers regularly encounter in their teaching practicum. One of these challenges related to their academic supervision is the lack of availability of or access to their university supervisors. This has led to student teachers' voicing the following perceptions of i) a lack of care and attention towards them from their supervisors; ii) a lack of opportunities to observe classes, iii) a lack of coordination with cooperating teachers; iv) a certain degree of the overreliance of the university supervisor and the cooperating teachers on each other; v) ineffectual supervisory feedback; vi) having non-specialist university supervisors; vi) teacher assessment criteria not being communicated, and vii) a general lack of rich and helpful teaching resources.

One of the main findings voiced concerning the challenges associated with university supervision is the lack of convenient access to and availability of the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors. Six student teachers commented on the unavailability of the cooperating teachers and university supervisors. For example, one student teacher expressed his dissatisfaction at the quality of his supervision and the inadequate number of supervisory visits paid to his practicum:

> *"The university supervisor paid us very few visits. He is really happy that the* supervision *of the teaching practicum reduced his teaching load from the university. As soon as he checks our lesson plans, he leaves the practicum as if he wished he had not come at all." (ST20)*

The consequences of this were several, with the first reported being about the lack of attention paid to the student teachers by their university supervisors and the cooperating teachers. Four student teachers reported their worries about being left unattended and unsupervised in the teaching practicum. For example, one student teacher said:

> *"I repeat that the cooperating teacher, once you relieve him and start teaching his classes, you will hardly find him, and if found, he will always be unavailable to help. The cooperating teacher should know that we do not come to lessen their teaching load." (ST1)*

Secondly, several student teachers expressed their concern about not being given enough opportunity to observe classes by the cooperating or regular teachers:

> *"We were supposed to be observing cooperating teachers' classes in the first term to learn the methods of teaching in reality, but this did not happen as we were assigned classes to teach straight away without observing anyone. We need to watch real class performances in the first term and the second term includes practical teaching. I prefer to have full responsibility for a specific class as the main teacher and not as a visiting student teacher."* (ST12)

In addition, coordination with the cooperating teacher was reported as not being optimum. Two student teachers lamented this issue as follows:

> *"Most of us face a serious problem; we are not aware of the required lesson to teach every week. I think there is no planning. We come to the teaching practicum, and the cooperating teacher thinks we can prepare on the spot."* (ST9)

> *"Most student teachers usually ask pupils at the beginning of the class about where their regular teacher stopped in the book to continue where he stopped. Also, the cooperating teacher sometimes is not aware of the required part of the curriculum, which is due to be explained. The school is supposed to assign a specific class to the student teachers where they can teach the whole curriculum from the beginning to the end of the term."* (ST7)

Another problematic issue was that some student teachers expressed their concerns about the overreliance of the university supervisor and the cooperating teachers on each other, along with their solidarity together, to the detriment of the student teachers:

> *"I think the unavailability of the supervisors at the teaching practicum is one of the biggest problems that face us as student teachers of Arabic. It is also noteworthy that both the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher rely on each other in their supervisory roles."* (ST 18)

Equally, three student teachers perceived the supervisors' feedback as ineffectual, as exemplified in the following:

> *"I did not receive any feedback from my teaching practicum supervisors as they are here to assess my teaching performance and give me a mark without justification."* (WR29)

> *"I think supervisors' feedback is useless as the supervisor visits us only once per semester."* (WR32)

However, it is interesting to note that nine other student teachers perceived the supervisor's feedback as useful, for example:

"I benefited a lot from my supervisor; especially, in the method of presenting the lesson, as he presented models to me. He did not give it to me, but he put it on a wall in his office and asked all students to take a copy from it." (ST 14)

Another area of note concerned the specific subject-specialism of university supervisors. Ten student teachers expressed their displeasure at having non-specialist university supervisors. This was perceived as a significant challenge, voiced by student teachers in both the interview data and the written questionnaire responses:

"Several student teachers are trained in the same teaching practicum, and the university does not have enough supervisors. This leads the university to assign an unspecialised university supervisor to supervise and train student teachers of Arabic. For example, my university supervisor was specialised in Mathematics. You can imagine the lack of technical and professional knowledge we need to develop as future teachers of Arabic." (ST9)

"University of Hail assigns new Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) to supervise us at the teaching practicum schools. These GTAs lack the professionalism needed by student teachers. We need a role model to look up to." (WR 59)

One further issue highlighted by student teacher participants referred to the fact that the assessment criteria used to assess their performance in the teaching practicum were not always communicated clearly to them:

"There are no clear assessment criteria based on which we are evaluated teaching performance at the teaching practicum. I wish we had been informed of any assessment criteria that would help us be fairly and objectively evaluated." (ST11)

"Supervisors ask us to accurately and objectively evaluate school students, and at the same time, they do not do the same with us as student teachers." (ST15)

Another challenge reported by the data relates to a lack of stimulating and informative resources regarding pedagogy, professional development and teaching practice. Nine student teachers voiced their concern about this issue. For example:

"The school headteacher does not allow us to use the library for our meeting with the university supervisor who rarely visits us. He

justified this decision by saying that he is afraid not to lose any of the library valuable books and equipment." (ST 8)

"Supposedly, the school library should encompass some books that in-service use to update their pedagogical knowledge and skills. However, no resources exist to develop teachers professionally. This gives us an idea that student teachers have no resources whatsoever." (ST 13)

Nonetheless, student teachers' responses to the questionnaire items about supervision in the teaching practicum were generally positive and complimentary: 90% of student teachers agreed that teaching practicum supervisors 'helped them with their lesson planning skills'; 89% of student teachers agreed that 'teaching practicum supervisors helped them with their use of effective teaching strategies'; 85% of student teachers agreed that 'teaching practicum supervisors helped them with their use of effective classroom management'; 92% of student teachers agreed that 'teaching practicum supervisors enriched student teachers' knowledge of assessment practices'; 94% of student teachers agreed that 'teaching practicum supervisors were objective in their end of practicum evaluation'; and 90% of student teachers agreed that 'teaching practicum supervisors gave them constructive feedback'.

It is noteworthy that the inadequacy of supervision reported from the interview data is contradicted by the questionnaire data (Table 5.7). This may be explained by several reasons. It is worth bearing in mind, first, that while qualitative data is influenced by the researcher's interpretation, which, as explained earlier, can affect the entire process of data collection, quantitative data mainly involves a statistical/numerical process to generate and interpret results (Oppenheim, 1992). Qualitative data analysis, on the contrary, involves an inductive process which can be influenced by bias, that is, my positionality as a researcher. Moreover, the presence of the interviewer also allowed the participants to clarify the meaning of questions they did not understand. In this respect, the nature of the interview questions and the interview itself triggered participants' more detailed and considered responses to the challenges they encountered in their teaching practicum, including challenges related to supervision, because participants had more time to elaborate their answers during the interviews. This also raises the possibility that some questions from the questionnaire might have been misunderstood.

Furthermore, time might be an important reason for this discrepancy between the interview and questionnaire data. The interviews were conducted three weeks after the questionnaire had been completed; hence, the two instruments may have been separated by a period which may have affected the participants' responses (Harris & Brown, 2010).

In addition, the Interview data collected here were somewhat contextualised (Fontana & Frey, 2000) as participants had further experiences of the practicum, hence providing a more nuanced picture of the challenges related to supervision. It is also plausible that the lack of time to complete the questionnaire and the respondents' inability to quickly recall relevant information caused them to respond inaccurately (Brewer, Hallman, Fielder, & Kipen, 2004).

It is also worth acknowledging that there is a difference between the questionnaire completed in the presence of their university tutors for a study conducted by an unknown researcher and the interview in which I was able to develop a more open and trusting relationship. Student teachers who completed the questionnaire for me and in the presence of their university tutors might have been affected by power relations with their university tutors as it is likely that some respondents might want to please their tutors by giving satisfactory responses to the questionnaire items thinking that their responses would be revealed to their tutors who had the powers and means to affect their course grades negatively. However, those student teachers whom I interviewed were ensured that their responses would be strictly anonymous, private, and confidential and that their university tutors would have absolutely no access to their data, under any circumstances. This resulted in developing a more open and trusting relationship with the participants, and student interviewees were given the opportunity to express their views freely, some of which contradicted with the questionnaire results.

Interviewing only student teachers about their experiences of the teaching practicum might be interpreted as telling part of the story. However, interviewing the cooperating teachers and university supervisors about their experiences with supervising student teachers in the teaching practicum was an attempt to tell the whole story and enhance the credibility of the argument as all parties involved were given the opportunity to voice their concerns. This is also supported by Gonzalez & Carter's (1996) study, which found that cooperating teachers and

student teachers recalled the same teaching events; however, they thought about these teaching events differently. Finally, as explained in the Methodology Chapter, self-reported data can also affect the results. As noted by Marton & Pong (2005) or Pajares (1992), it is not unusual for participants to hold conflicting conceptions and contradictory beliefs thereby sometimes responding inconsistently. Individuals may have conflicting beliefs about the same issue, which might result in inconsistent responses to the same examined issues. As I collected self-reported data from the current study participants, they might have given me socially acceptable answers about their teaching practicum experiences.

5.3.2.3.3 Administrative challenges

In addition to the teaching challenges and the supervisory challenges, the data analysis revealed that participants reported administrative challenges which relate to three issues: (a) insufficient duration of the teaching practicum; (b) extra classes and (c) the strict attitude of headteachers.

Firstly, with regards, the duration of the teaching practicum, nine student teachers voiced their concern about its short duration and hoped that it could be extended longer: One student teacher expressed his view as shown in the following response:

> *"Only two days are not enough for training. As well, our previous colleagues who graduated from the education colleges received training in the teaching practicum every week for an entire academic semester. I specialised in Arabic, and the branches of Arabic and I cannot teach a branch of Arabic at the expense of the other branch. So, the training should be more than two days." (ST3)*

Student teachers further claimed that they are not necessarily happy taking extra classes:

One student teacher expressed his reluctance to take extra classes as follows:

> *"I am only there to replace the absent or delayed teacher. In addition, I do not accept doing so, and if I accept doing this, it will be a wasted hour unless it was by the instructions of the supervisor. Also, my supervisor did not give me additional classes, as I am still having problems managing my basic classes, so the additional classes make it worse!" (ST 1)*

On the other hand, three other student teachers admitted the benefit of covering for colleagues:

"For sure, they are useful for student teachers. I have no problem with taking five or six extra supply classes. They find trust and credibility in our personalities as student teachers, and we should react positively to this trust by attending these classes willingly." (ST12)

"I am willing to take extra classes as they strengthen the interrelationship between my students and me and make use of them to teach the curriculum lessons when there was not enough time to finish them." (ST19)

"Yes, I have the desire, but I prefer to take classes in my specialisation and for younger stages than I am teaching now. For example, I teach year six now, but I prefer to teach year 4 or 5 because the content and the themes are easier to teach." (ST10)

In addition to this, the strict attitude of headteachers towards student teachers' taking cover lessons was reported as another inhibiting factor for student teachers in the teaching practicum. One student teacher referred to the school headteacher as a *"significant hurdle":*

"Dealing with the school headteacher is an insurmountable challenge, as he wants to satisfy his colleagues at our expense and in return, one cannot squeeze because the supervisor will not be satisfied." (ST14)

One student teacher also referred to the school headteachers as a hindering factor, explaining that he liked to give student teachers extra classes to relieve his regular teachers' workload:

"The school headteacher wants to relieve his colleagues and put pressure on the student teacher, and the teacher wants that too, which means putting the burden on the student teacher who takes extra classes from the teacher. The teacher is supposed to remain at the school to help me, but I never saw him in class when I was free. He leaves school, and the director does not stop him." (ST18)

5.3.3 Significant Others and Student Teachers

The data analysis of the current study presents the impact of various significant others on the experience of student teachers during their teaching practicum. Influential significant others are generally classified as: the headteachers, the regular schoolteachers, the cooperating teachers, the university professors and the practicum fellows.
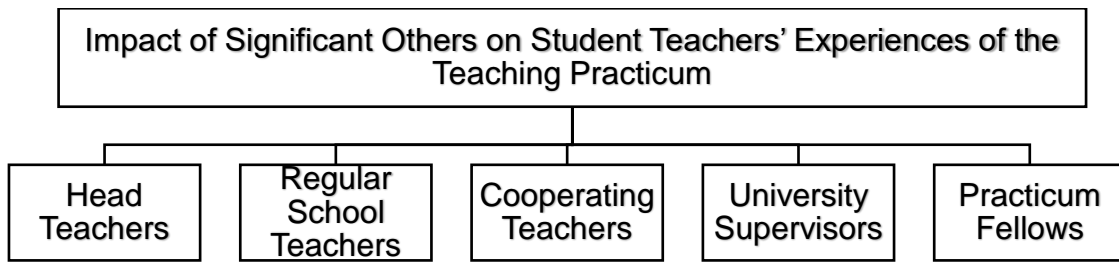
Figure 5.2 Impact of Significant Others on Student Teachers

5.3.3.1 Head Teachers

The headteacher was reported as a significant other who had an influential effect on shaping student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. Student teachers openly expressed their views about the impact of the school headteacher on their teaching practicum.

For example, eight student teachers described the headteacher as: a professional, busy and an organised leader, whilst two university supervisors viewed the headteacher as representing the *'proper channel of communication'* between student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors. In addition, three other student teachers regarded the headteacher as a respectable man, who had professionally welcomed them at the teaching practicum school. For example:

> *"There is a mutual respect relationship between the school headteacher and me. He asked some teachers to guide my teaching practicum fellows and me through how to deal with students and how to teach the curriculum. He is busy with other administrative duties, but he made me love to come to the teaching practicum." (ST 1)*

Also, five student teachers viewed the headteacher as a busy leader, pleasant but somewhat removed from the teaching practicum experience:

> *"My relationship with the school headteacher is superficial as he is busy. He welcomed us during the first week of the teaching practicum, and then he handed us over to the cooperating teacher to take care of us." (ST 11)*

Moreover, one of five students to comment on headteachers' involvement with regulations and procedures, stated that the headteacher focused on school regulations, e.g. by giving them *"guidance"* along with some of the regulations and rules of the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia *(ST 8).*

Equally, two university supervisors commented on the fact that the school headteacher had an important and authoritative role as the lynchpin between the university and the practicum school and all those involved.

> *"[The] school headteacher is in charge of all student teachers as he is the channel of communication between the student teachers, the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors." (US7)*

5.3.3.2 Regular school teachers

In addition to the main groups of significant others, the data analysis revealed that the regular schoolteachers were also reported as having an impact on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. For example, seven student teachers considered their relationship with regular schoolteachers as *"superficial",* whilst five other student teachers and two university supervisors perceived the regular schoolteachers as *"experienced".* Seven student teachers explained more about the nature of this *"superficial relationship"* they had with regular schoolteachers:

> *"My relationship with schoolteachers is just superficial due to the age difference and lack of familiarity. They are quite old in their fifties from a different generation, and they are following the old tradition of teaching. Therefore, they avoid getting in touch with us, as we are student teachers who [have] studied updated knowledge of classroom pedagogy and practice that shows they are old fashioned teachers." (ST 9)*

On the other hand, five other student teachers believed that regular schoolteachers are experienced and that their presence can be of value to the ST:

> *"On the contrary, the teachers were welcoming and sympathetic to us because we are brothers in Islam before being colleague teachers. We learn more from their experiences and make use of their opinions and consultations on the issues, related to our learning." (ST7)*

Two other university supervisors supported making use of the senior teachers' experience. For example:

> *"When student teachers interact with or consult colleagues working in the same teaching profession, there is no doubt that they will benefit from their experience. Student teachers drink from a bowl, especially enriched previous experience or feedback or other activities, and views, all of which contribute to the construction of the student's personality and preparation as a robust teacher." (US5)*

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5.3.3.3 Cooperating teachers

Cooperating teachers, identified as the third influential 'significant other', were reported as profoundly affecting the student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. Indeed, the data analysis revealed nine different roles played by the cooperating teachers. Cooperating teachers were perceived as *"experienced advisors"* and *"barrier breakers"*. Also, cooperating teachers were described as: senior, mediating, important, friendly, gentle, helpful, and close.

More specifically, three student teachers perceived the cooperating teacher as an *"experienced advisor"* who coached them carefully:

> *"I believe an experienced cooperating teacher is someone who has given me his experience and guidance in teaching. He told me some dos and don'ts in teaching. He advised us not to be nervous whilst teaching. He urged us not to discriminate amongst students. He encouraged me not to have a teacher's pet in the classroom as this negatively affects other classmates. He informed me not to use biased language (ST 3)*

Another student teacher described his relationship with the cooperating teacher as a hierarchical one:

> *"My relationship with the cooperating teacher is like the relationship between superior and subordinate, but I noticed that he seeks to achieve good results." (ST 5)*

Likewise, one student teacher described the cooperating teacher as a mediating person in the teaching practicum:

> *"I can assure that my relationship with the cooperating teacher is stronger than that with the university supervisor because of the direct communication with him at the school. In addition, the cooperating teacher is the link who facilitates all the administrative issues between the school headteacher and me." (ST9)*

The data showed that student teachers sometimes equated the importance of cooperating teachers to that of the university supervisors:

> *"The cooperating teacher's role is no less important than that of the supervisor as that of a guide [to] direct, inform and assess us in the teaching practicum." (ST8)*

With reference to the cooperating teacher's role in "breaking barriers" at the teaching practicum, one student teacher said:

"Honestly, the cooperating teacher helped me break the barrier of fear, worry and inclusion into the school because the university supervisor's visits are very few." (ST16)

Also, commenting on the nature of the relationship between student teachers and cooperating teachers, one student teacher asserted that:

"The cooperating teachers created a friendly relationship with us as they help us to solve any problem and guide us on many issues. It is a close friendship, and we benefited a lot from their feedback." (ST4)

Noting the good manners of the cooperating teacher, one student teacher said:

"My relationship focuses on mutual respect between the cooperating teacher, my teaching practicum fellows and doing the required duties by the university supervisor. The best relationship was with the cooperating teacher for his gentle manners with us." (ST19)

Another student teacher commented on the helpful role of the cooperating teachers as follows:

"He helped us with school attendance, the morning assembly, the participation in the *school broadcast, running on the broadcast, distribution of the curriculum, teaching preparation, lesson plan, setting goals and questions, the ways of the explanation, clarification and delivering information to students. He also holds meetings with us to discuss any difficulties or problems and shows us the type of errors and strategies for correction and so on." (ST16)*

On the other hand, one cooperating teacher commented on the close relationship with his student teachers as follows:

"This is the first time we train student teachers of Arabic language at our school, but in fact, we consider them as brothers and colleagues, not as student teachers. We have links to friendliness and mutual care and respect with all student teachers in the practicum." (CT3)

Despite the positive picture painted by student teachers about their cooperating teachers in this section, it is worth acknowledging that, as explained earlier in the chapter (see 5.3.2.3.2) some student teachers expressed negative views about the practices of cooperating teachers and mentioned the difficulties they met as a result of co-operating teachers not adequately fulfilling their roles in the teaching practicum. Examples of concerns voiced by student teachers included, for example, the lack of convenient access to and availability of the cooperating teachers, the lack of coordination with cooperating teachers, or the cooperating teachers' ineffectual feedback (See 5.3.2.3.2).

5.3.3.4 University supervisors

University supervisors, as the fourth influential significant other, profoundly affect student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. Student teachers of Arabic reported contradictory views about their university supervisors. Some viewed their university supervisors as helpful overseers, bridging the gap between theory and practice and being caring. Conversely, other student teachers experienced a negative relationship with their university supervisor, one based on a relationship of enforced seniority; full of fear and suspicion; transient and fault finding.

From a positive perspective, three student teachers highlighted the beneficial, helpful role of their university supervisors as follows:

> *"University supervisors taught us how to prepare and present a lesson in class to our pupils, how to explore learners' mistakes, and also his permanent guidance towards mistakes faced by students, enriching students' general knowledge, especially in Arabic which is our speciality. We refer to and ask about anything that comes to mind concerning it. He gives us some valuable information." (ST13)*

> *"The university supervisor, God bless him, was a real help as he provided me with notes photocopied from books about some objectives. He also helped me with applying more than one method and taught me that there is no ideal method. As I said before, he told me to prepare theoretically, and he would be with me in training and practical application. I did what he asked, and he revised with me all the steps then I applied them successfully." (ST18)*

Another written response supporting the same point explained that:

> *"The university supervisor detects my weak skills in teaching that I did not master whilst studying at university in order not to let us repeat them over the years." (ST20)*

Moreover, written responses from different student teachers who responded to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire highlighted the importance of the supervisory meetings in the teaching practicum. One student teacher wrote:

> *"In the supervisory meetings, we discuss issues such as effective teaching methods of Arabic in general and grammar in particular, classroom management, presentation of content, enrichment activities, and assessment of pupils' different skills" (WR13)*

Furthermore, concerning the different roles of the university supervisor in the teaching practicum, one student teacher described how supervisors could help to bridge the gap between university and the teaching work:

> *"The supervisor plays multiple roles; he directs the trainees on the basics of teaching practicum as well as helping them to apply what they had learnt at the university on the ground at the teaching practicum." (ST19)*

Another student teacher commented on the caring role of the university supervisor as follows:

> *"University supervisors act as parents, as they give me tips, advice and help. For example, the supervisor has a prominent role in my psychological relief as he was my university supervisor at school. Then, he and I visited the library, and all the people there stood as soon as they saw him, as a sign of respect. He said to the cooperating teacher, "This student needs you, and I am busy at university. I will visit him a few times, and you should follow up with him." (ST15)*

In addition, the student teachers and cooperating teachers described various types of relationships between student teachers and university supervisors which were marked by enforced seniority, fear and suspicion, transience and fault finding. For example, one student teacher described his relationship with his university supervisor as useful but taking the form of an authoritative relationship as follows:

> *"It is like an employer-employee relationship. However, the university supervisor always cares about us as trainees at school. He encourages us to do better. He wants us to make use of our training at school to link the courses at the university with the application at school." (ST2)*

Another student teacher commented on the transient nature of the relationship with the university supervisor in the following manner:

> *"I have a good relationship with the university supervisor. He visited us only three times during the practicum: at the beginning, in the middle and a final visit to assess our performance in the teaching practicum. We exchanged mobile phone numbers, and he told me to call him in a time of need." (ST7)*

From a different perspective, some cooperating teachers seemed to believe that the student teachers' relationship with the university supervisor is based primarily on fear and suspicion, because the supervisor is the one who assesses their performance at the end of the semester, as one cooperating teacher asserted:

> *"On the contrary, student teachers' relationship with the supervisor is strong, but maybe they fear him because he assesses their teaching performance during the evaluation week at the end of the practicum." (CT1)*

5.3.3.5 Practicum fellows

The data analysis showed that practicum fellows, i.e. other training peers at the same teaching practicum are the last category of significant others who can have a notable influence on student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. The impact and influence of the practicum fellows has been described by student teachers and cooperating teachers as influential, collaborative, beneficial, and familial.

> *More specifically, two student teachers and two cooperating teachers highlighted that practicum fellows can in fact be more influential than some other significant others. For example, one student teacher elaborated further:*

> *"I had a stronger relationship with my teaching practicum fellows as we are all in the same boat as new to school coming from the same university and the same diploma with the same goal to receive training and become Arabic teachers. We met at university, and then we met at the teaching practicum school; therefore, we become close friends. We learn from each other at the teaching practicum. We peer- observed each other's classes without being embarrassed. We give feedback to each other, and we accept it willingly." (ST12)*

Similarly, commenting on teamwork and collaboration, another student teacher explained that:

> *"Teaching practicum fellows helped me learn more from them by asking and answering questions. We work as one team." (ST6)*

Moreover, one cooperating teacher acknowledged that student teachers also benefited from each other more than from him as follows:

> *"I would like to add that the student teachers could benefit from other fellow student teachers more than from me as a cooperating teacher and or from the university supervisor. However, this relies on the passionate and careful student teacher who is not shy to seek knowledge." (CT1)*

Interestingly, participants also commented on the familial and collegial role created among the teaching practicum fellows. For example, the one cooperating teacher observes that:

> *"Some teaching practicum fellows have harmony as they say, "we did not know each other before; we knew each other right here in the teaching practicum". After training, they became such close friends." (CT7)*

This section has shown that student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum can be substantially influenced by various significant others. These significant others at the teaching practicum include headteachers, regular teachers, cooperating teachers, university supervisors and practicum fellows. Important and mainly positive views were expressed by the study participants about most categories of these professional, significant others. However, contradictory views were also expressed by the study participants in relation to the university supervisors about whom they expressed both positive and negative views. This underlines the necessity to probe more deeply about the role of university supervisors in the teaching practicum, as it seems vital to ensure that university supervisors are supportive and not an inhibiting factor for student teachers' progression in the teaching practicum.

5.3.4 Contextual Factors Influencing Student Teachers' Experience of their Teaching Practicum

To explore the factors which can have an impact on student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, the data analysis revealed three main classifications as follows: a) personal, b) educational, 3) cultural, as illustrated in Figure 5.3. These themes and corresponding sub-themes are not exclusive but interrelated to the teaching practicum and the different roles played by various significant others, as shown in previous sections of this chapter. In other words, these themes may help the readers to understand the internal factors within the context and settings of the teaching practicum, and also regarding the student teachers themselves (e.g. their psychological domain), which inform and affect student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum.
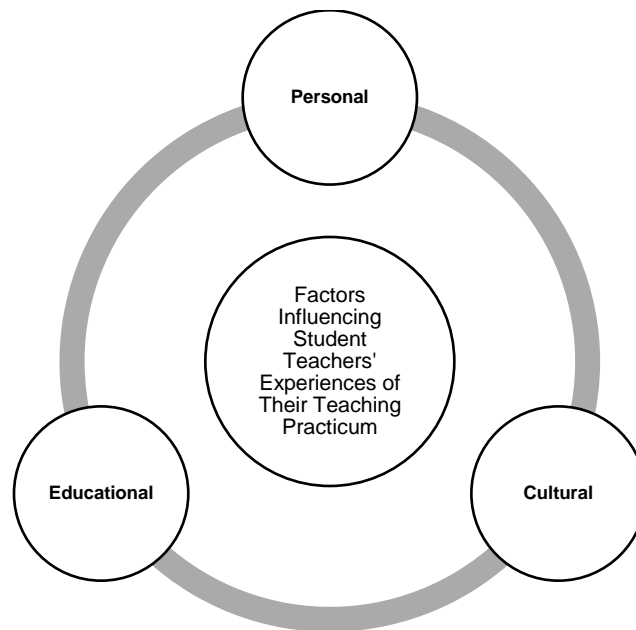
Figure 5.3 Factors Influencing Student Teachers' Experience of Their Teaching Practicum

5.3.4.1 Personal factors

Analysis of the data identified a group of factors which can be referred to as 'personal factors' which had a significant effect on the teaching practicum experiences of Saudi student teachers of Arabic. Four sub-themes emerged from these personal factors: a) student teachers' self-reflection or reflexivity; b) student teachers' commitment to teaching; c) student teachers' sense of self-efficacy and d) student teachers' professional identity.

5.3.4.1.1 Student teachers' self-reflection

With reference to the impact of student teachers' self-reflection, one cooperating teacher expressed his view that:

> *"Self-reflection was very helpful with my student teachers. After I attended their classes, I asked my student teachers to reflect on their teaching performance highlighting their points of weaknesses and strength as teachers. The comments I received from my student teachers showed that they are capable of producing very insightful reflection about their teaching performance." (CT7)*

Similarly, one university supervisor commented about the impact of self-reflection on students' experience in the teaching practicum:

> *"I taught my student teachers at university a course called "Teaching Methods" in which we had an entire lecture about self-reflection. I*

was really pleased to read my students' self-reflection reports on their teaching performance and how they critically think to develop their areas of weaknesses and become better teachers." (US1)

In addition, four university supervisors referred to "self-reflection" as an important personality trait for student teachers which can have an important impact on their teaching practicum. For example:

"Student teachers also possess the ability to practise self-reflection and self-criticism. This trait helps them to learn from their mistakes. They are allowed to know their points of strength and weaknesses through their self-reflection." (US3)

A written response from one of the student teachers indicated a further benefit of the teaching practicum, namely the students' self-reflection leading to correction of their previous assumptions and misconceptions. One student teacher explained that:

"Teaching practicum helped me to correct some misconceptions about teaching and solve some teaching problems through self-reflection. For example, I had a misconception that a teacher can never convey incorrect information to his students in the class. However, I had the chance to observe a cooperating teacher who gave an incorrect piece of information to his students whilst teaching in one class. Later, in his second class, he apologised for his students and corrected the wrong information provided earlier." (WR48)

Another student teacher demonstrated the effect of this self-reflection upon previous misconceptions he had had about teaching Arabic:

"The teaching practicum helped me to deeply understand some concepts and correct some misconceptions through self-reflection of student teachers such as the misconceptions that I had about the deductive and inductive approaches to teaching Arabic grammar" (ST 10)

5.3.4.1.2 The impact of student teachers' commitment to teaching

Respondents were asked about their commitment to teaching, and it was clear from the 7-item scale that most respondents considered themselves committed (see Table 5.3). Responses to all the items showed that the least favoured item scored an agreement percentage of 88% and the highest item scored an agreement percentage of 97%.

Three student teachers showed how their commitment to teaching affected their teaching practicum experience, with one example as follows:

> *"I enjoy teaching my classes and interacting with students while teaching them how to read and write in Arabic. I am highly committed to teaching to the extent that I like to have more training classes (ST15)*

Another student teacher had an equally positive comment about his commitment to teaching:

> *"I arrived early at school, and I really like teaching more than one class for training purposes. I feel happy when I check students' understanding and I found out that they understood the content of the lesson." (ST 10)*

Moreover, three other university supervisors attributed the impact of student teachers' commitment to teaching for increasing student teachers' motivation towards teaching. For example:

> *"I think that the emotional aspect is a very influential aspect of student teachers. When we train student teachers in the teaching practicum, we find them motivated. Other student teachers are reluctant. This makes a huge difference between the two types of teachers in the future." (US4)*

One other cooperating teacher commented on the link between student teachers' motivation and their commitment to teaching:

> *"We observe many student teachers who are passionate about teaching and have strong motivation to learn everything new and do their best in their teaching." (CT3)*

5.3.4.1.3 Student teacher's sense of self-efficacy

Student teachers' sense of efficacy was measured through 9 items, all of which showed high overall agreement. This indicates that respondents reported a high degree of efficacy overall. The highest-ranked items were the 'ability to help students work collaboratively in pairs or in groups at 99% and the 'ability to check students' comprehension' at 99%. The lowest-ranked item was the 'ability to teach students with different abilities' at 78%.

Analysis of the data showed that student teachers' 'sense of self-efficacy' helped them to: a) perform better in class; b) motivated their learning; c) improved their practical and academic achievements; d) influenced their learning positively, and e) improved student teachers' job satisfaction and commitment to teaching.

Some student teachers paid particular attention to the idea of the impact of their self-efficacy on the way they perform in class:

"My sense of self-efficacy affects how I perform in class as a teacher. It increases my confidence in the pedagogical approaches, the engagement techniques and the teaching methods I utilise in class." (ST5)

Other student teachers stressed the influence of their self-efficacy on increasing their motivation for learning:

"My sense of self-efficacy helps to increase my motivation for learning as I am confident in dealing with unexpected situations in my teaching." (ST7)

The effect of self-efficacy on student teachers' academic and practical achievements was also shown:

"Being able to solve problems, think critically and deal with unforeseen teaching situations have improved my academic achievements and enhanced my practical thinking to make the right teaching decisions." (ST5)

It was equally clear that self-efficacy determined some student teachers' learning in a positive way:

"As a student teacher, my sense of self-efficacy affects my learning positively. I can control students' disruptive behaviour, help them value learning, and check their comprehension of what they have been taught." (ST8)

Self-efficacy was also instrumental in improving job satisfaction and commitment to teaching:

"At the teaching practicum, we are satisfied and committed to teaching because of the reasonable working hours, proper training, the professional atmosphere, and the collegial treatment. All these factors contributed to our satisfaction and commitment to teaching." (ST6)

With reference to the influence of student teachers' self-efficacy, most student teachers indicated that they considered their self-efficacy to promote their self-confidence. One cooperating teacher confirmed this:

"It is important that student teachers dare to meet students and talk to them without fear or shyness because the feeling of fear leads to confusion and the inability to control the class or even teach. Student teachers' self-efficacy supports their confidence in standing in the class and communicate positively with the pupils." (CT 1)

Another written response by a questionnaire respondent supported the same point about the impact of self-efficacy on their self-confidence: "*My self-efficacy enabled me to face students and interact with them confidently.*" (WR8).

5.3.4.1.4 Student teachers' professional identity

Data analysis showed that the professional identity of student teachers helped them to develop their practical experience, subject knowledge and skills, and which consists of both the personal and professional domains of student teachers' lives.

The influence of teaching practicum on developing student teachers' professional identity was generally deemed essential for effective teaching:

> "*The teaching practicum has developed my attitude towards teaching. I started to have a positive attitude towards the teaching profession because my identity as a teacher is being developed. My cooperating teacher closely guides, mentors and constructively provides feedback on my teaching performance to become a better teacher.*" (ST6)

Some student teachers stressed the effect of the teaching practicum on their development of the subject matter knowledge and skills.

> "*I gained many teaching skills and strengthened my subject knowledge of Arabic. For example, I developed my knowledge of teaching the reading, writing and orthographic skills through the mentoring of the cooperating teacher and learning from my practicum fellows.*" (ST8)

Student teachers' professional identity was influenced by their teaching practicum experience, which linked the previous personal experience of being taught and the professional and practical experience of becoming a teacher:

> "*I learnt a lot from my previous teachers at school and my university teachers at the university. In the practicum, I was exposed to different teaching approaches by my cooperating teachers and my practicum fellows. My identity as a teacher comprises the knowledge and skills gained from my previous teachers and those gained from my teaching practicum experience.*" (ST5)

The issue of professional identity is important because for some student teachers there is a conflict and tension between the personal traits or attributes they may possess and their educational background, and the reality of the professional school contexts and settings they are required to operate and teach at the teaching practicum and beyond as future teachers.

