An Evaluative Study of the School Based Practicum Course in a Pre-service English Language Teacher Preparation Programme at a College of Education, Oman

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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.

ABSTRACT

The study explores opportunities and challenges encountered by pre-service English language teachers and their college supervisors in a school based practicum course of a pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at a College of Education in Oman. It also aims at understanding the cooperating teachers' perceptions of practicum to arrive at solutions for possible problems while helping to make recommendations for further improvements in the course. The conceptual framework of the study is based on the sociocultural theory that views teaching practice as a social activity. The study adopts Fetters, Curry, and Creswell's (2013) case study framework. The opportunities and challenges that pre-service English teachers encountered during practicum as well as their agenda for change were explored through a sequential exploratory mixed method design. Four focus groups were employed with 26 pre-service English teachers and the findings were used to develop a semi-structured questionnaire that was distributed to 52 pre-service English teachers. In analysing the sequential exploratory design, I adopted Creswell and Clark's (2011) method level integration procedure– integration through building. The opportunities and challenges that college supervisors encountered during practicum were qualitatively researched, while the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the practicum course were handled quantitatively.

The findings indicate that despite the fact that all study participants value the importance of practicum, some of them were clearly dissatisfied with the current practicum course. The thematic analysis of the focus groups and the one to one interviews highlights some common challenges confronted by both pre-service teachers and college supervisors. For instance, the huge perceived gap between the theoretical and practical components of

the programme, communication barriers between the practicum triad and ineffective practicum assessment methods were brought out in the analysis. Additionally, the findings of the cooperating teachers' semi-structured questionnaire reveal that most cooperating teachers request more preparation, support and power from the College in order to better guide the pre-service English teachers during their teaching practice in the cooperating schools.

The present study is more exhaustive than the existing practicum studies as it covers the challenges confronted by every member in the practicum triad– pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers, and accordingly offers an agenda to improve the quality of practicum. The study proposes the integration of the practicum community of practice model into the school based practicum course. Based on this recommendation and the findings of the study, I propose the practicum community of practice mobile application (PCOP app) that is hoped to enhance the implementation of the practicum community of practice model and provide interconnected channels of communication between the practicum members.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late father who died of cancer while I was away in the UK to complete my Doctoral dissertation. There can never be anyone else that can replace the love and care that was my father, and I continue to feel the pain of losing him to this disease. I have battled with guilt of not being with him at the time of his death, however, I also know that he would be so proud of me for having completed my doctoral degree. May he rest in peace and love forever.

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ABBREVIATIONS

PST: Pre-service Teacher

CS: College Supervisor

CT: Cooperating Teacher

CS: Cooperating School

SBP: School Based Practicum

TP: Teaching Practice

CBP: College Based Practicum

COP: Community of Practice

Online CsOP: Online communities of Practice

PCOP: Practicum Community of Practice

PCOP app: Practicum Community of Practice Mobile Application

TCs: Thought Collectiveness

TPCK: Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge

L1: First Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

EFL: English as Foreign Language

ESL: English as Second Language

B. Ed: Bachelor of Education

B.A: Bachelor of Arts

B.Sc: Bachelor of Science

Ed: An Education Programme of Pedagogy Courses

MoE: Ministry of Education

MoHE: Ministry of Higher Education

MoS: Ministry of Statistics

IBE: International Bureau of Education

MoNE: Ministry of National Economy.

GES: General Education System

BES: Basic Education System

CASs: Colleges of Applied Sciences

CoE: College of Education

SQU: Sultan Qaboos University

TPD: Teachers' Professional Development

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

QA: Quality Assurance

OAC: Oman Accreditation Council

HEIs: Higher Education Institutes

TTI: Teacher Training Institute

ITTCs: Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges

IELTS: International English Language Testing System

FPY: The Foundation Programme Year

GFP: The General Foundation Programme

SCT: The Socio-Cultural Theory

ZPD: The Zone of Proximal Development

ZPTD: The Zone of Proximal Development to Teacher Education

RP: Reflective Practice

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LIST OF DEFINITIONS

Pre-service Teachers (PSTs): Students in an undergraduate teacher preparation programme at a College or University who are learning how teach in order to graduate with a Bachelor in Education that enables them to work as teachers in public or private schools.

College Supervisors (CSs): College teachers / lecturers who mentor and evaluate pre-service teachers' teaching in the cooperating schools **(CSs).**

Cooperating Teachers (CTs): Public school teachers who are requested to assist and mentor pre-service teachers during their teaching practice in the cooperating schools. Pre-service teachers practise teaching in the cooperating teachers' classrooms.

School Based Practicum / Teaching Practice / Practicum / Field Experience: An obligatory course in any pre-service teacher preparation programme that provides pre-service teachers with real teaching experience in the cooperating schools (CSs). It is also "A phase of teacher preparation characterized by extended, intensive clinical experience in which teacher candidates have opportunities to develop and demonstrate professional competencies under the supervision of a mentor or cooperating teacher" (Coward, Hamman, Johnson, Lambert, Indiatsi & Zhou, 2015, p.198).

Cooperating Schools (CSs): Government schools where pre-service teachers practise teaching.

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

1.1 The nature of the problem

The recent years have marked a rapid proliferation of English as an international language in the world. English has had the greatest influence on world affairs more than any other language (Wardhaugh, 1987). Therefore, the phenomenal spread of English and its current status as "a world's leading language" (Salih & Holi, 2018, p. 97) has had several implications for the implementation of educational policies in the outer and expanding circles (Kachru, 1990) where English is taught as a second or a foreign language. In these countries, English is perceived as a language of success (Ciprianová & Vančo, 2010) and high income (Holly 1990). Therefore, the industry of English language teaching in the outer and expanding circles has gained great importance resulting in various economic gains for the UK and the US (Pennycook, 1994). However, the countries in these circles are actively involved in negotiating their positions in the global market space to lessen the hegemony of the native English-speaking countries (Ciprianová & Vančo, 2010, p. 133) particularly in the industry of English language teaching through designing their own English textbooks and preparing their citizens for the profession of English language teaching.

Oman, as a country in the expanding circle, has had strong historical relationship "with the UK since 1646, which developed due to economic and political benefits and reasons" (Al-Issa, Al-Bulushi, & Al-Zadjali, 2017, p. 2). Therefore, English is the only foreign language that enjoys official language status in country. It has become the language of

Education and "it also serves multiple purposes locally and globally........and receives political, economic, and legislative support from the elite as represented in the government, which determines its place on the social hierarchy" (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p.142). English is considered a very important tool to access the national labour market in Oman (Al-Lamki, 2006; Al-Issa, 2006). It is also perceived as a "key element in the development of the country and its effective integration into the modern world" (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012a, p. 263). Furthermore, English in Oman is perceived as a prestigious language which enables its speakers to pursue higher education and find "a white-collar job" (Al-Issa et al., 2017, p.2). The National English language Policy/Plan (NELP) states that:

> **"The English language skills of Omani nationals must be seen as an important resource for the country's continued development. It is this recognition of the importance of English as a resource for national development and the means of wider communication within the international community that provides the rationale for English in the curriculum."** (as cited in Al-Issa, 2005, p.2)

Consequently, the status of English in Oman has clearly manifested in the massive reforms of English language teaching in the education system. The Ministry of Education (1995) states:

> The government recognizes that facility in English is important in the new global economy. English is the most common language for International Business and Commerce and is the exclusive language in important sectors such as Banking and Aviation. The global language of Science and Technology is also English as are the rapidly expanding international computerised databases and telecommunications networks which are becoming an increasingly important part of academic and business life (p.A5-1).

A closer look at the schooling system in Oman, indicates that a major reform centred on comprehensive development of Omani citizens has been established as it strives to enable individuals to develop and apply different types of knowledge and the required tools for lifelong learning in order to become effective participants in the society (United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization- International Bureau of Education, 2011). A part of education reform policy (refer to 2.3), English has been introduced to students from Grade One in the Omani schools which resulted in creating new teaching posts that needed to be occupied by qualified Omani English language teachers. As a result, the government has started to implement the strategy of Omanization – "a systematic and gradual replacement of foreign skilled labour by nationals" (Al- Issa, 2006, p.8) and include it in government's plans and policies. Rassekh (2004) points out that "one of the strategies for human resource development up to 2020" (p.12) aims to "substitute expatriate labour with highly qualified Omani labour…. and to increase the participation of Omanis in the labour market" (ibid, p.12). Omanization in the education sector has been applied through intensive preparation of qualified Omani English language teachers who are capable of teaching English in the Omani schools. It is noteworthy that the Omani government plans to prepare a stable cadre of Omani English language teachers for three reasons. First, the government aims to replace expatriate teachers who "lacked proper academic and educational qualifications and training" (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p. 143) with qualified Omani teachers. It was observed that the expatriate teachers brought multiple and conflicting cultural, experience, and professional backgrounds, which had negative implications for ELT in Oman (Al- Issa, 2009a). Also the teaching of English to children from Grade One is

generally not the norm in any of the countries from which Oman presently recruits, making it virtually impossible to recruit the necessary number of suitably qualified and experienced teachers from other countries for the target age group between six to sixteen (Al-Issa, 2006). In addition, Al-Abri (2003) criticizes the unprofessional selection process of the expatriate English teachers in Omani public schools and stresses that such process of recruitment has negative implications for English language development in Oman. Second, the government aims to employ Omani citizens to create internal job opportunities. Third, it is obvious that the local Omanis will understand the local students better and will be able to deliver better results in a more consistent and direct manner, thereby contributing substantially to the development of the nation. Moreover, the developing skills and experience of this stable cadre of Omani teachers will be used to further improve and develop the curriculum, materials and methodologies to teach English to young learners and continue to meet the educational needs of students in a rapidly developing and changing society. Al-Issa (2006) asserts that

> "Well-prepared Omani English teachers, inspectors, syllabus writers and others in the field understand the needs and problems of the Omani learners best and can work towards meeting these needs and overcoming these problems. This can have its long lasting and powerful effects on the Omani students' second language learning and acquisition, as these students embark on various courses in the future where English is the medium of instruction and hence will not need any actual prior language improvement courses." (pp. 28-29).

Therefore, the government has planned to increase the intake of school graduates into the pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). The pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes aim at preparing English language teachers academically, pedagogically and professionally

to teach English in the Omani schools. Chapman, Al-Barwani, Al Mawali and Green (2012) assert that pre-service teacher preparation programmes is one of the most widely used interventions to improve the quality of schooling and they emphasize that the whole world relies on those trainees to improve the quality of education. Furthermore, Al Jabri, Silvennoinen and Griffiths (2018) point out that "developing and modernising initial teacher preparation" (p.85) is one of the different ways of improving the quality of teaching in Oman. Although there has been a comprehensive transformation in the development of the pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes in Oman since 1977 (refer to 2.5), studies show that graduates of these programmes lacked methodology training in teaching the English language curriculum in the Omani schools (Al Jabri et al., 2018; Moates, 2006). It is noteworthy that the study conducted by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the World Bank (2012) reveals that courses in the pre-service teacher preparation programmes are "not well matched to the curriculum that new teachers are expected to teach or to teaching realities in Omani classrooms" (p.25). The study also indicates that pre-service teachers have limited practical classroom experience during their teaching preparation. Likewise, Wilkinson and Al Hajry (2007) assert that Omani teachers generally lacked formal training which impacted negatively on their performance in the classrooms.

Furthermore, graduates of the pre-service teacher preparation programmes are found to demonstrate low levels of proficiency in English (Al-Issa et al., 2017; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012a; Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). Consequently, they encountered "difficulties in handling higher level classes" (Al-Issa et al., 2017, p.5). Similarly, Al-Mahrooqi (2012b) asserts that "research and experience have proved that the majority of school and college graduates

have neither adequate English language skills nor communication skills to function effectively in the workplace, which is dominated by expatriates from around the world" (p. 124). Moreover, the graduates generally lack the basic communication skills (Al-Issa, 2005) that are mandatory in order to perform professionally in a language classroom. Therefore, the low quality of English language graduates has certainly negative impacts on the quality of education in Oman (refer to 2.3). Al-Toubi (1998) and Al-Issa (2005) attributed the inefficiency of the English teacher preparation programmes to various shortcomings in the overall structure and quality of delivery of the ELT academic and training programmes. Thus, education experts in Oman believe that pre-service teacher education in Colleges and Universities along with in-service training and teachers' professional development (TPD) "should be the primary targets of development measures" (Al Jabri et al., 2018, p.84).

Additionally, Oman witnessed a series of strikes by its citizens in 2011 demanding salary increase, more job opportunities and fighting corruption in the society. It was actually part of the revolutionary wave known as the Arab spring. "Indeed, events in the "Arab Spring" of early 2011 give witness to the pressure on the government in Oman in terms of social justice and unemployment issues for nationals" (Issan, 2013, p.2). The strike started with the demonstration of 500 young Omanis in the city of Sohar which is considered to be one of the most important cities in Oman. The strike turned violent and the police had to intervene to disperse the protesters. As a result, a first-year student at a College of technology was killed. After this incident, a series of strikes started all over Oman. Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) also witnessed similar strikes. The pre-service English language teacher preparation programme under investigation was involved in these

strikes. Pre-service English teachers demanded improvements in the evaluation scheme of some of the courses in the programme. In addition, they requested some alterations in the English language study plan (Appendix 1). One of their main demands was to place more emphasis on teaching practice in the study plan.

It is thus in the light of the above issues, the present study has been conducted to evaluate the teaching practice components of the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at a College of Education. The study aims to explore the potentials and challenges encountered by the pre-service English teachers and college supervisors during the school based practicum course (SBP). It also tackles the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum course in the programme under study. It is worth mentioning that the present study is not an attempt to evaluate the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme as a whole but to focus on the backbone of the programme, 'the school based practicum' in order to provide pre-service teachers with quality preparation and subsequently provide the Omani schools with qualified Omani English language teachers. It is also important to note that the terms: school based practicum (SBP), teaching practice (TP) and practicum are used interchangeably in the present study.

1.2 Rationale of the study

Based on my personal experience as a teacher in a Higher Education Institute and also as a college supervisor and a former Head of the Practicum Unit in a pre-service English language teacher preparation programme for two consecutive years, in 2010 and 2011, I have observed that many teacher preparation programmes including the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme under study, do not reflect "the actual

on-the-job performance requirements" (Friedman, 1980, p.30). The feedback I constantly used to receive from the pre-service English language teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers during my position as the Head of the Practicum Unit indicated that there is a huge gap between the preparation that the pre-service English teachers receive in the teacher preparation institute and what they are asked to deliver in the cooperating schools. Friedman (1980) clearly describes the situation stating that:

> "Many teacher training institutions have been accused of preparing the teacher for students and schools that no longer exist. These institutions have lost contact with their constituency and continue to prepare teachers as they did twenty years ago. Thus, the preparation teachers receive has become less and less relevant to actual on-the-job performance requirements." (p. 30)

In addition, I noticed that the experiential and training knowledge the pre-service teachers receive in the cooperating schools is insufficient compared to the amount of theory they study at the College. Apparently, there is no balance between theory and practice in the programme under study. Many researchers in pre-service teacher education emphasize the importance of experiential and training knowledge that pre-service teachers should get through direct contact with the real context of teaching (Ishihara, 2005; Al-Mekhlafi, 2012; Farrell, 2003; Brisk, 2008; Buck, Mast, Ehlers & Franklin 2005; Rorrison, 2008). In fact, pre-service teacher education research has shown that "trainees value the teaching practice component the most in their teacher education programme since it gives them an opportunity to practice their skills in a real-life context" (Al- Mahrooqi, 2011, p.247). Therefore, if the school based practicum course does not meet pre-service teachers' expectations, they consequently confront with numerous challenges that impede effective teaching practice experience. In fact, during my position as a Head of the Practicum Unit in the programme under study, many pre-service teachers complained about the

discouraging teaching environment in the cooperating schools including: uncooperative cooperating teachers and school students, lack of resources, and the huge amount of administrative work that they were asked to do. Pre-service English teachers also seemed dissatisfied with the school based practicum assessment criteria. In addition, the practice followed in the SBP course that does not allow pre-service teachers to view their results after each evaluation was one of the repeated complaint that I received from both pre-service teachers and college supervisors.

Although, I and some academics, have pointed to some questionable practices and critical issues related to teaching practice in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme under study including the length of practice, the practicum evaluation form, the quality of the cooperating teachers, the teaching resources and the cooperating school environment, there was unfortunately no serious attempt to evaluate the quality of the teaching practice that the pre-service English teachers receive in the programme. It was only recently due to the college students' strikes and the rise of the Quality Assurance movement that is run by Oman Accreditation Council (OAC) to monitor and ensure quality in Higher Education Institutes in Oman, minor but insignificant amendments were brought to the programme that mainly dealt with reordering the courses offered in the programme. It is noteworthy that the feedback and recommendations from me and the academics in the programme under study was not based on research studies as it was done in the nearby countries in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (Troudi, Combe & Al Hamly, 2009). Therefore, no serious changes have taken place to improve the quality of the pre-service English teacher preparation programme. Al-Salmi (1996) emphasizes that "teacher training institutions must

continuously justify, revise, and improve the components of their preparation programmes in order to meet previously-stated demands (p.2).

Therefore, I am convinced that in order to improve the quality of the teaching practice, a thorough and detailed case study of the school based practicum course in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme should be conducted and the study should target every member in the practicum triad (pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers) as they are the main pillars of the school based practicum course. Therefore, I have decided to conduct this study that can be considered a scientific reference for policy makers in the Ministry of Higher Education to critically rethink the educational policies that are currently applied in the programme under study. The study involves prospective teachers and college supervisors to reflect on their teaching practice experience and discuss the opportunities and challenges they encountered during the school based practicum course. I believe that an emphasis on a "meta-awareness" – "a heightened awareness of how [teachers'] thinking evolves as they are being socialized into their disciplines" (Ramanathan, 2002, p. 2) is crucial to enable them to question the status quo and make an effective change that will help in preparing efficient English language teachers. Therefore, study participants were encouraged to critically challenge the status quo of the school based practicum components in the programme. It is worth mentioning that during some phases of the data collection procedures, there was constant critical questioning of the current practices, structures, phenomena or beliefs that are incorrectly taken as real or natural and which hinder the preparation of qualified English language teachers.

More importantly, the study aims at identifying the weaknesses of the teaching practice components of the programme and subsequently improving the quality of the programme by proposing an effective model of the school based practicum course. I, as a researcher, believe in what Pennycook (2001) says that by "problematizing' the narrow points, posing critical questions and avoiding a utopian vision, it is hoped to obtain an array of ethically grounded, preferred futures" (p. 9). Generally, the present study aims at re-planning the currently practiced input "in such a way that change becomes the driving agenda" (Tessema, 2008, p.358). Furthermore, the study aims at listening to the voices of pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers because they are the best reflection of the effectiveness of the school based practicum. Darling-Hammond (2006a) emphasizes that graduates of teacher education programmes are one of the important measures to be used to provide judgment regarding the adequacy of the programmes. Therefore, the present study constitutes the incorporation of the agency (e.g. graduates) in order to know how reality is seen by them in their social context. This study is also an attempt to revive the important role of pre-service teachers in decision -making as teachers are not involved in educational policy making (Troudi, Coombe & Al-Hamly, 2009; Shohamy, 2007) Furthermore, the study informs future policy initiatives and it is valuable for stakeholders and policy makers (Sharp, Mobley, Hammond, Withington, Drew, Stringfield & Stipanovic, 2012). Clark and Starr (1976) express philosophically that:

> "In order to guide his ship on its proper course, a navigator must know where he is. He, therefore, keeps a running record of his approximate position and frequently checks to fix his exact position. He must do so in order to know in what direction to lay his course. If he does not know where he is, how can he tell in what direction to go? So it is with teaching. We must know where we are in order to know in which way to go. We must continuously appraise and reappraisal our position." (p. 333).