"As a student teacher, I came to the practicum with some prior knowledge and experiences about teaching derived from my previous teachers. At the practicum, I learned some new knowledge and skills which contradicts with what I gained previously. For example, I was punished as a student by being hit; however, at the practicum, I learned to minimise the pedagogical punishment techniques and reinforce my reward and motivation techniques with my students." (ST4)

Some student teachers stressed that their teaching practicum experiences had influenced the formation of their professional identities, as shown below:

"I cannot deny that my practical experiences have influenced the formation of my professional identity as a teacher. At the practicum, I gained some more values which have been enhanced such as punctuality, professional collegiality, collective help and professional ethos." (ST8)

5.3.4.2 Educational factors

In addition to various personal factors, the data analysis showed that educational factors, i.e. the factors influencing individuals which relate to their current higher education programmes and briefly, to their previous educational background at school. Two sub-categories of educational factors emerged from the data: formal and informal education. With regards to formal education, the study participants alluded to the importance of their current university education and the Saudi GDE. With reference to informal education, the study participants mentioned several aspects, including Quranic sessions.

5.3.4.2.1 Formal higher education

In the current study, formal education refers to the experiences through which new skills or knowledge is acquired and learnt, and a formal certificate is obtained over time. The participants reported the different aspects and factors of formal higher-level education (i.e. at university level) as having an influence upon their teaching practicum, e.g. their current university programme and the GDE. For example, six cooperating teachers in total highlighted the importance of university education in shaping student teachers' experience in their teaching practicum:

"The university has a great role as student teachers spend four years to obtain their bachelor's degree in Arabic language and a year to study the General Diploma in Education. Courses taught at a university such as Personality Formation, Behaviour & Psychology, and Methods of Teaching must have informed student teachers' experiences of their teaching practicum. All the skills and knowledge

acquired during these courses will be beneficial later in teaching."
(CT3)

In addition, another university supervisor commented on the full range of different course modules taught during the GDE as follows:

"I see that the General Diploma in Education is comprehensive of all the educational aspects. Of course, the General Diploma in Education focused on student preparation in several aspects: Curriculum and Teaching and Methods, Educational Evaluation, Psychology, Foundations of Education, Pedagogical Supervision and History of Education in Saudi Arabia." (US3)

Fifteen student teachers in total commented on the usefulness of the courses taught. For example:

"I swear by Allah (God) that the programme is good. I am aware of subjects related to Curricula because as I mentioned to you, I am concerned about knowing students who trained on many things depending on the theoretical side and practice is the foundation, cognitive side also is necessary, although undoubtedly training is more important. I am not saying that as prejudice to speciality, but school subjects benefit the student in the field." (ST16)

With regards to the GDE, two university supervisors commented on its conformity to real teaching and learning situations as follows:

"The General Diploma in Education is adequate with many diversified components. It has a strong impact on student teachers as it conforms to the real educational situations. It shapes student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum by providing them with the needed pedagogical and practical knowledge and skills." (US2)

In addition, four cooperating teachers expressed their views about the value of the GDE. For example, two cooperating teachers elaborated further the knowledge of pedagogy and teaching practice gained through doing it:

"There is no doubt that the General Diploma in Education enrichens student teachers' knowledge of pedagogy and practice as well as broadening their understanding of the teaching and learning processes." (CT3)

Two other cooperating teachers commented on the theoretical and practical knowledge that the GDE programme offers to student teachers. The following quote from one cooperating teacher is an example of this view:

"The General Diploma in Education programme is unique and targeted to create a generation of teachers not only equipped with theoretical knowledge provided by their universities, colleges and

institutes, but also equipped with the expertise and skills needed as solid and professional teachers within their future schools, and with their students in the classroom." (CT4)

In addition, student teachers also held similar opinions about the GDE. For example, twelve student teachers expressed positive views towards the offered course modules in the GDE despite some overlaps in content in some course modules. The following example taken from a student teacher interview is indicative of this view:

> *"All the course modules are very useful with this General Diploma in Education. For example, Developmental Psychology helped me understand the different stages in the child/student's development in general. School Administration is also useful as it teaches us how the school administrative system works and how the school head deals with the administrative staff and other teachers. Teaching & Curricula, and Teaching Methods courses sometimes overlap in concepts of teaching; nevertheless, they benefited us greatly." (ST11)*

Other student teachers articulated their increased appreciation of the different roles a teacher must play, due to their acquired knowledge during the GDE programme:

> *"The General Diploma in Education programme has changed my view of the teacher's roles. The teacher is not only a transmitter of his specialised knowledge but also a supervisor, a trainer, a developer, a leader, an educator, an expert, a counsellor, a creator and a technical person. The successful teacher is the one who makes use of this programme and applies it correctly." (ST10)*

Three further student teachers of Arabic also indicated the usefulness of the GDE course modules:

> *"The Curriculum, Teaching Methods, and Psychology course modules are the most important ones for our teaching career. They help us deal well with our students, manage classes appropriately and deliver the information to students smoothly. I think they are the most important courses because they are the basis for a successful teacher (ST6)*

The central and important role of university supervisors (who are normally also university lecturers and professors) in the GDE was also lauded by the student teachers:

> *"There is no doubt that university supervisors play a significant role, especially in the General Diploma in Education. They direct our attention and thinking to beneficial issues in our professional, scientific, public, educational, communal and familiar life. We*

benefited from so many things, and if there are blurry concepts that we did not perceive, the university supervisor is the one to whom one resort after Allah the Almighty to guide us in such matters." (ST3)

5.3.4.2.2 Informal education

In the current study, informal education refers to those experiences and events in an individual's life from which new skills or gains in knowledge are acquired without necessarily obtaining a qualification. With regard to informal education, one important aspect of such informal learning emerged and predominated from the data analysis, namely Quranic sessions.

Eighteen student teachers in total highlighted the importance of Quranic lessons on student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. One example of the centrality of the Quranic sessions was noted as follows:

"I used to go to Quranic sessions at the mosque to study my lessons. Arabic is the language of Qur'an and reading it frequently, improves the pronunciation of Arabic vowels. Also, I gained some socialising skills, which helped me when I meet supervisors, teaching practicum fellows and even my pupils in the class. Besides, I learnt how to work in a group as a team member in the Quranic sessions where the religious teacher assigned roles to us. I sometimes worked as a teaching assistant to the religious teacher taking attendance, asking students who memorised their daily part to recite it by heart, helping those who have problems in reciting their parts to do it properly." (ST16)

Similarly, two other student teachers commented on the importance of the Quranic sessions, as shown in the following different quotes:

"When you hear a good colleague of ours reading Arabic in a very good way, one will automatically understand that he was enrolled in Quranic sessions when he was young as it naturally improves reading of Arabic." (ST19)

"My regular attendance of the Quranic sessions has helped me know and abide by the etiquette of dialogue and morals of listening to others and practising the language as the Holy Quran is only written in Standard eloquent Arabic." (ST17)

This section has shown how both formal and informal learning experiences and episodes have enriched student teachers' experiences of their teaching practicum.

Formal learning experiences in the Saudi context are similar to many other Arab contexts in the Middle East and North African Region (MENA) region where programme and course modules are studied, and a certificate received at the end

of the study. However, in the Saudi context, as with other Gulf region contexts, informal learning experiences have been shown to be beneficial as well, as they form an essential part of the culture there. Attendance of Quranic sessions also constitutes a vital part of children's daily life. Furthermore, the *Majlis* was generally acknowledged to be an influential factor upon the teaching practicum for these student teachers of Arabic, in that it enriches the personality of those who attend it regularly through the exchange and sharing of experiences and knowledge.

5.3.4.3 Cultural factors and the culture of collectivism

Culture constitutes a further important factor which emerged clearly from the data analysis. Culture was highlighted as having a significant impact on student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. Analysis of the participants' semi-structured interviews revealed that Saudi society has some specific and meaningful cultural features, which are an integral part of Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, namely the main focus of the current study. Consequently, this following section illustrates the extent of the impact of culture on student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (the KSA).

Frequent references to the Saudi culture of collectivism influencing the teaching practicum emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, and from all the participant cohorts, i.e. the student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors.

Three cooperating teachers, a university supervisor and a student teacher expressed their views about the collectivist culture prevalent at schools in the KSA as shown by the following examples:

> *"At the school, we always have social gathering events that give us a sense of belonging and unity as teachers who belong to the same school, same subject. We celebrate special occasions such as the birth of our colleague's child or the promotion of a colleague." (CT3)*

> *"We also help each other willingly. We promote a selfless culture where we help and give to each other, without waiting for compensation. If any of our colleagues is sick at home, we come together to visit him to relieve his pain and inform him that we need him to recover quickly as we miss him at school." (CT5)*

> *"I remember that one group of student teachers were very helpful to each other in the teaching practicum. They used to visit each other's*

classes and try to solve any problem for their teaching practicum fellows. This goes back to the culture of collective help in time of need." (CT5)

One of the written responses of a university supervisor supporting the same point explained that:

"At the teaching practicum school, I work with the cooperating teachers and student teachers as one family. We help each other to overcome any problems that may take place in teaching or administration. Our main purpose of this cooperation is to provide student teachers with an enjoyable experience at the teaching practicum." (US4)

Similarly, another written response by a student teacher supporting the same point was that:

"In the teaching practicum, we like the family atmosphere found at the school. From day one, we are warmly welcomed by the headteacher and cooperating teacher in a brotherly fashion. Our cooperating teacher invited me and my practicum fellows to have lunch together for free. We are also allowed to order tea or coffee for free during our teaching practicum days." (ST11)

Another informal aspect of education emerging from the findings was the notion of the traditional *Majlis*, a seemingly important cultural element for student teachers. Seven student teachers in total pointed out the importance and the role of the *Majlis*. As explained earlier in Chapter Two, the *Majlis* is a social space where Saudis usually exchange ideas and discuss important matters. Being from the local community student teachers attend these gathering and take part in these discussions. Due to the presence of student teachers, issues that relate to either the school or, more specifically, to the practical aspects of teaching are often discussed. For example:

"In Majlis, we gather in one of our friend's house in the evening to have dinner and then have tea and coffee. After that, we start chatting about everyday life situations, and we learn from sharing these experiences. They are quite useful as they informally present a problem and we learn how this problem was solved ethically and easily. Elder people narrate incidents whether old or new. These narratives are very beneficial to us as they form part of our morals and ethics as well as critical thinking when solving a problem." (ST7)

Additionally, one cooperating teacher and a university supervisor also highlighted the importance of the *Majlis*:

"Majlis sessions form part of our morals and ethics. They also help us develop our critical and creative thinking skills in response to

everyday problems and incidents. Majlis also develops our problem-solving skills through which we know what is socially and culturally acceptable norms." (CT5)

"Majlis is very important to us as the old generation teaches the new ones how to live. People in the Majlis will be talking and drinking Arabic coffee. In the Majlis, people learn to listen and talk to each other. Poetry, discussion about the camel competitions and sale of camels are always discussed as they are part of the Arabic culture." (US2)

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the quantitative and qualitative findings together in a complementary way to endeavour to find answers to the three research questions of the study, which focus on the three areas of a) student teachers' of Arabic views of their teaching practicum; b) the influence of significant others on Saudi student teachers' of Arabic experience of their teaching practicum; and c) the various cultural factors which can have an impact upon these same student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum.

In sum, the findings are compelling and illuminating regarding student teachers' views and perspectives about the role of their teaching practicum and in shaping their experience as future teachers. In this respect, the chapter has highlighted several important aspects of the teaching practicum, including the practicum environment and associated challenges, e.g. with the teaching, administration and supervision.

Moreover, the data analysis has shown that professional significant others, namely the teaching practicum staff, headteachers, cooperating teachers, practicum fellows and university supervisors, have influenced student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum considerably in various ways, e.g. regarding offering support, help, or carrying out an assessment. These significant others constitute key elements of the location where student teachers receive their training, i.e. in the process of becoming to become future schoolteachers.

Furthermore, the last section of this chapter explores the different factors shown to affect student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. These factors were divided into three categories: personal, educational and cultural. These three types of factors were shown to be instrumental in influencing Saudi student teachers' of Arabic behaviour and experience in their teaching practicum in different ways, e.g. personally and psychologically with their sense of self-efficacy

and commitment to teaching; educationally with their accounts of the Quranic sessions and the impact of their university study, and culturally and socially with the Majlis. The following chapter presents an in-depth discussion of the major and most pertinent findings in this chapter.

Chapter Six: Discussion of the Findings

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings are discussed based on the conceptual framework of the current study, which includes the different views of student teachers' experiences of the teaching practicum, that is, the different contextual factors which influence their teaching practicum experiences on a personal level (i.e. student teachers' professional and psychological domains). In addition, the chapter discusses certain contextual factors related to several aspects of the school settings, where the student teachers have their teaching practicum, that can potentially influence student teachers' knowledge and practice. Furthermore, the findings of the current study relate to several key issues discussed in the literature pertaining to the teaching practicum and the key factors influencing it in the educational context of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). This has been done to interpret and gain a better understanding of Saudi Arabic-language student teachers' teaching practicum experience.

The study findings have revealed key aspects of the teaching practicum at KSA schools, gaining insight from the perspectives of student teachers of Arabic. The impact of significant others on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum was found to be critical. Additionally, the influence of a range of different contextual factors was noteworthy. The findings that emerged from the data reported in the previous chapter relate to fundamental aspects of the sociocultural framework used as a basis for this study. More specifically, the findings relate to key aspects and critical functions of the communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Hence, the findings are discussed in light of five key aspects of the COP:

a) gathering and exchanging information about the practice
b) forming communications and cooperation among colleagues
c) supporting learning through discussion and sharing
d) promoting the transfer of new knowledge to work contexts to solve problems
e) sharing solutions within the community

In the current study, the teaching fellows explicitly reported and described the personal impact of the teaching practicum as a positive element. This is partly because, through positive relationships with their peers, student teachers were able to share different professional and personal experiences of teaching in this practice community.

Consequently, this chapter, firstly, summarises the main findings of this study and, secondly, discusses the importance of the teaching practicum as well as the main challenges associated with it from the participants' perspective. The chapter also explores the role of significant others in shaping the participants' experience of the teaching practicum. Finally, the contextual factors influencing student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum are presented.

6.2 Summary of the Research Findings

Three research questions have guided the data collection and analysis in the current study, which focuses on three main areas:

a) student teachers' views of their teaching practicum
b) the influence of significant others on student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum
c) the various contextual factors which influence student teachers' teaching practicum

Key themes have emerged from both the quantitative and qualitative data, which articulate and explicate how Saudi Arabic student teachers view and evaluate their teaching practicum and what people and factors influence their experience of this.

Firstly, the findings have emphasised the central importance of their teaching practicum to the participants, revealed aspects about the nature of the teaching practicum environment and clarified some of the challenges faced by student teachers during their practicum, mainly relating to teaching, supervision and administration. Secondly, both of the participants' written and interview responses have confirmed that five different cohort groups of significant others have had a strong influence on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. These groups comprise the headteachers; the cooperating teachers; the regular teachers in the practicum schools; the practicum fellows, and the university supervisors. Finally, the findings suggest that three main types

of factors have had a meaningful effect upon Saudi student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum, namely: personal factors, educational factors and cultural factors.

All the themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data do not exist discretely nor independently but were found to be interrelated within the teaching practicum and were relevant in various ways according to the different roles played by significant others. Therefore, the themes emerging from the data may help the readers to understand the multiple layers of meaning concerning and informing student teachers' lived experience of their teaching practicum.

6.3 Student Teachers' Views of their Teaching Practicum Experience

The first research question allows for a broader and more textured picture of how student teachers perceive their teaching practicum. In the first instance, the findings have endorsed and confirmed the extent to which the teaching practicum is vital to training future teachers, and in what ways (e.g. for linking theoretical, pedagogical knowledge and applying it practically in context). The findings have also described the specific nature of the teaching practicum environment, highlighting some of the notable challenges (i.e. aspects of the teaching itself, supervision and the school administration), which the student teachers have encountered during their teaching practicum. In this regard, the participants' responses have revealed more in-depth information about the essential nature of the Saudi student teachers' practicum experience.

6.3.1 Providing a Role Model for Student Teachers

As reported in the previous chapter, the student participants stressed the importance of the teaching practicum for student teachers to find and identify the most suitable role model for them amongst various significant others with whom they interacted, as illustrated in section 5.3.2.1.1. For example, five student teachers referred implicitly to the importance of role models showing how, through observations of other teachers, they found "inspiring" models to emulate in order to support students.

Based on this premise, it appears that the issue of finding the right role model is one of the implicit targets for student teachers during their teaching practicum experience. The issue of a professional role model is particularly important

because a role model is a person who can inspire and encourage others to strive for best practice and recognise their best attributes and qualities. Student teachers appeared to learn through these role models, through their commitment to excellence and through their ability to promote their personal growth whilst they are seeking expert assistance and guidance. This aspect of the data relates to the notion of legitimate peripheral participation, as some student teachers gained meaningful learning from more experienced teachers by taking the main instruction role. There is an agreement that the course of the practicum can be classified as a form of legitimate peripheral participation operating from the "periphery" of the community of practice of their practicum school despite the short time of the placement. Research has clearly documented the benefits of newcomer teachers gaining from interacting with the more experienced colleagues, and this has equally been demonstrated in the research conducted by Lave and Wenger (1991).

This issue echoes what has been reported by Korthagen et al. (2006) who maintain that teacher educators do not only support student teachers' learning about teaching but model the role of the teacher by teaching their students as well as teaching about pedagogy and teaching in general. However, despite the importance of the role of teacher educators, Lanier and Little (year) assert that the teachers who help in the training of teachers or influence them, are not always easily identifiable and are quite often overlooked in research studies (1986, p. 528). It may not be clear and self-explanatory as to who is, in fact, acting as the teaching role model. It could reasonably be assumed that, rather than it being the supervisor who provides the role modelling, or even the direct cooperating teacher, it could even be a case of the other regular teachers at the school fulfilling this role.

However, in this study, the relatively negative comments about other teachers at their practicum suggest otherwise. Indeed, some of the student teachers in this study were vocal about their criticisms of cooperating teachers whom they perceived as unsupportive, inattentive or too willing to pass their workload onto the student teachers. This finding is particularly interesting as it seems to conflict with the notion of legitimate peripheral participation. Indeed, this is evidence that, in contrast, some student teachers might suffer from a lack of validation by colleagues (although not explicitly expressed) and could further escalate feelings

of being unneeded or unimportant to the department (Johnston, 2016). This was identified as an uncomfortable situation for student teachers, hence the comment by one student teacher who felt alienated (see Section 5.3.2.1.1). This also relates to what Johnston (2016) referred to as "professional undermining" where Saudi student teachers seemed to have been undermined in front of their school pupils. In Wenger's (1998) terms, it is critical for student teachers to feel welcomed and supported as legitimate participants in the class and school communities. However, as reported by some Saudi student teachers in this study, their cooperating teachers were, at times, unsupportive, inattentive, or too willing to pass their workload onto them. Likewise, the importance of some significant others acting as role models seems somewhat at odds with what the cooperating teachers, regular teachers and university supervisors can offer in reality, as sometimes there is not enough of the essential knowledge or technical skills present in the practicum for modelling to be used effectively. For example, the teaching carried out by significant others in the teaching practicum is often based on implicit skills and knowledge (Smith, 2001). Some of these significant others do not necessarily have the knowledge and skills to make their teaching explicit and to link their educational selections to theory to be applied by student teachers.

Furthermore, based on my personal experience of the Saudi classroom context, it seems that many student teachers often take it for granted that the skills, the teaching strategies and methods of cooperating teachers, regular teachers and university supervisors represent ideal choices to be uncritically adopted for their future teaching career. It, therefore, is appropriate to conclude that the importance of following role models in the teaching practicum needs to be understood from different perspectives and considered more critically.

6.3.2 Linking Theory to Practice

The findings suggest that one of the key aspects attributing importance to the teaching practicum relates to the role it plays in helping student teachers find links between theory and practice, as illustrated in section 5.3.2.1.2. Student teachers expressed the view that the practicum was "translation of this theoretical side into practical reality." This means the teaching practicum created a confluence of the theoretical and practical branches, providing student teachers with the opportunity to apply the concepts, theories and knowledge that they have studied

in teacher education programmes at university. Also, learning about education is an applied discipline, which is most meaningful when performed in practice. This issue is of specific importance to students as practical training in the classroom is vital to becoming an effective teacher. This is a fundamental aspect of the study as it relates to one of the core functions of the communities of practice, as explained by Wenger (1998). Indeed, the findings suggest that student teachers tend to find ways to transfer their new knowledge acquired at university to work contexts in order to solve problems that arise in the classroom during the course of the practicum. Likewise, this finding relates to Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of periphery; indeed, this shows that student teachers are learning from the periphery to become community members. Hence, tasks that they accomplish during the practicum become more important with time and their participation and involvement contribute to their competence in teaching and completing tasks and processes in the community they aspire to join. By implementing their theoretical knowledge into the classroom, they attain the ability to move from the periphery to full participation. It is important to note that this experienced, implemented knowledge, appears to be vital for Saudi Arabic student teachers.

The importance of linking educational theory to practice is borne out in the literature. For example, Glover and Mutchler (2000) state that the first time they teach in the classroom, student teachers are able to directly apply their theoretical knowledge of pedagogical life (e.g. of curricula, teaching methodology, procedures and policies) to the harsh realities of school life (e. g. the routines, prescribed instruction guidelines, targets, grades and assessment and direct interaction and communication with the pupils). Moreover, the teaching practicum offers student teachers the opportunity to learn some key 'soft skills', that is, to be able to solve problems independently, work collegially with other teachers and develop professional values and attitudes (Ramsden, 1992). All these skills represent the building blocks of their future teaching career as well as helping them to cope with practical tasks in the classroom.

In line with Wenger (1998), it is argued here that student teachers use their new knowledge in their work context to solve problems. For example, the current study findings highlight the problems and issues that the student teachers encountered with this aspect of their lived experience of the training practicum, namely, with the lack of respect, and difficulties in disciplining and engaging pupils. However,

several of the respondents indicated a willingness to address these issues which agrees with Smith and Lev-Ari (2005, p.291) who also add that teaching practice *in situ* offers a further forum for developing teaching competence. This is also consistent with teacher educators, who not only need to provide student teachers with a solid foundation of content knowledge but also to furnish the latter with the chances needed to find connections between the teaching practicum and the theoretical knowledge studied at university (Yost et al., 2000). This enables the student teachers to bridge the gap between theory and practice during the teaching practicum. In this regard, Tjeerdsma (1998) posits that the teaching practicum is important because it allows student teachers to experience the real world of teaching, as teacher education courses at university are not always enough to prepare competent teachers because many practical teaching aspects cannot always be learned from a theoretical standpoint in university lectures. Given that Darling-Hammond (2009) has highlighted the lack of connection between theoretical university courses and the teaching practicum as a fundamental and inherent weakness within teacher education, this is a key issue which needs to be addressed and which is in line with the study findings. To relate the above issues to the local Saudi context, it can be argued that linking theory to practice is one of the expected benefits of the teaching practicum from the student teachers' point of view. In addition to this, the teaching practicum in the KSA aims to strengthen the effective linking between theory and practice thereby addressing the points of weakness of the ties between theoretical courses and practical training during the teaching practicum (Al-Shahry and Mohamad, 2013). Moreover, for Al-Oyouni (2003) the teaching practicum is one of the most important elements in the teacher preparation process, if not the most important as, in his view, teacher preparation programmes become only theoretical without the teaching practicum.

In addition to bridging the gap between theory and practice, the teaching practicum allows student teachers the opportunity to become more reflexive and critically appraise their teaching practice (Gustafson & Rowell, 1995). It also allows student teachers to develop their knowledge of dealing directly with people; to develop their reflexivity and their *"interpersonal sensitivity"* (Yan & He, 2010). Similarly, this way of thinking and the current findings seem to somewhat corroborate with studies by Hammerness et al. (2005) and Zeichner (1996) who indicate that student teachers often do not have the chance to observe, try out

and get feedback about their teaching methods in their university courses. Moreover, they have the opportunity to think, reflect and react during their practical teaching training.

In conclusion, the findings of the current study indicated that many of the student teachers of Arabic in this study could develop their professional knowledge and explore their professional lives efficiently through their teaching practicum. The practicum allowed them to transfer their new knowledge into a practical setting to solve problems that arise from their practice, which is a key aspect of the communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

6.3.3 Developing Student Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge

The theme developing student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in relation to their teaching practicum appeared strongly in the findings, as illustrated in section 5.3.2.1.3. References to pedagogical content knowledge occur in different findings of the current study. For instance, student teachers' responses to the questionnaire items about 'developing language teaching skills in the teaching practicum' mainly revealed positive views. The teaching practicum helped student teachers to develop their teaching of Arabic grammar (94%), Arabic reading (94%), Arabic writing (94%), Arabic listening (88%) and Arabic speaking (92%). Learning Arabic was reported as one of the most challenging languages to learn and teach, especially with regard to Arabic grammar.

In addition to language teaching skills, the data suggest that the teaching practicum played an important role in developing the practical experience and application of their pedagogical knowledge of teaching Arabic. Most significantly, the student teachers' responses to the questionnaire indicated that the teaching practicum had helped them most with: 'checking their students' comprehension' at 99% of the responses; 'engaging students in learning at 95%'; and 'asking students good probing questions' at 92%. At the other end of the scale, only 78% of the respondents said that the teaching practicum had helped them with 'teaching students of different capabilities. This indicates that this could be an area for development in future teacher training programmes in the university where this research was conducted and possibly in the KSA as well.

As outlined previously, the study participants reported that the teaching practicum had enabled them to practise some of the essential practical tasks connected to

effective classroom teaching. This included tasks such as a) writing an effective lesson plan, combining theoretical and practical knowledge and skills; b) using the board effectively and organising it appropriately and attractively and c) applying different teaching strategies to cope with the different needs of students in class such as problem-solving, cooperative teaching strategies such as pair work and group work. Accordingly, their teaching practicum was shown to have taught student teachers how to manage a class in terms of organising and controlling the teaching process and dealing effectively with the students in the class. All these aspects of the teaching practicum were shown as being instrumental in helping student teachers to become effective classroom teachers.

Based on these previous findings, it appears that the issue of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is of vital importance to student teachers as it is *"the knowledge that teachers bring forward to plan, apply and reflect on instruction"* (Gess-Newsome, 2015, p. 36). The term PCK was originally introduced by Shulman to indicate *"the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others."* (Shulman, 1986 b, p. 9). Similarly, Magnusson et al. define PCK as "*a teacher's understanding of how to help students understand the specific subject matter"* (1999, p.115), which involves teachers synthesising, organising and representing their knowledge in a way that reflects the diversity of their learners and the different way in which they learn. PCK also reflects the integration between different types of knowledge supported by using specific teaching methods. Magnusson et al. (1999) argue that there is a multidimensional domain between the different types of PCK and having a separate type of knowledge is not enough for the student teachers to become effective teachers. Therefore, different types of PCK need to be learned and applied at the same time and collectively in each learning experience (Nilsson & Vikström, 2015). In light of the findings that emerged from the data collected in this research, this is what seems to occur in the teaching practicum experience of student teachers because they are required to apply their different types of theoretical, pedagogical content knowledge during their daily teaching in schools.

This finding reflects what has been reported by several authors (Lederman et al., 1994; van Der-Valk & Broekman, 1999), namely that the application of the content knowledge in the class by both experienced teachers and student teachers alike is challenging. This is because there is a lost paradigm in teacher preparation

which neglects the interaction between content knowledge and pedagogy (Shulman, 1987). Equally, Ball (2000) maintains that there is an explicit division between the conceptualisation and organisation of PCK into the curriculum and the reality of learning to teach in the classroom. Ball (2000, p.245) adds that the hypothesis that *"someone who knows content for himself or herself can use that knowledge in teaching"* is not practically valid.

The challenge of keeping a balance and interaction between the content knowledge and pedagogy is also apparent in the context of Arabic language teaching in the KSA in general, as reported by the participants. This could be even seen as one of the main challenges to achieving effective student teacher preparation in the KSA as the focus on student teachers' content knowledge is still more than that on the PCK. Although participants of the study revealed an awareness of the importance of pedagogical content knowledge to the student teachers themselves, this lack of focus on PCK in the KSA could be attributed to the fact that the pedagogical content knowledge is still an elusive concept in two ways.

Firstly, there are often no specific content features to which to refer with PCK in order to be able to promote and evaluate effective teaching through it. Therefore, student teachers and teacher educators need to be conscious of the required content of the pedagogical content knowledge through their own experiences in the teaching practicum.

Secondly, PCK can often remain hidden from a professional teacher's view. Cochran et al. adopt a psychological perspective, believing that the term *"knowledge' in PCK '[is] too static and inconsistent"* (1993, p. 266). Similarly, Abell (2008) claims that it is difficult to agree on the importance of student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge without having a theoretical framework for PCK to identify and modify student teachers' skills. This could also consist of performance indicators for eventual assessment. Therefore, discrepancies and disparities about the content of PCK have resulted in having no general agreement about how PCK can best be used to describe effective teaching.

The participants in the current study highlighted that the content of PCK is important for their training in the teaching practicum. In this regard, it is highlighted that PCK is a valuable notion and instrument for identifying the required knowledge and skills for student teachers and contributing to the general

recognition of teachers' professional practices. From a different perspective, PCK is a complex concept which emerges not only from the theoretical courses and the training in the teaching practicum, but also from deeply diverse human communication in a variety of contexts. Thus, trying to identify the nature of PCK from experienced teachers is difficult and identifying the exact impact of PCK upon student teachers is challenging. Combining the perspectives of experienced teachers, student teachers, significant others, and teacher educators may facilitate a greater appreciation and clearer identification of what constitutes PCK.

6.3.4 The Teaching Practicum Environment

The current data analysis revealed that student teachers, university supervisors and cooperating teachers reported the teaching practicum environment as having several positive characteristics. For example, data from semi-structured interviews and open-ended responses to the questionnaire, highlighted the participants depiction of the teaching practicum as new and unfamiliar, flexible, friendly and helpful, and useful for predicting potential problems, as illustrated in section 5.3.2.2.

Indeed, Saudi student teachers reported that they viewed the teaching practicum environment as a new and unfamiliar environment, with some student teachers reporting feeling "shy" or "alienated" at the beginning of their practice, as reported in section 5.3.2.2.1. Although this was generally described in positive terms, this *new and non-familiar environment* was often perceived by the participants as a challenge. This echoes the findings of Yan and He (2010) who suggest that student teachers can find it hard to adapt to the teaching practicum environment at the beginning of the course as they encounter challenges relating to the new location, the teaching methods, and the facilities. With regards the context of my study, this can be explained by the fact student teachers often demonstrate different attitudes during their teaching practicum. For instance, in the beginning, the teaching practicum environment is unfamiliar and new as it is the first field of teaching experience for them.

This is an interesting finding as it may relate to the notion of peripheral participation insofar as Lave and Wenger (1991) contend that at first, people have to become community members and learn from the "periphery". The activities and tasks that they partake in may be less important to the community than others. However, with time, their participation and involvement qualify them to become

more competent in undertaking the main processes of the specific community, effectively moving from the periphery to full participation.

However, the findings also showed that student teachers also viewed the practicum environment as "friendly, flexible and helpful" as reported in section 5.3.2.2.3, several student teachers reported being "helped" by senior colleagues. This is because, after some time in the practicum, cooperating teachers and university supervisors often try to help student teachers by creating a more flexible environment to facilitate practical teaching experiences for them. This also resembles the findings of Haigh et al. (2006), who found that student teachers were positive about the teaching practicum environment as they engaged in professional dialogue with significant others in the practicum.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting here that this finding can be contradicted by what some student teachers reported with regards to several drawbacks and negative aspects of the teaching practicum environment. For example, as reported in section 5.3.2.3.2, some student teachers reported "not being at ease" in their new environment. This result can be explained by the fact that these participants felt they were unprofessionally treated by their supervisory team as well as being left unattended or uncared for during the practicum.

Similar findings have been reported in the literature; for example, Al-Ajami (2006) indicated that most student teachers in his study believed that the Teaching Practicum Centre at their university was ineffective in creating a positive environment due to the poor follow up of student teachers' development. Likewise, these results are consistent with Al-Dakheel and Al-Mazroi's (1997) investigation of 195 Saudi student teachers who explored the problems they encountered. Their findings showed that some student teachers suffered greatly from the fact that they were not at ease in their new environment of the teaching practicum due to the often demanding and exacting relationship between cooperating teachers and university supervisors. This can, in part, be explained by the fact that in the KSA, student teachers' experiences differ widely and should not be understood in dichotomous terms. Rather they form a wide range of views beyond the simple "negative/positive" spectrum.

Furthermore, such high levels of dissatisfaction with the practicum environment may also relate to the different modality and purposes of communication between student teachers and significant others in the teaching practicum. Communication

happens for various personal, professional or procedural reasons and can occur through dialogue, meetings, email or social media. Hence, there are many opportunities for miscommunication or misunderstandings between the various communities of practice (cooperating teachers, administrators, significant others, etc.) interacting in the teaching practicum environment. These communities may have disparate responsibilities, duties and timetables, in addition to heavy workloads and who may work at different locations. Communication is a central aspect the notion of COP; as defined by Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, (2002, p. 4) "*groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis*". As a result, the poor level of communication and interaction between these communities may not be conducive to a positive environment. As briefly explained here, this aspect of the data relates to some of the challenges experienced by the study participants.

6.3.5 Practicum Challenges

The Saudi Arabic student teachers in the study were found to have encountered several challenges in their teaching practicum in three different areas: (1) teaching (see Section 5.3.2.3.1), (2) supervision (Section 5.3.2.3.2) and (3) administration (Section 5.3.2.3.3). In terms of the teaching challenges, the student teachers highlighted three specific problem areas: the complexity of teaching Arabic as a language; teaching much younger pupils and the interaction between student teachers and pupils in the class. With respect to the supervisory challenges, the participants alluded to the fear of being observed, the ineffective feedback, the lack of coordination with supervisors, the unavailability of and lack of access to supervisors and the lack of clarity in the evaluation criteria. In terms of the administrative challenges, the student teachers reported the short training duration, transportation problems, the burden of cover, the miscommunication between the university and the practicum and the heavy workload.