1.3 Aims of the study

Contemporary literature is rich in studies that evaluate pre-service teacher preparation programmes but the teaching practice components of these programmes are either addressed superficially or remain unaddressed in most of the studies. Therefore, the present study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- To investigate, study and evaluate the major components of the school based practicum in the pre-service English teacher preparation programme at a College of Education in Oman.

- To challenge the current educational status quo in relation to teaching practice in the pre-service English teacher preparation programme at the College.

- To explore the critical issues that help to maximize the effectiveness of school based practicum at the College.

- To empower the pre-service teachers by listening to their voices and involve them in decisions-making.

- To help find solutions for the possible problems and make recommendations for further improvements in school based practicum course.

1.4 Research questions

The study aims at answering the following research questions:

Q1. What are the opportunities and challenges encountered by the pre-service English language teachers in the school based practicum course in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at a College of Education?

Q2. What do the pre-service English teachers feel needs to be maintained and what do they feel needs to be changed in the school based practicum course?

Q3. What are the opportunities and challenges encountered by the college supervisors in the school based practicum course in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at a College of Education?

Q4. What do college supervisors feel needs to be maintained and what do they feel needs to be changed in the school based practicum course?

Q5. What are the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum course?

It is worth mentioning that the study has a two-edge significance. First, it investigates, studies and evaluates the present school based practicum in the programme under study. Second, the study is valuable for the Department of English Language and Literature, pre-service teachers, practicum supervisors, cooperating teachers and school administrations. Furthermore, the study will be of great help to programme designers and teaching materials writers of the future. It is also hoped that it will improve the quality of the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at the College.

1.5 Research approach

The study goes through three sequential phases to explore and evaluate the teaching practice components of the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at the College of Education. The first phase involves conducting focus groups which explore the opportunities and challenges encountered by pre-service English language teachers and also provide a basis for a semi structured questionnaire that will be used later to elaborate on some of the focus groups' findings and generalize these findings to the whole study population. The second phase looks at one to one interviews conducted with four college supervisors to explore the opportunities and challenges they encountered during their supervision of pre-service English teachers. The focus groups

and one to one interviews also aim to elicit some solutions to overcome the challenges encountered by pre-service teachers and college supervisors to improve the quality of English language teachers pedagogically and professionally. During the third phase of the study, a semi structured questionnaire is distributed to 20 cooperating teachers in some cooperating schools in the surrounding areas of the College. The cooperating teachers' questionnaire will elicit a comprehensive picture of the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at the College. It also aims at identifying any tensions in the relationship between the practicum triad: the pre-service teachers, the college supervisors and the cooperating teachers

1.6 Organization of the study

The study will be divided into six chapters. ***Chapter one*** states the problem and the rationale of the study and concludes with the aims, research questions and significance of the study. Then, the Omani context in terms of the historical background, the education system and the development of pre-service teacher preparation programmes is delineated in ***chapter two***. Furthermore, ***chapter three*** presents an overview of the relevant literature on teaching practice as far as the objectives of the present study are concerned. The data collection methods, participants, ethical consideration and limitation of the study are presented in ***chapter four***. Furthermore, the findings of the study are reported in ***chapter five***. It also develops an exhaustive analysis and interpretation of the available data and compare the study findings to findings of previous studies. ***Chapter six*** puts forward pedagogical recommendations for further development.

1.7 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the status of the English language in Oman and highlighted the demands for preparing qualified Omani English language teachers to replace expatriate English teachers. The study rationale was clearly addressed in the chapter. The consensus has been that the preparation of qualified Omani English language teachers necessitates a continuous revision of the practical components of the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme under study. The aims of the study, research questions, and organization of the study were also addressed in this chapter.

Chapter Two: Research Context

2.1 Introduction

The chapter gives an overview of Oman's historical and linguistic background. It also traces the developmental phases in the country's economic and education sectors. The transformational reforms in education are highlighted in this chapter with special and detailed reference to English language teaching as a major focus of these reforms. Furthermore, the chapter spotlights on the development of higher education in Oman particularly the development of pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes that are responsible for preparing English language teachers to supply public and private schools with qualified Omani English teachers. Moreover, the context of the present study is clearly defined through detailed description of the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme and the school based practicum under study.

2.2 Sultanate of Oman

Oman was a powerful empire for almost three centuries from the 17th century until the beginning of the 20th century. The Omani empire extended to the northeast to cover Iran and Pakistan and to the south to cover Zanzibar (today part of Tanzania). As a result of this imperial past, Oman is ethnically a diverse country consisting of different ethnic groups and several indigenous languages. Arabic is the official language in Oman. It is the first language (L1) of the majority of Omanis and the second language of the ethnic

minorities in Oman. Al- Busaidi (1995) states that Arabic "…represents the official identity, nationhood, ethnicity, culture and traditions of the Omanis; it has no indigenous rivals; it is understood and spoken by almost the entire population, though at varying degrees of proficiency" (p.134). The languages of ethnic communities are Luwati, Baluchi, Sawahili, Jabbali, Mahri, Bautahari, Harsusi, Shahari and Shihuhi. Al-Issa (2002) acknowledges that "these indigenous languages and their discourses are valued differently and ideologies about them differ and vary" (p.4) Therefore, Oman is considered a multilingual and multi-ethnic country compared to the neighbouring countries in the region. Despite the many different indigenous languages, the government worked towards treating ethnic minorities, who immigrated to Oman during the imperial climax, and indigenous Omanis equally and continues to follow a "melting pot assimilationist strategy" (ibid, p.8) to establish a single national identity.

It is evident that Oman has witnessed comprehensive transformation in all sectors of life since the accession to the throne of Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 1970. Initially, the economy of the country depended exclusively on oil which has contributed extensively to the development of the country. However, the government has realized that full dependency on oil for long term could lead to a developmental crisis in the country. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said declares that "oil is a finite resource, with its price at the mercy of external circumstances beyond local control" (Ministry of Information, 2001, p. 188). As a result, Oman's "Vision 2020" on the country's economic future focuses on economy diversification which could be achieved through effective utilization and management of the available natural resources in the country such as gas, agriculture or fishing. The diversified industrial development policy has required development of human resources

as His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said emphasizes that "human being is the power, the instrument and the ultimate aim of national development "(ibid, p.9). Hence education and human resource development has been a national priority in Oman. The implementation of human resources' strategy, Omanization, (refer to 1.1) has manifested through transformational reforms in the education sector in Oman which is clearly detailed in the following sections

2.3 The Development of the education system in Oman

The education system in Oman has developed rapidly in recent decades. Before 1970, illiteracy rate in Oman was significantly high due to the lack of schools and teachers. There were only three schools for 900 students chosen personally by the former Sultan-Saed bin Taymur. Thus, when his majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Saed, the current leader, assumed authority in 1970, education was the biggest challenge that the new leader encountered. His Majesty has actually realized that the rise of a nation will be stultified without education and the development of human resources through education and training is the cornerstone of Oman's economic growth. Therefore, he has aimed to grant every individual in Oman the right to education, even if the schools had to be run under the shades of the trees, (i.e. without buildings). This phrase of his continues to echo in society and provides motivation, determination, strength and enthusiasm to all Omanis:

> "Education was my great concern, and I saw that it was necessary to direct efforts to spread education. We have given the Ministry of Education the opportunity and supplied it with our capabilities to break the chains of ignorance. Schools have been opened regardless; the important thing is that there should be education, even under the shadow of trees." (From a speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said in 1972)

His Majesty fulfilled his promise and within a year of his accession, 13 additional schools were established for 7000 students and the number rose up to 45 schools for 15000

students in 1972. Three years later, the government realized the need to increase the funds allocated for education to US $20 million which resulted in a rapid increase in the number of schools and students -176 schools for 50,000 students. In 2008, education received 17.5% of the total government expenditures (Ministry of Education & The World Bank, 2012). The number of schools increased to 1283 schools and there were 600,000 students receiving education in Oman in that year (ibid).Consequently, the adult literacy rate has reached 84% in 2008 (Economist Intelligent Unit, 2008) while it was 33% in 1970 (Ministry of Education, 2006). According to the United Nation Development Programme (2010), Oman was ranked "first (of 135 countries), as the world's most improved nation over the last 40 years, according to criteria based on health, education and income" (as cited in Wyatt, 2013, p.220).

The government considers education as a tool "to raise and develop general cultural standards, promote scientific thought, kindle the spirit of research, build a generation that takes pride in its nation's heritage, and preserves its achievements" (MoE 2006, p.34). As a result, the education system in Oman has undergone a series of reforms and experienced a comprehensive transformation. These reforms in Oman's education system are viewed as initiatives to improve the quality of education in the country. The Ministry of Education started with the General Education System (GES) and replaced it later with the Basic Education System (BES) which has marked a transformational phase in the Omani education system. The following sections discuss the flow of the education reforms in Oman. In addition, the development of English language teaching is highlighted in each phase with a critical reflection on the outputs of these reforms on ELT in Oman.