6.3.5.1 Teaching Challenges in the Practicum

The Findings suggest that the study participants experienced difficulties with three aspects of classroom teaching: the nature of Arabic teaching itself; the teaching of younger pupils and with interacting and dealing directly with their pupils. The first two areas are correlated and linked, as outlined in the next section.

The teaching of Arabic language in general and to early years, in particular, involves a range of skills, dependent both on PCK as well as on content knowledge, which student teachers need to apply in the teaching practicum. Regarding the challenges of the teaching of Arabic itself, participants referred to the nature of the language itself, that is, the syntax, structure or patterns as illustrated in section 5.3.2.3.1. This finding relates to Abdul Rahim's (2003) and Khalid's (2004) claims that Arabic is complex and difficult to teach because of the traditional methods of teaching Arabic used such as memorisation, reading and grammar which are often mixed with the teaching of spoken Arabic. The problem of diglossia with regards MSA and colloquial Arabic as discussed in the Introduction and Context Chapters (see Sections 1.3 & 2.4.2), is particularly relevant. As explained by Al-Huri (2012), Arabic diglossia and the use of "the vernacular in teaching the Arabic course certainly affects students' linguistic performance and leads to poor proficiency". It may be argued here that the reason for the teaching of Arabic being relatively difficult (especially with low levels of attainment and poor outcomes) could be due to the inadequate teaching methodologies employed by Arabic teachers. In addition to this, Salleh (2006) asserts that the complexity of teaching Arabic is because many Arabic curricula are not designed to teach speaking and instead, they concentrate on Arabic grammar and reading comprehension. Salleh also explains the Saudi Arabic curriculum does not focus equally on the four basic skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. In addition, speaking skills are not evaluated orally in assessed Arabic exams as there is a false belief that teachers using the more 'communicative approach' might affect the pace of language acquisition and/ or impede completion of the requisite syllabus (Salleh 2006).

It is worth noting here that, based on my professional experience of the Saudi context, the language itself may not necessarily be the cause; rather, there seem to be other influencing factors inherent to the curriculum which might lack organisation and development. Indeed, the curriculum does not always match students' ability to learn, nor take into consideration the expectations of each stage of student development regarding the choice of the most suitable literature or textbooks. In addition, it may be argued here that Arabic teaching methods are not always up to date or consistent with contemporary pedagogical thinking or methodologies. Where no significant changes have been made, Arabic teachers are still adopting more traditional approaches based on memorisation, which can

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reduce students' enthusiasm and motivation for learning the language. Moreover, these perceivable flaws in the Arabic curriculum and the teaching methodology present some difficulties for student teachers when teaching early years age pupils, which relates to another important aspect of the data. Despite various attempts to modernise teaching methods for teaching Arabic, many language teachers have not been sufficiently influenced or persuaded by these more developed methods of language teaching to make any significant changes (Saeed, 2009). This may therefore refute the claim that teaching Arabic is inherently difficult as the main issue here rests with certain weaknesses in the Arabic curriculum and the methods and ways of teaching Arabic.

Moreover, student teachers reported the teaching of early years as another teaching challenge (see Section 5.3.2.3.1). For example, some student teachers expressed the view that teaching the first three primary years was particularly challenging in relation to discipline and misbehaviour. This issue does not necessarily relate to the low level of teacher performance, but mainly due to the problems with the Arabic curriculum and current outdated ways of teaching it. In this regard, this finding reinforces Dajani's claims that the complexity of the early years teaching can be attributed to problems of teaching methods: "*Arabic teaching needs a change in teaching methods […]. It needs to modernise its methods in presenting creative and attractive content which goes along with the fast development in global world development*" (2015 p.762). Consequently, the effectiveness of the content of the curriculum and the teaching methods play a pivotal role in transmitting knowledge and skills to learners.

However, the current study findings seem to contradict those of Alkahtani (2015) who found that his study participants generally found teaching reading in Arabic to be relatively easy, with the only more problematic part coming with evaluating students' Arabic reading skills. The difference between the current study and Alkahtani's study is that Alkahtani failed to consider the contextual factors in the classroom and in the practicum school, which can have a considerable impact on student teachers' knowledge and skills in their teaching practice. Likewise, Peters (2010) maintains that teaching Arabic to pupils in the early years is the easiest teaching stage for students as the pupils are young, so they tend to follow the teacher's instructions and they acquire the information easily.

Based on these findings and the above conflicting views, it can, therefore, be concluded that the notion of Arabic being difficult and complex to teach, especially to very young learners, is one which needs to be carefully considered from multiple perspectives, namely, from curriculum designers, educational experts or policymakers who may work on modifying Arabic teaching methodology and curriculum, as well as the significant others within the teaching practicum. Doing so should result in a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges of teaching Arabic, especially to younger students. In turn, it should lead to the design of a more effective curriculum for Arabic as well, as to a more informed approach to implementing and applying the appropriate teaching methods for teaching Arabic.

Furthermore, as reported in the previous chapter (see Section 5.3.2.3.1), during their interviews, the student teachers reported experiencing a range of communication challenges with pupils in the classroom in their teaching practicum. For example, student teachers explained that there is a lack of interaction between student teachers and school pupils on the one hand and that pupils disrespect student teachers, on the other hand.

The main problems included a lack of pupil interaction with student teachers, disruptive pupils, pupils' disrespect to student teachers, student teachers' young age, student teachers' lack or responsibility for student grades, lack of authority of student teachers' over students' grades, lack of learner knowledge and pupils' low achievement levels. In addition, the quantitative findings showed that the student teachers had low percentages in the questionnaire item concerning the interaction between them and the pupils in the class, particularly with aspects of classroom life and practical experience of student teachers such as 'dealing with my pupils appropriately' at 40%. This is indicative of poor relationships in class between the student teachers and the students.

This issue is particularly important because effective communication between student teachers and students is essential to achieve optimum teaching. Hargreaves (1994, p.835) refers to the *"positive emotion"* surrounding good teaching, and with *"good teachers"* going beyond the confines of having the requisite content knowledge, competencies, skills and technical know-how to being *"emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy"*. Hence, as clearly

reported by the student teachers in this study, teaching is not just a matter of knowledge transfer as this must be underpinned by a respectful, clear, open and considerate relationship between the teacher and the students. Some of the participants seemed to miss this sense of rapport with their students. For example, some participants reported that the *lack of regular contact with the pupils* affected their authority and caused what they perceived as disrespect towards them. Also, there are more dimensions to the student-teacher than just that of knowledge transfer such as providing emotional support, classroom organisation and instructional support which also play their part in the teaching process (Allen et al., 2013, p.77). It is worth noting here that this finding tends to suggest that the student teacher cannot be regarded simply as a transmitter of knowledge to learners who receive knowledge and skills. On the contrary, this reinforces the idea that more abstract notions of caring, love and support are essential to foster quality student teachers-pupils relationship.

The key is that mutual respect and more effective teaching is possible when the student teacher becomes more aware and has a better understanding of the factors affecting classroom interaction with students, especially with key stages like adolescence (Allen et al., 2013). Furthermore, Mazer asserts that it is necessary for the teacher to foster *"emotional interest"* (2012, p. 99) and engagement with the material and resources and encourage positive interaction.

In addition, as reported in the findings, the student teachers explained that this poor interaction affected their motivation. For instance, some student teachers felt that caused students to misbehave in the class (see Section 5.3.2.3.1). This echoes the findings of Sasidher, Vanaja, and Parimalavenu (2012) who confirm that a lack of motivation towards teaching on the part of student teachers is one the main reasons behind pupils' unresponsiveness, laziness and disorderly behaviour in the classroom. Added to this, pupils' attitude in class can significantly affect their achievements as they may not seem to actively care about the teaching process. This lack of motivation regarding the teaching 'process' compared to the teaching 'outcomes', namely, attainment and grades, are often the source of students' misbehaviour (McPhillimy, 1996).

This issue was perceived by the student teachers as a lack of respect on behalf of students (see Section 5.3.2.3.1). For example, one student teacher referred to the lack of student teachers' authority in class and not being able to assess

students in different language skills as he is viewed as a temporary teacher. This may, in fact, be viewed as a form of "professional undermining" (Johnston, 2016, p. 542), which contrasts with the notion of legitimate peripheral participation. Even though most of the student teachers managed to develop sound relationships with their cooperating teachers, some teachers were found to somewhat undermine student teachers in front of learners, based on student teachers' account. Likewise, student teachers' perceptions of their students' opinions about them being "temporary teachers" might have impacted the quality of their work and relationships with pupils. This was described as an uncomfortable situation for student teachers. Thus, this finding tends to partly contrast with the concept of legitimate peripheral participation, which perceives the aspect of remaining at the peripheral as an empowering position in the hope of becoming fully involved.

This, therefore, constituted a significant challenge that affected their experience of the practicum. Based on the structure of the practicum investigated here, this may also be partly because the students know that the student teachers are only at the school for a short while. Al-Qow (2001) concurs with this and explains that some of the main problems encountered by student teachers are low respect and acknowledgement from pupils towards student teachers. Consequently, when pupils react negatively or antagonistically, student teachers frequently become angry, and the classroom situation is exacerbated (Al-Qow, 2001).

The current study echoes these last two writers' findings in that the situation is often made worse by the fact that student teachers often appear to be reluctant to discover anything about their pupils' moods, behaviour and personal circumstances, possibly because they are not always in a position to do so. In addition, student teachers can have problems in controlling their responses to pupils' disruptive behaviour. Consequently, Francis and Carter describe this type of struggle for student teachers as *"a rite of passage that is often described as a "reality shock"* (2001, p. 249). They also emphasise the importance of this support to beginner teachers at the early stages of their professional training and experience, as well as being vital for the quality of their learning in the long term. Therefore, the teaching practicum needs to support student teachers with their classroom management, especially regarding pupils' misbehaviour; helping to achieve teaching goals; to find out more about their students and motivate pupils towards learning (Sutton et al., 2009).

Thus, the professional practice of student teachers is a demanding process which includes professional knowledge and practical experience as well as strong social communication between student teachers and significant others and students in the school context (Liou, 2001; Farrell, 2003; Liu, 2005; Vélez-Rendón, 2006). Equally, miscommunication and misunderstandings between student teachers and pupils in the classroom can result in pupils' frustration and lack of motivation, leading to negative relationships based on little mutual understanding and a lack of respect, which may in turn adversely affect student attainment and achievement. Consequently, it is necessary to question and critically appraise communication and relationships between student teachers and their pupils because it is essential to have a safe teaching environment where pupils can feel engaged and encouraged to learn, share their experiences, and demonstrate their learning abilities.

6.3.5.2 Challenges with Supervision

The student teachers provided different responses to the various challenges they encountered with their practicum. In addition to the above teaching challenges, the student teachers expressed that they viewed supervision as challenging in the teaching practicum. One of the main issues with this concerns the unavailability of, and lack of access to university supervisors at the teaching practicum as supervisors were reported to have heavy workloads. Hence, according to the student teachers' views, the findings suggest that this resulted in several challenges including student teachers often left unmonitored and unattended by the cooperating teachers in the class or a lack of opportunities to observe cooperating teachers' classes. Likewise, the findings showed that student teachers expressed concerns about the lack of coordination with cooperating teachers. Another notable supervisory issue that was deemed challenging for student teachers is the mutual overreliance between the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher in performing their supervisory duties which resulted in ineffective feedback. In addition, student teachers complained about having non-specialised university supervisors and that the teacher evaluation criteria were not being communicated clearly to them.

More specifically, the findings clearly showed that student teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with and complaints about supervision because they were not able to contact their supervisor for guidance and direction. As shown in section

5.3.2.3.2, some student teachers mentioned that they lacked convenient access to and availability of the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors. Some of them felt that this was due to their supervisors' heavy workload. For instance, one student teacher recognised that university supervisors were not available due to the lack of subject specialists. With respect to the Saudi context, this finding may not be surprising as may Saudi university supervisors and cooperating teachers often have a heavy teaching workload at their universities and correspondingly cooperating and regular schoolteachers do not always have enough time to spend with student teachers at their schools. This finding has been corroborated by Al-Zahrani (2002), who made similar observations. Likewise, In the Chinese context, a similar challenge was reported, cooperating teachers' lack of supervision due to their heavy workload, which was found to adversely influence the supervision process in the teaching practicum (Yan & He, 2010).

Consequently, as reported by the findings (see Section 5.3.2.3.2), student teachers felt unattended or unmonitored during their practicum, which seemed to constitute a significant challenge for them. For example, some student teachers complained about the lack of opportunities they had to observe experienced teachers, which they viewed as a lack of support. Concurring with this, other Saudi writers point out the inherent weaknesses in supervisory practices, including Al-Qow (2001) who claims that student teachers are often weakly supported by cooperating teachers. Similarly, Hobson (2002) ascribes student teachers' frequent inability to interpret the practicum context and respond pedagogically to local classroom contexts to a general lack of practical guidance from mentors. This seems to be a significant issue for many student teachers, even in different contexts. Beck and Kosnik (2002), for example, also reported that a great number of cooperating teachers often want student teachers to work harder without their guidance.

This issue is particularly important, as not having dedicated supervisory teams means student teachers being without an effective supervision process, which is widely acknowledged as being the core of teaching practicum. However, there is no overall agreement about what *"supervision should be or what educational supervisors should do"* (Daresh, 2001, p.3). Therefore, this raises the question as to the necessity of recognising the voice and examining more closely the

nature of the interaction between supervisors and student teachers in supervisory practices because successful supervision can, in turn, result in high-quality classroom teaching. This highlights the importance of taking into consideration the responses about the difficulties that student teachers face with the supervisory process (Firth, 1997). Accordingly, complaints from student teachers about not having an available supervisory team are of great importance to assess the quality of supervision and to find ways for modifying it.

Another aspect of supervision which student teachers found challenging relates to the fact that some Saudi Arabic student teachers had a university supervisor whose specialisation was not Arabic. For example, as highlighted in section 5.3.2.3.2, some student teachers expressed their disapproval about having Maths specialists as supervisors. This was also reported in another Saudi study (Bakhsh, 2000) with student teachers who complained about having to deal with university supervisors who belonged to different specialisms of education other than Arabic. It is reasonable to assume that non-specialised university supervisors may sometimes provide irrelevant feedback about student teachers' classroom teaching. Poor supervisory conduct was also reported by participants in the current research project. Interestingly, this relates to another important finding highlighted in the previous chapter (see Section 5.3.2.3.2) which is the lack of effective feedback in the supervision of student teachers during their practicum. Indeed, it was found that student teachers in the current study viewed the supervisors' feedback as "useless" due to his rare visits to the teaching practicum (see Section 5.3.2.3.2.) The importance of constructive, feedback was illustrated by Beck and Kosnik (2002) and Hyland and Lo (2006). Based on this, it is reasonable to assume that a non-specialised expert would not be able to adhere to this. The importance of constructive and relevant feedback is emphasised here and by Beck and Kosnik (2002). The feedback given also needs to be presented in a friendly way that allows truthful discussion about the perceived matters (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). In addition, Hyland and Lo (2006) stress that cooperating teachers' feedback needs to be helpful, friendly, supportive and encouraging.

Moreover, In the current study, the student teachers of Arabic reported that the assessment system criteria used in the teaching practicum were not always communicated to them. In addition, the participants complained that they were

not made fully aware of the nature nor the requirements of the assessment system. As highlighted in section 5.3.2.3.2, Saudi Arabic student teachers found this issue very challenging. For example, a student teacher commented on the lack of transparency of the assessment criteria, which impacted on his "fair" and "objective" evaluation. This finding relates to Al-Shamekh's (2003) study investigating student teachers' views about the evaluation system used in the teaching practicum. His study confirms the current findings in so far as it was found that supervisors do not always inform their student teachers about the assessment criteria for their training in the teaching practicum throughout the year. Equally, Bakhsh (2000), exploring Saudi female student teachers' perceptions about the assessment criteria in the teaching practicum programme, found that student teachers do not fully recognise the criteria upon which their assessment is based. Similarly, Allen (2011) points out that student teachers also often criticise supervisory practices due to the lack of explanation of the assessment rationale. This issue, as a result, does affect not only the student teachers' experiences of their practicum but also the outcomes of their evaluation. Consequently, this may lead to weak teaching practice performance and subsequent negative evaluation by the cooperating teachers, as reported by Canh (2014).

Based on my personal and professional experience, both as a student teacher and as a supervisor in the Saudi context, it seems that the assessment criteria are not always presented (either beforehand or afterwards) to student teachers because the supervisory teams at the university and at the schools are not always in a position to inform student teachers about their assessment. Alternatively, supervisors may consider it unnecessary for student teachers to be informed about the rationale for the assessment, on the basis that they should be fully prepared for any type of assessment at any time. Whatever the underlying reasons, this finding relates to another aspect of the data and indicates that there is a significant issue in terms of communication between student teachers and their supervisory team. This is an aspect that student teachers found particularly challenging, as reported in section 5.3.2.3.2. Indeed, the findings suggest that this lack of clear communication relates to a mismatch of expectations between student teachers and supervisors. Therefore, providing the student teachers with the assessment criteria needs to be understood from the perspectives of the student teachers and the supervisory team as well.

The rather negative picture painted by the student teacher experiences of supervision in the current study suggests that collaboration between student teachers and their supervisory team is a crucial element of the teaching practicum. This is because it can offer several significant benefits such as endowing a positive sense of identity as a specialist teacher (Burn, 2007), reducing teacher burnout (Allan & Miller, 1990), supporting a positive relationship between mentor-mentee (Levin & Rock, 2003), assisting in-service teachers and pre-service teachers to improve their intellectual abilities (Balach & Szymanski, 2003), and developing a positive sense of identity and developing cultural competence and enhancing new teachers (Farrell, 2003; Stairs, 2008).

It is, therefore, essential to overcome these challenges with supervision. In this regard, Burn et al. (2015) suggest three ways which could help student teachers navigate their way successfully through their teaching training programme. Firstly, supervisors need to ensure that student teachers are fully aware of the complexity of teaching and learning processes so that they can embark on their new roles as confident student teachers who can succeed in their teaching. Secondly, supervisors need to find many channels through which student teachers can access supervisors' expertise. However, these channels of access should not be imitated practices or advocated theories; rather, they should be "*a process of well-informed analytical reasoning*" (Burn et al., 2015, p.30). Finally, supervisors need to be creative about effective ways in which to validate student teachers' emerging identities as teachers and facilitate their continuous learning. In doing so, this validation process needs to foster respect for student teachers and empathy and sensitivity towards them. More importantly, supervisors ought to model their own commitment to learning thereby allowing student teachers to ask critical questions to make use of 'adaptive expertise'.

6.3.5.3 Administrative Challenges

In addition to the above teaching and supervisory challenges experienced by student teachers, the data analysis revealed that the participants reported administrative challenges in their teaching practicum relating to several key issues. For example, it was found that the insufficient duration of the teaching practicum was challenging for the student teacher participants. In addition, busy teaching schedules due to the extra burden of covering classes were also found to be challenging issues.

The findings showed that the first challenge affecting many of the student teachers concerned the insufficient duration and amount of teaching practice allowed during the practicum. Indeed, the findings showed that the practicum lasted only two days a week for a whole term. Hence, the findings suggest that the teaching practicum time was insufficient and critical for student teachers. Similarly, student teachers in Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (2001) complained that the teaching practicum duration was insufficient to develop them professionally. Other studies have also highlighted the high level of dissatisfaction expressed by student teachers regarding the duration of the teaching practicum, with it being insufficient to develop them professionally (Wang & Ren, 2002; Wang & Gao, 2007; Wang & Xu, 2008; Fei, 2007). As reported in the current study findings (see Section 5.3.2.3.2), the inadequacy of the duration of the practical training was felt to have a negative impact on the effectiveness of supervisory practices. This issue corroborates what Neville at al. explain in relation to the value of the practical experience for trainees emphasising that it greatly depends on "*the quality of the supervisor and the amount of time she or he spends monitoring and coaching the student*" (2005, p.13). In addition, they point out the high likelihood of the various experiences of teaching practice being limited and often far removed from university coursework on education programmes. Hence, some Saudi researcher, such as Bogas and Baraidah (2006) recommend re-considering the duration dedicated to the teaching practicum programme for student teachers by making student teachers fully available to practise teaching for one complete semester or one whole year. This is particularly important as a longer practicum could provide Saudi student teachers with more opportunities to connect field experience to the theoretical part of the study (Le Cornu & White, 2000) while allowing them to become accustomed to class teaching and school culture and context (Freeman & Richards, 2002; Wang & Xu, 2008). An issue that relates to the timing and duration of the practicum has also been addressed by Lawrence (1988) who highlights the fact that because student teachers may come into the school at different points of the term and of the syllabus and for a limited period time only, the classroom teaching in lessons may be disjointed or repetitive in content, over which the student teachers have no control. Likewise, Yan and He (2010) explained that the timing of the practicum could often clash with students' university exam preparation at the end of the academic year, both for student

teachers and students. Consequently, this can lead to frustration for the student teachers and students alike. The timing and duration is, therefore, a critical issue as student teachers' work is not always valued nor appreciated if they are viewed as temporary teachers, so the pupils may not always react appropriately nor respond to their classroom instructions, nor even consider the class to be worthwhile or of value (Loveys, 1988).

This finding raises questions as to the requirements necessary for a suitable length of time and time of the year for the practicum to take place. It is clear that this needs to be examined in more depth, taking into consideration the perspectives of all of the stakeholders, including student teachers, educational experts and significant others considering the Saudi context.

Furthermore, as reported in the previous chapter (see Section 5.3.2.3.3), many of the student teachers complained about their heavy teaching schedule, which included many extra cover classes. This issue is of particular importance, as teacher shortages constitute a significant concern in many Saudi schools. As a result, some headteachers and school administrations impose extra cover lessons to the student teachers. This may appear as an unfair situation as some of the student teachers reported that they were unprepared and ill-equipped to do this. Also, this finding tends to suggest that the extra teaching workload during the teaching practicum does not provide at all training lessons for student teachers, thereby negatively affecting their experiences of the practicum.

Considering the Saudi educational context, it is recognised that there is a general shortage of certain subject teachers in many Saudi schools (Al-Sadan, 2000), with the Saudi Ministry of Education currently requiring more than 2,378 mathematics teachers for secondary and middle-level schools and 1,745 maths teachers are needed for in primary schools. Likewise, the shortfall of physical education (PE) teachers is 1,697 (Samargandi, 2018) and there has also been a dramatic fall in the number of those wanting to teach in the KSA due to teachers' salaries and remuneration being considered to be low and inadequate, as related to other careers (Alzaidi, 2008).

Research studies in the KSA context have confirmed this phenomenon of student teachers being overwhelmed by extra cover lessons and an excessively heavy teaching workload during their teaching practicum. For example, Bakhsh's (2000) study shows that female student teachers are often given extra cover lessons,

which in turn adversely affected their teaching performance, resulting in negative evaluation in the assessment. This finding also concurs with those of other researchers, including Ong et al. (2004) and Farrell (2008) who posit that heavy workloads represent a significant challenge for student teachers.

This issue is significant because it represents an additional challenge to student teachers which relates to having disruptive pupils in their cover classes during the teaching practicum, as reported in the findings (see Section 5.3.2.3.1). This finding relates to Lawrence (1988) claim that cover teachers lack the essential continuity of classroom teaching, which is often reflected subsequently in the negative attitudes of pupils towards them, embodied in frequent misbehaviour and lack of engagement. Consequently, this raises the question as to whether student teachers should be given extra cover classes and a heavier teaching workload. More consideration perhaps needs to be given by headteachers to the validity of this situation for the sake of both the student teachers' training and pupils' learning.

To summarise, the findings have emphasised the central importance of their teaching practicum to the student teachers, revealing aspects about the nature of some of the teaching practicum challenges they faced mainly relating to teaching, supervision and administration. In addition, both the qualitative and quantitative data have confirmed that groups of significant others had a strong influence on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, as discussed in the following section.

6.4 Significant Others

The data analysis has shown that five different types of significant others have an impact on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum: the headteacher, the cooperating teachers, the regular teachers, the practicum fellows and the university supervisors. It is important to note that student teachers' interaction with other people at the teaching practicum can also be an influential factor upon student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum.

6.4.1 Head Teachers

As shown in the previous chapter (see Section 5.3.3.1), many student teachers viewed the headteacher at their teaching practicum as someone who had a

significant effect on shaping their experience of their teaching practicum. Various views were expressed in this regard. Some student teachers commented on the respectability and professionalism of the headteacher while others referred to the headteacher's warm welcome and provision of useful educational information. Others, however, noted the superficial relationship they had with their headteachers.

A significant finding of this study is that headteachers seemed to be influential in shaping student teachers' positive experience during the teaching practicum. For example, as highlighted in section 5.3.3.1, participants referred to the headteacher as professional, busy and organised leaders. This finding relates to what Al-Shahary (2013) who reported the positive impact of headteachers on the teaching practicum. He investigated the techniques used by headteachers in the Saudi context to deal with the challenges encountered by student teachers at public schools. Al-Shahary also found that some headteachers welcomed student teachers, encouraged them to talk freely, offered them model lessons by experienced teachers and provided general guidance about the school system and class management. Likewise, another study, conducted by Shamo (2001), investigated 35 female headteachers in Saudi intermediate schools and found that headteachers generally held positive attitudes towards student teachers, which was thought to promote a spirit of cooperation between the staff, the administration and student teachers in the school.

However, the above view of the positive impact of the headteacher upon student teachers in the teaching practicum is somewhat at odds with Al-Habbad and Ibraheem's (2008) results. Their results show that the role of headteachers was considered to be the weakest in developing and improving the quality of the teaching practicum by student teachers. Similarly, Al-Buhairi (2011) found that some headteachers at the schools often demonstrated little respect for student teachers and Smith and Lev-Ari (2005) state that only 25% of the participants of their study found the school principal to be co-operative and caring during practice teaching. Interestingly, this was also reported by some participants in the current study, as it was found that there was little interaction between student teachers and the headteacher during the teaching practicum. For example, as highlighted in section 5.3.3.1, some participants felt that their relationship with the headteacher was "superficial". This is probably because, in the KSA, schools tend

to consider the teaching practicum to be the primary duty of the school supervisory team together with the university without the interference of the headteacher. In the same vein, the findings also showed that participants described the headteacher as "busy school leaders" (see section 5.3.3.1). This, therefore, suggests that, for certain participants, headteachers neglected their role with regards the effective administration of student teachers' practicum. Hence this was thought to affect the quality of the teaching practicum as they can be considered as the agent of supervision in the school to support quality standards (Okumbe, 2007). Moreover, being too busy or distracted may mean that headteachers, who usually have to apply education policies and key objectives appropriately in order to cope with the challenges of managing student teachers and matching their expectations during the teaching practicum, may not be in a position to fulfil this imperative duty.

Overall, there seems to be little consensus regarding the impact of headteachers on student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum. As reported in the results, the student teachers in the current study expressed contradictory views about the impact of the school headteacher on their experiences. From their personal experience, school headteachers were viewed as either welcoming or busy school leaders. Participants who viewed headteachers as welcoming and guiding reported having a positive relationship with them. However, other student teachers who perceived their headteachers as busy leaders had a superficial relationship with them.

In terms of the Saudi context, it can be argued that the headteachers mainly have a positive impact overall and demonstrate a constructive attitude towards student teachers in the teaching practicum. On the other hand, headteachers tend to be burdened by many daily managerial and operational tasks which may alter their positive impact towards teaching practicum into negative impact. This might be one of the reasons why they do not always personally welcome nor have much regular contact with the student teachers on a personal basis. Nevertheless, what may not be so visible to the student teachers is the regular contact which headteachers have with cooperating teachers and university supervisors to control and guide the process of student teachers' training.

6.4.2 Regular School Teachers

The data revealed that regular schoolteachers influenced the Saudi student teachers' experience to varying degrees. The findings suggest that the views on this issue varied between student teachers perceiving the regular teachers at their teaching practicum as superficial, and several student teachers and two university supervisors noting the regular teachers' experience as significant.

More specifically, as highlighted in section 5.3.3.2, some student teachers referred to regular schoolteachers as "experienced resources" that need to be exploited during the practicum. This suggests that the role of regular teachers is of value in terms of shaping the student teachers' experiences of their practicum. This finding echoes the study of Schulz and Mandzuk (2005), who asserted that student teachers need to be provided with more opportunities to enrichen their experiential knowledge and practical skills through having more communication with regular schoolteachers.

On the other hand, some student teachers in the current study described their relationship with regular schoolteachers as superficial. In line with this, Bakhsh (2000) observes that regular schoolteachers tend to have a low impact on student teachers in the teaching practicum compared to the predominantly high and positive impact made by the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors.

These findings, therefore, suggest that regular schoolteachers' experience may be of value to student teachers. However, the process and procedures of the teaching practicum in the KSA do not necessarily allow them to play a major role in this regard. Thus, based on the results, it could also be argued that regular schoolteachers have little impact on the effectiveness of student teachers' experiences. Although, they may have valuable teaching experience, which can be helpful to the student teachers during their teaching practicum.

In this respect, Ten Dam and Blom (2006) claim that teacher training alters at a fast pace and that there is a need to allow regular schoolteachers to play a useful role in student teachers' preparation. It can also be a mutual knowledge transfer. Following this premise, Schulz and Mandzuk (2005) assert that student teachers need to be prepared to be scholars, leaders and transformation mediators and this requires them being provided with more opportunities to enrichen their

experiential knowledge and practical skills through having more communication with regular schoolteachers.

Consequently, the above begs the question as to whether regular teachers should play a major role in the student teachers' experience because the regular schoolteachers have the experience repertoire in teaching and ways of dealing with pupils in the classroom. Consequently, student teachers need to take part in the educational context of school in an increasingly competent way, with a significant part of this context being regular schoolteachers (ten Dam & Blom 2006).

6.4.3 Cooperating Teachers

Cooperating teachers, as a primary group of significant others, were reported to influence student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum strongly. The data analysis revealed the numerous ways in which cooperating teachers were described. While describing their influence in the teaching practicum, participants referred to the cooperating teachers as "barriers breakers" or as "senior" teachers, "mediating", "important", "friendly", "gentle", "helpful" and "close", as highlighted in section 5.3.3.3 in the Findings Chapter.

Likewise, several cooperating teachers viewed their role as being experienced advisors who coached student teachers carefully and who had a close relationship with them. As clearly shown in Chapter Five (see Section 5.3.2.2.3), other participants reported that cooperating teachers seemed to consider the student teachers as colleagues who were more helpful to them than their university supervisor. For example, one participant explained that cooperating teachers were willing to answer his questions and benefit from their experiences and advice. Likewise, it was shown showed that cooperating teachers dealt with student teachers in a friendly and collegial way. This finding tends to suggest that there was a positive relationship between student teachers and cooperating teachers which impacted positively on the experiences of student teachers at the teaching practicum. Similar findings were found by Haigh et al. (2006), whose research results indicated that student teachers were positive about their teaching practicum supervisory team where they were engaged in professional dialogue. This suggests that there is a beneficial dimension to the impact that cooperating teachers have on student teachers' experience of the teaching

practicum, even to the extent of impacting positively on student teachers' behaviour, knowledge and skills.

In this regard, Seperson and Joyce, as cited in Anderson (2006) note that this close and influential relationship between the cooperating teacher and the student-teacher can often continue throughout the student teaching at the school and into the future. Other writers also echo the positive effect of this collaboration between cooperating teachers and student teachers. For instance, Whitney et al.'s (2002) substantial analysis of the findings of 900 questionnaires and focus groups found that the participants stated that the cooperating teacher had the utmost influence on how they teach. They also found that the cooperating teachers educated the student teachers about new instructional strategies and classroom management techniques. Furthermore, Mays-Woods (2003) adds that cooperating teachers can teach student teachers about general school procedures (e.g. how to communicate with parents). Additionally, cooperating teachers play a key role as they provide support for student teachers during their developmental process as teachers (Clement, 2002; Dever et al., 2003). Moreover, Klassen and Durksen (2014) argue that the teaching practicum is a critical, influential and transformational stage in student teachers' professional lives. Also, the influence of cooperating teachers extends even further as they often play a role in linking student teachers to the school community. Similarly, Stevens et al. (2006) maintain that student teachers can develop new ways of thinking about the subject and students by engaging in collaborative work with the cooperative schoolteachers during the practicum.

Nonetheless, there is another side to the narrative concerning the impact that cooperating teachers have on student teachers. In the data and perspective of the cooperating teachers, it is apparent that they too have challenges with supervision. They often have heavy workloads and demands from the workplace, preventing them from being available to coordinate classes and/or supervise student teachers, as highlighted in section 5.3.2.3.2. This lack of availability, attention to and dedication of effort on behalf of cooperating teachers for the student teachers' training seems to represent the reality of the Saudi context. It is thus necessary to question and carefully consider the contextual hindrances and inherent weaknesses of the procedures and logistics of the cooperating

teacher-student teacher relationship to ensure that the impact which cooperating teachers have on student teachers is a fully positive one.

Thus, to echo the above findings, despite the positive influence of cooperating teachers on the student teachers' experience of their practicum, some researchers state that the efforts of cooperating teachers are not always sufficient to prepare student teachers to become professional teachers (Hebiton et al., 2002). Furthermore, MerÇ (2011) even goes as far as to attribute part of the difficulties that student teachers face in the teaching practicum to the cooperating teachers; difficulties, such as high absenteeism; negative intervention in student teachers' teaching and limited awareness of the student teacher's role. In the Saudi context, Al-Bisher (2005) attributes student teachers' struggle in applying theoretical approaches in the teaching practicum schools to the lack of supervision from cooperating teachers. There can also be issues with aspects such as the quality and frequency of the feedback given; the summative evaluation; the degree of mentoring provided as related to the degree of autonomy given (Shantz & Brown, 1999); negative role modelling (Tok, 2011) and the lack of consideration, useful feedback and guidance (Anderson, 2006).

6.4.4 University Supervisors

University supervisors, as key significant others, were viewed as profoundly affecting student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. Nonetheless, contradictory views about university supervisors were reported by student teachers of Arabic in the KSA. This aspect of the data has been addressed in the literature. Indeed, it has been claimed that student teachers tend to comment positively about their university supervisors (Yunus et al., 2010), particularly concerning help and guidance with their teaching, learning and classroom management. Other research studies have further highlighted the central importance of the guidance provided by university supervisors and on the significance of the supervisory relationship for a successful and effective teaching practicum. For instance, concurring to the above finding, Acheson and Gall (1987) notes the role of the university supervisor as being that of councillor, instructor, supervisor, guide and master. Additionally, university supervisors play an important role in giving constructive feedback to student teachers for them to modify their teaching (Hastings, 2004).