2.3.1 The General Education System

The General Education System (GES) was first based on "6/3 system" where "6" represented 6 years of Elementary Education and "3" represented 3 years of Preparatory Education. Three additional years were added later for Secondary Education. Arabic was the language of instruction in the GES. Furthermore the General Education System mainly emphasized teacher-centred instruction and rote learning (Chapman, Al-Barwani, Al Mawali & Green, 2012). The government had to recruit expatriate teachers from North Africa (Egypt, Jordan &Tunisia) and South Asia (India) ''since there was a very limited cadre of educated personnel from which to draw teachers and administrators'' (Atkins & Griffiths 2009, p. 2). Expatriate teachers were gradually replaced with Omani Nationals. English was first introduced in Grade Four in the GES with only six lessons a week. The main textbook that was first used to teach English in the GES was *Living English for the Arab World* which was shortly replaced by *English For Oman.* Al-Issa (2009a) criticizes the content of both textbooks claiming that they both neglected the local Omani culture and they presented the English language as discrete elements (ibid). After that, *Our World Through English* "was written and produced locally" (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p. 150). Although, the content of *Our World Through English* was more authentic (Al-Issa, 2009a), it "was found to concentrate on teaching certain skills more than others" (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p.150). Furthermore, the ELT assessment system in the GES was criticized for focusing only on "non-critical or lower-thinking skills" (ibid, p.150), which negatively impacted on the quality of the school graduates who lacked critical thinking skills that are essential to compete in Higher Education Institutes and the labour market. Moreover, the feedback from the Ministry of Education and the local labour market indicated that the GES failed to improve school students' competence in English (Al-Issa

2009b; 2010) since the English level of school students was found to be very poor (Al-Toubi, 1998).

2.3.2 The Basic Education System

In 1998-1999, the government worked on a national strategic plan that recommended further improvements to the education system which resulted in the introduction of the Basic Education System (BES) in Oman. The BES gradually replaced GES (Elementary, Preparatory and the First Grade of Secondary Education). It consists of two cycles: Cycle One (Grades 1 to 4) and Cycle Two (Grades 5 to 10). Soon after, the Ministry of Education gradually implemented a Post Basic Education (Grades 11 to 12) which replaced the two years of Secondary Education under GES. The two years of Post-Basic Education aim to prepare school students for higher education and the labour market. (The Ministry of Education & The World Bank, 2012). The Basic Education System was seen as "an "ambitious" scientific and pedagogic education development project" (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p144). Similarly, Al-Farsi (2002) asserts that the Basic Education System aims to promote quality in the Omani education system and meet international educational standards. It also focuses on the application of technology in teaching, communication and problem solving skills that the learner needs in their daily lives (English Language Curriculum Framework, 1999). Arabic is still the language of instruction, and emphasis in BES shifted from teacher-centred instruction and rote learning to more learner-centred approach, creative learning, different curriculum content and means of assessment (Chapman, Al-Barwani, Al Mawali & Green, 2012).

It can be observed that English language teaching has experienced a comprehensive transformation in BES in order to overcome the shortcomings of GES and "to meet the present and future challenges and demands of the local and global market" (Al-Issa & Al-

Bulushi, 2012, p.142). One of the significant education policy mentioned in Oman's Vision 2020 document was to improve the teaching/learning of the English language in Basic Education (Ministry of Development, 1997). Therefore, English is introduced at Grade One in BES and teachers are encouraged to incorporate technology into English language teaching. The main English textbook used in all schools is *English for Me* written by different British commercial writers while Grades 11 and 12 were written by Omani authors (Al-Issa, 2009a). Although, *English for Me* tackles different communicative skills and believed to equip learners with over 6,000 receptive and active words, it is found to lack some cultural aspects of the target language, which if included in the syllabus, could contribute to the development of the learner's communicative competence (Al-Issa, 2005). Furthermore, unlike the GES, English language teaching in BES is learner-centred and aims to "foster critical thinking skills and problem solving capacity among students and provide opportunities for practical experience and application to real life situations" (Rassekh, 2004, p.18). Moreover, a continuous formative assessment system substituted the summative assessment that was implemented in the GES. The ELT assessment system in the BES evaluates students' school achievement on a wide range of learning aspects including "knowledge, skills and attitude" (ibid). However, Moates (2006) pointed out that there is still a mismatch between the BES objectives and its assessment system. In addition, the results of three national assessments carried out by the MoE on the BES, indicate that students generally "did not reach the MoE's expected standard or performance level" (The Ministry of Education & The World Bank, 2012, p.66). The output of the currently applied BES has been criticized for not meeting the requirements of the labour market and the higher education standards as large proportion of secondary

school graduates are found to be academically unprepared to pursue higher education (Chapman, Al-Barwani, Al Mawali & Green, 2012). According to the Ministry of Education and the World Bank (2012), school graduates "lack some critical skills, particularly in English, which necessitates a foundation year in Higher Education Institutions" (p.24). Apparently, the infrastructure expansion in the education sector has not resulted in improving the quality of students' learning. These findings indicate that despite the availability of all the materialistic resources needed for better education, the quality of education in the Arab World and Oman particularly is progressing slowly compared to the rapid improvement in the quality of education in Latin America (Maroun, Samman, Moujaes & Abouchakra, 2008). Similarly, Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012) state that according to the "Education For All Global Monitoring Report" released by the UNESCO (2009), "Oman was ranked 82 out of 125 countries in terms of the education development index, indicating that the country's education investment did not translate into the desired outcome" (p.147). Also, Al Jabri et al. (2018) proclaim an educational crisis in Oman. They found that Omani schooling is encountering serious problems "which make up an "educational crisis" in the country" which is mainly attributed to "(1) an increase in the educational disparity within countries, (2) a decrease in the quality of education despite high per capita education expenditures, and (3) a mismatch between labour market needs and the output of educational systems" (p. 84). This lacuna in the quality of education could be attributed to the wrong implementation of the educational strategies set by the Ministry of Education, which is described as "background" and a "failure" (Al-Dhafiry, 2003; Al-Suwaidi, 2010). Thus, the implementation of educational policies should be

carried out with caution as "the success of language-in-education policy is measured by the effectiveness of its implementation" (Barkhuizen & Gough, 1996, p.461).

It is also noteworthy that the teachers' linguistic incompetence (Al-Issa, 2005; Al-Issa, Al-Bulushi, & Al-Zadjali, 2016; Moates, 2006) is the main reason for the considerable low level of students' performance in the BES. Therefore, the government should strive for high quality and efficient education system through a series of actions including a comprehensive improvement in the quality of pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes. Al Jabri et al. (2018) assert that "teachers' preparation affects students' learning outcomes and the quality of the entire education system" (p.86).

2.3.3 Private Education

Apparently, most Omani citizens enrol their children in public schools that are free of cost. It has been observed that the majority of Omani citizens spend relatively 4.8 % on their children's education which is significantly less than their expenditure on "housing (23.1%) and transport and communication (20.9%)" (The Ministry of Education & The World Bank, 2012, p195). However, private education including private, bilingual and international schools, has recently attracted Omani citizens as it is perceived to provide quality education and "more advanced education services" (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p. 146) that public schools generally lack such as computer labs and libraries. It is noteworthy that enrolments in private and international schools has increased dramatically to 29,000 in 2008 (The Ministry of Education & The World Bank, 2012). Yet, most of the Omani citizens are incapable of affording private schools' high fees which, in some private schools, exceed the fees of Higher Education Institutes. Therefore it is only "children of the economic and political elite" (ibid) who can afford to study in private schools. According to The Ministry of Statistics (MoS), approximately "11.1 % of children in Oman

are at fee-paying schools" (Issan, 2013, p.9). Nevertheless, the quality of education in some private schools in Oman is questionable. English is the language of instruction in private schools and it is taught from Kindergarten (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). Arabic is taught as a standalone subject and the number of the Arabic lessons in the private schools is relatively less than that of the English lessons. Table 2.1 illustrates the growth in the number of schools, students and teachers in GES, BES and private education in the year of 2012/2013 (Ministry of National Economy, 2014). In addition, Figure 2.1 reflects the quantitative mutation in the school education sector in the number of schools and students (Ministry of National Economy, 2014).

Type of Education	Number of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	
			Omani	Expatriate
General Education	1042	112,538	5108	1055
Basic Education	920	404	41,815	7,365
Private Education	508	98,275	2619	4549

Table 2.1 School education indicator: 2012/2013
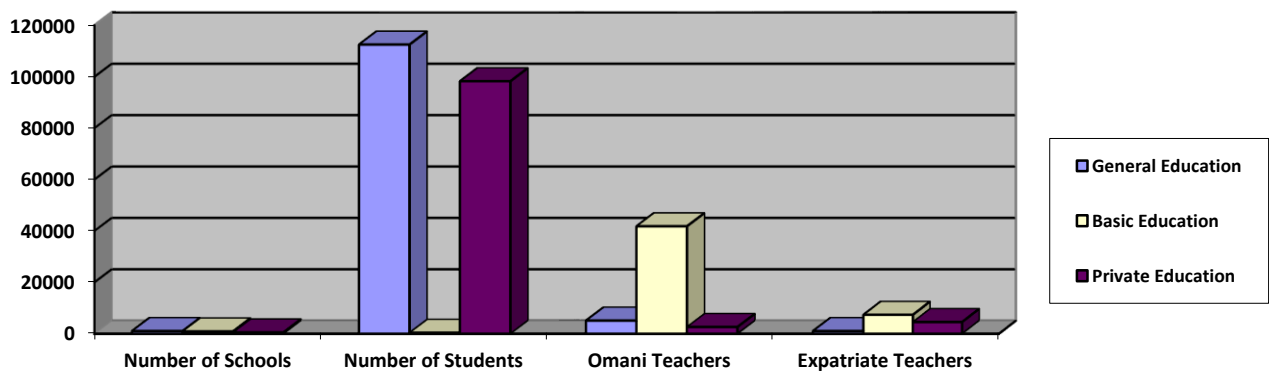
Figure 2.1 The Quantitative Mutation in the number of schools and students.

2.4 Higher education in Oman.

Higher education has a significant role in providing the local market with professional human resources. Oman as a developing country has manifested rapid growth in the number of Higher education Institutes (HEIs) and the number of students joining these institutes as a counterpart to the development of education in schools. Issan (2013) states that "Oman has one of the fastest growing Post-Secondary Education systems in the world because the number of Higher education Institutes' graduates exceeds the number of job available (p.2)". Although there is only one state-owned University (Sultan Qaboos University, SQU), there are 26 private Universities and Colleges to embrace school graduates. At present, SQU has nine Colleges: Arts and Social Sciences, Commerce and Economics, Science, Education, Agriculture and Marine Sciences, Engineering, Medicine and Health Sciences, Nursing and Law. Furthermore, there are five Colleges of Applied Sciences (CASs) and a College of Education (CoE) which operate under the umbrella of the Ministry of Higher Education. The Directorate-General of the Colleges of Applied Sciences (CAS) in the Ministry of Higher education (MoHE) is responsible for the administration and management of these Colleges. The Colleges of Applied Sciences currently offer six-degree programmes –in Information Technology, International Business, Communication Studies, Design, and Engineering and English Language Teaching. English is the medium of instruction in these programmes. The number of students at these institutes is around 100,000 (Ministry of National Economy, 2009). In addition, the annual output of graduates from higher education is around 40,000 graduates (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2009). Table 2.2

illustrates the number of graduates and current students in the five Colleges of Applied Sciences and the College of Education in the year 2011/2012 and 2012/2013.

	2011/2012	2012/2013	
Qualification	Graduated	Registered	Enrolment
Diploma	67	-	-
Bachelor	1426	6327	1765

Table 2.2 Students in Colleges of Applied Sciences 2011/2012 and 2012/2013

In 2007, the government encouraged the involvement of the private sector in higher education. It is noteworthy that the Omani government provides financial support to the private higher education sector including "a land grant, certain customs exemptions; as well as, for private universities, a matching grant of 50% of capital contribution to a maximum amount of RO three million" (Issan, 2013, p.7). As a result, 50% of Higher Education Institutes are supervised by the private sector. Private Higher Education Institutes are administered by other ministries and organizations but operate under the Ministry of Higher Education and are affiliated to Universities in the UK, USA, Australia, India or Germany. English is also taught for general, specific purposes (ESP) and academic purposes (EAP) in public and private Universities and Colleges. Table 2.3 highlights the rapid increase in the number of government and private Higher Education Institutes in Oman in 2012 / 2013. It also shows the large number of students enrolled in these institutions.

Higher Education Institutions	Number of Institution	Number of Students
Sultan Qaboos University	1	13022
Colleges of Applied Sciences	6	6327
Technical Colleges	7	31261
Institute of Shariah Sciences	1	528
Institutes of Health	13	1284
Private Universities and Colleges	28	52115

Table 2.3 Higher education indicator 2012/2013
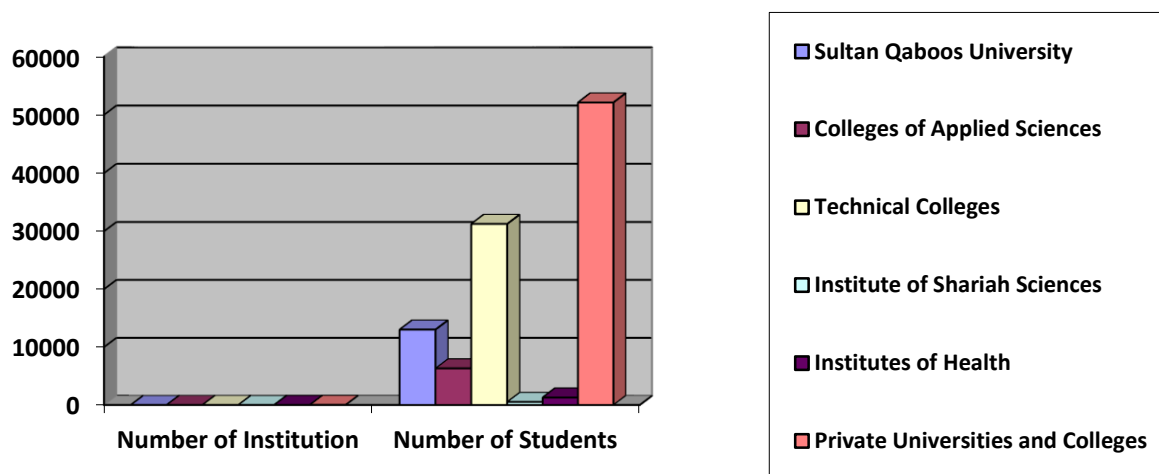
Figure 2.2 Higher education indicator 2012/2013

It is evident that the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) has worked towards ensuring the quality of higher education through programme diversification and the establishment of the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) in order to meet international standards of higher education. However, the quality of higher education that the current Higher Education

Institutes provide has been questioned. It is noteworthy that some public and private higher education graduates find it difficult to procure jobs due to the low quality of their higher education resulting in high rate of unemployment in the local market which has approximately reached 49% (The World Bank, 2018). Baporikar and Shah (2012) affirm that despite the MoHE efforts to meet international standards of higher education, the quality of education in HEIs "in terms of knowledge acquisition and skills seems to be missing and is not up to the desired level" (p.10). Therefore, the government "needs to revisit the policy of funding private Higher Educational Institutes and enforce the laws and regulations to ensure proficient graduates whose experience can allow them to compete in the international job market (Issan, 2013, p.13)". In addition, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education should work simultaneously as a single network to meet the international standards in higher education as several studies show that there is a big gap between school education and higher education (Baporikar & Shah, 2012; Al-Mamari, 2011; Al-Sadi, 2012)

2.5 The Development of pre- service English Language teacher preparation programmes in Oman.

As it was mentioned above, Oman spends 17.5% of its total expenditure on education (The Ministry of Education & The World Bank, 2012) which resulted in massive development of the education infrastructure including a substantial increase in the number of schools and students receiving education in the country (refer to 2.3). Therefore, there was a pressing need to prepare qualified Omani teachers to accommodate this inflation in the number of schools and students. Many pre-service teacher preparation programmes have been established to prepare qualified Omani teachers. In fact, there has been a comprehensive transformation in the development of

pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes in Oman since 1977. The first Teacher Training Institute (TTI) was established in 1977. It received preparatory school leavers who were trained for three years to graduate as elementary school teachers. Unfortunately, the graduates were found inadequate in English (4.0-4.5 on IELTS) and "lacked proper training and qualification (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p.143). Therefore, striving for quality education, the Teacher Training Institute was later transformed to Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges (ITTCs) which trained pre-service English teachers for two years to graduate with a diploma in teaching (Al-Issa, 2010). Likewise, the graduates of the Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges were also found to be linguistically and methodologically inadequate in English language teaching (ibid, 2010).

Furthermore, the first state-owned University, Sultan Qaboos University, was opened in 1986. The College of Education is one of the oldest Colleges in SQU and it is responsible for preparing pre-service English language teachers. Yet, SQU graduates were also found linguistically and methodologically inadequate in teaching English in the Omani schools due to the lack of proper teaching practice in the programme. (ibid). It was also found that the design of the ELT pre-service teacher preparation programme at Sultan Qaboos University had innumerable weaknesses in its structure and content, which negatively affected the quality of the prospective teachers (Al-Issa, 2006 & 2009b).

Therefore, in order to enhance the quality of pre-service teacher preparation programmes, the Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges were converted to six Colleges of Education in 1995 which offered a four-year teacher preparation degree programme to prepare pre-service English teachers academically and professionally to teach English

in the Omani schools. A short time later, the six public Colleges of Education were transformed to Applied Sciences Colleges to embrace new specializations including Communication Studies, Information Technology, Design and International Business Administration. As a result of this reform, the pre-service English teacher preparation programme was phased out in five Colleges of Applied Sciences except one College which was later converted to a College of Education. Currently, there are also some private Universities and Colleges in Oman that offer pre-service English teacher preparation programme to provide the Omani schools with qualified Omani English language teachers. However, the difference between these institutes in the introduction of the English teacher preparation programme "is substantial and lies in the academic and administrative structure, and quality and quantity of types of knowledge presented to the prospective teachers." (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). Figure 2.3 manifests the development of the pre-service teacher preparation programmes in Oman since 1977.

The Development of Pre-serive Teacher Prepration Programmes in Oman

Teacher Training Institute

Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges

College of Education (SQU)