Generally speaking, the data presented in the previous chapter indicate that participants, student teachers, in particular, commented positively on university supervisors emphasising on the positive aspect of their guidance and help in the practicum. This seemed to have a positive impact on their experiences of the practicum. For example, participants described how supervisors could help bridge the gap between university and the teaching duties at the teaching practicum, as explained in section 5.3.3.4.

Furthermore, the above finding tends to demonstrate the significant role of university supervisors could, in fact, in terms of critical feedback for student teachers (Hastings, 2004). This is because university supervisors link university and school and keep the core integrity of the teaching profession as *"gatekeepers"* to the profession (Slick, 1998, p. 822). Thus, it follows that university supervisors will offer criticism as well as merely assessing student teachers' performance, even if student teachers object to this. At the same time, university supervisors have dual roles towards student teachers; to help them and assess their performance.

More specifically, the findings suggest that some participants viewed university supervisors as helpful in bridging the gap between theory and practice and as being caring. As highlighted in section 5.3.3.4, similar findings were reported, highlighting all the supervisor's essential tasks to fulfil and attributes to have as follows:

> *The supervisor's role is to help novice teachers make connections between the material in their training courses and the classroom contexts they face… the supervisor may need to guide them as they build bridges between the research and theories they have studied and the realities of the classroom teaching… so in addition to providing practical tips, supervisors' feedback can promote reflective practice and socialize novices into the professional discourse community. (Bailey, 2006, pp. 240–44)*

Nonetheless, there is also a negative dimension to the relationship between university supervisors and student teachers in the Saudi context, for example with references to a *"seniority relationship"* which might inspire *"fear and suspicion."* As highlighted by a cooperating teacher (see Section 5.3.3.4), the finding showed that this affected the student teachers experience of their practicum negatively. This finding concurs with what several researchers have found, namely, that university supervisors do not always have an essential and beneficial impact on

student teachers in their teaching practicum (Slick, 1998). In the KSA context, some writers have even reported mistreatment of student teachers by university supervisors (Al-Momani, 2016); supervisors' lack of care (Al-Thabiti, 2002) or negative interventions in teaching situations (Smagorinsky et al., 2004).

Furthermore, other student teachers expressed a view of their relationship with the university supervisor as being negative in that it could be hierarchical, transient, authoritative and fault finding as presented in section 5.3.3.4. For example, some student teachers described their relationship with the university supervisor as an authoritative one. This suggests that the university supervisor and student teachers' relationship may, at times, built upon authority and power, but the data suggest that this is rare.

Moreover, the data presented in the present chapter indicate that university supervisors have been identified as having a relatively insignificant impact on student teachers' development during the teaching practicum, due to university professors' superficial relationship with student teachers, as their main role is to assess performance in class (see Section 5.3.3.4). This relates to similar claims made by Richardson-Koehler (1988), who contend that the university supervisor was not able to devote time to achieve his supervisory duties at the teaching practicum due to the college demands and was therefore not able to build trust with the student teachers and cooperating teachers. Similarly, Whitney et al. (2002) pinpointed that the university supervisor visited student teachers occasionally. Findings also showed that the study participants did not establish a real personal or professional bond with their university supervisor.

Nevertheless, various underlying factors, normally practical, can explain the above contradictory views from participants concerning the influence and impact of university professors and supervisors on student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum. Firstly, university supervisors often have limited time to perform their duties during teaching practice as they tend not to observe student teachers in the classroom nor have the same strong communication with them daily in the same way as cooperating teachers do. Bowyer and Van Dyke (1988) also found that university professors expressed their doubt as to whether they were indeed able to dedicate the essential time to their supervisory role in schools because they had so much academic teaching and research work to do at the university. This also could be why there were complaints from the current study

participants about university supervisors' unavailability during the teaching practicum, as reported by some student teachers (see Section 5.3.2.3.2).

Equally, student teachers expressed the belief that university supervisors' feedback was lacking due to their very few visits during the teaching practicum (see Section 5.3.2.3.2). This is supported by the findings of Bowyer and Van Dyke's study (1988), who found that university professors expressed their doubt as to whether they were indeed able to dedicate the essential time to their supervisory role in schools.

However, when drawing on the current study results, the contradictory beliefs of student teachers and cooperating teachers regarding the positive role and influence of the university supervisor in the teaching practicum are evident. Nonetheless, it is also necessary to understand the impact of the various contextual causes which may affect the role of university supervisors. Accordingly, there is a need for a frank exchange of beliefs and ideas about the core role of university supervisors, which takes into consideration the views of all stakeholders (i.e. student teachers and the cooperating teachers), incorporating the influence of other contextual factors (e.g. heavy workloads at the university which conflict with supervising duties).

6.4.5 Teaching Practicum Fellows

In the current study, student teachers' and cooperating teachers' responses highlighted the importance of student teachers' relationship with their teaching practicum fellows. Participants commented that their relationship with their peers was often more beneficial than that with others, reporting that they had close relationships with each other and that they worked as a team. The impact of the practicum fellows was described by student teachers and cooperating teachers as *"influential"; "collaborative"; "beneficial"* and *"familial"* as indicated in section 5.3.3.5. This, therefore, suggests that there is a positive relationship between student teachers and their peers in the teaching practicum, with actions, interaction and cooperation with colleagues helping to shape student teachers' professional identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Hence, based on the above findings, it may be argued here that student teachers seemed to grow and develop a sense of belonging and participation in a community of practice. For example, as explained by several student teachers, the data demonstrate that student teachers were establishing communication and engaging in cooperation

with their colleagues which relates to important functions of the community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Indeed, the above finding shows that student teachers gather and exchange information about their professional practice during the practicum and start to cooperate with peers and colleagues. These key functions resonate with the teaching practicum fellows as an important component of significant others impacting on Saudi student teachers' experiences of the teaching practicum.

Echoing the current study's results, Daniel et al. (2013) claim that exchanging experiences with teaching practicum fellows presents an opportunity for student teachers to practice basic teaching skills and become involved in continuing critical reflection. Another important aspect of this relationship lies in the fact that teaching practicum fellows seemed to impact student teachers personally and professionally. In our study, this was described by the student teachers as a positive element in the development of their professional identity. For example, as highlighted in the previous chapter (see Section 5.3.3.5), student teachers viewed the impact of teaching practicum fellows as influential, collaborative, beneficial, and familial.

This aspect of the data suggests that the transformation that occurs as a result of the learning process does not only relate to professional knowledge and skills but is also part of a process of identity formation and transformation:

> *Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming – to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person.* (Wenger, 1998, p. 215)

This is also because, through this positive relationship with their peers, Saudi student teachers were able to share different professional and personal experiences of teaching in this community of practice.

6.5 Contextual Factors

As the findings suggest, student teachers of Arabic felt that their professional experiences of the teaching practicum were substantially influenced by clearly identified groups of significant others, as explained earlier in the previous section. In addition to these determining factors, the current findings suggest that there are other personal, educational, and cultural factors which have a significant

impact on Saudi Arabic student teachers' experiences of their teaching practicum. The main factors that emerged from the data and discussed here in the following sections are (1) personal and professional, (2) educational and (3) cultural.

6.5.1 Personal and professional Factors

Various aspects of the data have revealed that the interplay between personal and professional issues of student teachers themselves can affect student teachers' experience of their practicum teaching practicum. The findings in the current study shed light on the following influential factors: student teachers' professional identity, their sense of efficacy, their commitment to teaching and student teachers' self-reflection as indicated in section 5.3.4.1.2.

6.5.1.1 Student teachers' professional identity

The notion of student teachers' professional identity as being important was borne out as one of the factors affecting student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum (see Section 5.3.4.1.4). For example, student teachers pinpointed that the teaching practicum helped them shape their professional identity through developing their practical experience, and subject knowledge and skills. This finding suggests that the student teachers' professional identity is a dynamic and changeable relationship between the student teacher's self and the professional factors all around them. For example, the findings showed that student teachers' professional identity was impacted by their teaching practicum experience in which their previous personal experience of being taught and the professional and practical experience of becoming a teacher were linked. This tends to suggest that the integration of knowledge, skills and experiences within the individual student teachers' self-affected their reactions towards different elements in the teaching practicum. This, therefore, posits that student teachers' professional identities are developed by their experiences, which, in turn, determined their decisions and choices.

This issue is of particular importance as researchers report on the factors which contribute to the formation of student teachers' professional identity without necessarily focusing on the influence of student teachers' professional identity on the student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum (Seetal, 2006; Rodgers & Scott 2008; Puurula & Löfström, 2003; Troman, 2008). Furthermore,

Beijaard et al. (2004) maintain that there are aspects of professional identity which strictly control the way teachers instruct, select teaching strategies, and deal with pupils in the class and their attitudes towards educational reformation. This was particularly evident in some of the participants' responses who viewed their professional identity in terms of conflict and tension between their traits and their educational background, and professional school contexts and settings. Therefore, professional identity affects student teachers' teaching practicum as the aspects of professional identity which control student teachers' experience in the teaching practicum emerge from student teachers' proficiency in their subject matter with knowledge and skills to promote their pupils.

Moreover, as the findings suggest, the professional identity of Saudi Arabic student teachers who took part in this study seemed to have had a substantial impact on their practicum. For example, in section 5.3.4.1.4, it was reported that student teachers' traits, educational background and school contexts impact the development of their professional identities. This finding, therefore, suggests that it represents a compromise between the personal and professional domains of teaching (Pillen et al., 2013). Accordingly, it means that their professional identity influenced their teaching practicum through their reconciliation with the requirements of the teaching context in the teaching practicum. This relates to the claim:

> *professional identity includes a process of influential conflict inside the student teachers within the context of teaching practicum through which there is a continually acquiring and redefining of an identity that is socially legitimated.* (Coldron & Smith, 1999, p. 712)

This results in there being a continuous influence of the student teachers' identity within the process of teaching practicum to achieve a more modified student-teacher identity which enables the student teachers' teaching practicum to be a more effective one.

Moreover, as reported by Sammons et al. (2007), there is also a relationship between aspects of teachers' professional identity and pupils' achievements as teachers' decisions about curriculum design, pedagogy, assessment, and student learning are significantly influenced by their identity (Meckler, 2009).

This is why it is essential to consider student teachers' identity as vital to the practice of initial teacher education (Bullough and Gitlin, 2001) and identify the perspectives of student teachers, which is an essential part of their professional

identity. This aspect, therefore, should be a key concern for teacher educators when designing the content of student-teacher education and specifically their teaching practicum.

Nonetheless, the complex nature of the subject of professional identity raises the question as to whether the professional identity of student teachers' is affected by their teaching practicum or vice versa. When considering the findings of the current study, it can be argued that the student teachers' professional identities were not only an influential factor in the effectiveness of the teaching practicum but are also affected by the teaching practicum itself. Possibly, a student teacher's professional identity is influenced by different contextual factors which assert their influence in a student teacher's early life. These include social connections and collaborations with others in sociocultural, historical and institutional contexts; embracing emotions, values, beliefs, traditions, educational backgrounds and job and life experiences amongst many others (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Day et al., 2006; Johnston, 2012).

In this regard, Hobson et al. (2006) maintain that student teachers have their own inbuilt experience (one of which is the professional identity of student teachers) which is a cumulation of their previous interactions and ideas developed during their learning in the various contexts experienced in becoming a teacher. The construction of teacher identity is a dynamic and complicated process where teachers have a repertoire of different contextual, social and personal factors that are affected by their training in the teaching practicum (Bloomfield, 2010; Trent, 2013; Zare-ee & Ghasedi, 2014). Therefore, the professional identity of teachers is also constituted by what student teachers believe about teaching and learning. Moreover, this identity is affected by the early years of their lives and is developed through student teachers' experiences of teaching practicum and is of vital importance to teacher education itself. (Bullough, 1997).

Hence, the findings suggest that the Saudi Arabic student teachers' professional identity influences their teaching practicum through the decisions and selection of teaching procedures they make during the teaching practicum. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that their identity both influenced and is influenced by their teaching practicum.

6.5.1.2 Student teachers' sense of efficacy

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the qualitative findings of this study suggest that the student teachers' sense of self-efficacy, defined as the "*belief in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments*" (Bandura, 1997, p.3), had a pivotal effect on their teaching practicum (See section 5.3.4.1.3). Indeed, the findings suggest that the sense of self-efficacy had an impact on student teachers' motivation and cognition.

More specifically, it was found that the sense of self-efficacy affected them to perform certain actions (See section 5.3.4.1.3). For instance, participants reported persisting in completing specific duties of teaching such as setting aims in teaching, implementing their choices through the teaching process and through using different strategies (See section 5.3.4.1.3).

In addition, this was amply demonstrated in the quantitative responses to the questionnaire (see Section 5.3.1.2), whereby all the items showed high overall agreement. This indicates that respondents reported a high degree of efficacy overall in their practicum, with the *"ability to help students work collaboratively in pairs or in groups"* and the *"ability to check students' comprehension"* rated highest. The lowest-ranked item was the "*ability to teach students with different abilities".* Interestingly and pedagogically, this implies that student teachers may need help with inclusion and differentiation in the classroom.

Similar findings in the literature suggest that self-efficacy can affect the experience of trainees in their practicum in demonstrable ways. These include how well student teachers perform in the class through increasing their motivation towards learning, which has a positive impact on their academic and practical achievements at the university as well as in the teaching practicum (Carmichael and Taylor, 2005; Lane et al., 2004; Schunk, 2003). Self-efficacy has also been found to enhance student teachers' job satisfaction (Caprara et al., 2003) and their commitment to teaching.

Owing to this, it can be argued here that self-efficacy has been demonstrated to significantly affect student teachers' classroom performance and behaviour, as reported by the current findings (see Section 5.3.4.1.3) and Ashton and Webb (1986). This is partly because student teachers with a high level of self-efficacy are demonstrably more effective in their teaching and work hard with the opposite situation also being the case. In the KSA context, Al-Jadidi (2012) found a

correlation between Saudi kindergarten student teachers' low sense of self-efficacy and a lack of their own belief in their capabilities to organise and execute the required teaching tasks during the teaching practicum. However, this negative situation was mitigated and changed into a more positive experience when the same student delivered positive and interesting lessons, used what they had learnt, was well-prepared for giving a lesson and had had previous teaching experience.

Equally, student teachers' self-efficacy can be detailed by relating it to specific teaching tasks, which was found to have a positive impact on applying greater levels of teaching, planning and organisation (Allinder, 1994). Moreover, it allowed for more effort with weaker students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Student teacher's self-efficacy can be seen to be a motivational trait in student teachers which has a direct impact on the effectiveness of student teachers in the classroom, to the benefit of the pupils. As in the current study which found that self-efficacy affected student teachers' motivation (see Section 5.3.4.1.3), Atay (2007) claim that student teachers improved self-efficacy kept them motivated and stimulated learning, subsequently promoting the high quality of the teaching practicum. This was also confirmed by Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) and Schunk (2003). It seems clear that self-efficacy affects teachers' learning in a positive way (Klassen & Tze, 2014) as well as promoting student teachers' commitment to teaching and supporting their teaching skills (Gedzune, 2015; Lent et al., 2002).

The multiple studies which have presented the considerable edge and advantage that is possible by engendering student teachers' self-efficacy indicate just how important it is to foster and develop self-efficacy in student teachers. This is mainly because student teachers' beliefs in their capabilities are instrumental in them being able to achieve the required teaching tasks. This is further confirmed by Day (2004), who highlights that identity, subject knowledge, interrelationships and a passion for teaching are all connected with high self-esteem. The literature shows that teachers' strong belief in their abilities to plan and carry out the required teaching tasks can also help student teachers to adjust their practice and engage better with their students (James-Wilson, 2001).

The findings from this research in addition to the above-related studies' claims, therefore, suggest that student teachers' self-efficacy can have a significant

impact on student teachers' practicum experience. These research findings also indicate that self-efficacy plays a predictable and mediating role between several elements of competence, such as skill, knowledge, ability, identity, motivation, subject, relationships with peers, and the quality of teaching practicum, and their consequent performances (Bandura, 2006; Schunk and Pajares, 2001). Consequently, due to the pivotal role played by student teachers' self-efficacy, it is appropriate to gain further understanding and insight into the development of students' self-efficacy, and how teacher education, generally, and initial teacher education, more specifically, can support this development. This is because promoting the development of teachers' self-efficacy is vital for producing effective, committed and enthusiastic teachers (Tschannen- Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2005), who are open-minded and *"more willing to use complex strategies"* (Moulding et al. 2014, p.61).

6.5.1.3 Student teachers' commitment to teaching

As reported in the previous chapter, the findings indicated that student teachers' commitment to teaching was one of the main factors affecting student teachers' experience in the teaching practicum, as indicated in section 5.3.4.1.2. For example, some student teachers mentioned that commitment to teaching had a positive impact on the teaching practicum experiences of student teachers as they liked and enjoyed their teaching. Additionally, university supervisors and cooperating teachers expressed the view that commitment to teaching increased student teachers' motivation to teach. One of the possible reasons for this is that teacher commitment seemed to enable the supervisory team in the teaching practicum to differentiate between those teachers, who are committed and take the teaching practicum seriously and other student teachers who are less engaged and dedicated to teaching practice. Hence, it was clear from the findings, that the majority of questionnaire respondents in the current study considered themselves to be committed to teaching when asked with, noted by the agreement average of 90.7% (see Table 5.2). This, therefore, suggests a high level of student-teacher commitment to teaching, which could be considered as a key to quality teacher practicum.

The literature concurs with these findings in various ways. For example, this issue of teacher commitment is encapsulated by a graphic metaphor from Park (2005, pp. 461–462), who describes this commitment as *"an internal force coming from*

within teachers themselves who had needs for greater responsibility, variety, and challenge in their work as their level of initial education had grown". This force, for Park, then transmutes into the student teachers: "*sustained efforts and their commitment to their students, their schools and their work as teachers*".

Brooks and Swailes (2002) position professional commitment to teaching as the strict link between the student teachers and their contribution to their profession. Teachers' commitment to teaching also suggests a psychological connection to their work as teachers (Van Huizen, 2000) and it is an essential element influencing job performance and the quality of education (Tsui & Cheng, 1999). This is because committed teachers tend to be positive workers in the teaching field as such teachers usually have strong psychological bonds with their school, their students, and their teaching and are a fundamental asset to the success of the teaching process (Celep, 2000).

The findings also relate to what has been reported by Skillbeck, and Connell (2004) that teachers' commitment to teaching has a strong influence on pupils' performance. Furthermore, Day (2004) explains that teachers' commitment is a dedication to the teaching process, which has an impact on teaching, communication with pupils and colleagues and the others in the school context. This creates a positive impact from student teachers' commitment over the different contextual and members of the teaching profession and vice versa. Additionally, committed teachers have a special devotion to their students as they deal not only with the academic side of teaching but also with the personal side of every student in the class (Bilken, 1995), which has a positive effect on student learning and achievement.

These findings further highlight the need to investigate and facilitate the conditions, systems and logistics, which encourage and develop student teachers' commitment to teaching. This is because commitment does not just relate to the commitment to the teaching process (Kitchell & White, 2007). There are different types of commitment such as commitment to providing an effective teaching context in the class (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), and commitment by student teachers to developing themselves professionally during their teaching practicum (Clarke, 2006). These different types of commitments provide strong incentives to enable student teachers to become highly qualified teachers

through exploring their beliefs and assumptions which inspire their teaching practice (Ambrose et al., 2010).

The above findings seem to be largely positive ones; however, as outlined earlier in section 6.3.5 of this chapter, student teachers regularly face tough challenges with their teaching, supervision and the school administration. These challenges can conflict with student teachers' commitment and arise from a mismatch or lack of equilibrium between these challenges in student teachers' context and teachers' commitment to teaching (Tang, Cheng & So, 2006). Additionally, miscommunication between cooperating teachers and university supervisors can challenge student teachers' commitment to the latter's detriment because of the traditional model of supervision for cooperating teachers and university supervisors (Wilson, 2006). Unfortunately, the teaching practicum opportunities available are not all effective nor facilitating ones and include many challenges implicit in student-teacher training contexts (Tang & Chow, 2006). Accordingly, there needs to be more support available and offered to overcome the challenges student teachers' face in the teaching practicum, which can undermine and erode student teachers' commitment and confidence. Equally more could be done to try and understand student teachers' commitment in more depth, as it can play a positive role in student teachers' teaching practicum.

6.5.1.4 Student teachers' self-reflection

The idea of '*self-reflection*,' as one of the factors affecting the experiences of Saudi Arabic student teachers during their practicum, was one that was often emphasised by the participants, especially by the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers as presented in section 5.3.4.1.1. For example, university supervisors pinpointed that the teaching practicum helped student teachers self-reflect and identified their points of weakness, helping them develop into better teachers. In contrast, cooperating teachers believed that student teachers were capable of producing insightful reflections about their teaching performance. As for student teachers themselves, the findings suggest that the teaching practicum helped them correct previous assumptions and misconceptions.

This tends to suggest that this process of self-reflection should not necessarily be positioned as a way of just processing the negative side of the teaching practicum, nor is it always about the more troubling aspects or incidents student teachers experience there. On the contrary, this finding indicates that self-

reflection can also enable student teachers to identify the strengths and highlights of their teaching practicum and promote them accordingly. This was clearly emphasised by the participants, as highlighted in section 5.3.4.1.1.   Self-reflection and reflexivity, in general, can allow for a structured method of also considering what is positive and affirming, as well as what is negative and in need of improvement.

It, therefore, follows that the supervisory team should stress the positive impact of student teachers' self-reflection on student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum. This issue is of particular importance because student teachers' self-reflection has several benefits for student teachers; it promotes self-awareness and enhances their perception of their practice. Furthermore, student teachers' self-reflection allows student teachers to identify areas for development and also areas of strength. Additionally, student teachers' self-reflection provides student teachers with more practical experiences which create a sense of awareness towards what is either effective or ineffective in the classroom. Moreover, student teachers' self-reflection provides more insight for student teachers as to the nuances and nature of students' responses and reactions to their teaching, as well as to the complexities of classroom dynamics.

The study findings reflect Spilkova's (2011) claims that when student teachers reflect on their teaching experiences, their perception of their profession often changes to be more tolerant and understanding of various teaching practicum experiences, and sometimes more positive. In the same way, Maclean and White (2007) demonstrated the impact of reflective practices on student teachers' teaching practicum experiences and development in a research study conducted amongst both experienced teachers and student teachers who reflected on student-teachers' video recordings. Their study stressed the importance of collaborative reflection and suggested that contributions from student teachers and experienced teachers helped student teachers to develop effective student-teacher experience through evaluation, categorisation, representation, inclusion and individualisation. Yuan and Lee (2016) asserts that objective student teachers' self-reflection is important in sustaining student teachers' practice through the following: identifying various points of weaknesses and strengths; setting modified measurable aims; tracing the modification of the weaker points and the support of the more effective ones. Student teachers' self-reflection is a

journey from experiencing to insights and understanding of their teaching practicum experiences.

Nevertheless, based on my experience of the Saudi context, it could be argued that student teachers are quite familiar with the process of self-reflection. It may also be the case that various university supervisors or cooperating teachers at the teaching practicum tend to present the concept of self-reflection or reflexivity explicitly to student teachers. However, it is also possible that student teachers have been trained and given the appropriate language to reflect upon their teaching and experiences. Also, student teachers have been trained to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching performance, and that of others in the teaching practicum.

6.5.2 Educational Factors

In addition to the personal factors outlined in the previous section, the data analysis showed that educational factors also influence student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. Two sub-categories of educational factors emerged from the data, namely, formal and informal education. Concerning formal education, the participants addressed the importance of their university education and the GDE in the KSA (see Section 5.3.4.2.1) while they viewed Quranic sessions as informal types of education that influenced their practicum experiences (see Section 5.3.4.2.2).

6.5.2.1 Formal education

In the current study, the notion of *"formal education"* was described as the experiences through which one purposefully acquires a new skill or learn new knowledge and obtains a formal certificate after a specific duration of time as indicated in section 5.3.4.2.1. As reported in the previous chapter, the participants alluded to the impact of university education on their teaching experience. It was found that this type of education provided student teachers with different course modules such as *personality formation, behaviour and psychology, and methods of teaching.* These course modules within their university education provide student teachers not only with knowledge but also with a range of skills for effective teaching. Some participants expressed the view that these courses shape student teachers' experience in their teaching practicum. Others declared

that these courses are useful and conform to real teaching and learning situations (see Section 5.3.4.2.1).

With regard to the GDE, the participants reported that it had a considerable and positive influence on their conformity to and fitting in with authentic and real classroom teaching. For example, participants highlighted that these courses provided them with the needed pedagogical and practical knowledge and skills. Likewise, the findings suggest that formal education shaped the student teachers' experiences of their teaching practicum by providing them with the essential theoretical, pedagogical and practical knowledge, as well as situations to learn generic skills. This enables them to deal better with students and manage the classroom, as well as to provide effective teaching. For example, some participants expressed the view that the GDE courses empowered them with the lesson planning techniques, classroom management strategies and overcoming practicum problems.

From a different perspective, findings from the literature report that student teachers' formal teachers' education has a strong impact on their teaching practicum, first and foremost due to the fact that it provides them with the required knowledge base of teacher education (Klette, 2007). Moreover, subject-matter knowledge is a part of student teachers' formal education. It is considered the most fundamental knowledge because in-depth understanding and mastering subject-matter knowledge are pivotal for effective teaching and constitute the primary part of a teacher's knowledge (Zhao, 2012, p.76).

Based on the previous findings, it appears that the issue of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which is an integral part of student teachers' formal education, is of significance to student teachers as it is *"the knowledge that teachers bring forward to plan, apply and reflect on instruction"* (Gess-Newsome, 2015, p. 36).

Therefore, formal education has several effects on student teachers' teaching practicum experience. Accordingly, the contribution made by student teachers' formal education programmes can be defined as follows, in that the formal education:

> *provide[s] the theories, methods, and skills; schools provide the classroom, curriculum, and students; and student-teacher provides the individual effort; all of which combine to produce the finished product of professional teacher.* (Britzman, 1986, p. 442)

However, such a stance requires further careful consideration. Student-teacher preparation necessitates student teachers acquiring specific competencies in the form of formal and informal elements of education, knowledge, skills and creative and productive capacities. The quick pace of teaching and learning innovations, expectations and requirements can cause difficulty in identifying the types of both formal and informal education needed as it can be difficult to decide upon the required student teachers' competencies to be an effective teacher.

The roles of teachers and pupils regularly change in an uncertain world to cope with the new knowledge and the new expectations of both of them. Similarly, Korthagen et al., (2001) claim that the gap between theory and practice is a serious problem which refers to the inconsistency of the content of teaching practicum programmes as a teacher preparation programme and their reality of experiences as professional teachers. Generally, it seems that student teachers encounter a serious problem regarding accessing and finding the necessary formal and informal educational opportunities for being a competent professional teacher (Tait, 2008).

6.5.2.2 Informal education

Moreover, in terms of informal education, Quranic sessions emerged from the data analysis as one such example as presented in section 5.3.4.2.2. In the current study, the term *"informal education"* refers to those educational experiences and incidents which take place during a person's life from which and from where new skills or knowledge are gained without obtaining a qualification.

This finding that Quranic lessons have an impact on student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum can be explained by the fact that Quran learning can provide ample opportunity to practise some key subject skills for teaching Arabic. This is why some participants referred to the Quranic sessions as helpful in improving student teachers' pronunciation, reading and listening of the Arabic language and, hence, their socialising and communicative skills. As a result, student teachers from this study mentioned that these sessions helped them when they met supervisors, teaching practicum fellows or even their pupils in the class.

It seems clear from the data that such lessons are helpful and useful for Arabic teachers to be able to become natural and fluent speakers in authentic Arabic-speaking settings where the High form of Arabic is used. Besides, in this situation

the student teachers learnt how to work in a group as team members in the Quranic sessions, where the religious teacher assigned various roles to them: as a teaching assistant to the religious teacher taking attendance, checking individual students' daily memorisation and helping those having problems in reciting the Quran.

Also, Swennen et al. (2008) maintain that the influence of informal education upon student teachers' activities and learning is possibly due to the gap between what is taught at university theoretically and what is practised on the ground in the teaching practicum. Although many reform initiatives have taken place to prepare student teachers, many student teachers still appear to feel that they are not adequately prepared to teach their subject due to the lack of an informal repertoire of effective teaching performances (Kelly, 2000).

Therefore, informal education can have a positive impact on student teachers' performance as it fills the gap between theoretical, academic and formal courses and the reality of classroom teaching. Additionally, some researchers assert that informal learning environments have the potential to enhance professional identities and enhance the teaching practicum experiences of student teachers, in combination with more formal educational experiences (Kelly, 2000; Dierking et al., 2003; Rennie, 2007). Besides, more informal educational experiences enable student teachers to shape the teaching process per their needs and expectations, which can result in increased teacher satisfaction (Nir & Bogler, 2008).

Furthermore, informal learning experiences can help student teachers perform their classroom teaching more effectively (Fenstermacher, 1994; Kessels & Korthagen, 1996). This is because academic knowledge, as a representation of formal education, cannot be simply transferred to student teachers and improve their teaching performance. There is a need for informal education to student teachers which often emerges from their reactions with and to others in the educational context as student teachers' learning outcomes are socially constructed (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, informal education of student teachers has strong influences on student teachers' experiences of the teaching practicum. With this in mind, the consensus from the research has been to recommend providing student teachers, in teacher education programmes, with a wide range of situations in which they can interact, collaborate, develop, and

become aware of their possible identities to develop their informal education (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

The above findings show that these factors (informal and informal ones) share features of the communities of practice. Indeed, some communities can be said to be informal and fluid, while others have been organised formally. Some have names, while many others do not. Nevertheless, Wenger (1998) explains that members of such communities share commonalities that bring them together to share their experiences and learning by mutually engaging each other in these activities. In this regard, there is a difference between a community of interest and a community of practice, since the latter comprises a shared practice. Hence, it seems reasonable to conclude that both formal and informal education has a significant impact on student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. This issue is of particular importance as the impact of informal education can be successfully combined with all the influence of formal education to complement the teaching targets of student teachers. For example, the student-teacher may transfer and use the knowledge acquired on a teaching methods course module as part of his formal education with the practice that he has gained from a private teaching centre as part of informal education to teach a specific lesson. Thus, the impact of both formal and informal education is not distinctly separate because they tend to be mixed within the repertoire of experience of student teachers. These inseparable influences coming from both their formal and non-formal education continue along with their teaching duties in the teaching practicum. Therefore, both of these elements have a strong impact on student teachers' experience in the teaching practicum.

6.5.3 Cultural Factors

The findings of the current study revealed that the Saudi community has typical cultural specifics which have a fundamental impact on student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum in this context. This section shed light on two cultural factors which have contributed extensively to Saudi Arabic student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, namely, the collectivist culture and the *Majlis* as presented in section 5.3.4.3.

In this respect, research has shown that culture plays an important role in establishing and developing student teachers' stance and attitudes toward teaching practicum experiences. Research also suggests that culture could be

an influential contextual factor which explains teachers' directness or indirectness as well as student teachers' response to it (Fitch & Saunders, 1994; Strong & Baron, 2004). In teaching education practices, the effects of the cultural context on teaching and learning practices of pre-service teachers should be fully understood to sustain their effective professional development (Fenwick & Cooper, 2013).

6.5.3.1 The culture of collectivism in Saudi schools

As reported in the previous chapter, the participants reported collectivist aspects of the Saudi culture, which seemed to influence their perceptions and experiences of the student teachers' practicum. References were made to practical examples of collaboration, such as solving each other's problems or supporting colleagues or school staff when faced with challenges or problems. Student teachers described strong ties with their fellow teachers or socialising outside the school with cooperating teachers (see Section 5.3.4.3). For example, cooperating teachers mentioned how they willingly help each other and explained that he saw many student teachers supporting each other to solve personal and professional problems. This was also described in terms of "selfless culture" or "culture of collective help".

Based on this finding, in light of my knowledge of the Saudi context, it can be argued that this suggests that most of the practicum schools reflect the local Saudi cultural context. This issue is of particular importance as the school culture affects student teachers' experience in the teaching practicum, as the school cultural dimension of collectivism heavily influences the way in which student teachers learn, react and the way they work with others, as well as their attitudes towards the context of their teaching practicum and the significant others with whom they have contact.

In relation to these findings, Saudi Arabian society has been described as a collectivist culture society, as Hofstede explains: *"collectivism pertains to societies in which people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty"* (1991, p. 51). Based on my personal experience in the Saudi context, it seems that the culture of collectivism prevails all over the country as there are strong tribal and familial ties between Saudi people who work

collaboratively for the benefit of all their members. Therefore, the collective culture of a school represents an integral part of Saudi culture in general.

The findings further relate to what has been reported by Al-Hassan (2009) and Hofstede (1991), stating that the 'culture of collectivism' has a strong impact on the school context generally and the teaching practicum specifically. The influence of collectivist cultures is shown in student teachers favouring group harmony over individual benefits. In such cultures, there is a strong feeling of involvement in each other's personal and academic lives, as well as strong loyalty and responsibility to each other and the teaching process. Moreover, the 'culture of collectivism' gives rise to and sustains the strong bond and ties between student teachers of Arabic and their regular classroom teachers, cooperating teachers and their university supervisors.

Several studies have explained the effect of the socio-cultural context on the learning process of the student teachers in the teaching practicum (Burgess & Butcher, 1999; Britzman, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2005). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the cooperative environment of the teaching practicum all serve to support student teachers' learning, result in successful outcomes, promote the high-quality learning outcomes of student teachers and establish their professional and personal identity (Hastings, 2004).

Moreover, the collectivistic or individualistic cultural orientation of student teachers' beliefs can have a considerable impact on their teaching and learning (Hofstede, 2001). Student teachers' beliefs of collectivism as a cultural orientation influence their role as teachers as they transfer knowledge in a clear, structured, and direct way; however, the teacher has an active role in teaching through discussions and inquiry according to their beliefs in the individualistic culture (Staub & Stern, 2002).