Colleges of Education

Private Universities and Colleges
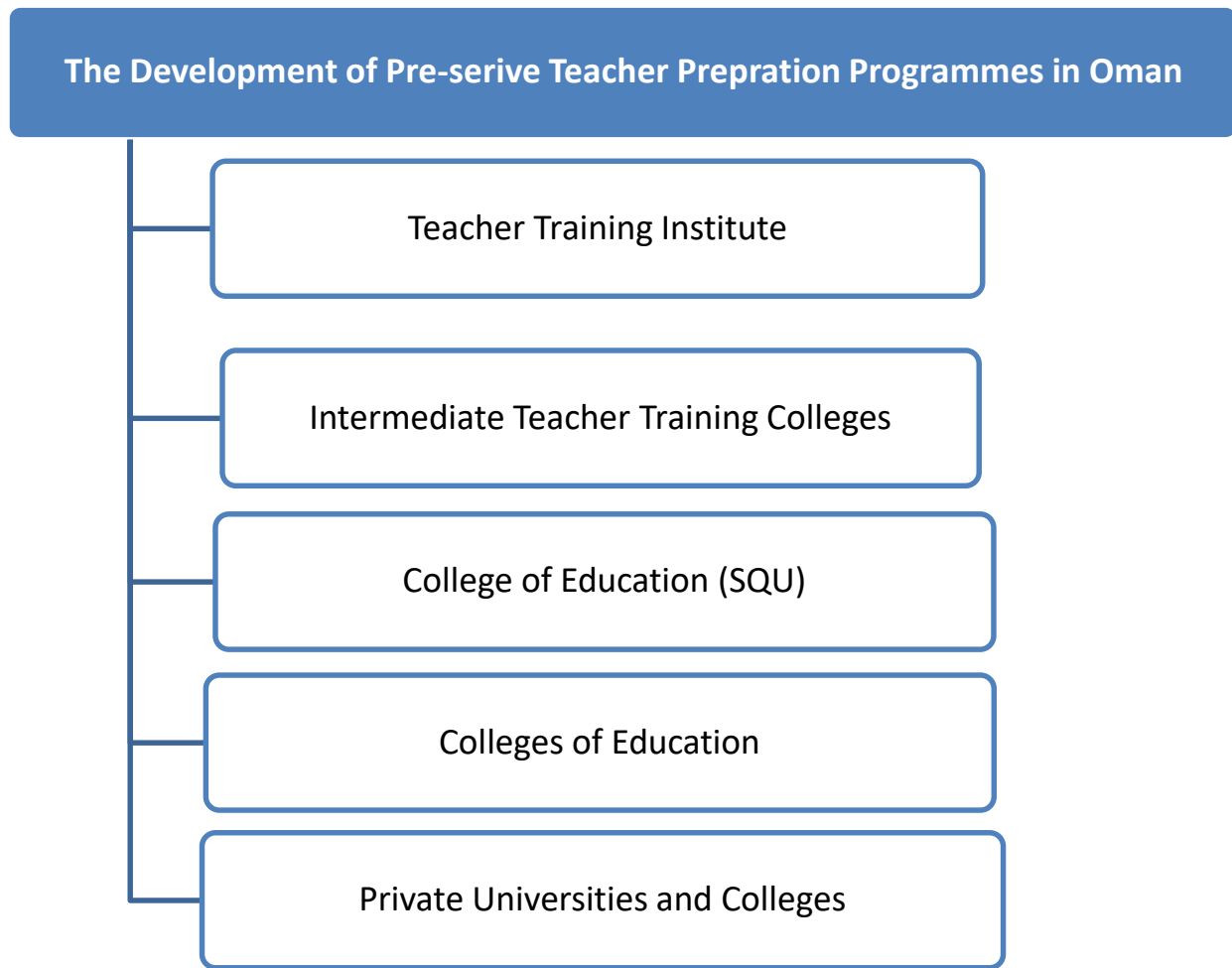
Figure 2.3 The development of pre-service teacher preparation programmes in Oman

2.6 The Pre-service English teacher preparation programme at the College under investigation

The College under investigation in this study has been offering the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme since two decades. The main aim of the programme is to prepare qualified Omani English Language teachers for the public and private schools and colleges in Oman. It also aims to meet international standards of English language teaching. The pre-service English language teacher preparation programme is four years of study. Before 2008, the programme consisted of a Foundation Programme Year (FPY) aimed at developing pre-service English language teachers' proficiency in English. The Foundation Programme Year offered different English language courses to assist pre-service English teachers to transit to the degree programme - English language teaching. However the first year was a non-credited foundation year, all pre-service English teachers were required to undertake it. In 2008, the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme has adopted the General Foundation Programme (GFP) that streams students into four levels (A, B, C and D). The General Foundation Programme has initially been applied in all the new programmes in the Colleges of Applied Sciences and private Colleges and Universities (refer to 2.4). After that, the GFP has been introduced to the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme in the College under investigation. These days, all new students in all the different specializations including English language teaching must undergo the General Foundation Programme (GFP) which consists of English language courses, General study skills, Basic Mathematics and IT courses. The GFP is currently "a compulsory entrance qualification" (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p. 146) to the pre-

service English language teacher preparation programme. The GFP aims to prepare pre-service teachers academically before transiting to the degree programme. However, pre-service English teachers who provide a recognisable English language certificate that indicates an adequate level of English language, "an IELTS score of at least 5.0 with none of the four areas of writing, speaking, listening and reading below 4.5, or a TOEFL score of at least 500" (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p. 146), will join the degree programme directly. It is found, though, that 80% of HEIs students in Oman undertake the General Foundation programme (Al-Mamari, 2011) because they are unable to obtain the required English language level that will exempt them from undertaking the GFP due to their low level of English skills.

According to the English language teaching study plan (Appendix 1) in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme in the College under scrutiny, pre-service English teachers are required to study 8 academic semesters during the four credited years of the programme. It is obvious that the study plan offers a variety of linguistic, educational and literature courses. Most importantly, there are two college based practicum courses and two school based practicum courses, all of which aim to provide pre-service English teacher with sufficient teaching practice at the College and in the cooperating schools. It is noteworthy that school based practicum is a requirement for all pre-service teachers in the pre-service teacher preparation programmes of other subjects in the College under study including Arabic, Chemistry and Physics. Graduates of the pre-service English teacher preparation programme under study are required to take the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) as a condition to join the teaching profession in public schools. The minimum result for acceptance in the Ministry

of Education is band 6. In 2008, the first cohort of the programme graduates achieved a maximum result of band 7.5 in IELTS.   Strikingly, this result was not achieved in the same year in any of the other pre-service English teacher preparation programmes in the country. Many factors could have contributed to this outstanding result that are actually beyond the scope of the present study.

As it was mentioned above, the programme offers four practicum courses which are essentially the crux of the teacher preparation programme. These four practicum courses are divided into two college based practicum courses (Curr170 and Curr180) that are offered in the 6th and 7th semesters and two school based practicum courses (Curr190 and Curr200) which are offered in the 7th and 8th semesters.

2.6.1 College based practicum (Simulated teaching – Micro-teaching) in the programme under study.

The main objective of the college based practicum course (CBP) is to familiarize pre-service teachers with the four competencies (planning, teaching strategies, content-mastery and micro-teaching competency). Generally, CBP offers a variety of fundamental topics related to the teaching of English in the classroom including lesson planning, aspects of foreign language teaching, aspects of classroom techniques, educational technology and classroom management. In the sequence of the course, pre-service teachers are given the opportunity to simulate real teaching situations by teaching their classmates at the College. Pre-service English teachers are required to use the schools' English language curriculum to micro-teach their classmates at the College. Every pre-service teacher should teach two training sessions. At the end of each session, the course teacher and other pre-service teachers work collaboratively to provide the pre-service teacher with comprehensive feedback. The main text-books that are used in the college

based practicum courses are "The practice of English language teaching" by Jeremy Harmer (2001) and "Teaching Practice: A Handbook for teachers in training" by Gower (2005). Micro-teaching makes 70% of CBP's assessment scheme and 30% is allotted to the pen and paper mid-term exam that basically tests pre-service English teachers' theoretical knowledge of the course.

2.6.2 School based practicum (Teaching practice) under investigation

Despite the fact that school based practicum is the cornerstone of the programme under study, it is surprisingly the only course that does not have a course description. In fact, the aims of the SBP are not documented but left to the rationality and practicality of the course. Therefore, based on the teaching practice literature (refer to 3.4) and my professional knowledge as a teacher in the programme, it can be said that the school based practicum under study aims to provide pre-service teachers with valuable opportunities to practise English language teaching in real classrooms. It also aims to familiarize pre-service teachers with content knowledge in the schools' English language curriculum and prepare them for a learner centred foreign language pedagogy that is currently applied in the Basic Education schools. In addition, SBP helps pre-service teachers to understand the school social community and develop a sense of responsibility towards their students and school staff.

As part of the requirements of the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) in the programme under study, pre-service English teachers are required to undertake two school based practicum courses – Curr 190 and Curr 200 in the 7th and 8th semesters consecutively (refer to Appendix 1). It is worth mentioning that the school based practicum under study is based on the partnership model (refer 3.4.2). However, some minor modifications were brought to the current SBP course. In both courses, pre-service teachers are assigned to the local

cooperating schools. While female pre-service English teachers are sent to Cycle One schools (Grades 1-4) in semester 7 and to Cycle Two girls' schools (Grades 5-12) in semester 8, male pre-service English teachers are only sent to Cycle Two boys' schools in both semesters. Pre-service English teachers visit the cooperating schools twice a week for approximately 12 weeks in each semester. College supervisors are asked to supervise the same pre-service teachers for six consecutive weeks and later move to a different cooperating school to evaluate different pre-service teachers for the following six weeks. Each pre-service teacher should be evaluated four times by two different supervisors in order to get accurate and reliable results about the pre-service teacher's performance in the classroom. At the end of each observation, the college supervisor provides the pre-service teacher with verbal and written feedback but she/he is not allowed to inform the pre-service teachers about their marks.

As it was mentioned above, since there is no course description for the SBP, the assessment scheme of the course as well as the duties and responsibilities of the practicum triad are not documented. The protocol is that college supervisors inform pre-service teachers verbally about the assessment scheme of the course. Actually, on the first day of SBP, the college supervisor usually meets with the pre-service teachers in the cooperating school and hand them the classroom observation form that is used to evaluate pre-service teacher's teaching in the classrooms (Appendix 2). The College supervisor also meets with the cooperating English language teachers and the cooperating school's principal and gives them two different evaluation forms that should be used to evaluate the pre-service English teachers. In fact, the evaluation form that the cooperating teacher uses to evaluate pre-service English teacher is similar to the form

used by the college supervisor which basically consists of 20 elements that are disseminated to 5 main criteria including: personality, language proficiency, lesson preparation, instructions, and classroom management and achievement of aims (refer to Appendix 2). On the other hand, the cooperating school's principal uses a completely different form (Appendix 3) that focuses on different criteria including adherence to the cooperating school's regulations, participation in the school's activities, punctuality and effective cooperation with the cooperating teachers and school administration. It can be observed that the school principal's evaluation form concentrates on pre-service teachers' attitudes, behaviours and personal attributes. While 80% of the SBP total assessment mark is given by the college supervisor, the cooperating teacher and school principal are authorised to deal with the other 20% of the course total mark based on their evaluation of the pre-service teacher's performance in the classroom in particular and the cooperating school in general. As an extracurricular activity, pre-service English teachers are requested to write a self-reflection after each lesson they teach in the cooperating schools (refer to Appendix 4). Since there is no course description, the purpose of introducing post lesson self-reflection to the course remains unidentified. However, it is a good attempt from a college supervisor in the programme to add elements of criticality to the SBP course.

Although school based practicum has significant implications for the preparation of English language teachers in the programme under study, there have been repeated complaints about its effectiveness (refer to 1.1 &1.2). Therefore, the present study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the school based practicum course in preparing qualified

Omani pre-service English teachers. It also seeks to provide an agenda to improve the quality of the teaching practice components of the programme.

2.7 Conclusion

The chapter has clearly defined the context of the present study. It has also explored the education reforms in Oman and indicated that there has been significant quantitative mutation in the number of schools and Higher Education Institutes in the country. However, the infrastructure expansion in the education sector didn't translate to improvement in the quality of the students' learning, particularly in improving students' proficiency in English. The chapter has also highlighted the development of pre-service English teacher preparation programmes in Oman with special reference to the programme under study. The chapter has concluded that establishing a quality programme that prepares qualified Omani English language teachers, is a necessity to improve school students' level in English and consequently to improve the quality of education in Oman.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The literature review chapter provides a brief synopsis about the phenomenal spread of English in the world and its implications for the industry of English language teaching. Since the study targets pre-service English language teachers, it is imperative to discuss the penetration of the English language in the outer and expanding circles and the hegemony of the English language teaching industry in the educational sectors in these countries. The chapter also depicts a practical context of ELT and highlights the critical role of the members involved in the process of English language teaching. Furthermore, a detailed exploration of pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes and their different conceptual frameworks is addressed in the chapter. Subsequently, based on the reviewed pre-service teacher education literature, I propose a conceptual framework for the pre-service teacher knowledge base that considers the current global role of the English language as a lingua franca, and the social and cultural context of English language teaching. The chapter also focuses on the practical components of the pre-service English teacher preparation programmes – micro-teaching and teaching practice. It provides a comprehensive discussion of the crucial role of teaching practice in pre-service teacher preparation programmes. Since school based practicum / teaching practice is the topic under study, different models of teaching practice are significantly

presented and evaluated in this chapter. In addition, the chapter presents insights from previous studies on teaching practice. A detailed section is advocated in this chapter to address the challenges confronted by pre-service teachers during their practicum experience. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the theoretical groundings of the study. The sociocultural theory that embraces the notion of the zone of proximal development to teacher education forms the basis of the present study and it is discussed thoroughly in the chapter. The literature review chapter ends with an interest in the pre-service community of practice model aiming by the end of this study to propose a practical framework for practicum community of practice that can be implemented in the school based practicum course under study.

3.2 The Enterprise of English Language Teaching

It is noteworthy that the recent years have marked rapid growth of the English language as a worldwide lingua franca. It is also evident that the phenomenal spread of English is remarkable and "No other language has ever had the influence in world affairs that English has today" (Wardhaugh, 1987, p.131). English has significantly maintained its salient and powerful position in the globe as it is spoken by approximately 1.5 million people around the world (Crystal, 1997, p.5). Several historical and cultural factors are believed to have accelerated the phenomenal spread of English and its current powerful position. Crystal (1997); Wardhaugh (1987); Phillipson (1992); Pennycook (1994); Ciprianová and Vančo (2010); Singh, Kell and Pandian (2002) point out that the high wave of immigration to the English native speaking countries, colonialism, internationalization of education, globalization and the massive influence of internet and

advanced technology in education have contributed to the rapid growth of English as a lingua franca.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning in this context that the spread of English in the world has been portrayed through three different circles in which English has a different status (Kachru, 1990) – the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle. The inner circle comprises countries that speak English as its native language but English in the outer circle is used as a second language, for instance, India, Pakistan, Singapore and Nigeria. In addition, the expanding circle includes the countries where English has the status of a foreign language. On the other hand, Phillipson (1992) depicts the phenomenal spread of English using the notions of the Centre and periphery. He indicates that the centre comprises the core English speaking countries, while the periphery involves countries in which English is used as a second language or as a foreign language. Phillipson's (1992) notion of periphery was criticized as it depicts a passive role of the periphery communities and it clearly perpetuates the uneven distribution of power between the centre and periphery countries. Therefore, the present study only adopts Kachru's (1990) representation of the spread of English in the world.

In fact, it can be observed that language educational policies in the outer and expanding circles have extensively supported the spread of English as a global language. English is preferred to the indigenous languages in some of these countries as "...structural factors ensure English advances at the expense of local languages, and ELT professionalism is a key link in this process" (Phillipson 1992, p 306). Furthermore, it is notable that social mobility and success, in the outer and expanding circles, is "associated with the knowledge of English and the Western model of education" (Ciprianová & Vančo, 2010,

p.126). Actually, English in the outer and expanding circles is perceived as a language of prestige, wealth, privileges and "a means of approaching nearer the throne of world economic dominance" (Holly 1990, p.17).

It is thus the industry of English language teaching (ELT) or sometimes referred to as (TESOL) in these countries has gained much importance in recent years. ELT has considerably embarked as a standalone field since the 20th century. Pennington and Hoekje (2014) asserts that English language teaching is a complex and hybrid enterprise that incorporates different facets including instruction, profession, service and business. It also comprises a set of practices and areas of knowledge and expertise that operate within an international, multilingual, and multicultural environment and which is also affected by the dynamic interplay of global and local forces. It is worth mentioning that Pennington and Hoekje (2014) ELT framework supports the theoretical basis of the present study that is clearly manifested in section (3.5). Prior research generally confirms that the field of English language teaching is not an isolated field but a mixture of cultural, political, commercial, social, historical and humanistic frames that intersect to construct the educational field of ELT. Pennington and Hoekje (2014) have significantly grouped the relevant frames of ELT into categories of work frames and two types of sociocultural context frames. The ELT work frames comprise different perspectives of ELT work such as instruction, profession, service and business. Additionally, the second category consists of internal and external sociocultural context frames. The internal sociocultural frame involves language learners, teachers, researchers and administrators whereas the external sociocultural frame deals with the larger social and political aspects of ELT.

It is important to mention that Pennington and Hoekje's (2014) ELT framework proposes a practical context of English language teaching in the outer and expanding circles as it has been observed that ELT in these circles primarily focuses on the instruction frame during the preparation of pre-service English language teachers and ignores the sociocultural context of language teaching that plays a crucial role in creating a real and dynamic atmosphere in an English language classroom. Consequently, ELT fails to achieve the communicative goal of language teaching in the outer and expanding circles. The consensus has been that "the very nature of teaching is "constantly requiring situational judgments based on complex combinations" (Preston & Walker, 1993 as cited in Sim, 2006, p. 78). Thus, the separation of English language teaching from the situational context and culture elements causes a lacuna in pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes. The following section spotlights on pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes and the conceptual framework of pre-service English teachers' knowledge base.

3.3 Pre-service English Teacher Preparation Programmes

The preparation of English language teachers is a critical issue in the contemporary pre-service teacher education research as "pre-service English teacher education determines the quality of future in-service English teachers." (Tercanlioglu, 2008, p.148). In addition, the consensus has been that without adequate preparation in language teaching, graduates of pre-service English teacher preparation programmes will "be left in the lurch" (Al-Mekhlafi, 2012 p.161). Similarly, Marland (2007) asserts that quality pre-service teacher preparation programmes provide pre-service teachers with "new perspectives on teaching and learning that may challenge pre-service teachers' existing values, beliefs,

attitudes and perspectives and they provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to acquire new skills and behaviours that are crucial to their professional development" (p.11). However, it has been observed that pre-service teacher preparation programmes did not receive much attention in language teacher education research (Vélez-Rendón, 2002) despite various attempts to postulate the essential competencies that are mandatory for the preparation of qualified English language teachers (Adlan,1980).

There are currently two types of pre-service English as foreign/second language EFL/ESL teacher preparation programmes – the concurrent and consecutive models. The concurrent model offers general (Arts) and pedagogy courses simultaneously and candidates eventually graduate with a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed). On the other hand, the consecutive model's candidates are offered general courses and they graduate with Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.). Afterwards, graduates of the consecutive model can enrol in an education programme of pedagogy courses (Ed.) to be work as certified teachers. Unlike the concurrent model, theory and practice in the consecutive model are clearly separated. Indeed, the separation between theory and practice in teacher preparation programme has widely been challenged for decades. Dewey (1962) asserts that theory should not be separated from practice. He argues that the context of professional education and the professional instruction of teachers must include both theoretical and practical work, as the separation of these two important elements leads to improper implementation of teaching theories.

Furthermore, Darling-Hammond (2006b) argues that preparation of qualified English language teachers stresses a good balance between content knowledge and teaching practice.

Therefore, much attention has been recently drawn to the concurrent model. The consensus has been that pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes should consist of educative and training elements. The following section clearly highlights the knowledge and skills that pre-service teachers should acquire to perform effectively in an English classroom.