Nonetheless, this opinion seems at odds with Bush (2006, p. 14) who asserts that that learning is merely an acquisition of new behaviour based on observable environmental conditions. This result reflects the 'behaviourist theory of learning' which is based on acquiring observable behaviour and promoting the learners' response to a stimulus. According to behaviourism, there is little consideration of the effect of culture or social contexts of the learning and experiences of student teachers in the teaching practicum. Likewise, the 'cognitive perspective' considers that it is essential to look at the learner's mental processes and

establish how these mental processes have an impact on learners' behaviour (Leahey, 2000). Piaget, for instance, posits that the cognitive development of learning emerges from the internal ability of the learner to adapt to new experiences. In contrast, Vygotsky maintains that the cognitive development of learning is motivated by the learner's social interaction with others (Rotfeld, 2007).

This begs the question as to just what extent cultural factors and society, in general, have an impact on student teachers' learning experience in their teaching practicum. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the 'social-cultural theory of learning' represents a basic shift in the learning theories that consider learning as occurring through a dialogic process that arises out of the active interactions between learners and their socio-cultural contexts (Kelly, 2006). Situated learning, as an application of social-cultural theory, also involves connecting to the activity, context, and the culture of the learning (Brown et al., 1989). Accordingly, sociocultural theory asserts that the impact of society and culture on learners' acquisition is considerable as learners tend to always be affected by their peers and how social situations influence their ability to acquire information (Viczko & Wright, 2010; Trent, 2010).

6.5.3.2 The Culture of Majlis

As reported in the previous chapter, the participants in the current study referred to the notion of the traditional *Majlis* quite often. This seems to imply that it was an important cultural factor in student teachers' lives, as presented in section 5.3.4.3. For example, seven of the student-teacher respondents highlighted the importance of the Majlis as a family and friend gathering where they could talk with each other and exchange their knowledge and experience about different contextual issues.

For example, the participants referred to the Majlis as a place where they shared experiences and solved problems or develop their critical and creative thinking skills. This gathering was deemed useful by student teachers to learn from shared experienced and find solutions to real-life problems in an informal environment. It was also described by one student-teacher as having an ethical and moral dimension. This, therefore, suggests that the Majlis is an important aspect of the Saudi culture whereby Saudis not only socialise, but also develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This finding highlights the significant role

played by the Majlis in the lives of Saudis. Indeed, as reported elsewhere in the literature (Weir, 2008), this social space is central in the lives of Saudis in particular and Arabs in general. It has been described as "a place of decision, as well as of social intercourse" (Weir, 2008, p. 256). Also, as a place of learning. This is because, during these gatherings, attendees can interact and learn through an informal exchange of knowledge and information while practising fundamental skills such as listening and questioning. More importantly, the significance of the Majlis lies in the fact that it reflects some of the most important cultural characteristics of the wider society. Indeed, through these Majlis sociocultural norms are reinforced taught and reproduced. These norms and values include the family, kinship and neighbourhood ties that are central to Islam.

As student teachers often attend these Majlis, they may often address personal issues but also more professional matters that relate to their practice. They can be questioned about their experience in the school or their relationships within the school/academic community. The Majlis, being attended by senior members of the community, is also a place where they may seek advice from peers or elders, including retired teachers or more experienced colleagues, in order to find solutions to problems they may face. The notion of Majlis relates to the concept of the community of practice as members of their community can network and develop strong relationships in this social space. This also tends to suggest that the Majlis is also a place of learning for Saudis; indeed, it is generally accepted that in these gatherings Saudis learn *"the manners and ethics of their community, dialogue and listening skills, and respect for the opinion of others"* (UNESCO, 2015). Therefore, it is fair to assume that the Majlis influences student teachers in their teaching practicum as it allows them to share and discuss their social experiences and problems in the teaching practicum with more experienced members of the community.

In more formal settings, the Majlis has also been described as the place where Saudi citizens can make personal appeals for assistance in private matters (Weir, 2008). For example, at the royal level, (the Royal Majlis) people often explain their complaints or present a written petition which the King would examine and respond in the following session (Saudi Government, 1999). Another important aspect of the Majlis, as argued by Weir (2008), is that seniority and effectiveness

play a significant role. However, in Majlis, all participants' voices are heard, and their interests and needs met, ensuring that access and respect are given to all members of Majlis.

As a Saudi person, based on my understanding and knowledge of these Majlis, it can also be argued here that student-teacher may also find in the Majlis culturally appropriate solutions to the problems they may face. This is why the Majlis was reported as a good occasion for student teachers to discuss and share social experiences and solutions to problems that they might encounter whilst teaching or in life in general. It was also described as an informal learning place where student teachers could learn many values such as respecting elders, listening attentively to others, respecting others' opinions, the initiation and sustainability of dialogue and the value of punctuality with special reference to prayer times. This may explain why one of the cooperating teachers invited all student teachers for dinner after school, as part of the Saudi culture of hospitality towards others, hoping to provide support to student teachers during their practicum. This was also a way to help student teachers instil these values in students.

These findings, therefore, tend to indicate that these dimensions of hospitality and socialisation conclude that the culture of Majlis was founded to encourage effective community practice among student teachers outside the school. Indeed, student teachers could share and exchange knowledge, skills, challenges and solutions of their student teachers' experiences. For example, they shared educational resources among each other as a form of loyalty and respect, which could have been one of the reasons behind the strong relationship between student teachers and their practicum teaching fellows. This aspect of the data, which strictly relates the sociocultural context of this study, seems in line with important functions of the community of practice, insofar as these informal gatherings have a degree of informality that help its members connect and form stronger relationships. Hence, this culture of Majlis has a vital impact on student teachers' teaching practicum and enhances their interactivity with the community of practice in their teaching practicum. Essential characteristics of a 'community':

> *communities of practice typically have a degree of informality (low to moderate institutionalisation, making them a community and not an organisation), and high connectivity (rather tight social relationships*

between members of the community, and a relatively high degree of identification with the group. (Hoadley, 2012, p. 299)

Hence, student teachers were found to seek good relationships, not only with their practicum fellows but also with the significant others in the school teaching practicum, as reported in section 5.3.4.3.

Effective contextual communication in the Majlis is a characteristic which shows that being together is emotionally sufficient. Accordingly, this issue is of particular importance as the Majlis has a vital impact on the notion of the community of practice, which in turn has a significant role in the development of higher learning outcomes. Thus, a community of practice builds confidence between the learner and the community, supports insights, promotes learners' trust, increases work satisfaction, and fulfils the learners' goals with respect to the effective community (Wilding et al., 2012; Daniel et al., 2013; Friberger & Falkman, 2013).

The Majlis, beyond its impact on the participants in their practicum, can be viewed in Wenger's (2007) terms as it shares the three factors that play a critical role in distinguishing a community of practice from other communities or groups; notably, the domain, the community, and the practice. First, the Majlis supersedes a network of connections or a club of friends, and its common interest acts as its identity. Becoming a member of such a community, therefore means that one is committed to the group's domain. Also, in discussing their shared interests in the Majlis, members participate in discussions and joint activities, sharing information amongst themselves and helping each other. They institute interrelations that facilitate learning amongst themselves. This is particularly true for younger generations. Finally, individuals belonging to a Majlis can be compared to practitioners forming a shared pool of assets and resources: strategies and tools of dealing with recurrent issues, stories, and experiences. Through these gatherings, shared experiences are sustained through interaction and time.

In conclusion, more investigation is needed about the impact on student teachers due to Arabic Majlis on the teaching practicum. Some of the areas where it influences the student teachers are in identity formation, the development of student teachers and building strong relationships with others in the teaching practicum, as well as promoting the notion of 'community of practice' where student teachers can interact effectively during the teaching practicum.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter briefly referred and discussed the main findings of the current study in relation to the Saudi context. It also presented the teaching practicum as the main focus of the current study within which student teachers are provided opportunities to act, interact and develop their professional development through interaction with the teaching practicum fellows, regular classroom teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors. In this section of the chapter, several contextual factors, which are believed to influence and shape the teaching practicum experiences of Saudi Arabic student teachers, have been discussed. Firstly, personal factors such as professional identity, sense of efficacy, self-reflection and commitment to teaching were discussed in conjunction with the relevant literature. Secondly, educational factors were addressed, with a particular focus on formal and informal educational experiences. Finally, cultural factors, with specific attention to the culture of collectivism and the sub-culture of Majlis in the Saudi context, were outlined.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Implications

7.1   Introduction

This chapter mainly focuses on the study's contribution along with its implications and recommendations. It first revisits the aims and the research questions then it presents its contribution to knowledge. Next, the chapter highlights some implications and makes several recommendations based on the findings of the current study, including certain suggestions for future research. The limitations of this research are also highlighted and, finally, the chapter concludes this thesis with a personal reflection.

7.2   Revisiting the aims and research questions

The aims of the current study were threefold. Firstly, it investigated how Saudi student teachers of Arabic viewed their teaching practicum. Secondly, it explored the impact of significant others (i.e. school headteachers, cooperating teachers, university supervisors, regular teachers, and teaching practicum fellows) on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum. Finally, the study sought to identify the factors that influenced Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, from the perspective of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors.

Thus, based on the above aims, the research raised three main questions:

1. How do Saudi student teachers of Arabic view their teaching practicum?

2. How do significant others impact on Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum?

3. What factors influence Saudi student teachers' experience of their teaching practicum, from the perspective of student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors?

Based on the results of this study, it can be argued that a substantial contribution to knowledge was made in regard to the importance of the teaching practicum experiences in the initial formation of Saudi teachers of Arabic. More specifically, the first research question sheds light on the influence of the teaching practicum

environment and the challenges encountered by student teachers related to teaching, supervision and administration. These included a lack of care towards them from their supervisors and a lack of coordination with cooperating teachers. In addition, the short duration of the practicum and the heavy workload were found as significant challenges to the teaching practicum. Student teachers also emphasised the low student achievement standards and the lack of respect they received from their students. Nonetheless, many of the study participants across all of the different groups reported positive aspects of the teaching practicum environment (see section 5.3.2.2, for example).

It is also necessary to emphasise that student teachers indicated that they had encountered several challenges related to teaching, supervision and administration in their teaching practicum. With regards to teaching challenges, data analysis revealed that participants viewed the practicum as challenging in terms of the complex nature of teaching the Arabic language, specifically with early years. It also appears that student teachers suffered from a lack of positive interaction with their students, often due to a perception of disrespect towards student teachers. Likewise, the school students' low achievement level was a challenging experience.

Through this study, significant insights were gained about the supervision of student teachers during their practicum. Supervision was the source of particularly challenging experiences in terms of the perceived lack of care and attention towards them from their supervisors and a lack of coordination with cooperating teachers. The perceived poor feedback they received from non-specialists also had a direct impact on their experiences. It is also worth noting that the study revealed dissatisfaction with the assessment procedures during their supervision as it appears that there is a lack of transparency with regards to assessment criteria.

In addition, the study has revealed that participants' administrative challenges significantly affected student teachers' experiences of their practicum. Issues such as the insufficient duration of the teaching practicum and the extra classes they had to cover were particularly significant.

In response to the second research question, the research provided a deeper understanding of the relationship between student teachers and significant others in the Saudi teaching practicum. Various significant others influenced student

teachers' experience of their teaching practicum (headteachers, university supervisors, cooperating teachers, regular teachers, and teaching practicum fellows). Despite the challenges with supervision, teaching and administration in the teaching practicum, Saudi student teachers of Arabic had mostly positive experience in terms of relationships with others. They usually felt supported and engaged in the teaching practicum by the different significant others in their teaching practicum. Hence, they sought good relationships, not only with their practicum fellows but also with the significant others in the school teaching practicum hoping to maintain harmony with their colleagues and peers, which was deemed more culturally acceptable. Furthermore, the study is significant insofar as some student teachers were able to form a community of practice with their fellows, university supervisors, cooperating teachers, which was fostered by the cultural context, through, notably, the Majlis. This issue is of particular importance since, for some student teachers, the Majlis had an important impact on the notion of the community of practice which in turn has a significant role in the development of learners and learning outcomes.

In response to the third research question, the study has shed light on the broader factors of Saudi student teachers' life experience that were considered likely to have an impact on their teaching practicum experiences. The findings indicated that although these factors overlap in various ways, they could be classified as personal factors, educational factors and socio-cultural factors. For instance, the study showed how the collectivist Saudi culture and the traditional Majlis contributed to Saudi student teachers of Arabic's experience of their teaching practicum. In this respect, research has shown that culture plays a vital role in establishing and developing student teachers' stance and attitudes toward teaching practicum experiences. Research also suggests that culture could be an influential contextual factor which explains teachers' directness or indirectness as well as student teachers' response to it (Fitch & Saunders, 1994; Strong & Baron, 2004). The influence of collectivist cultures is shown in student teachers favouring group harmony over individual benefits. In such cultures, there is a strong feeling of involvement in each other's personal and academic lives. Moreover, there is a strong feeling of loyalty and responsibility to each other and the teaching process.

Another significant issue highlighted by this study lies in the impact of the Majlis on the formation of student teachers because it deals with different aspects of life in the Saudi context as participants could discuss local events and issues, exchange news, socialise and get entertained. Hence, this culture of Majlis seems to have a significant impact on student teachers' teaching practicum as it can enhance their interactivity with the notion of the community of practice in their teaching practicum. A significant finding related to the Majlis is how closely it relates to the notion of the community of practice. This extends beyond the impact it can have on student teachers as professionals. Indeed, whereas technical skill and knowledge are important elements in a community of practice, they are not the only factors required. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), individuals belonging to a community of practice are engaged in relationships, and communities form around issues that people find important to them, which seems to the case in the Majlis. Coming together under a common theme, as this is common practice in the traditional Majlis, also gives attendees a certain sense of identity and belonging. It is not just skill and knowledge that are exchanged, but the Majlis also entails strategies of approaching and doing things of common interest among members of the community.

The study has shown how the initial teacher education programme plays a substantial role in student teachers' interaction with significant others, which is essential for their development as Arabic teachers. In addition, the teaching practicum generally provides pedagogical and subject matter knowledge, as well as useful, practical and contextual teaching experience, which was argued to be fundamental in shaping future Arabic teachers. The influence of other contextual factors such as the personal, educational and cultural factors demonstrate the importance of 'social construction' with others in shaping the practical experiences of Saudi student teachers of Arabic within the teaching practicum.

Therefore, based on the above, the current study has the potential to improve the teaching practicum experience of Saudi student teachers in several ways. Firstly, the research has the potential to contribute to initial teacher education in the Saudi Arabian context and other similar Arab contexts, given that few studies have been conducted to explore the impact of teaching practicum on student teachers in such settings, least of all in the KSA.

7.3 Contribution to Knowledge

The teaching practicum is considered to be one of the main components of teacher education programmes worldwide. However, little research has been conducted to explore the significance of the experience of student teachers in their teaching practicum in the Saudi Arabian context. Consequently, there was a gap in the knowledge regarding the teaching practicum, as experienced by student teachers in the KSA. Moreover, the exact nature of this needed to be articulated through the voices of student teachers and other stakeholders' views such as cooperating teachers and teacher educators, as they play an essential role in forming the experience of student teachers in the practicum (Trent, 2010).

Regarding educational research methodology, the study contributes in several respects. It can serve as an example for other mixed-methods studies in higher education in the KSA, as few studies have used an exploratory approach to investigate the teaching practicum experiences of Saudi student teachers of Arabic. Most educational research studies in the KSA and the Arabic world often seem to entail a quantitative and scientific approach. The study could also be used as an example of a mixed-method methodology used to help understand and interpret the different experiences of teachers. The use of mixed methods of data collection enabled me to collect richer and more varied and textured data to obtain comprehensive answers to the research questions.

7.4 Implications and recommendations of the study

What emerged from this study as being of primary importance, is just how critical it is to establish strong and useful links between the different parties involved in the practicum to facilitate the smooth-running of its basic processes. Therefore, several implications emerged from this study, as explained below.

1. It was clear from the study that student teachers were often concerned about the lack of professional preparation of cooperating teachers and university supervisors. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to provide the school headteacher, cooperating teachers and university supervisors with a training programme on how to professionally supervise, observe and assess student teachers in the practicum. Professional preparation can take the form of supervisory license that can be obtained by an accredited body. On the one hand, school headteachers can be professionally prepared in terms of how to accommodate student teachers from an administrative perspective. On the

other hand, university supervisors and cooperating teachers can be professionally prepared by attending specific training courses and obtain a license to be professional and certified supervisors of student teachers.

2. To ensure an effective supervision process, university supervisors and cooperating teachers need to be released from specific teaching and administrative duties during their teaching practicum days. This release will enable them to have sufficient time to plan, visit and observe and assess student teachers in class and discuss the feedback in one-to-one meetings. A one-day relief is a very feasible professional development opportunity for both university supervisors and cooperating teachers. This could be in the form of a focused, intensive day that helps update cooperating teachers and university supervisors' methods of supervision and classroom observation. Another reasonable professional development opportunity could be a five-day intensive supervisory programme during mid-term break or mid-year holiday. This seems particularly realistic as most teaching staff in the KSA, as per the country's regulations, have a minimum of 60 days leave per academic year.

3. Many participants in the study complained about the short duration of their teaching practicum. It is therefore recommended to extend the practicum duration to be one year long, and for once a week, in addition to the mandatory two-week blocks of teaching before the end of the second semester. The two-week blocks of teaching give student teachers the sense of living the role of a 'real' teacher from the beginning to the end of the school day for two consecutive weeks. Another possible solution to this problem is the provision of summer teaching practicum where there will be no university courses to attend. This solution could alleviate the burden of university courses and teaching practicum in the same semester and enable student teachers to become more fully involved in communities of practice in schools.

4. The role and the significance of informal learning experiences in shaping the practical experience of student teachers also emerged as an important finding from the data. In this regard, it is also meaningful to engage student teachers in curricular as well as extracurricular activities in the teaching practicum to enrich their teaching experience and develop their competencies: personally, socially, and academically. Examples of useful extracurricular activities could be the creation of visual aids for specific reading and writing skills, the school assembly preparation club, the reading club or involvement in student council

and debate teams. Community service is another form of extracurricular activities in which student teachers could be involved. This could also give student teachers the chance to take part in school initiatives, curriculum development and reform.

5. Having reviewed the teaching practicum guide developed for all teaching colleges in the KSA (see Appendix 2), it is recommended that modifications are made to design a new and comprehensive teaching practicum guide. This guide needs to be benchmarked against other international accredited institutions and taking the socio-cultural contextual issues of the Saudi context into consideration. For example, drawing on the culture of Majlis, weekly staff meetings might be held where cooperating teachers, university supervisors and student teachers come together to discuss issues related to teaching practicum in a friendly, collegial non-threatening manner.

6. The findings could introduce radical changes into the curricula of Arabic teaching in the future. They might also enhance the efforts of policymakers to plan and take action to promote teaching practicum as a positive and beneficial experience for Saudi student teachers of Arabic. More specifically, this study could help to improve the proficiency level of Saudi student teachers of Arabic and other subject student teachers in the future. Student teachers' suggestions for the development of Arabic curricula, improvement of teaching and assessment issues need to be taken into consideration.

Hence, in line with the findings both from the empirical study findings and key issues raised in relevant educational research, several recommendations can be made:

1. It is recommended to have a supervisory scheme that focuses on improving the partnership between the College of Education, University of Hail and the different teaching practicum schools to allow students to develop as professional teachers. In addition, it is recommended that the supervisory scheme adopts a more reflexive and reflective approach to explore student teachers' concerns, views, problems, and beliefs in conjunction with the other learning community members (e.g. teaching practicum fellows, university supervisors and cooperating teachers). This approach would enhance the knowledge, practices and relationships of stakeholders about the teaching practicum. Such a supervisory scheme could take the form of regularly scheduled weekly meetings between the university supervisor and student

teachers to discuss issues related to their teaching practice. This might help address some challenges encountered by student teachers in their teaching practicum such as the lack of support or the lack of communication.

2. Cooperating teachers' and University supervisors need to be offered professional development through training programmes based on their assessed needs. Such training could be tailored to address their teaching, supervision and assessment skills. The Ministry of Higher Education could provide these training programmes in the KSA as they already have expertise and experience in teacher training.

3. It appears that student teachers of Arabic are in great need for a guidebook about their teaching practicum. This guidebook should include their duties and responsibilities in the teaching practicum and should be focused on the teaching of Arabic in particular (e.g. teaching strategies, classroom management, assessment of the student, student teachers' interactions with school pupils).

4. In reference to the duration of the teaching practicum, it is recommended to have an entire semester solely allocated to the teaching practicum with no university studies. This will give student teachers a sense of continuity which will have a positive impact on their professional identity as a future teacher.

5. In addition, student teachers need to have a comprehensive orientation programme, in addition to a guidebook, highlighting their duties and responsibilities in the practicum. This programme could also inform student teachers about all aspects of the teaching practicum, primarily how to deal with regular teachers and students in their new roles as student teachers, and the protocols and behaviour expected by the schools, as well as detailing the assessment procedures transparently.

7.5   Research Limitations

Beyond the challenges encountered in this research, the current study comprises several limitations which need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, the number of participants was limited because only one region of the KSA was investigated in the current study. Therefore, due to this limitation, it may not be possible to generalise the findings of the current study to other contexts within the KSA. The university where the study was conducted is one of the twenty-nine public universities in Saudi Arabic. Secondly, the research lacked the opportunity to collect authentic data from real-life discussions between schoolteachers and

cooperating teachers during meetings or feedback sessions with supervisors. Thirdly, the study used only a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. This could be a reason for conducting further research in this area using other data collection instruments which are generally believed to generate more profound and richer qualitative data such as journal writing, focus-group discussions, classroom observations and supervisory meetings. In addition, and more importantly, there was a cultural and religious issue regarding the notable absence of the female voice in this research. Female student teachers and cooperating teachers refused to be interviewed for cultural reasons. As a result, interviews were only conducted with male student teachers and their cooperating teachers. This can be explained by the fact that Saudi Arabian society is known to be conservative in terms of gender relationships, especially in educational settings which are usually segregated by gender (Elyas & Picard, 2012). The cultural and religious norms of the Saudi community would make it challenging for a female researcher to interview male Islamic Studies teachers and vice versa (Jamjoom, 2010). In the current study, it was impossible for a male researcher to interview female student teachers, cooperating teachers or university supervisors. Consequently, it can be suggested that further research be conducted at the University of Hail, involving female researchers and female participants to overcome this limitation. Moreover, the current study used a mixed-method methodology over a relatively short period. Another study could be used employing this methodology for a longer duration or using a different methodological approach such as an ethnographic study or narrative enquiry to delve deeper into the nature and essence of the teaching practicum of Saudi student teachers of Arabic.

7.6   Potential areas for future research

It would be interesting to use other methodological approaches to this subject area, such as narrative inquiry or ethnography to explore the teaching practicum experience of Saudi student teachers of Arabic. Focusing on this area, further insight may be gained in understanding different types of motivation for student teachers and exploring different attitudes.

In addition, the research could be conducted to explore student teachers' beliefs as to the means and methods of shaping and possibly even reforming teaching practicum, as a result of this exploration of the nature of student teacher

responses' to their experiences within teaching practicum. Teachers' beliefs are important to understand and improve the educational process as they are related to teachers' strategies for planning, designing and implementing lessons. These beliefs also help teachers to overcome the challenges they encounter in their professional life so that they can create positive and healthy learning environments for their students. This research could be carried out quantitatively to investigate to what extent and in which settings findings from this study would be applicable and transferable to other contexts, in the KSA, in the Arab world and further afield.

Moreover, the research could be conducted to explore how new forms of assessment can be made practical for use in the teaching practicum classroom and in large-scale contexts. It would also be worthwhile to explore how various new forms of assessment affect student teachers' learning; teacher practice, and educational decision making.

Similarly, further research could be conducted to explore how effective journal writing or other forms of reflective writing or practice might be effective in the Saudi context, where male and female student teachers would be able to express their views freely to avoid the exclusion of the female participants in the current study.

Furthermore, further research could be conducted in the form of a longitudinal study involving a larger number of participants from different areas of the KSA, in order to gain a greater in-depth understanding of student teachers' experience of the teaching practicum. More research could also be conducted at undergraduate and postgraduate levels of teacher education to gain a more comprehensive view of the factors contributing to the positive and negative experience of student teachers in their teaching practicum.

In addition, there is the potential to further investigate the supervisory practices (e.g. classroom observation, feedback-giving strategies, evaluation of student teachers' performance) within the teaching practicum as this is a fundamental area that would help to provide more insight into the development of the trajectories of the teaching practicum.

Another area for consideration for potential future research may that of investigating the practical experience of student teachers in the Saudi context using other theoretical frameworks such as 'activity theory' or with other research

tools such as classroom observation, focus-group discussion and video-recordings of supervisory meetings. These theoretical frameworks and data collection instruments have the potential to offer greater depth, breadth and variety concerning the nature of the teaching practicum experience of Saudi student teachers of Arabic, or indeed for other subjects as well. Finally, investigating the professional agency of Saudi student teachers is a potential and new area for further research.

Finally, as this relates to a fundamental finding of this study, it is worth conducting further investigation on the role of the Majlis and other forms of informal settings such as Quran classes on formal education professional practice. The results of this study showing the importance of the Majlis as a tool to acquire knowledge and skills may serve as a starting point for further research.

7.7   Personal Reflection and Concluding Remarks

Throughout this research journey, I have become increasingly aware of some of the implications of my positionality in relation to the study and my identity. The first reflection I can make is that I should avoid polarising notions of insider and outsider as these notions are not fixed in time and space. Instead, I now see my position as shifting within a continuum, like my identity as a member of staff of a Saudi university and a Saudi researcher from the UK. I also learned that my positionality is not so simple. While in some respects, I can be considered as an insider, which granted me acceptance, access and a sense of connection with the context, it is possible for a person to be an insider and feel like an outsider. If I was seen by some participants as an insider, being away from my country for many years also gave a personal sense of being an outsider sometimes. As a result, I feel that being an insider or outsider has a lot to do with my experience as well as my prior knowledge which have constantly been evolving before and during this research, and will continue to develop beyond this doctoral research.

Nonetheless, my position as an insider, in some respects enabled me to gain an even deeper understanding of the nature and complexity of the teaching practicum. Indeed, this opened to me a powerful lens to carefully examine the viewpoints of participants. Hence, I realised that my insider position was not necessarily a source of bias, but I learned to embrace and assume this subjectivity. This is because, I believe, this allowed me to gain deeper as well as broader insights into the experiences of student teachers in their teaching

practicum. This also seemed to have encouraged some participants to express themselves freely about the problems and challenges they encountered in the teaching practicum as there was a sense of shared knowledge or common experiences between them and me. Additionally, as I was well aware of the research context, this had some practical advantages, including getting the prompt approval of practicum schools and reducing formalities as compared with an outside researcher.

However, I have become more conscious of the participants' perceptions of myself. Indeed, I feel that my ambivalent position as a semi-insider/outsider, a member of staff from the university and as a Saudi researcher from the UK, might have caused some participants to assume certain issues about me which might have influenced their responses. For example, the challenges I first experienced in getting the approval of recording interviews, especially from some university supervisors may demonstrate these assumptions. It might be that the university supervisors were reluctant to express their views because I was viewed as one of the university staff, and this might have caused problems to them in case of reporting something negative. Fortunately, confidentiality issues were explicitly and transparently clarified, and permission was sought to record the interviews. Also, I felt that the most effective way to address potential issues with my positionality was to be extremely rigorous and transparent throughout the research process

One of the most notable aspects for me at the beginning of this research journey was that I knew relatively little about qualitative research. Qualitative research methods are very different from the quantitative and quasi-experimental methods widely used in educational research in the KSA. I had been taught how to conduct quantitative research during my MEd in the KSA, but I acquired far more knowledge and skills about qualitative research while doing my MSc and PhD at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter. Therefore, I feel that the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in this research was a beneficial experience that enriched my experience and strengthened me as a researcher. However, in terms of research methods, designing the data collection instruments was probably one of the most critical stages. I had a series of regular meetings with my supervisors and based on readings and recommendations, I managed to design the questionnaire and the interview questions in a way that

allowed to me collect rich data. Likewise, the data collection stage took more time and effort than I had initially expected.

Despite the apparent richness of the data, it is important to reflect on certain discrepancies between some of the interview data (in relation to supervision, for example) and questionnaire data. In my view, as the researcher's interpretation influences qualitative data, the entire process of data collection can be affected while quantitative data mainly involves a statistical/numerical process to generate and interpret results (Oppenheim, 1992). The interview data analysis involves an inductive process which could have been influenced by bias, that is, my positionality and shifting positions and identity. Nonetheless, I felt that my presence as an interviewer allowed the participants to clarify their ideas and express some of the opinions they had, using more detailed descriptions than in the questionnaire. The nature of the interview questions and my relationship with the participants triggered more detailed and considered responses to the challenges they encountered in their teaching practicum. Upon reflecting on this issue, it is also likely that some questionnaire items might have been misunderstood.

Another issue that is worth noting is that the questionnaire was completed in the presence of their university tutors for a study conducted by an "unknown researcher", presented as a "member of staff" and as a "Saudi researcher from the UK", while during the interview I was able to develop a more open and trusting relationship reaching the position of semi-outsider. It must be acknowledged, however, the likely presence of power issues as far as the data collection is concerned. In spite of the fact that the student teachers had read the information sheet which assured their anonymity in the research, some respondents might have been affected by power relations and thus wanted to please their teachers by giving positive responses. However, once again, strict ethical conduct had to be upheld, and participants were ensured that their responses would be strictly anonymous, private, and confidential and that their teachers would have absolutely no access to their data, under any circumstances. Hence, I had to develop an open and trusting relationship with the participants to ensure that student interviewees were given the opportunity to express their views freely.

It is also noteworthy to pinpoint here that conducting research in a "collectivist culture" like Saudi Arabia has its limitations. Collectivist cultures are broadly

described as more group-oriented, interdependent, and harmonious (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis et al., 1988). Hence, the highly positive claims expressed in the questionnaire responses might have been an aspect of this collectivist culture. It seems fair to question whether the questionnaire respondents believed that they would do their seniors a favour by overstating the positive aspects of their experiences to paint a more acceptable picture of the teaching practicum in Saudi Arabia. Halder, Binder, Stiller, & Gregson (2016) makes similar claims about Indian participants who expressed positive views to satisfy their seniors. It is also important to mention that it is the norm in collectivist cultures that the participants show harmony and loyalty to their seniors (Basabe & Ros, 2005; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, during the interview process, some participants were initially reluctant to express their views openly as they might have been reluctant to criticise their senior lecturers or the institution. This issue was promptly addressed as I ensured them that the conversations were entirely anonymous, confidential, and private and that they had all the right to withdraw from the study at any time. This resulted in a trusted relationship between the participants and me, which made the interview process smooth and easy; I did get a genuine sense that they openly expressed their views with no restrictions.

The contradictions between the overtly positive questionnaire results and some interview data prompted me to reflect more deeply on the challenges and limitations of using self-report data. One of these challenges related to the accuracy of interpretations of the self-reported data which might have caused participants to report socially desirable answers (Araujo, Wonneberger, Neijens, & de Vreese, 2017). Also, as humans, we often have conflicting conceptions and contradictory beliefs, which can possibly explain the inconsistencies in some of the responses. Individuals may have conflicting beliefs about the same issue, which might result in inconsistent responses to the same examined issues (Marton & Pong, 2005; Pajares,1992). In addition, the study participants might have given socially acceptable answers to present their teaching practicum as positive experiences. In addition, interpreting self-reported data was, in my view, related to the evaluation of my interpretations of the research findings as there were no standards to which I could compare these self-reported data. However, to address these concerns, I made sure I followed the principles of

trustworthiness throughout the research to ensure that my interpretations followed rigorous procedures.

An important remark needs to be made regarding the complexities of conducting research in the Saudi context. Most specifically, there is no doubt that the issue, or absence of, Saudi female participants represents one of the most salient cultural and religious aspects that we are faced with as male researchers in the Saudi context. Although I was fully aware of Saudi Arabia's gender segregation in place in all educational institutions, I faced great difficulties to include female participants in the study. It was, in fact, impossible for me as a male researcher to interview female student teachers, cooperating teachers or university supervisors. As a result, I do have a sense that this kind of segregation can have a negative impact on research in the Saudi context. Despite these cultural and religious norms, I was not able to interview female student teachers. However, female participants did respond to the questionnaire, which may have somehow limited the possible negative impact of the absence of female interviewee participants.

Some reflections relate to more practical concerns that relate to the writing of the thesis. Having completed this project, I feel that the writing process, though time-consuming and challenging since English is not my first language, was a rewarding experience. I drafted, edited, proofread each chapter and received constructive feedback from my supervisors and examiners; this played a major role in completing this work. Thus, I feel that my descriptive writing style, influenced by the Arabic language style of writing, has been slightly changed into a more critical one. Thanks to my supervisors' frequent oral and written feedback, I learned to create an argument and support it with evidence. Carrying out the current study was, without doubt, the most intellectually challenging scholarly task I have ever undertaken. It was a highly demanding process for me to read and select previous research, design the methodology and analyse data, report the findings, discuss them and provide some implications and recommendations. Nevertheless, it was a beneficial learning experience which enrichened me personally, professionally and academically. However, there were moments of inevitable frustration, but I now feel better prepared to make more sound decisions about conducting research as well as transferring my skills to other fields.

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Appendix (1): Course Description GDE

General Diploma in Education

Course Description

The General Diploma in Education consists of 16 courses, with 38 credit hours, taught on two semesters. The purpose of GED is to equip non-educational students with the pedagogical and teaching skills. In addition, the GED enhances the teaching and pedagogical performance of education graduate who are working as in-service teachers. The GED develops in-service teachers' experiences and skills, which helps them perform their assigned teaching tasks in a more professional way.

Course Reference Number	Course Title	Credit Hours
EDUC 449	Foundations of Islamic Education	3
EDUC 450	School Administration and Educational Supervision	3
CRCL 452	Computer Uses in Teaching	2
CRCL 453	Curriculum and General Teaching Methods	2
CRCL 454	Introduction to Teaching	2
ETEC 455	Education Technology & Communication	2
PSYC 456	Principles of Research and Education	2
PSYC 457	Educational Measurement and Evaluation	2
PSYC 458	Psychology of Childhood and Adolescence	3
Total Credits		21
Course Title	**Course Reference Number**	**Credit Hours**
EDUC 459	The Education System in Saudi Arabia	2
PSYC 460	Educational Psychology	3
PSYC 461	Foundations of Guidance and Counselling	2
SPEED 462	Principles of Education of Gifted Children	2
CRCL 463	Special Teaching Methods	2
ETEC 464	Production & Use Educational Aids	1
CRCL465	Teaching Practicum	5
Second Semester Total Credits		17
Diploma Total Credits		38

Appendix (2): Teaching Practicum Guide for Teachers' Colleges in the KSA

Dr. Saleh Mohammed Al-Ayouni & Dr. Nasser Al-Falih (Translated Version)

Introduction:

The teacher is considered the person who is entrusted with the task of raising and the good preparation of young people in accordance with the requirements of life; its scientific and technical changes; and within the framework of the teachings of the Islamic religion. The educational policy of Saudi Arabia affirms that the curricula of preparing teachers in the different educational institutions and at all stages are adequate to the basic goals desired of the Islamic nation. The basic desired goals include raising Muslim generation who understands Islamic regulations and rules correctly and exerts efforts to promote the Islamic nation. In addition to this, the Saudi educational policy focuses on the Islamic education and the Arabic language to enable teachers to provide excellent instructions with high understanding of Islamic spirit using correct Arabic language. Thus, the officials of the education and instruction in KSA provide increasingly great attention to the teachers' preparation programme in KSA. This attention is illustrated in the proper way of preparing efficient teacher as the person who is responsible for implementing any change and developing in the educational process. Consequently, the pre-service teachers' preparation programmes and any subsequently teachers' professional programmes are entailed to be modernized programmes. These programmes present educational methods and experiences with whatever provide teachers with the general and the private competencies. These competencies commensurate with teachers' great role and with the requirements of modern developments in the objectives of education and its content, methods, sources and tools.

Due to the fact that the teaching practicum represents the field education in teachers' preparation programmes as it denotes an appropriate opportunity to experiment and apply student teachers' theoretical and practical knowledge in the classroom. Accordingly, teaching practicum is considered not only one of the most basic elements in the process of teachers' preparation, but the most important element of all. As teachers' preparation programmes are assumed to

be useless and invalid theoretical programmes without the teaching practicum. From this perspective, it is necessary to develop a unified guide of teaching practicum which explains the desired objectives. This can be achieved through the clarification of the supervision process; the duties and the responsibilities of the academic supervisor, school director, co-operative teacher, student teacher as well as the assessment process. There should be some flexibility in how to implement this guide but this flexibility should not negatively affect the achievement of the desired objectives of teaching practicum.

The current teaching practicum guide avoids generalities so that all the required responsibilities, duties and skills of the stakeholders of teaching practicum are measurable and observable.

Theoretical Framework:

The teachers' preparation institutions have similarities in the axes that must be covered by the teacher preparation programmes, namely the general cultural preparation, the specialized preparation and the professional preparation. The professional preparation includes teaching practicum which exemplifies the practical part of investigating and applying all what the student teachers taught of theoretical courses in the classroom. Therefore, teaching practicum is considered not only one of the most basic elements in the process of teachers' preparation, but the most important element of all. As, teachers' preparation programmes are expected to be useless and invalid theoretical programmes without the teaching practicum.

Different opinions about the concept of teaching practicum:

Hassan, (1992) indicated that teaching practicum is a set of programmes and the organized situations which are organized by the colleges of education and teacher training institutes in partnership with the concerned schools. Through these programs, there are student teachers' interaction with several organized situations and guided plans to provide the student teacher with a set of knowledge, skills and trends that help him to carry out his comprehensive educational role of teaching, supervision, guidance, evaluation and follow-up of students' behaviours.

Kandil (1993) defines teaching practicum as the basic and main period of providing teaching experiences of pre-service teachers. This training period

includes variety of experiences, whether the teaching practicum is carried out as a system of direct training or separate training which is followed by continues training. As for Hamdan (1981), he mentioned that teaching practicum is the period which allows student teachers to verify the validity and the practicality of their theoretical preparation psychologically, educationally and administratively to the experiences and requirements of real classroom rooms. This can be done under the supervision and guidance of qualified educators from the college of preparation and the school of application together or one of them.

In this regard, Abu Labbada et al. (1996) believe that teaching practicum is the opportunity that is provided by the College of Education for its students in order to practice all the acquired knowledge, theories, skills and attitudes of student teachers. This is accomplished under specialized supervision which guarantee appropriate feedback enabling student teachers to modify and develop their educational behavior. Besides, encouraging student teachers to select, apply and evaluate what they realize as appropriate teaching methods and educational techniques.

Teaching practicum aims at achieving several objectives. Al-Kathiri (1996) defined the objectives of teaching practicum as follows:

1. Developing trainee student teachers' abilities and provide them with the necessary teaching skills.
2. Developing the personal characteristics and the social and professional roles of the trainee student teachers which are related to their profession in the future.
3. Modifying and improving the instructional and educational behaviours of the trainee student teachers.
4. Supporting the good behaviours and the proper performance of the trainee student teachers.
5. Introducing the trainee student teachers to their responsibilities towards their students.
6. Introducing the trainee student teachers to their responsibilities towards their co-operative school and its school community.
7. Introducing the trainee student teachers to their responsibilities towards the students' parents.

In this regard, Hassan (1992) points out that some of the objectives of teaching practicum are the following:

- Helping the student teachers to acquire the necessary competencies:
    a) To plan daily lessons.

b) To plan the course throughout the teaching period.

c) To implement teaching.

d) To manage the classroom.

e) To evaluate the learning process.

In the view of (Homs, Ali, 1998) teaching practicum works on deepening the relationship between student teachers and their profession in an effective practical way. This can enable student teachers to become part of the community and school, to provide them with deep understanding of the teaching and learning process, and to identify the real problems of education. In addition to this, (Homs, Ali, 1998) decide the importance of teaching practicum as follows:

1. Teaching practicum is considered a unique experience for the teachers of the future as it allows them to interact with students as well as with all school staff in real learning situations.

2. Teaching practicum qualifies student teachers to acquire some of the basic skills of teaching such as lesson preparation, how to present the educational topics, how to conduct the assessment process, and to obtain number of skills required for the successful teacher.

3. Teaching practicum changes the personality traits of student teachers from the role of the students to the role of the teachers.

4. Teaching practicum is an opportunity for the first time to the student teachers to develop direct relationships with the most experienced schoolteachers and school management.

5. Teaching practicum is a translation of the theories, principles and educational concepts that the student teachers learned during their preparation in the college into the field of application and practice.

6. The student teachers identify in the teaching practicum to what extent their real desire and sincere inclination towards teaching profession and the formation of positive attitudes towards it.

7. Teaching practicum develops student teachers' ability to self-assessment.

8. Teaching practicum provides student teacher with the sense that teaching is a profession which has its scientific and applied foundations.

Al-Khatib (2000) has identified the following teaching practicum models:

1. The model that is based on the fact that teaching practicum is a continuous task from the first stage of preparation to the last stage of it.

2. The model, which is based on presenting teaching practicum as stages during selected periods of the preparation program.

3. The model, which is based on providing teaching practicum in the last year of preparation.

4. The model which is based on providing teaching practicum in the last semester of the teacher preparation programme.

5. The model which is based on providing teaching practicum during the last year or the last semester of the preparation period; partially (one or two days per week) or (within one month only) and there's no need for the trainee to be discharged to attend teaching practicum.

In order for the teaching practicum to achieve the desired objectives, it is necessary for its stakeholders to play their roles effectively. (Alkathiri, 1987) identified some roles and tasks of the teaching practicum supervisor, some of them are:

1. The supervisors inform the student teachers about their observations and discuss them.
2. The supervisors direct and guide the trainee student teachers.
3. The supervisors encourage trainee student teachers to participate in school activities.
4. The supervisors guide the trainee student teachers to prepare the lessons in the preparation notebook.
5. The supervisors help in the development of teacher preparation education programme at the college.
6. The supervisors collect some necessary information about the school before accepting it as a teaching practicum school.
7. The supervisors show the relationship between the school and the college as well as between the student teachers and the school.
8. The supervisors write notes about the trainee student teachers during teaching.

In this regard, (Al-Ayouni, 2001) referred to a number of tasks and activities, including some of them:

1. The supervisor should visit the student teachers at least eight visits, including at least five visits within the classroom to observe their teaching performance.
2. The supervisor guides the student teacher to use different teaching methods.
3. The supervisor attends with the student teacher during teaching in the classroom throughout the class period.
4. The supervisors work on organizing the attendance of student teachers for some classes, especially during the first week of the beginning of teaching practicum.
5. The supervisors hold a weekly meeting with the student teachers not less than two hours to do the following- :
a. Explain and discuss common mistakes of student teachers.
b. Show films for model lessons and guide student teachers to make the best use of them.

c. Follow-up the extent of implementation of student teachers to the notes and suggestions which are agreed upon them at the previous meeting.

d. Help student teachers and train them to make some of the teaching aids they need in teaching.

6. The supervisor presents some of video-taped lessons recorded for distinguished and weak student teachers and criticize them.

Lal (1993) also identified a number of roles that the school headteacher can perform as follow

1. With regard to school curriculum, the school head teachers' role is as follow:

   a. Discussing the results of the students with the trainee student teachers.

   b. Discussing the methods of addressing the weakness of students in the course with the trainee student teachers.

   c. Discussing the teaching methods and design tests with the trainee student teachers.

2. With regard to administration and management, the school head teachers' roles are as follow:

   a. Visiting the trainee student in the classroom.

   b. Providing notes to the trainee student teachers.

   c. Encouraging exchanging of visits between trainee student teachers and schoolteachers.

3. With regard to educational objectives, the school head teachers' roles are as follow:

   a. Discussing the general educational objectives of education in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the trainee student teachers.

   b. Discussing the objectives of the stage with the trainee student teachers.

   c. Discussing the objectives of the course with the trainee student teachers.

As for (Akbar & Abd Al-Halim, 1996), the roles of the school headteacher are as follow:

1. Working to incorporate student teachers within the school community.
2. Working to involve student teachers in school activities.
3. Eradicating the difficulties and solving the problems facing student teachers.
4. Treatment of student teachers as professional colleagues.

Also, Al-Qahtani (1994) identified the role played by the co-operating teacher towards the trainee student teachers during the period of teaching practicum in several aspects:

1. Guidance and directing of the trainee student teachers at the beginning of teaching practicum, such as providing information about the school and its classes and general plans for the target courses.

2. Helping the trainee student teachers in preparing and organizing daily lessons, such as helping them to prepare daily lessons or follow up lessons' preparation during the training period.

3. Guidance and directing of the trainee student teachers in teaching through discussion of some of the foundations of teaching methods; helping the teachers in identifying errors committed during training; developing of some teaching skills such as the use of blackboard and questions formation; and encouraging the use of different teaching methods.

4. Providing the necessary information on how to evaluate students; follow up their work, and how to develop and correct monthly tests.

5. Assisting the trainee student teachers in some other educational aspects such as selecting and using educational aids; implementing varieties of some school activities; developing the skills related to class management and solving some behavioural and acquisition problems which are related to the students.

(A group of university staff in the teachers' college in Riyadh in coordination with the General Administration for Teachers' Education, 1991) specified the tasks of the student teachers as follows:

1. Teaching eight lessons per week and the supervisor can ask for other tasks concerning class teaching.

2. Carrying out the different supervisory tasks which are assigned for the student teachers by the school as any other schoolteachers.

3. Conducting the monthly tests, preparing the students' monthly reports which indicate the students' level and cooperating with the students' academic advisor in studying the different students' cases.

4. Participation in non - class activity groups and highlighting student teachers' knowledge and skills in this area.

Thus, the evaluation process of the student teachers in the field of teaching practicum is carried out on continuous basis during the semester. The aim of the evaluation process is to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses. The aim of the evaluation in teaching practicum is referred to by (Homs, Ali, 1998):

1. Identifying the points of weaknesses and strength of the student teacher during the teaching practicum.

2. Recognizing to what extent the student teachers achieve the targets of the teaching practicum.

3. Distinguishing between the levels of the student teachers and their practical and professional competencies.

4. Identifying the suitability of the student teachers to the teaching profession.

Guidelines of the student teacher before teaching:

Instructional planning:

1. Don't go to the classroom without good lesson planning.

2. You should cover all the different aspects of the educational material during lesson planning.

3. Don't go to the classroom without being well-preparation of the scientific, psychological, social and physiological aspects.

4. You should make sure to fulfil the target goal during teaching before moving to another one.

5. You have to be creative in writing the daily teaching plan.

6. You need to use varieties of strategies and teaching methods which you have acquired in the college.

7. You should plan for teaching every lesson in different way than the previous one because every lesson has specific features.

8. Don't ask students to do many homework tasks.

9. Don't ask students to buy expensive educational means, but you should encourage them to produce educational means of raw materials of the local environment around them.

10. Don't worry if you are asked to teach another course in addition to your specialized course. At that time, you have to be well-prepared and exert more effort to be a successful teacher in this course.

11. Use the blackboard effectively.

Teaching:

1. The student teachers should give explanation for the students, why do they study this subject? (Linking the lesson to students' daily life).

2. Do not pretend that you know something and you do not know about it, students will know and this is one of the reasons for students' disrespecting for the teachers.

3. Ask questions that develop the scientific thinking of the students

4. Do not be afraid to admit scientific error in front of the students, they will appreciate it and respect you.

5. The good teacher is the one who works hard; deal with students in a good way; provide varieties of teaching methods; and encourage co-operative learning among the students.

6. Taking into account the flexibility in your weekly class plan. This helps you enrich the scientific content of the course and provides variations of daily lesson planning.

7. If you use certain teaching methods or activities and they won students' admiration, don't use them frequently because they lose their importance.

8. Give students guidance and advice on ways of studying and making the best use of the course content.

9. You should keep a copy of students' written assignments or activities.

10. Attention should be giving to the quality of the blackboard summary.

11. When you ask the students to do homework, you should make sure that the students completely understood the homework. This is due to the fact that the lack of understanding the homework embarrasses the students and their families.

12. Give the students the opportunity to discuss in groups because it is very useful. This type of discussion should not be permanent. Students should also be given clear instructions on how to work in groups.

13. Students have the ability to understand and do many things. Thus, you should benefit and develop this ability.

14. You should give an opportunity for open discussion on a specific subject in the area of specialization from time to time.

15. Trust yourself and respect your students, this is a reason for acquiring students' respect.

16. 16. Be firm and merciful in dealing with your students.

17. 17. Do not use the methods of threatening and intimidation for the students and avoid beating and ridicule them.

Dealing with others:

1. Try always to make good relationships with your colleagues in the school and make sure to benefit from their experiences especially the co-operating teacher .

2. Do not do all the responsibilities but consult your colleagues at work; attend with the co-operating; invite the co-operating teacher to attend one of your classes; visit another colleague in another school, and speak with the academic supervisor around all the emerging inquiries in the school.

3. Make an accurate analysis for all the notes given to you by the academic supervisor or the co-operating teacher or the school head teacher, or the students. Do not think that they are negative ones as these notes become useful after careful consideration about them and modifying them.

4. You are in the training stage; you should welcome and accept any advice.

5. Accept the instructions of the co-operating teacher and try to apply them accurately.

6. You should understand that the teaching practicum period is a contract between you and the school. Hence, you should perform the teaching duties perfectly and don't preoccupied with other things.

7. You should benefit from your presence in the school and identify all the duties of the teacher such as: teaching, activity, supervision of students, associations, field visits, dealing with students, dealing with parents,

dealing with teachers, dealing with the school headteacher and dealing with the co-operating teacher.

8. Make use of the schoolteachers to improve the learning process.

9. Try to adapt to the new situation surrounding you appropriately.

10. Participate and contribute to all school events.

11. Participate in school decisions making and try to implement them.

12. Participate with the schoolteachers in the educational discussions.

13. Be patience, honest and sincere.

The students

1. You have to recognize that students have more intelligence and abilities than you expect.

2. Be kind to your students to gain their love.

3. Remember always that students are easily bored, so do not spend too much time in teaching one topic and provide varieties of your teaching methods.

4. Treat your students in a human way; avoid reprimanding, listen to their views and ideas, as much as possible, and apply their ideas when you have the opportunity.

5. Do not expect miracles from your students, so use different ways of reinforcement.

6. Students always like rewards, so use rewards in dealing with the students.

7. Let the students feel safe when they talk to you as if they talk to their parents.

8. Do not think at all that you do not have talented students in case of not having get excellent rating or not thank you for your work.

9. Give time to take care of students' private needs orally or in writing.

10. Identify the academic and professional tendencies of students.

11. Keeping records of guidance and directing for students

The system:

1. Identify the types of problems to minimize their occurrence.

2. Solve the problems that occur immediately before they get out of control.

3. Do not care about what the students say personally about you.

4. Help the students and be a great support in solving their problems. For example, when a student needs a pen, give him yours.

5. Students benefit from you in case of providing them the opportunity.

6. Treat the students equally and don't prefer one student over another.

Dealing with parents

1. Inform the parents about the level of their children and discuss them.

2. Establish regular contacts with parents.
3. Inform the students and their parents about the results of the evaluation.
4. Inform the parents about the learning objectives.
5. Provide the parents with information regarding the academic progress of their children.

Tests

1. Make the test a way to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses.
2. Do not focus solely on information.
3. Don't use tests as punishment for students.
4. Prepare the questions well earlier than the test time.
5. Collect more questions then choose the appropriate ones.
6. Make the questions clear and short.
7. Use different types of tests.
8. Select the questions at the level of the average student.
9. Start with the easy questions then harder and harder.
10. The good question is what distinguishes between the excellent student and the weak student.
11. Try to avoid using the language of the textbook in questions' formulation.
12. Make the test questions commensurate with the daily goals of the lessons and the curriculum in general.

Characteristics of good teacher

The educational policy in Saudi Arabia stems from Islam, which the nation believes in it as a faith, worship, regulation, law, governance and an integrated system of life. Thus, teachers must have a number of characteristics and attributes:

1. Be knowledgeable of the target course.
2. Having the ability to explain and present the course content in an easy manner.
3. Having the ability to use the appropriate educational aids.
4. Having the ability to attract students' attention during the course content presentation.
5. Having a common culture.
6. To be balanced and calm.
7. Treating the students in good manners and affection.
8. Having the ability to dealing with the individual differences among students.
9. Having the desire and enthusiasm for teaching.

10. Be patient.

11. Having a continuous access to the knowledge development of the course content.

12. Being flexible and tolerance of opinion.

13. Having enthusiasm for teaching.

14. Having an appropriate intelligence and promptness.

15. Having complete understanding of the psychological foundations of learning.

16. Having the desire to cooperate and help others.

17. Having the ability to build good relationships with others.

18. The absence of congenital defects (especially speech).

19. Having the ability to present ideas in a simplified and easy way.

20. Avoidance of ridiculing the mistakes of students.

21. Being punctual in dealing with appointments.

22. Being fair and providing equal treatment for the students.

23. Having self-confidence.

24. Being objective.

25. Having the ability to use the computer.

26. Having the ability to conduct research.

27. To be a student as well as a teacher

The concept of teaching practicum:

Teaching practicum is the training field teachers' preparation programme in the college. Teaching practicum is also considered a part of a larger program, namely the practical education of the teacher. This programme includes all the practical courses and experiences which are offered within teachers' preparation programme whether these experiences are in the real field of teaching or within the walls of teacher colleges.

Concept identification

Teaching practicum is considered in this guide as one of the courses of the educational preparation in all institutions of teacher preparation. The student teacher enrols in the teaching practicum course in the last semester after passing all the other courses. The teaching practicum course entails teaching the specialized course for specific level or for several levels in one of the public schools. The student teachers apply all what they learned in the college under the collaborative supervision of the academic supervisor, the headteacher of the school, and the co-operating teacher.

The academic supervisor:

The academic supervisor is one of the teaching staff in the college who is assigned the task of supervising student teachers for a semester during their practical training in schools through field visits and weekly meetings. This type of supervision occurs with the aim of directing the student teachers. The academic supervisor should have MA degree in curriculum and teaching methods and he should at least have a bachelor's degree in the student teachers' specialization.

School head teacher:

The school headteacher is the person who is responsible for managing the educational process in all its aspects of the teaching practicum school.

The co-operating teacher:

The co-operating teacher is appointed by the Ministry of Education. He teaches the student teachers' specialization teacher and he is required to have an outstanding performance. The co-operating teacher should have at least three years' experience in the teaching practicum school.

The student teacher

The student teacher is the student who has completed all courses and is registered in the field of teaching practicum. The student teacher teaches his specialization for one class or a number of classes in a public school where he is directed by the college in coordination with the education administration.

Objectives of teaching practicum:

Teaching practicum is the cornerstone in the educational and vocational preparation of teachers and aims to:

1. Providing practical experiences that help the trainee to acquire the skills and professional attitudes of the teacher.
2. Providing practical experiences that help the trainee to practice various tasks assigned to the teacher.
3. Providing the opportunity for the student teacher to identify the curriculum at the stage where he is intended to teach.
4. Providing the student teacher with the opportunity to acquire the basic skills of teaching, such as: the skill of planning lessons daily: the skill of curriculum distribution, the skill of implementation of daily lessons, the skill of using educational aids, the selection and production of appropriate educational aids, the skill of management and control of the classroom, and the skill of evaluation.

5. Providing the opportunity for the student teacher to identify his abilities and teaching competencies.

6. Developing the positive attitudes towards the profession of teaching at the stage where he is intended to teach.

7. Providing the student teacher with the opportunity to communicate directly with students, teachers and administrators in the teaching practicum schools.

8. Providing the student teacher with the opportunity to identify the duties and responsibilities of the teacher.

9. Providing the student teacher with the opportunity to use and apply teaching strategies.

10. Modifying and improving the instructional and the educational behaviours of the student teacher.

11. Supporting the student teachers' good behaviours and sound performance.

Importance of teaching practicum:

Teaching practicum represents the practical aspect of the teacher preparation process, which is the core of the educational and vocational aspect of the preparation process. The teacher preparation programmes become theoretical programs of limited utility without teaching practicum. The importance of teaching practicum is shown in the tangible results of the scientific, educational and professional progress of the student teacher after completion of this practical aspect of his study.

The relationship between teaching practicum and the educational preparation:

The process of educational preparation in the educational colleges is the distinguishing feature that differentiates it from the other faculties. The educational preparation process is represented in the relevant courses related to the educational and psychological sciences. The general and special teaching methods curriculum and teaching practicum are the basis for the professional preparation process through the teaching practicum and the actual practice of teaching. This is done provide the student teachers with the opportunity to experiment all what they learned from theories and concepts.

The supervisory practices of the teaching practicum

It is necessary to take care and attention to the process of supervising of the student teacher to achieve the objectives of the teaching practicum. This is due to the fact that the student teacher needs help and guidance during this to perform his work perfectly. Hence, the supervision is cooperative between the academic supervisor (supervisor of the college), the school head teacher, and the school

co-operating teacher. In order for supervision to achieve its goal, these supervisors must be aware of the overall educational supervision process.

Stakeholders of the teaching practicum: Roles & responsibilities

There are many stakeholders who contribute to achieving the objectives of the teaching practicum:

1. Academic supervisor
2. School headteacher
3. Co-operating teacher
4. Student teacher.

First: Academic supervisor

The academic supervisor is a teaching stuff of the faculty who is assigned the task of supervising student teachers for a semester during their application in schools to perform the following tasks and activities:

Field visits:

1. The academic supervisor should visit the student teacher at least eight visits, at least five visits within the classroom to observe his classroom performance.
2. The academic supervisor should guide the student teacher to use different teaching methods.
3. The academic supervisor discusses the student teacher the daily teaching plan before entering the classroom.
4. The academic supervisor should hold short and individual meetings with the student teacher after the end of the classroom visit directly to provide his comments.
5. The academic supervisor needs to attend the whole class period with the student teacher during his teaching in the classroom.
6. The academic supervisor requires to ask several questions to the student teachers during his attending the class period with the student teacher to ensure the acquisition of the students.
7. The academic supervisor should guide the student teacher in how to exploit all the facilities available in the school environment.
8. The academic supervisor should organize the attendance of the student teacher for some classes, especially the first week of the beginning of the teaching practicum.

Weekly meetings:

Some of the tasks and activities of the academic supervisor are to set a fixed weekly appointment in his schedule and the student teachers' schedule at least two hours to perform the following tasks and activities:

1. To explain and discuss common mistakes that student teachers make and help teachers to avoid them.

2. To show films for model lessons and guide student teachers to learn how to benefit from them.

3. To clarify the progress and improvement in the performance of the student teacher from the previous visit.

4. To work on the development of the positive attitudes of the student teachers towards the teaching profession.

5. To follow up the extent of the implementation of student teachers of the observations and suggestions that were agreed at the previous meeting.

6. To help the student teachers and train them to make some teaching aids and devices.

7. To show the student teachers some video-taped lessons recorded for distinguished and weak students and criticizing them.

8. To have a look at all preparation notebooks and activities conducted by student teachers during the week.

The Evaluation:

The tasks and the activities of the academic supervisor are to evaluate the student teachers in the teaching practicum programme continuously. This is occurred diagnose points of weaknesses and support the points of strengths to avoid and treat them, using a form containing a number of basic teaching skills prepared for this purpose (model 5).

Second: School head teacher

The school headteacher is responsible for management of the educational process in the school and helps the academic supervisor in supervising the student teacher from the administrative aspects, where he performs the following tasks and activities:

1. To inform the student teacher about rules and regulations of the school.

2. To introduce the student teacher to the schoolteachers and administrators.

3. To involve the student teacher in the school meetings.

4. To involve the student teacher in the meetings of parents' councils.

5. To follow the daily lesson preparation of the student teacher.

6. To follow up the presence of student teacher for the school morning assembly.

7. To follow the attendance of the student teacher for the class period.

8. To follow the daily attendance of the student teacher for the school.

9. To help the student teacher to participate in non-class activities.

10. To attend with the student teacher in the classroom from time to time.

11. To arrange the attendance of some of the lessons for the student teacher with the co-operating teacher.

12. To submit an administrative report about the student teacher at the end of the semester (Form 6).

Third: Co-operating teacher

The co-operating teacher is appointed by the ministry and he teaches the student teacher's specialization. He can do the following tasks and activities because of his experience in the course content and the students.

- To provide the student teacher with the required textbooks.
- To show the student teacher about the available educational aids in the school.
- To inform the student teacher about the clever and the weak students.
- To notify the student teacher about the qualities, tendencies and desires of their students.
- To train the student teacher of curriculum distribution on the months and weeks of the semester.
- To notify the student teacher about the school facilities.
- To inform the student teacher about the daily schedule and places of the teaching aids necessary for teaching.
- To provide a special office for the student teacher.
- To help the student teacher in writing the daily plan.
- To train the student teacher on how to keep students' records.
- To hold a meeting at the beginning of each week with the student teacher to evaluate the teaching plans and discuss the problems that may appear

Fourth: Student teacher

Duties and responsibilities

The student will be discharged during the last semester of the week to perform the following tasks and duties:

1. To teach at least eight classes per week and not more than twelve classes per week.
2. To carry out the supervisory duties of the school administration, as any other teachers in the school.
3. To conduct tests and reports about the level of the students and cooperate with students' academic advisor.
4. To attend school meetings.
5. To attend parents' council meetings.
6. To participation in student activities carried out by the school.

7. To attend the weekly meeting with the supervisor at specific date and place.

8. To attend the morning assembly in school.

9. To present in school until the end of official school hours.

10. To work at least three reserve classes per week.

Planning for teaching:

A. Class plan:

1. Distribution of curriculum topics over the semester's weeks.

2. Distribution on a unit basis.

3. Distribution of the unit's topics.

Before distributing the unit in the textbook, it is preferable to answer the following questions:

– What are the objectives of the unit?

– How long does this unit take? How many lessons can the unit be distributed?

– What does the student know about this unit?

– How do I present this unit to students?

– What are the questions that are needed to be addressed about the unit?

– What are the appropriate ways to teach this unit: individual methods, group method, scientific units, guest invitation from outside the school, lab method, story, lecture, discussion ... etc?

– What are accompanied activities that help in teaching this unit?

– What are educational aids that assist teaching this unit?

– What are the best ways to evaluate this unit: tests, assignments, continuous assessment (oral - essay –complete – multiple choice- match questions… etc.)?

B. Daily plan: it contains the following elements:

1. The learning content

1. The introduction of the lesson:

  – Using daily events that students may experience such as lightning, thunder lightning, newspapers, and shops.

  – The relationship between the new topic and the old topic.

  – Picture puzzles.

  – Presentation of some living and non-living organism samples.

  – Variation in asking questions.

  – Visiting of the school library.

  – Making a scientific visit to a factory or museum or zoo.

  – Inviting a visitor to participate in teaching.

The behavioural objectives (schedule 1)

Some of the verbs which are used in classification of the behavioural objectives in the cognitive domain.

Schedule (1)

Bloom's classification	**The verbs that are used in objectives' formation**
Evaluation	Select-evaluate-arrange-support-judge
Creating	compose, create, plan, predict, revise, write, invent
Analysing	analyse, compare, classify, discuss
Applying	apply, solve, show, solve, use
Understanding	Describe, explain, paraphrase, rewrites, summarizes
Remembering	identify, count, names, recalls, recognizes

This schedule was adopted from (Pelletier, 2000) P.75

As for the emotional domain, as examples of the actions that can be used: help, listen, volunteer, lead, wish, appreciate, contribute, accept.

With regard to the psychological field, as examples of verbs that can be used: collect, construct, compose, be, blend, confuse, measure, use.

- All actions are affected by the way the goal is formulated.

2. Teaching procedures:

The class time is (45 minutes) according to the following schedule (Schedule 2)

This schedule was adopted from (Pelletier, 2000) P.79

The time	The lesson	Teacher's performance	Students' performance
%5	The beginning of the lesson	Instructions and Collecting homework	Listening and presenting assignments
%10	The beginning of the lesson	Introducing objectives- Vocabularies - Questions	Listening and participation
%70	Mid of the lesson	Displaying different activities for the students	Thinking-Discussion- Answering questions\
%10	Revising the lesson	Summarizing the lesson- Revising the lesson- Deciding the objectives of the next lesson	Answering questions- Students' assessment to themselves- Summarizing the lesson-Revising the lesson- Deciding objectives for the next lesson
%5	Closing the lesson	Providing instructions and guidance	Presenting the materials to the teacher (pictures-photos-reports….etc.)

You don't have to stick to that schedule

1.   Educational materials and devices.
    - Films.
    - Microscope.
    - Slices and photographers.
    - Overhead projector
    - Live Models.
    - Dark material projector
    - Non-living models.
    - Interactive Video.
    - Chemicals.

- Samples.

2. Evaluation.

3. Homework:

It is what the students are assigned of work and activities after completing the lesson.

Basic principles of teaching:

The student should be aware of the following basic principles:

4. Why do I study this topic?
   - It is a requirement.
   - An interesting topic for students.
   - Interesting topic for me.

5. What do I want to achieve from this lesson?
   - Developing skills.
   - Teaching concepts.

6. The quality of students:
   - Individual differences between students.
   - Age of students.

Students' attitudes and tendencies.

4. How do I start the lesson?
   - Narrating a story.
   - Relationship of the topic to the lives of students or previous experiences.
   - Use of teaching aids.

5. The sources of education that I need:
   - Educational or technical aids.
   - Distribution of cards, pictures or drawings around the target topic.

   5. How do students spend class time?
   - Distribution of students in groups: small, large, or individual.
   - Practical activities or experiments.
   - Recording notes.

7. How can I evaluate the lesson?
   - Short test.
   - Follow-up.
   - Open questions.

8. Conclusion of the lesson:
   - Reviewing of the topic and writing the abstract.
   - Collection of assignments.

- Giving time to write homework or questions.
9. The extent of achieving the objectives:
- Self-evaluation.
- Students' answers.
- Notes of co-operating teacher.
10. Homework and additional activities:
- Giving instructions about these activities.
- Good thinking in how to correct them.
- The extent to which students accept such assignments.
11. Linking the current lesson to the next:
- Continuation of the topic.
- Different topic.

Evaluation in teaching practicum:

The student teacher needs to take part in the educational process. Thus, he must possess a number of basic skills that can be performed in a behavioural manner. Therefore, the evaluation process of the student teacher in the teaching practicum is carried out continuously during the semester to identify the strengths to support them and to modify and treat weaknesses. The teaching practicum finishes at the end of the semester by accomplishing a degree that reflects the ability of the student teacher to carry out the teaching process, and this requires the following:

A. To accurately identify the skills, activities and roles that the student teacher must perform, and to provide them with these skills, activities and roles at the beginning of the semester and before going to the teaching practicum school. This is because the student teacher needs to be aware of what is required of them. These performed skills and activities should be observed and measurable in the following teaching areas:

1. Field of planning and preparation skills.
2. Field of teaching performance skills and classroom management.
3. Field of educational material skills.
4. Field of teaching aids and practical activities skills.
5. Field of evaluation skills.
6. Field of weekly meeting.

B. The co-operating evaluation:

If the supervision of the student teacher is cooperative, the evaluation should be cooperative, in which the academic supervisor has (80 degrees), the school headteacher and the cooperating teacher jointly take part to assess (20 degrees).

The student teacher will be evaluated in this manner. The committee (academic supervisor, school headteacher and cooperating teacher) will meet at the end of the semester to determine the progress of the student teacher and give him the overall grade. This committee will be headed by the academic supervisor.

C. Visiting of the student teacher

The stakeholders who evaluates the student's teacher in the teaching practicum should make field visits to him as follows:

1. The academic supervisor: the number of visits to the student teacher should not be less than eight visits, including five visits must be in the classroom.
2. The school head teacher: the number of visits to the student teacher should not be less than two visits.
3. The cooperating teacher: the number of visits to the student teacher should be at least four visits.

Marks distribution

The grades distribution of the different fields are as follows (Schedule 3):

Field	Grade
1. Field of planning and preparation skills.	6 marks
2. Field of teaching performance skills and classroom management.	32 marks
3.Field of educational material skills	18 marks
4. Field of teaching aids and practical activities skills.	14 marks
5.Field of evaluation skills	19 marks
6.Field of weekly meeting	10marks
Total	**100 marks**

The organizational domains of the teaching practicum

First, registration in the teaching practicum

1. The student teacher registers the course of teaching practicum in the last semester.

2. The student teacher has successfully completed all courses except teaching practicum.

3. Registration of student teacher to the teaching practicum is an early registration in the previous semester of the teaching practicum.

4. Filling the form of the early registration of teaching practicum in the previous semester of teaching practicum (Model No. 2).

5. Submitting a copy of the registration form of the teaching practicum for the Department of Curriculum and Teaching Methods.

6. Early registration for teaching practicum's aims to:

    a. Provide sufficient time for coordination between the College of Preparation and the Department of Education to determine the appropriate schools for the application.

    b. Allow sufficient time for student teachers' distribution on supervisors.

    c. Providing the opportunity for the guidance of the student teacher to the school of teaching practicum in the first day of the beginning of the semester.

    d. Providing the opportunity for the school head teachers of the teaching practicum to find out how many student teachers will be directed to their schools.

Second: Failure, deprivation and warning in teaching practicum:

1. The student teacher will drop if he obtains a grade less than 60%. He won't be entitled to re-enrol except by a decision of the Department Council and the College Council.

2. The student teacher will get a warning in case of being absent from school for four consecutive days or separated ones from the school without an excuse or for four weekly meetings with the supervisor (connected or separated).

3. The student teacher will get a warning if he violates the regulations and rules of the schools. He will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee of the student teachers at the College and the academic supervisor will be part of the committee.

4. The student teacher is prohibited from continuing the teaching practicum if the percentage of absenteeism is 10% of the number of classes he attends.

Third: Method of calculating teaching practicum for the student teacher:

In light of the tasks and responsibilities assigned to the student teacher specified in this guide and what is represented by the teaching practicum in the preparation of student teacher, teaching practicum is considered 8 for the student teacher.

Fourth: the weekly meeting:

- The role of the academic supervisor:

One of the major tasks of the academic supervisor is to set a fixed date each week to meet with the trainees who he supervises. The supervisor determines the place and time of the meeting and may change the place according to the requirements of the work interest. The meeting time is constant and must be observed when coordinating the schedules of the trainees in the school. The meeting must be not less than two hours and the supervisor needs to do one or more of the following:

– Discussing his notes on the level of skill performance of student teachers.
– Discussing the training plan in the next stage and its requirements.
– Explaining the method or methods of teaching or a particular concept or skill.
– Presentation of realistic teaching models or recorded videos.
– Dealing with some trainees on individual basis to discuss their special problems.
– Making micro teaching for training on a specific teaching skill.
– Updating the student teachers with the instructions or directives that arise.

The role of the student teacher:

The student teacher must:

– Attending weekly meetings with the academic supervisor.
– Discussion and providing opinion on the issues raised.
– Presentation of innovative work and self-efforts which are created by the student teacher.
– Recording notes which are issued by the academic supervisor.
– Accepting advises, guidance and work to implement them.
– Providing lesson preparation notebooks for the academic supervisor to view and make observations about them, whether positive or negative.
– Presentation of samples of tests conducted by the student teacher.
– Providing a short oral report about what the student teacher did the teacher of teaching and non-teaching activities.

-The basic tools of the student teacher:

Each trainee must prepare the basic tools for starting his / her training program:

1. Notebook preparation book.
2. A special notebook to record the supervisor's notes.
3. The textbooks of the classes that he will teach as well as the teacher's guide.
4. Some pictures or slides or other educational aids that he had prepared himself during his study of the educational aids courses.

5. Books and references in the area of specialization and in the educational areas that can be useful for him in teaching.
6. Guide of teaching practicum.
7. Wearing appropriate dress for teaching (some disciplines such as sports or technical education need wearing special costumes).

Fifth: the method of calculating teaching practicum for the academic supervisor

In view of the duties and responsibilities of the academic supervisor, each student is counted as one hour of teaching load of the supervisor, provided that the supervision hours for the teaching practicum do not exceed 75% of the supervisor teaching load.

Teaching practicum unit:

The establishment of units for teaching practicum in educational colleges is very important in order to carry out the following tasks:

The missions:

1. Conducting the necessary researches and studies for the development of teaching practicum.
2. Working on selecting the best supervisory elements from within or outside the college who are scientifically and educationally qualified to supervise the student teachers.
3. Conducting official correspondences and communication with the Department of Education and the schools of teaching practicum.
4. Distribution of student teachers on the teaching practicum schools in coordination with the Department of Education.
5. Organizing periodic meetings between the head teachers of the teaching practicum schools and supervisors of teaching practicum.
6. Organizing periodic meetings between cooperating teachers in the teaching practicum schools and supervisors of teaching practicum.
7. Organizing educational seminars and inviting specialists.
8. Organizing periodic meetings between faculty teaching staff of the faculty and supervisors of teaching practicum.
9. Organizing educational training courses for non-educational supervisors (at least for the time being).
10. Working on solving the problems of the teaching practicum.
11. Organizing guided orientation meetings for student teachers before going to the teaching practicum schools.
12. Providing some model lessons.
13. Following-up graduates and identifying their attitudes and opinions to develop the teaching practicum.

Organizing observation visits for student teachers according to Model No. (1). The Department of Curriculum and Teaching Methods in each College organize the visits to fit as follows:

1. At least one visit to the school during the study of the student teacher of the general teaching methods course in the sixth level.
2. At least two visits during the study of the student teacher of the special teaching methods course according to his specialization in the seventh level.
3. Discharging the student teacher in the eighth level for the actual application.

Following-up the student teacher:

Following- up the student teacher during his teaching in the teaching practicum period to observe his personal growth through:
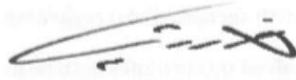
- Providing the Department (Curriculum and Instruction Department) with at least two reports about the performance of the student teacher, and his participation in the school activities by the academic supervisor and the school head teacher. The first report will be in the middle of the semester and the second one will be at the end of the semester.

- Following-up of the student teacher after graduation; to assess his performance and the extent of his benefit of the teaching practicum programme. This is done to modify, improve and update the teaching practicum programme (model 8).

Teaching practicum schools

The school environment is one of the essential elements in achieving the goals of teaching practicum. The teaching practicum schools are supervised by teacher colleges to train student teachers. Thus, it leaves the freedom to choose the teaching practicum schools for the colleges according to the conditions and nature of the schools in which the colleges are located. However, it is preferable to select the teaching practicum schools based on the following criteria:

1. The building of the school is to be a governmental one with all the basic necessities of the school from a mosque, laboratories, playgrounds and a garden.
2. The school has the desire to cooperate and assist in the supervision and following-up of the student teachers.
3. The co-operating teacher in the teaching practicum school needs to be an outstanding teacher in his instructional performance.
4. The school should be close to the college.
5. The number of classrooms should not be less than fifteen classes

Appendix (3): Ethical approval form (University of Exeter) and participant information sheet

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

DISSERTATION/THESIS

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications and view the School's Policy online.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Nashmi Ayadah M Alshammari

Your student no: 580042053

Return address for this certificate: 3Julius House New North Road, EX4 4HG

Degree/Programme of Study : PHD Education 4 year

Project Supervisor(s): Nigel Skinner & Dr. Salah Troudi

Your email addres : nama205@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 07453307120

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: _____   date: 15/12/2014

NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: April 2012

Certificate of ethical research approval
DISSERTATION/THESIS

Your student no: 580042053

Title of your project:

Exploring Saudi Student Teachers' Professional Identity in the Teaching Practicum: A Case Study.

Brief description of your research project:

The current study seeks to investigate and understand the ways in which Saudi student teachers' professional identity (i.e. Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Responsibilities) is shaped in the course of their teaching practicum. Secondly, the current research attempts to study and uncover the nature of the existing relationships between Saudi student teachers' professional identity and the other significant others involved in the teaching practicum such as, fellow student teachers, cooperating teachers, school/university supervisors. Finally, the study seeks to investigate the various factors that impact positively or negatively on the formation of Saudi student teachers' professional identity. This research uses a case study methodology in which questionnaires, interviews and observation are used. It is informed by symbolic interactionism as the theoretical framework in the light of which the research instruments have been designed.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

- This study will be conducted during the teaching practicum in schools that collaborate with the concerned faculty of education in a pioneering university in Saudi Arabia. Participants will be divided as follows:
- 113 Saudi Student teachers of Arabic will be selected for the questionnaire. These student teachers will be selected from those who meet the following criteria: a) these student teachers are specialized in teaching Arabic, b) they are Arabic language graduates from the faculty of Arts studying the teaching practical component at the University of Hail, c) they are conducting their placement in the schools of the Hail region. The Curriculum and Instruction Department at the College of Education-University of Hail in the KSA will be selected for supervising the placement school for student teachers.
- Interviews will be conducted with
  - o 20 students teachers
  - o 7cooperating teachers
  - o 7 university supervisors

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:
- a) Informed consent: Where children in schools are involved this includes both head teachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document.

  - Student teachers who will be participating in the current study will be asked to sign an informed consent form to show that they are voluntarily participating in the study.

- University supervisors will also sign an informed consent form to show that they are voluntarily participating in the study
- Cooperating teachers will also sign an informed consent form to show that they are voluntarily participating in the study.
- Permission to observe classrooms will be taken from the school principal.

All research participants will be informed of the purpose of research and the researcher will follow the BERA Ethical Guidelines while doing this research.

b) anonymity and confidentiality

All research participants of this study will be made anonymous using codes and all their data will be kept confidential.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Informed by the interpretive research paradigm in general and symbolic interactionism in particular as the theoretical framework, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and observation will be used in the current study as data collection tools. Close-ended items of the questionnaires will be analysed quantitatively using SPSS, whereas responses to open-ended questions in the questionnaire and responses to the interview questions along with data derived from observation will be analysed using thematic analysis and coding using Nvivo software or Maxqda

Collected data will follow BERA Ethical Guidelines where the research participants are aware of the research purpose; they voluntarily participate in the research; their data are kept confidential and anonymous and they are given the right to withdraw from research at any time and for nor reason.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

All research data whether from the questionnaire or the interviews will be stored securely in the researcher's laptop and another copy will be kept in an external hard drive as a back-up in case of data loss. The researcher's laptop as well as the external data storage device are password-protected with an up-to-date antivirus protection. The hard drive will be kept with the researcher in Saudi Arabia and then with him in the UK while he is analysing the data. Nobody except the researcher and his two supervisors will have access to this data.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

My research topic does not involve any conflicts or harms to the participants as all permissions and informed consent forms will be signed voluntarily in advance.
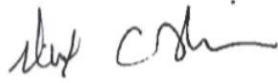
This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: 25/1/2015 **until:** 23/4/2015
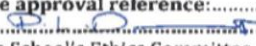
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: April 2012

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature):

[signature]

date: 9th February 2015

N.B. To Supervisor: *Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

GSE unique approval reference:............D\14\15\25..............
Signed:.........._[signature]_.............................date: 24/2/15.......
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
Information Letter for Student Teachers

Dear Student Teacher

My name is Nashmi Alshammari. I am a PhD candidate in the School of Education at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom. I am undertaking this research as part of my PhD degree.

I would like to invite you to take part in this research. Your involvement as a student teacher is appreciated. All the information about the purpose, procedure, confidentiality and ethical approval from the UK and KSA will be available in writing and in verbal form.

Purpose of the research project:
The purpose of this study is to investigate how you form your professional identities in your teaching practical experiences; to explore your relationships with other figures in the teaching environment at schools, such as: your university supervisors, teaching practicum colleagues, co-operating teachers, school principals; in addition, to identify the positive and/or negative factors which can affect your professional identity.

Stages and participants:

You will be invited to take part in the experimental part of the current study in which data will be collected to achieve the purpose of the study. This study consists of three stages in order to achieve the above purposes by collecting the required data. It is not compulsory that you will take part in the three stages as some of you will take part in one stage only, others will take part in two stages and some of you will take part in all three stages.

Stage (I): 113 Saudi Student teachers of Arabic will be selected for the questionnaire. You have been selected because you meet the following criteria: a) you are specialized in teaching Arabic, b) you are Arabic language graduates from the faculty of Arts studying the teaching practical component at the University of Hail, c) you are conducting your placement in the schools of the Hail region. The questionnaire will be asking questions about your professional Identity as a student teacher.

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Stage (II): 20 student teachers will be selected for the interview based on some criteria such as your completion of the questionnaire fully and your willingness to participate in the interview. The interview will last for no more than 30 minutes and will take place at the teaching practicum school or at university whichever is more convenient for you. The interviews will be recorded using a digital audio recorder. You will be asked some questions about how teaching practicum shapes your professional identities as a student teacher; how does your relationship with other figures such as your colleagues, cooperating teacher and your university supervisors look like at the teaching practicum, what factors impact the formation of your professional identities at the teaching practicum.

Stage (III): You will be observed while teaching your classroom sessions and while being coached in your supervisory meetings. I will be taking notes of what is happening in the supervisory meeting and how you are advised by your university teachers and cooperating teachers about how to improve your performance in the teaching practicum. Recorded data will be kept in a secure place in my laptop and external hard drive and once I complete writing my data analysis, they will be erased. My PhD supervisors will be the only two people whom might access the recorded data if the need arises. All this data collection process will be abided by the ethical standards used in educational research.

Confidentiality:
All your information will be treated in complete confidentiality and you will be given pseudonyms. All the information collected through questionnaires, interviews and observations will be kept in a safe and secure place until the end of this research project. If this information is no longer needed in future research, it will be destroyed straight after completing the research project.

Your participation in this research project is very important. Please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or if you want to discuss any related issues about this research.

Thank you for your time

PhD's Researcher :

Nashmi Alshammari

Email: (nama205@exeter.ac.uk)

Phone: (00966505168383)

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Information Letter for University Tutors

Dear university supervisor

My name is Nashmi Alshammari. I am a PhD candidate in the School of Education at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom. I am undertaking this research as part of my PhD degree.

I would like to invite you to take part in this research. Your involvement as a university supervisor is appreciated. All the information about the purpose, procedure, confidentiality and ethical approval from the UK and KSA will be available in writing and in verbal form.

Purpose of the research project:
The purpose of this study is to investigate how Saudi Arabia student teachers of Arabic form their professional identities in their teaching practical experiences; to explore the relationship between student teachers and other figures in the teaching environment at schools, such as: yourselves (university supervisors), their teaching practicum colleagues, co-operating teachers, school principals; in addition, to identify the positive and/or negative factors which can affect the professional identity of Saudi Arabian student teachers.

Participants:
You will be invited to take part in the experimental part of the current study in which data will be collected to achieve the purpose of the study. Seven university tutors will be invited to be interviewed. This is based on your willingness to participate in the interview. The interview will not last more than 30 minutes and it will take place in a mutually-agreed upon location whether at your office at university or at the teaching practicum school or anywhere else. The interviews will be recorded using a digital audio recorder. You will be asked some questions about how teaching practicum shapes student teachers' professional identities as professional teachers; how does your relationship with student teachers look like at the teaching practicum, what factors impact the formation of professional identities of student teachers at the teaching practicum. In addition, you will be observed while coaching student teachers in your supervisory meetings. I will be taking notes of what is happening in the supervisory meeting and how you advise student teachers about how to improve their performance in their teaching practicum. Recorded data will be kept in a secure place in my laptop and external hard drive and once I complete writing my data analysis, they will be

erased. My two PhD supervisors will be the only two people whom might access the recorded data if the need arises. All this data collection process will be abided by the ethical standards used in educational research. All this data collection process will be abided by the ethical standards used in educational research.

Confidentiality:

All your information will be treated in complete confidentiality and you will be given pseudonyms. All the information collected through questionnaires, interviews and observations will be kept in a safe and secure place until the end of this research project. If this information is no longer needed in future research, it will be destroyed straight after completing the research project.

Your participation in this research project is very important. Please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or if you want to discuss any related issues about this research.

Thank you for your time

PhD's Researcher :

Nashmi Alshammari

Email: (nama205@exeter.ac.uk)

Phone: (00966505168383)

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Information Letter for Cooperating Teachers

Dear Cooperating Teacher

My name is Nashmi Alshammari. I am a PhD candidate in the School of Education at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom. I am undertaking this research as part of my PhD degree.

I would like to invite you to take part in this research. Your involvement as a cooperating teacher is appreciated. All the information about the purpose, procedure, confidentially and ethical approval from the UK and KSA will be available in writing and in verbal form.

Purpose of the research project:
The purpose of this study is to investigate how Saudi Arabia student teachers of Arabic form their professional identities in their teaching practical experiences; to explore the relationship cooperating teachers establish with them and how they relate to other figures in the teaching environment at schools, such as university supervisors, colleagues, school principals; in addition, to identify the positive and/or negative factors which can affect the professional identity of Saudi Arabian student teachers.

Participants:
You will be invited to take part in the experimental part of the current study in which data will be collected to achieve the purpose of the study. Seven cooperating teachers will be invited to be interviewed. This is based on your willingness to participate in the interview. The interview will not last more than 30 minutes and it will take place in a mutually-agreed upon location whether at your office at school or anywhere else. The interviews will be recorded using a digital audio recorder. You will be asked some questions about how teaching practicum shapes their professional identities as professional teachers; how does your relationship with student teachers look like at the teaching practicum, what factors impact the formation of professional identities of student teachers at the teaching practicum. In addition, you will be observed while coaching student teachers in your supervisory meetings. I will be taking notes of what is happening in the supervisory meeting and how you advise student teachers about how to improve their performance in their teaching practicum. Recorded data will be kept in a secure place in my laptop and external hard drive and once I complete writing my data

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

analysis, they will be erased. My two PhD supervisors will be the only two people whom might access the recorded data if the need arises. All this data collection process will be abided by the ethical standards used in educational research.

Confidentiality:

All your information will be treated in complete confidentiality and you will be given pseudonyms. All the information collected through questionnaires, interviews and observations will be kept in a safe and secure place until the end of this research project. If this information is no longer needed in future research, it will be destroyed straight after completing the research project.

Your participation in this research project is very important. Please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or if you want to discuss any related issues about this research.

<div align="center">

Thank you for your time

</div>

PhD's Researcher :

Nashmi Alshammari

Email: (nama205@exeter.ac.uk)

Phone: (00966505168383)

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Project title: Exploring Saudi Student Teachers' Professional Identity in the Teaching Practicum: A Case Study.

CONSENT FORM FOR THE FACULTY MEMBER

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

There is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

Any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

All information I give will be treated as confidential

The researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

....

(Signature of participant)   (Date)

 (Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher

Contact phone number of researcher (Nashmi Alshammari): UK +44745330712 or Saudi +966505168383

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

nashmi.alshammari@hotmail.com OR my supervisors, Dr. Nigel Skinner: n.c.skinner@exeter.ac.uk Telephone: +44 (0)1392 72 4932 & Dr. Salah Troudi: s.troudi@exeter.ac.uk

+44 (0)1392 1392724775

Appendix (4): Student Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Student teachers,

This study aims to explore Saudi student teachers' practical experiences in the context of teaching practicum. In particular, (1) it aims to explore how teaching practicum shape student teachers' practical experiences, (2) it aims to identify the impact of the significant others ;their colleagues, cooperating teachers, university supervisors and school administration on student teachers' teaching practicum experiences , (3) it aims to identify the factors that influence the Saudi student teachers' experiences in the teaching practicum. I would be grateful if you could answer this questionnaire fully. All the information you provide will be confidential and for study purposes only. Some of you will be selected for an interview which will not take more than 30 minutes. Thanks very much in advance for your help and collaboration.

The researcher

Nashmi Al-Shammari

PhD Candidate,

Nama205@exeter.ac.uk

If you are willing to be interviewed, please fill in the information below:

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Would you please fill in the following personal details?

Name:……………………………………………………………… (Optional)

Age:……………………………………………………………………………

E-mail:………………………………………………………………………

Mobile No: …………………………………………………………………

Category		Statements	SA	A	N	SD	D
Psychological Domain of student teachers	**Commitment to Teaching**	1. I play an important role in the teaching process.					
		2. Teaching is my favourite future profession.					
		3. Teaching helps me discover my capabilities					
		4. I can develop myself regularly while teaching					
		5. I am satisfied with teaching.					
		6. Teaching is meaningful to me.					
		7. I like teaching my students.					
		How do you see yourself as a teacher of Arabic? -- -- -- --					
	Student teachers' sense of efficacy	8. I can deal with difficult students in class.					
		9. I can help students engage in classroom discussions.					
		10. I can help students work collaboratively (in-pairs and/or in groups).					
		11. I can teach students of different capabilities.					
		12. I can give more than one example to explain a point.					
		13. I can ask students good probing questions.					
		14. I can respond to my students' difficult questions.					
		15. I can check my students' comprehension.					
		16. can use good classroom management strategies.					
		How has teaching practicum helped you inside the classroom? -- -- -- -- -- --					

Professional Domain of student teachers	**Student teachers pedagogical content knowledge**	17. I can give clear task instructions.					
		18. I can engage students in learning.					
		19. I can help develop students personally.					
		20. I can help develop students' Arabic grammar skills.					
		21. I know how to develop students' Arabic reading skills.					
		22. I know how to develop students' Arabic writing skills.					
		23. I know how to develop students' Arabic listening skills.					
		24. I know how to develop students' Arabic speaking skills.					
		Which Arabic skills do you find difficult to teach? Why? -- -- -- -- -- --					
	Student teachers' practical experiences	25. I exhibit professional conduct with colleagues and supervisors.					
		26. I cooperate with colleagues at the teaching practicum.					
		27. I take substitute classes as required by the school.					
		28. I collaborate with parents.					
		29. I seek continuous professional development opportunities.					
		30. I contribute to create a positive school climate.					
		31. I deal with my pupils appropriately.					
		32. I assure confidentiality of all information related to the teaching profession.					
		33. I adhere to local school policies.					
		34. I maintain professional appearance appropriate to the teaching profession.					
		What does a professional teacher of Arabic mean to you? -- -- -- -- -- --					
Supervision in the teaching practicum		35. My teaching practicum supervisors help me with my lesson planning.					
		36. My teaching practicum supervisors provide me with effective teaching strategies.					
		37. My teaching practicum supervisors provide me with effective classroom management strategies.					
		38. My teaching practicum supervisors enrich my knowledge of assessment practices.					

	39. My teaching practicum supervisors evaluate me objectively.					
	40. My teaching practicum supervisors give me constructive feedback.					

What issues do you discuss in the supervisory meetings?

What do you think of the feedback given by your teaching practicum supervisors?

Appendix (5): Student teachers' interview questions

1. What do you think of your preparation program at university?
   Probe: Teaching Methods Course – Pedagogical Courses…etc. Why do you think so?

2. What role do you think the cooperating teacher/university supervisor play in the teaching practicum?

3. How does the teaching practicum school help you to become accepted in the school environment?
   Probes: school administration – cooperating teachers – university supervisor– facilities & services – teachers' understanding of their needs.

4. What challenges/difficulties do you experience in the teaching practicum? (administrative, school challenges and Why?

5. How do you overcome these challenges?

6. What kind of support do you receive in the teaching practicum? **Probes:**

   a. professional responsibilities

   b. pedagogical strategies-

   c. instructional strategies-

   d. classroom management

   e. classroom environment

   f. assessment techniques

   g. relationship with colleagues
   Which of these are most useful? Why?

7. How have your experiences in life affected your views about the role of a teacher?
Probes: Prior experience as a student – previous teaching experience –
Previous teachers - family – culture – religion…others.

8. How does the teaching practicum help you in your teaching of Arabic?
Probes: Lesson Plan- Teaching Vocabulary – Grammar – Reading – Writing
– Listening - Speaking…etc.

9. What do you think about your relationships with others involved in the teaching practicum?
Probes: Headteacher – cooperating teacher –university supervisor – student teachers – pupils at school.

10. Are you willing to take extra classes? Why?

11. What issues do you discuss in the supervisory meetings?

12. How do you respond to the supervisors' feedback?

Appendix (6): Cooperating teachers and university supervisors' interview questions

1. What do you think about student teachers' preparation program at university?

Probe: Why do you think so?

2. What are student teachers' duties and responsibilities in your opinion?
3. How do you support student teachers in the teaching practicum?

Probe: 'Why are these areas important …?'

4. What difficulties/challenges do you think student teachers might experience in the teaching practicum? **Probe:** Why?
5. How do you, as a supervisor, help student teachers overcome the challenges, they face in the teaching practicum?
6. How do you prepare student teachers in the teaching practicum?

Probes:

h. professional responsibilities

i. pedagogical strategies-

j. instructional strategies-

k. classroom management

l. classroom environment

m. assessment techniques

n. relationship with colleagues

7. What factors do you think contribute to the construction of student teachers' experiences of teaching practicum?

Probes: Prior-knowledge – previous teaching experience – past and present

teachers – family – culture – religion…others.

8. How does the teaching practicum help student teachers in their teaching of Arabic?

Probes: Lesson Plan- Teaching Vocabulary – Grammar – Reading – Writing

– Listening - Speaking…etc.

9. What do you think about the relationships that student teachers develop with others involved in the teaching practicum?

Probes: Headteacher – cooperating teacher –university supervisor – student

teachers – students at school.

10. Are student teachers willing to take extra classes? Why?

11. What issues do you discuss with your student teachers in the supervisory meetings?

12. How do student teachers respond to the supervisors' feedback?

Appendix (7): Research Participant Consent Form

Project title: Exploring Saudi Student Teachers' experiences in the Teaching Practicum: A Case Study.

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project. I understand that:

- There is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me
- Any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications
- If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

All information I give will be treated as confidential

The researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.................................…………………..

(Signature of participant)   (Date)

……………………

(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher

Contact phone number of researcher (Nashmi Al-Shammari):

UK +44745330712 or Saudi +966505168383

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

nashmi.alshammari@hotmail.com OR nama205@exeter.ac.uk

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

Appendix (8): Approval of Data Collection

To Whom It May Concern

We would like to let you know that the Saudi PhD student, Nashmi Ayadah Al-Shammari, who work as a Lecturer at the Curriculum & Instruction Dept., College of Education, University of Hail and is currently doing his PhD study at Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, UK, has completed his data collection procedures in three months (25/1/2015 – 23/4/2015).

Head of the Curriculum & Instruction Dept
Eid Bin Jayiz Al-Shammari

Appendix (9): Access to Sample and Data Collection

22 /April / 2015

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم العالي
جامعة حائل

University of Ha'il

عمادة خدمة المجتمع والتعليم المستمر
DEANSHIP OF COMMUNITY SERVICE & CONTINUING EDUCATION

Dear Dr. Nigel Skinner,
Dean of Graduate School of Education, Exeter University.

I hope my letter finds you well. I would like to let you know that the number of student teachers of Arabic whom the researcher Nashmi Alshammari, Lecturer of Arabic Curriculum & Instruction at Hail College of Education, has chosen to be his sample was 113 student teachers of Arabic initially. However, 32 student withdrew from study after registration. In addition, 6 student deferred their study for one academic year for personal reasons. Therefore, the whole sample representing all those enrolled in the Arabic Department at the College of Education is 75 student

Thanks very much for your understanding and collaboration .

Dr. Abdulaziz Rashaied Al-Amro
Dean of the Community College and Continuing Education,
Assistant Professor, Curriculum & Instruction, College of Education,
Hail University
E-mail :Dr.alamr@uoh.edu.sa

Appendix (10): Sample Thematic Charts & Quotes

Appendix (11): Sample interview transcript analysis

Analysis of a Sample Interview with a Student Teacher

Student teachers' interview questions

Researcher: First of all, I welcome you and appreciate your acceptance of this interview and your acceptance of recording this interview. You are a distinguished saptudent teacher of whom we are proud and we hope to enrich what we aim to. I'm conducting a study entitled: exploring the professional identity of student teachers in the Teaching Practicum.

Student: Thanks doctor for the compliment and I hope to benefit you.

- What do you think of the General Diploma in Education program at Hail University?

The diploma includes the courses of Teaching methods, Administration, Supervision, Psychology as well as Education System in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Although it is a comprehensive programme, but it has some points that need to be modified. There's a course of teaching methods and there's another course of special teaching methods. They need to be combined into one.

- What do you think of the general diploma in education program?

The program is really good, useful, and comprehensive for many educational subjects. The educational diploma programme changed my view of the teacher's roles. The teacher is not only a transmitter of his specialized knowledge, but also a supervisor, a trainer, a developer, a leader, an educator, an expert, a counsellor, a creator and a technical person. The successful teacher is the one who makes use of this programme and applies it correctly

- Ok, you have mentioned several courses such as Administration, Supervision, Psychology and methods of teaching courses...etc. Which of these courses do you think is more useful to you as a student teacher?

Teaching methods courses are useful to the student teacher. Also, the whole programme is comprehensive and includes some inclusive good courses. My original specialization is Arabic and there are other specializations as well. For example, a university supervisor specialised in curriculum & Instruction of Mathematics supervises us in the teaching practicum as student teachers of Arabic.

- **Did you ask why?**
- Yes, they said at university there are few specialised supervisors and student teachers number is big.

-Ok, what do you think about the practical side or the teaching practicum in schools? How often do you go to teaching practicum per week?

Unfortunately, two days only of teaching practicum is not enough.

- **Why?**

Unfortunately it is totally not useful because most of the student teachers face serious problem. This problem is that the student teachers are not aware of the required lesson to be taught. Most student teachers usually ask pupils at the beginning of the class about what needs to be explained in the current class. There's no such an intelligent student teacher who could deal with this issue earlier than this critical stage of teaching. Also, the co-operating teacher sometime is not aware about the required part of the curriculum which is due to be explained. The school is supposed to assign a specific class to the student teachers where they can teach the whole curriculum from the beginning to the end of the term. For this task, the school can specify two Math student teachers, two English student teachers and two Arabic student teachers to teach this class on the bases of 4 days of

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Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Welcoming and informing the interviewee of the research purpose

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Important courses at the General Diploma in Education

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Duplication in General Diploma courses

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Educational Diploma

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
University supervisors supervise student teachers of different specializations

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Insufficient duration of the teaching practicum

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Cooperating teacher's lack of coordination with student teachers

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Careless Cooperating Teacher

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Suggestions for improving teaching practicum

teaching. For example, the Arabic course of the class can be divided into two classes in one day, another two classes on the other day, another one class afterwards. Thus, the school manages to apply the five Arabic hours per week.

- Ok, what are the roles of the university supervisor and the co-operating teacher in the teaching practicum?

Their roles are presented in one word which is co-operation. They should make sure that I prepared, understood and applied the teaching method in a correct way through my practical teaching. This can be done through watching and observing my teaching in the class to provide me with feedback about the extent of my efficiency in this regard. I think that this is more the role of the co-operating teaching other than anybody else.

Can you elaborate on this?

Supervisors should review my work and provide me with feedback. Their assessment doesn't have to be based on searching for my mistakes but on teaching and modifying my teaching skills and knowledge. I need to make the best use of their years of experience. For example, they should teach me new methods of teaching or new teaching approaches which aren't available in the course of teaching methods. This will put me on the right track to start a strong teaching career. This is due to the fact that If you start teaching correctly, you will continue teaching forever in a correct way as the proverb says 'Always has been, always will be

- What role do you think the cooperating teacher/university supervisor play in the teaching practicum?

For me, the help of the co-operating teacher is very minimal. For example, if you need to understand anything, just come to me. For me, I won't come to you to learn what's right and what's wrong. You as a co-operating teacher should come to me and teach me about the problems that I might face and what are the basic points of dealing in the school.

- What do you think of the co-operating teacher?

The co-operating teacher cares only for assigning specific classes and asks me to sign on the school timetable and be committed to it. The co-operating teacher doesn't enter my class to guide me nor to correct my mistakes. He wants to assign me a specific class to teach and relieve him from the burden of teaching this class; that's it.

- Did you observe the co-operating teacher teaching in class?

We were supposed to be observing co-operating teachers' classes in the first term, but this did not happen as we were assigned classes to teach straight away without observing anyone. Yes, we need to watch real class performances in the first term and the second term includes the practical teaching. I prefer to have full responsibility of a specific class such as class 3G or class3B or any of the other classes as a basic teacher on his own class and not as a visiting student teacher

- Ok, you have mentioned the weak part of the co-operating teacher, what do you think of the role of the university supervisor in the teaching practicum?

As for our university supervisor, he came many times honestly speaking and he observed us many times. He came for 5 or 6 times and he guided us and advised us how to modify the points of weaknesses.

In other schools, some of my classmates said that the university supervisor didn't visit them in the practicum. Other classmates said that university supervisors spent time at schools talking only with no practice.

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Also, other classmates mentioned that one university supervisor asked them to gather in one class and to prepare and to present a simple short real class teaching in front of each other. He asked the rest of student teachers to act as supervisors to student teachers. This is what I have heard from my classmates. Others stated that some university supervisors asked the school head teacher to assess student teachers' performance as they are busy at university.

- **Would you like to add anything else?**

The attendance of the university supervisor in the class helped me in teaching strategies and class management. For example, the supervisor provided me with a book of his own about the teaching strategies and asked me to read it carefully. Also, the supervisor assisted us in lessons preparation and concluding activities as well as ways of delivering the information to the students. This has been achieved through his style of explanation, his attendance for more than 6 times at the school, and his gentle treatment with us as a big brother and not as a supervisor and a student.

- **Well, you told me earlier that you have presented a typical lesson with your supervisor in the teaching practicum!**

Yes. This developed my self-confidence through having another person observing me in the class.

1. **What do you think of the teaching practicum school? Is it important? Why/Why not?**

Teaching Practicum is very important to all student teachers in many respects.

First, teaching practicum is the cornerstone of the general diploma through applying for the theoretical courses. It is a translation of this theoretical side into practical reality.

Second, teaching practicum is very important to developing my language skills. In the university laboratory, we learn how to practice the Modern Standard Arabic with all its different skills which are different from the colloquial Arabic that we use every day. In the teaching practicum we practice speaking, reading and writing with all school students from the beginning to the end of our class.

Besides, teaching practicum enabled me to confront the students in the class. In the beginning, I was scared to confront them, but later on, I started to confront them, call them by their names, creating a positive and safe classroom environment which is contradictory to the traditional one when I was a school student where our teacher was a scary person to see.

Moreover, teaching practicum assisted me in using some different teaching methods such as problem solving, cooperative teaching strategies such as pair work and group work. It is important to note that each one of us in the teaching practicum makes some errors and learns from them, but it is more important not to repeat theses errors in the future. Moreover, teaching practicum helped me to deeply understand some concepts and correct some misconceptions such as the misconceptions that I had about the deductive and inductive approaches to teaching Arabic grammar. Teaching practicum develops my self-confidence, especially while standing in front of students. This increases my self-confidence in the future when I become a fully-rounded teacher of Arabic.

-Ok, How does the teaching practicum help you in teaching Arabic language?

As I mentioned earlier, the teaching practicum helps me in lesson planning, vocabulary, and the rules of reading, writing and listening. Planning of the lesson includes how to start and end the lesson and how to address the questions. Also, I should read the vocabulary and the reading rules correctly in front of the students. I asked the students to read more than third of the text, so I need to utter the words correctly. Thus, this will enable the students to utter the words correctly.

- **Do you think that the teaching practicum promotes students' skills?**

Al-Shammari,... Micro teaching in the teaching

Al-Shammari,... Peer observation

Al-Shammari,... Lack of university supervisors'

Al-Shammari,... University supervisors' support

Al-Shammari,... University supervisor's brotherly

Al-Shammari,... The impact of micro-teaching on

Al-Shammari,... Linking theory to practice

Al-Shammari,... Developing language

Al-Shammari,... Classroom management

Al-Shammari,... Diverse teaching methods

Al-Shammari,... Trial and error

Al-Shammari,... Correction of misconceptions

Al-Shammari,... Increases Self-Confidence

Al-Shammari,... The impact of teaching

The supervisor noticed himself that I have asked many students to write on the board in front of him. Also, the listening as well as the writing skills. This develops students' self-confidence, writing and thinking skills as they are asked to write varieties of sentences. Furthermore, the students help each other in thinking, listening and writing tasks.

- What do you think of backup classes? Do you have desire in taking backup classes?

For sure, they're useful for all student teachers. We are beginners in teaching and there are more skills and experiences to be gained out of attending the extra supply classes. I have no problem taking up to 6 extra supply classes. Supervisors trust us as student teachers and we should react positively to this trust by attending these classes willingly.

- What do you think of the teaching practicum environment?

The teaching practicum environment was really flexible as the cooperating teacher helped me to rearrange my teaching schedule to start after the second period because I live far away from the school.

- What are challenges did you face in their teaching practicum?

There are many challenges in the teaching practicum. The most irritating challenge is being unaware of the assigned lesson to be explained in my class, being unaware of the students' homework of the previous class, being unaware of students' achievement level, being unaware of the co-operating teachers' teaching strategies that were used in the previous class, and being unaware of the points of weaknesses and the points of strength of every student in the class. This can help me in modifying their points of weaknesses whether they're in reading, dictation or reading comprehension. I don't attend school regularly, so I'm not aware of many important things related to the students. I found difficulty in managing the class and made them responsive. I didn't know the way to achieve that. I asked the cooperating teacher, but he asked me to use the stick to threaten students and manage the class. I did not like that at all.

- Did you face administrative challenges in the teaching practicum?

No, all my challenges are teaching ones and I didn't face any administrative ones. Thank Goodness for that.

- Ok, how the teaching practicum enable you to be accepted in the school context?

Teaching practicum helped me through working as a teacher in real context of teaching in class. I can teach real students and not only to my practicum fellows. When I deal with the students, I become more confident as I feel more knowledgeable than them. This is totally a different case than teaching in front of my colleagues. I think this is the best way to learn teaching, through real practice and not through studying theoretical courses.

Well, teaching practicum is not paradise as I expected. Of course there are some problems and challenges that I faced as a student teacher in the teaching practicum.

Pupils at schools had some bad and disruptive behaviours, utter some bad words and speak in a low style to their student teachers. The students are hyperactive inside class, and they need a teacher who can manage class management perfectly .

I encounter some difficulties in teaching first, second and third primary grades. Some of them want to go to the toilet, others misbehave, and others need to be disciplined.

Pupils' low achievement level is originally due to the lack of solid knowledge bases in their previous stages.

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
The impact of practicum on developing school students' language skills

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
The impact of supply classes in the practicum

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Flexible teaching practicum environment

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Teaching challenges in the teaching practicum

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Reference to religion

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Teaching practicum as a real teaching context

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Gaining self-confidence at the teaching practicum

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Disruptive pupils as a teaching challenge

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Challenges of teaching early grades

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
School Students' Low Achievement Level

I have the desire to take extra classes, but I prefer to take classes of my specialization and for younger stages than I am teaching now. For example, I teach year 6 now, but I prefer to teach year 4 or 5 because the content and the themes are easier to teach

> Al-Shammari,… Benefit of Supply Classes.

The students in the class are aware that I don't have any kind of authority for their assessment nor their grades. I only teach two classes a week and that's it. Frankly speaking, two students only interact with me in the class and the rest are asleep. I'm not aware of the health conditions of some students as some of the tired students are sick ones. This is due to the lack of regular contact with the students. Also, the regular contact enables me to identify the learning styles of the students and to modify my teaching methods according to their responses.

> Al-Shammari,… Lack of student teachers'
> Al-Shammari,… Short duration of the teaching
> Al-Shammari,… Pupils' low interaction level
> Al-Shammari,… Lack of regular contact with

- **What do you think about your duties as student teachers?**
Attendance at school is very important, the preparation of the lessons, punctuality of class timing, correct implementation of the teaching methods that one studied at the educational diploma, co-operation with other teachers, taking care of the students well and gaining the benefit from other teachers' experiences.

> Al-Shammari,… Student teachers' duties and

- **Good, how does you experience in life affect you as a teacher?**
Of course, my teaching experience has been formed out of my family, the society, my brother is a teacher and some other teaching colleagues. I discussed the problems that I faced in the class with the regular school teachers and they suggested some plausible solutions. I trust their help as they have long experience of teaching for many years. Also, my dad increases and develops my self-confidence as a teacher through promoting my dedication to my work as a teacher and there is no need to worry about anything else.
I have six brothers; two teachers of Arabic and one teacher of English. They have guided me through their experience whenever I have a question or a problem in teaching. Listening to my brothers' narratives about what happened to them in their schools on a daily basis was very illuminative.

> Al-Shammari,… The impact of significant other
> Al-Shammari,… The impact of regular school
> Al-Shammari, Nashmi August 06, 2017
> The impact of father as a teacher
>
> Reply Resolve
>
> Al-Shammari,… The impact of brothers as

- **What other things shaped your identity as a student teacher?**
Our Islamic religion comes first as the most important priority. Then, the culture and some traditions of the area that I'm working in as a student teacher shaped my identity. This is due to the fact that the traditions and the customs of the people of the north, the people of the south , people in Najd and the eastern area people are different from the area that I'm working in. Even the style and dialect of speaking is different.

> Al-Shammari,… The impact of and value of
> Al-Shammari,… The impact of culture and

- Ok, can you explain to me how the habits of the people of the north are different from the people of the south and different from the people of the middle area?
In Hail City, school students have more freedom than those in Hejaz. This increased freedom resulted in disrespect of the student teacher. For example, the student out of sudden leaves the class without the teachers' permission. This habit doesn't exist in Hejaz. Also, students are absent a week after vacation and a week before vacation. This doesn't occur in Hejaz. There are some enrichment classes for weak students a week before vacation. It's important for the student and the school to hold this type of classes to increase the students' level of acquisition. I can see through my young brothers in Hejaz that the enrichment classes are held a week or two weeks after vacation. Also, there are some written exams for the students' assessment and they're not part of their main assessment in the school exam system. These exams are held to promote the effect of the enrichment classes and to raise students' self-confidence. This is really very useful for the students' bright future ISA.

> Al-Shammari,… The impact of geographical

5

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- **Has religion influenced you?**

  Sure......

  How?

Our prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) and the holy Quran have fully discussed everything such as education, code of behaviour, the rights. Our prophet didn't leave anything without teaching us how to do it. He was a role model to be followed as a teacher.

- **What do you think of the feedback of the university supervisor?**

As for the feedback, I accept it whether it's negative or positive.

How negative?

The feedback includes negative point such as standing in front of the class in one place is wrong and you should move around the class. I should respond and react positively to develop myself and modify my points of weaknesses.

- **Do you think that feedback has a role in formation of the student personality?**

Of course, the feedback develops my emerging personality as a student teacher because it help me to promote my points of strength and addresses my points of weaknesses.

- God Bless you

Thanks

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
The impact of religion (Prophet and Quran)

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Supervisors' oral feedback

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Impact of supervisors'' feedback

Al-Shammari, Nashmi
Reference to religion

Appendix (12): Permission to use University of Hail name

To Whom It May Concern

We would like to let you know that the University of Hail does not mind that its name is mentioned in the PhD thesis done by the Saudi PhD student, Nashmi Ayadah Al-Shammari, who work as a Lecturer at the Curriculum & Instruction Dept., College of Education, University of Hail and is currently doing his PhD study at Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, UK.

This letter has been issued to him upon request.

Thank you.

Vice Rector for Graduate Studies
and Scientific Research

Dr.Abdulaziz Alamr

Appendix (13) Questionnaire in Arabic

عزيزي الطالب المعلم

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف خبرات الطالب المعلم (تخصص اللغة العربية) في سياق التربية العملية ، كما تهدف على وجه الخصوص إلى معرفة العلاقة بين الطالب المعلم والأشخاص المهمين للتربية العملية ، بالإضافة إلى تحديد العوامل المؤثرة سلبًا أو إيجابًا على خبرات الطالب المعلم . وسأكون ممتنًّا لك على إجابتك عن فِقرات (بنود) هذا الاستبيان . مع التأكيد على أن جميع ما تُدوِّنه من معلومات ستكون سرية تمامًا ، وسوف تستخدم لأغراض الدراسة فقط .

سوف يتم اختيار عددٍ من طلاب التربية العملية لإجراء المقابلة الشخصية كأداة من أدوات الدراسة ، ولن تستغرق هذه المقابلة أكثر من ثلاثين دقيقة لكل طالب معلم .

إذا كنت على استعداد لإجراء المقابلة الشخصية مع الباحث كرماً استكمل المعلومات التالية:

- الاسم: ....   (اختياري)

- العمر: ....

- البريد الإلكتروني: ....

- الجوال: ....

الباحث: نشمي عياده الشمري
Nama205@exeter.ac.uk

موافق تمامًا	موافق	محايد	غير موافق	غير موافق تمامًا	البنود	القسم
					ألعب دورًا مهمًّا في عملية التدريس	
					التدريس هي مهنتي المستقبلية المفضل	
					التدريس يساعدني على اكتشاف قدراتي	
					أستطيع أن أنمّي نفسي مِهنيًّا بانتظام أثناء التدريس	الاعتزاز بالتدريس
					أنا راضٍ عن مهنة التدريس	
					التدريس ذو معنى بالنسبة لي	
					أنا أحب تدريس طلابي	

كيف ترى نفسك كمعلم للغة العربية ؟

....
....
....

موافق تمامًا	موافق	محايد	غير موافق	غير موافق تمامًا	البنود	القسم
					أتصرف بسلوك مهني مع زملائي ومشرفيّ	
					أتعامل مع زملائي في التربية العملية باحترام	
					آخذ حصصًا احتياطية عند حاجة المدرسة	
					أتعاون مع أولياء أمور الطلبة	
					أسعى لتطوير نفسي مهنياً بشكل مستمر	التوجه المهني
					أساهم في إيجاد مُناخ مدرسي ملائم	
					أتعامل مع طلابي بشكل ملائم	
					أؤكد على سرية كافة المعلومات المرتبطة بمهنة التدريس	
					أتقيد بالقواعد والسياسات المدرسية	
					أحافظ على مظهر مهني ملائم لمهنة التدريس	

ماذا يعني معلم اللغة العربية المحترف بالنسبة لك ؟

....
....
....

موافق تمامًا	موافق	محايد	غير موافق	غير موافق تمامًا	البنود	القسم

					البنود	القسم
					باستطاعتي إعطاء تعليمات واضحة لكل مهمة من مهام التدريس	توجيه المهام التدريسية
					أستطيع أن أشرك طلابي في التعلم	
					أستطيع أن أنمي طلابي على المستوى الشخصي	
					باستطاعتي تنمية مهارات النحو لدى الطلاب	
					باستطاعتي تنمية مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب	
					أعرف كيفية تنمية مهارات الاستماع لدى الطلاب	
					باستطاعتي تنمية مهارات التحدث لدى الطلاب	
					باستطاعتي تنمية مهارات القراءة لدى الطلاب	

أي مهارة من مهارات اللغة العربية تجد صعوبة في تدريسها ؟ ولماذا؟

....
....
....

موافق تمامًا	موافق	محايد	غير موافق	غير موافق تمامًا	البنود	القسم
					أستطيع أن أتعامل مع الطلاب ذوى الشخصيات الصعبة في الفصل	فاعلية التدريس
					أستطيع مساعدة طلابي للانخراط في المناقشات الصفية	
					أستطيع إشراك طلابي في العمل التعاوني (ثنائي – جماعي)	
					أستطيع تدريس الطلاب على مختلف مستوياتهم	
					أستطيع الاستفاضة في إعطاء أكثر من مثال لنفس النقطة	
					أستطيع أن أسأل الطلاب أسئلة جيدة ومتعمقة	
					أستطيع الإجابة على أسئلة الطلاب الصعبة	
					أستطيع التأكد من فهم الطلاب للدرس	
					أستطيع إيجاد استراتيجيات جيدة لإدارة الصف	

كيف ساعدتك التربية العملية داخل الفصل الدراسي؟

....
....
....

موافق تمامًا	موافق	محايد	غير موافق	غير موافق تمامًا	البنود	القسم
					مشرفو التربية العملية يساعدونني على تخطيط الدرس	الإشراف على التربية العملية
					مشرفو التربية العملية يزودونني باستراتيجيات تدريسية فعالة	

					مشرفو التربية العملية يزودونني باستراتيجيات إدارة الصف
					مشرفو التربية العملية يثرون معرفتي بالمهارات التقييمية
					مشرفو التربية العملية يقيمونني بموضوعية
					مشرفو التربية العملية يزودنني بتغذية راجعة بناءة

ما رأيك في التغذية الراجعة التي يزودك بها مشرف التربية العملية ؟

....

....

....

Appendix (14): The Arabic interview schedule for student teachers

أسئلة المقابلة مع الطالب المتدرب

1. ما رأيك في برنامج إعدادك بالجامعة من خلال : المواد التربوية ، وطرق التدريس .... إلخ ؟   ولماذا تعتقد ذلك ؟

2. ما الدور الذي يلعبه كل من المشرف الأكاديمي ، والمعلم المتعاون في التربية العملية ؟

3. كيف تساعد التربية العملية في جعلك مقبولًا في البيئة المدرسية ؟
وهل تساعدك كل من إدارة المدرسة ، والمعلم المتعاون ، والمشرف ، والخدمات والمرافق ، والمعلمين في تلبية احتياجاتك؟

4. ما الصعوبات والتحديات التي قد تواجهك في التربية الميدانية في المدارس ؟ ولماذا ؟   (تحديات مدرسية ، إدارية ..... التقييم) ؟

5. كيف تتغلب على هذه الصعوبات والمشاكل؟

6. ما نوع المساعدة التي تتلقاها في التربية العملية ؟
المسؤوليات المهنية. الاستراتيجيات التربوية. الاستراتيجيات التدريسية. ادارة الصف ..... بيئة الصف ......أساليب التقييم .... والعلاقات مع الزملاء ؟. أي من هذه المساعدات تعتقد أنها مفيدة لك ؟ ولماذا ؟

7. كيف أثَّرت تجربتك في الحياة على وجهة نظرك فيما يتعلق بدور المعلم؟
الخبرات السابقة. الخبرة التدريسية السابقة. المعلم السابق / الحاضر . العائلة . الدين . الثقافة .

8. كيف يمكن للتربية العملية أن تساعدك في تدريس اللغة العربية ؟
تخطيط الدروس. المفردات اللغوية . القواعد. القراءة. الكتابة. الاستماع. التحدث

9. ما رأيك في علاقاتك بمن حولك في مدارس التربية العملية ؟
المدير . المعلم المتعاون. المشرف الأكاديمي. زملاؤك من الطلبة المتدربين الذين يتدربون معك في المدرسة. الطلاب في المدرسة

10. هل لديك الرغبة في دخول الحصص الاحتياطية ؟ ولماذا ؟

11. ما القضايا التي تناقشها مع المشرف (في اللقاءات الإشرافية) ؟

12. كيف تستجيب للتغذية الراجعة من قبل مشرفك؟

Appendix (15): The Arabic interview schedule for cooperating teachers and university supervisors

المقابلة الشخصية مع المشرف الأكاديمي والمعلم المتعاون

1. ما رأيك في برنامج إعداد الطالب المعلم بالجامعة ؟ ولماذا تعتقد ذلك؟

2. ما المهام والمسؤوليات الخاصة بطلاب التربية العملية من وجهة نظرك؟

3. كيف تساعد طلاب التربية العملية في مدارسهم ؟ ولماذا ترى أن تلك المساعدة أو غيرها بالتحديد هي المهمة ؟

4. ما الصعوبات والتحديات التي تواجه طلاب التربية العملية في مدارسهم؟ ولماذا؟

5. كيف تستطيع مساعدة طلابك في حل تلك الصعوبات كمشرف ؟

6. كيف تُعدُّ طلاب التربية العملية في مدارسهم ؟

المسؤوليات المهنية .الالتزام بالجدول ...... الخ. الاستراتيجيات التربوية. تعزيز التعلم. العقاب والثواب. تعديل سلوك التلاميذ. الاستراتيجيات التدريسية . إدارة الصف. بيئة الصف. أساليب التقييم. العلاقات مع الزملاء

7. ما العوامل التي تعتقد أنها تسهم في تشكيل خبرة الطالب المعلم المهنية ؟

الخبرات السابقة. الخبرة التدريسية السابقة. المعلم السابق / الحاضر. العائلة. الدين. الثقافة .

8. كيف تساعد التربية العملية طلابها في تدريس اللغة العربية؟

تخطيط الدروس. المفردات اللغوية. القواعد. القراءة. الكتابة. الاستماع. التحدث

9. ما رأيك في العلاقة التي يكوّنها طالب التربية العملية مع من حوله في التربية العملية ؟

المدير. المعلم المتعاون. المشرف الأكاديمي. زميل الطالب المتدرب الذي يتدرب معه في المدرسة الطالب في المدرسة.

10. هل طلاب التربية العملية لديهم الرغبة في دخول الحصص الاحتياطية ؟ ولماذا؟

11. ما القضايا التي يناقشها المشرف في اللقاءات الإشرافية؟

12. كيف يستجيب طلاب التربية العملية للتغذية الراجعة من قبل مشرفيهم ؟

Appendix (16): Research Participant Consent Form in Arabic

عنوان المشروع : اكتشاف خبرات الطالب المعلم السعودي المتخصص في اللغة العربية في سياق التربية العملية

نموذج الموافقة

اطلعت على أهداف المشروع وأغراضه ، وأفهم جيدا أنه :

- لا يمكن إجباري على المشاركة في هذا المشروع البحثي، وإذا اردت الخروج منه ، في أي مرحلة من مراحله يمكنني سحب مشاركتي .

- لدي الحق في رفض إذن نشر أي معلومات عني .

- سيتم استخدام أي معلومات أعطيها لأغراض هذا المشروع البحثي فقط ، والتي قد تتضمن منشورات .

- إن أمكن ، تكون مشاركة المعلومات التي أعطيها بين أي من الباحثين الآخرين المشاركين في هذا المشروع في شكل مجهول .

- سيتم التعامل مع جميع المعلومات التي أقدمها بسرية تامة.

- سيبذل الباحث (الباحثون) كل جهد للحفاظ على هويتي.

....………………

(التاريخ)   (توقيع المشارك)

....

(الاسم للمشارك)

سيتم الاحتفاظ بنسخة واحدة من هذا النموذج من قبل المشارك ؛ سيتم الاحتفاظ بنسخة ثانية من قبل الباحث.

رقم هاتف الباحث (نشمي الشمري): المملكة المتحدة 447453307120 + أو المملكة العربية السعودية 966505168383+

إذا كان لديك أي تساؤلات بشأن المشروع الذي ترغب في مناقشته ، فيرجى الاتصال او المراسلة بـ :
nashmi.alshammari@hotmail.com أو مشرفي الدكتور نايجل
سكينر n.c.skinner@exeter.ac.uk :هاتف: 4932 72 1392(0) 44+أو د. صلاح
طرودي s.troudi@exeter.ac.uk +44 (0) 1392 1392724775

قانون حماية البيانات: جامعة إكستر هي جامع للبيانات ومسجل لدى مكتب مفوض حماية البيانات كما هو مطلوب بموجب قانون حماية البيانات لعام 1998. المعلومات التي تقدمها سوف تستخدم لأغراض البحث وسيتم معالجتها وفقًا مع تسجيل الجامعة وتشريعات حماية البيانات الحالية .ستكون البيانات سرية للباحث (الباحثين) ولن يتم الكشف عنها لأي أطراف ثالثة غير مصرح بها دون مزيد من موافقة المشارك .التقارير التي تستند إلى البيانات ستكون في شكل مجهول.

Appendix (17): Information Sheets in Arabic

رسالة معلوماتية للطالب المعلم

عزيزي الطالب المعلم :

أنا نشمي الشمري مرشح لنيل درجة الدكتوراه في كلية التربية في جامعة (إكستر) في المملكة المتحدة ؛ لذلك أقوم بإجراء هذا البحث كجزء من السعي لنيل درجة الدكتوراه . وأود أن أدعوكم للمشاركة في هذا البحث مع العلم أن مشاركتك في هذا البحث كمعلم طالب ستكون موضع احترام وتقدير ، وستكون كل المعلومات المتعلقة بالغرض والإجراءات والسرية والموافقة الأخلاقية من المملكة المتحدة والمملكة العربية السعودية متوفرة خطياً وشفهياً.

الغرض من مشروع البحث:

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو:

(1) اكتشاف خبرات الطالب المعلم المتخصص في اللغة العربية في سياق التربية العملية

(2) اكتشاف علاقات الطالب المعلم مع شخصيات هامة أخرى في بيئة التدريس في المدارس، مثل: المشرفين الجامعيين ، وزملاء التربية العملية ، والمعلمين المتعاونين ، ومدراء المدارس .

(3) تحديد العوامل الإيجابية أو السلبية التي قد تؤثر على خبرات الطالب المعلم بالتربية العملية.

المراحل والمشاركون:

ستتم دعوتك للمشاركة في الجزء التجريبي من الدراسة الحالية ؛ حيث سيتم جمع البيانات لتحقيق الغرض من الدراسة ، والتي تتكوَّن من ثلاث مراحل لتحقيق الأغراض المذكورة أعلاه من خلال جمع البيانات المطلوبة. ليس من الضروري أن تشارك في المراحل الثلاثة ؛ لأن بعضكم سيشارك في مرحلة واحدة فقط ، والبعض الآخر سيشارك في مرحلتين ، والبعض منكم سيشارك في المراحل الثلاث كلها.

المرحلة الأولى : سيتم اختيار مائة وثلاثة عشر معلمًا من الطلاب المعلمين السعوديين في اللغة العربية للاستبيان. لقد تم اختيارك لأنك تفي بالمعايير التالية:

أ) أنت متخصص في تعليم اللغة العربية .

ب) أنت خريج اللغة العربية من كلية الآداب ، وتقوم بدراسة الجزء العملي للتعليم في جامعة حائل

ج) أنت تقوم بأداء التربية العملية في مدارس منطقة حائل.

لذلك سيطرح الاستبيان أسئلة حول خبرات الطالب المعلم في سياق التربية العملية.

المرحلة الثانية : سيتم اختيار عشرين طالباً معلمًا للمقابلة بناءً على بعض المعايير ؛ مثل إكمال الاستبيان بشكل كامل ، والاستعداد للمشاركة في المقابلة. وستدوم المقابلة لمدة لا تزيد عن ثلاثين دقيقة ، وستجرى في المدرسة التي تقوم فيها بالتربية العملية أو في الجامعة ، ولك حق اختيار أيهما أكثر ملاءمة لك . وسيتم تسجيل المقابلات باستخدام مسجل صوت رقمي . وسيتم طرح بعض الأسئلة حول كيفية اكتشاف الخبرة التدريسية في سياق التدريب العملية لك كطالب معلم ؛ كيف تبدو علاقاتك مع شخصيات هامة أخرى ؛ مثل

زملائك ومعلميك المتعاونين ، والمشرفين على جامعتك في عملية التدريس ، وما العوامل التي أثرت على خبراتك في سياق التدريب العملي .

المرحلة الثالثة : ستتم ملاحظتك أثناء تدريس الحصص الصفية ، وأثناء تدريبك في اجتماعاتك الإشرافية. كما سأقوم بتدوين ملاحظات حول ما يحدث في الاجتماع الإشرافي ، وكيف يتم إبلاغك من قبل معلمي الجامعات والمعلمين المتعاونين بشأن كيفية تحسين أدائك في التربية العملية. و سيتم الاحتفاظ بالبيانات المسجلة في مكان آمن في الكمبيوتر المحمول ، ومحرك الأقراص الثابتة الخارجي ، وبمجرد الانتهاء من كتابة تحليل البيانات، سيتم مسحها. وسوف يكون مشرفي الدكتوراه هما الوحيدان اللذان لديهما القدرة على تصفُّح البيانات المسجلة إذا دعت الحاجة. وسوف يتم الالتزام أثناء عملية جمع البيانات هذه بالمعايير الأخلاقية المستخدمة في البحوث التعليمية.

السرية:

سيتم التعامل مع كل معلوماتك بسرية تامة ، وسيتم منحك اسمًا مستعارًا . وسيتم الاحتفاظ بجميع المعلومات التي يتم جمعها من خلال الاستبيانات والمقابلات والملاحظات في مكان آمن ومأمون حتى نهاية هذا المشروع البحثي. وإذا لم تعد هذه المعلومات مطلوبة في البحث المستقبلي ، فسوف يتم التخلص منها مباشرة بعد إكمال المشروع البحثي.

مشاركتك في هذا المشروع البحثي مهمة جدًا. يرجى الاتصال بي إذا كانت لديك أية مخاوف أو إذا كنت ترغب في مناقشة أية مشاكل ذات صلة بهذا البحث.

شكرًا لك على وقتك الثمين ..

باحث دكتوراة : نشمي الشمري

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رسالة معلوماتية للمشرفين الجامعيين

عزيزي المشرف الجامعي :

أنا نشمي الشمري مرشح لنيل درجة الدكتوراه في كلية التربية في جامعة (إكستر) في المملكة المتحدة. لذلك أقوم بإجراء هذا البحث كجزء من السعي لنيل درجة الدكتوراه . وأود أن أدعوكم للمشاركة في هذا البحث . إذ إن مشاركتك كمشرف جامعي محل تقدير واحترام . وستكون كل المعلومات المتعلقة بالغرض والإجراءات والسرية والموافقة الأخلاقية من المملكة المتحدة والمملكة العربية السعودية متوفرة خطياً وشفهياً.

الغرض من مشروع البحث:

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو :

(1) اكتشاف خبرات الطالب المعلم المتخصص في اللغة العربية في سياق التربية العملية

(2) اكتشاف علاقات الطالب المعلم مع شخصيات هامة أخرى في بيئة التدريس في المدارس ، مثل: المشرفين الجامعيين ، وزملاء التربية العملية ، والمعلمين المتعاونين ، ومدراء المدارس

(3) تحديد العوامل الإيجابية أو السلبية التي قد تؤثر على خبرات الطالب المعلم بالتربية العملية.

المشاركون:

ستتم دعوتك للمشاركة في الجزء التجريبي من الدراسة الحالية ؛ حيث سيتم جمع البيانات لتحقيق الغرض من الدراسة. وسيُدعى سبعة من المدرسين الجامعيين إلى إجراء مقابلات معهم . وهذا يعتمد على استعدادك للمشاركة في المقابلة. ولن تستغرق المقابلة أكثر من ثلاثين دقيقة ، وسوف تتم في مكان متفق عليه بشكل متبادل سواء في مكتبك في الجامعة ، أو في المدرسة التي تطبق فيها التربية العملية ، أو في أي مكان آخر. وسيتم تسجيل المقابلات باستخدام مسجل صوت رقمي. وسوف تُطرح عليك بعض الأسئلة حول خبرات التربية العملية للطلاب المعلمين في سياق التدريب العملي ؛ على نحو : كيف تبدو علاقتك بالمعلمين الطلاب في عملية التدريس ؟ وما العوامل التي تؤثر في الخبرات التدريسية للطالب المعلم في عملية التدريس ؟ بالإضافة إلى ذلك ؛ ستتم ملاحظتك أثناء تدريب الطالب المعلم في اجتماعاتك الإشرافية . كما سأدوّن ملحوظات حول ما يحدث في الاجتماع الإشرافي ، وكيف تقوم بنصح الطلاب المعلمين بكيفية تحسين أدائهم في عملية التدريس الخاصة بهم . كما سيتم الاحتفاظ بالبيانات المسجلة في مكان آمن في الكمبيوتر المحمول ، ومحرك الأقراص الثابتة الخارجي ، وبمجرد الانتهاء من كتابة تحليل البيانات ، سوف يتم مسحها . وسيكون اثنان من مشرفي الدكتوراه هما الوحيدان اللذان يمكنهما الوصول إلى البيانات المسجلة إذا دعت الحاجة . وسوف يتم الالتزام في عملية جمع البيانات هذه بالمعايير الأخلاقية المستخدمة في البحوث التعليمية.

السرية:

سيتم التعامل مع كل معلوماتك بسرية تامة ، وسيتم منحك اسمًا مستعارًا ، وسيتم الاحتفاظ بجميع المعلومات التي يتم جمعها من خلال الاستبيانات والمقابلات والملاحظات في مكان آمن ومأمون حتى نهاية هذا المشروع البحثي. إذا لم تعد هذه المعلومات مطلوبة في البحث المستقبلي ، فسيتم التخلص منها مباشرة بعد إكمال المشروع البحثي.

مشاركتك في هذا المشروع البحثي مهمة جداً. يرجى الاتصال بي إذا كانت لديك أية مخاوف أو إذا كنت ترغب في مناقشة أية مشاكل ذات صلة بهذا البحث.

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شكرًا لك على وقتك الثمين ..

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رسالة معلوماتية للمعلمين المتعاونين

عزيزي الأستاذ المتعاون :

أنا نشمي الشمري مرشح لنيل درجة الدكتوراه في كلية التربية في جامعة (إكستر) في المملكة المتحدة . لذلك أقوم بإعداد هذا البحث كجزء من السعي لنيل درجة الدكتوراه. وأود أن أدعوكم للمشاركة في هذا البحث ؛ حيث إن مشاركتك كمعلم متعاون هي محل تقدير واحترام. وستكون كل المعلومات المتعلقة بالغرض والإجراءات والموافقة السرية والأخلاقية من المملكة المتحدة والمملكة العربية السعودية متوفرة خطياً وشفهياً.

الغرض من مشروع البحث:

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو:

(1) اكتشاف خبرات الطالب المعلم المتخصص في اللغة العربية في سياق التربية العملية

(2) اكتشاف علاقات الطالب المعلم مع شخصيات هامة أخرى في بيئة التدريس في المدارس، مثل: المشرفين الجامعيين ، وزملاء التربية العملية ، والمعلمين المتعاونين ، ومدراء المدارس .

(3) تحديد العوامل الإيجابية أو السلبية التي قد تؤثر على خبرات الطالب المعلم بالتربية العملية.

المشاركون:

ستتم دعوتك للمشاركة في الجزء التجريبي من الدراسة الحالية ؛ حيث سيتم جمع البيانات لتحقيق الغرض من الدراسة. وسيُدعى سبعة معلمين متعاونين إلى إجراء مقابلات معهم . وهذا يعتمد على استعدادك للمشاركة في المقابلة. ولن تستغرق المقابلة أكثر من ثلاثين دقيقة ، وسوف تتم في موقع متفق عليه بشكل متبادل سواء في مكتبكم في المدرسة ، أو في أي مكان آخر . وسيتم تسجيل المقابلات باستخدام مسجل صوت رقمي . كما سيتم طرح بعض الأسئلة على نحو : كيف للتربية العملية أن تشكل الخبرات المهنية للطلاب المعلمين المتخصصين في اللغة العربية في سياق التربية العملية ؟ كيف تبدو علاقتك بالمعلمين الطلاب في عملية التدريس ؟ وما العوامل التي تؤثر في تكوين الخبرات المهنية للطلاب المعلمين المتخصصين في اللغة العربية في التربية العملية ؟ بالإضافة إلى ذلك ستتم ملاحظتك أثناء تدريب الطلاب المعلمين في اجتماعاتك الإشرافية. كما سأدوّن ملحوظات حول ما يحدث في الاجتماع الإشرافي ، وكيف تنصح الطلاب المعلمين بكيفية تحسين أدائهم في عملية التدريس الخاصة بهم . كما سيتم الاحتفاظ بالبيانات المسجلة في مكان آمن في الكمبيوتر المحمول ، ومحرك الأقراص الثابتة الخارجي ، وبمجرد الانتهاء من كتابة و تحليل البيانات ، سيتم محوها. ومشرفي الدكتوراه هما الوحيدان اللذان يمكنهما الوصول إلى البيانات المسجلة إذا دعت الحاجة . وسيتم الالتزام بالمعايير الأخلاقية المستخدمة في البحوث العلمية.

السرية:

سيتم التعامل مع كل معلوماتك بسرية تامة ، وسيتم منحك اسمًا مستعارًا. وسيتم الاحتفاظ بجميع المعلومات التي يتم جمعها من خلال الاستبيانات والمقابلات في مكان آمن حتى نهاية هذا المشروع البحثي. وإذا لم تعد هذه المعلومات مطلوبة في البحث المستقبلي، فسيتم تدميرها مباشرة بعد إكمال المشروع البحثي.

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مشاركتك في هذا المشروع البحثي مهمة جداً. يرجى الاتصال بي إذا كانت لديك أية مخاوف أو إذا كنت ترغب في مناقشة أية مشاكل ذات صلة بهذا البحث.

شكرًا لك على وقتك الثمين ..

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