3.3.1 Conceptual frameworks of pre-service English teacher knowledge base.

Discussions regarding what should constitute the knowledge base of pre-service English teachers have dominated research in recent years. However, the term 'knowledge base' has gained popularity in language teacher education research, there is still a debate on what constitutes the knowledge base of pre-service teachers. Fradd and Lee (1998) defines knowledge base as "the repertoire of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers require to effectively carry out classroom practices" (P.761). Richards (1997) asserts that pre-service teacher preparation programmes should consist of educative and training elements. He classifies the educative elements as theories and concepts about language teaching and learning and the training elements as trainable teaching skills. Similarly, Wallace (1991 & 1998) stresses that any pre-service teacher preparation programme should offer two types of knowledge: received knowledge including language and teaching theories and experiential knowledge including direct contact with real students in the real teaching context. Likewise, Ellis (1997) discusses the pre-service teacher knowledge base through using different terminologies but his framework supports Richards' (1997) and Wallace's (1991 & 1998) classifications. Ellis (1997) emphasizes the importance of experiential and awareness- raising teacher leaning practices. The

former focuses on field teaching and the latter develops "the pre-service teacher's conscious understanding of the principles underlying second language teaching and/or the practical techniques that teachers can use in different kinds of lessons" (Ellis, 1997, p.27). In addition, Tarone and Allwright (2005) developed a conceptual framework of pre-service language teacher preparation programme that is similar to Richards (1997) and Ellis (1997) but they added a third dimension - teacher development "which resides both on training and education and is constructed continuously throughout the whole teaching" (Al-Rubaie, 2010, p.84).

Furthermore, Shulman (2002) explains that the classical model of teacher knowledge base should cover subject matter content knowledge (the arrangement of data relevant to the subject in the teacher's mind), pedagogical knowledge (delivery of information in a coherent, learner-oriented manner) and curricular knowledge (teacher's awareness of the curriculum as constructed from contextual requirements). In the same way, Mattsson, Eilertsen and Rorrison (2011) contend that pre-service teachers should have a combination of "declarative knowledge (knowing that), procedural knowledge (knowing how) and conditional knowledge (knowing when and why to apply certain procedures)" (p.5). Additionally, Kelly, Grenfell, Allan, Kriza and McEvoy (2004) propose a wider context of pre-service teacher knowledge base and they state that pre-service teachers need to be equipped with competence through the emphasis on the following elements: "A course in language proficiency" (p.5), "Training in language teaching methodologies and in state-of-the-art classroom techniques and activities" (p.46) and "Training in the ways of maintaining and enhancing ongoing personal language competence" (p.68).

Nevertheless, pre-service English language teacher knowledge base has been found to lack a uniform description (Al-Rubaie, 2010) which could be attributed to the continuous refinement and revision that the term has experienced because of the changing status of the English language globally. Through decades, there have been changes in the roles of teachers and learners in foreign and second language classrooms, classroom pedagogy and learning outcomes that has resulted in substantial changes in the teacher content knowledge (ibid). In the mid-seventies there existed a competence-based teacher education programme that was based on a set of competencies that were used as a criteria for success (Issa & Al-Khayat, 1987). The competence model was found ineffective and it disconnected theory from practice. Therefore, this prescriptive portrayal of teaching was replaced by a more analytical view of teaching that portrays teaching as a complex, dynamic, intellectual, and interactive activity that does not proceed linearly but is rather subject to change and is context dependent (Griffin, 1986; Smylie & Conyers, 1991). Based on the analytical view of teaching, Grossman, Hammerness and McDonald (2009) proposed the practice based curriculum that is organised around a set of core practices. They believe that organizing teacher preparation programme around a set of practices creates an integrated programme that lessens the separation between theory and practice and works "on a curriculum that puts practice at the centre of all endeavours." (ibid, p.22). However, Freeman (2007) criticizes the knowledge base model that operates on knowledge, skills and attitude consisting of a set of "fuzzy, usually ill-defined, perhaps indefinable ideas and concepts" (p.6). Additionally, organising the programme around a set of core practices portrays teaching as an "individual endeavour of enacting a prescribed repertoire of practices." (Smylie & Conyers, 1991). Moreover, in this model,

pre-service teachers are not encouraged to reflect on their teaching and their interaction with the students in the classrooms which has led "to despair of their competence and others to develop habits of teaching that, inevitably, are counterproductive to successful teaching and satisfying learning" (Griffin, 1986, p.278).

It is thus a new model of pre-service English teacher knowledge base emerges in the research of language teacher education which focuses on culture, social context, critical awareness and reflective teaching. Troudi (2005) argues that language is more than form and structure and he emphasizes the importance of placing language within a socio-cultural context. It is believed that prospective teachers develop their teaching skills effectively by being involved in "a dynamic socio-cultural process framed by the institutional forms and contexts where their teaching is done" (ibid, p.117). Although the new model of teacher knowledge base places great emphasis on culture and social context of English language teaching, it has been criticized for marginalizing the importance of language as an individual agent (Freeman, 2007). In addition, Al- Mahrooqi (2012) argues that the socio-cultural experiences of learning are given more prominence than the methodological and technical dimensions of teaching.

Therefore, Al-Rubaie (2010) recommends including critical knowledge as an element in the language teacher knowledge base. She believes that training TESOL pre-service teachers in "double thinking" helps them to move smoothly between the source and target language cultures. It also prepares pre-service teachers "to critically assess the complex phenomena that affect English language teaching" (ibid, p.88).

The discussion above clearly indicates that there is not yet a uniform and clear conceptual framework of pre-service English language teacher knowledge base despite the various

attempts to identify the main components of pre-service English language teacher knowledge base. I believe that pre-service teacher knowledge base framework should function within the socio-cultural context of language teaching. In addition, linguistic knowledge, received or educative knowledge, experiential knowledge, Meta awareness or critical reflective teaching knowledge, professional knowledge, technological pedagogical content knowledge should form the basis of the teacher knowledge base of any teacher education programme.

3.3.2 A proposed framework of pre-service English teacher knowledge base

The paucity of research on pre-service English language teacher education and unavailability of a uniform conceptual framework of pre-service English language teacher knowledge base has motivated me to propose a framework of what pre-service teacher knowledge base should consist of. The proposed framework has considered the current important and global role of the English language as an international language and the social and cultural context of English language teaching. Current theories of learning and teaching foreign or second languages and the new roles of teachers and learners in the classroom, form the basis of the proposed framework. Kennedy (1990) believes that teacher knowledge base should form a complete, inseparable unit of knowledge. The proposed framework consists of seven important components: linguistic knowledge, received and educative knowledge, experiential and training knowledge, professional knowledge, social, cultural and contextual knowledge, meta awareness and critical reflective knowledge, and technological pedagogical content knowledge. Each component will be discussed in the light of the relevant literature.

a) **Linguistic knowledge**. Pre-service English language teachers are required to obtain a high level of proficiency in English. They should have excellent command of the English language and good communication skills. Therefore, pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes should offer a variety of English courses to improve pre-service teachers' proficiency in English. Merino (1997) argues that "the most important professional duty for non-NESTs is to improve their command of English as much as possible." (p. 76). There are several studies that target the linguistic competence of pre-service English teachers. Gan (2013) investigated the challenges that non-native pre-service ESL teachers from Hong Kong experienced in an eight-week teaching practicum. The study indicates that inadequacy in English language competence impacted negatively on the pre-service teachers' teaching performance and their relationship with their students. Similarly, an evaluative study on EFL pre-service programme at Kuwait University evaluated the linguistic competence and classroom performance of EFL pre-service teachers. Al-Shalabi (1988) employed an observation sheet consisting of 36 language and teaching competencies to evaluate the linguistic competence and classroom performance of EFL pre-service English teachers. The findings show high rating of almost 80% of the candidates in teaching competencies but their scores in language competencies were dissatisfactory. Therefore, it is noteworthy that Al-Shalabi's (1988) findings refute Medgyes's (1992) hypothesis that there is a correlation between the pre-service English teachers obtaining higher proficiency level in English and being better English language teachers. Generally, the findings

of previous studies have proven that linguistic knowledge is a crucial component of English language teacher knowledge base.

b) **Received and educative knowledge** primarily focuses on theories about language learning and teaching. It also consists of language teaching methodologies and learning strategies. In fact, the process of learning how to teach should be clearly informed by the recent teaching and learning theories within the sociocultural context of language teaching. In addition, second language learning theories should have the lion share in any pre-service English language teacher preparation programme to educate pre-service teachers about the milestones in the acquisition of English as a second language. Troudi (2005) disagrees with teacher educators who underestimate the importance of second language acquisition courses in forming English language teacher knowledge base. Furthermore, it is important to be integrate educational psychology courses in the study plan of pre-service English teacher preparation programmes as obtaining a knowledge profile of factors such as motivation and language attitude helps pre-service teachers to deal with many issues related to language teaching and classroom management (ibid).

c) **Professional knowledge** consists of different courses including psychology, psycholinguistics, classroom management, communication that play a dynamic role in enhancing pre-service teachers' professional knowledge. Pre-service teachers are required to gain knowledge of the professional standards framework to function effectively in the classrooms. According to Shabani, Khatib and Ebadi (2010), teacher's professional change comes from two main sources: from within-the teacher's knowledge or beliefs and from outside - school or community.

Therefore, pre-service teachers should act as co-learners with the cooperating teachers and university supervisors "to develop their professional knowledge and practice as they learn to teach." (Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman & Stevens, 2009, p.285).

d) **Social, cultural, and contextual knowledge** should be highly considered in pre-service English language knowledge base. According to Freeman and Johnson (1998), the social, cultural, and contextual knowledge "should include forms of knowledge representation that document teacher learning within the social, cultural and institutional contexts in which it occurs" (p.397). In fact, pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes should prepare pre-service teachers for the school social context and the wider context of the outside community where English is used. The social and cultural knowledge creates a smooth transition from the institution setting to the school setting. It also enhances a reciprocal learning environment (Samson & Collins, 2012).

e) **Meta awareness and critical reflective knowledge:** Liakopoulou (2011) refers to meta awareness and critical reflective knowledge as knowledge of "self" (p. 69). Reflective knowledge could be gained "through reflection to learning, through their teaching experience….and the way they comprehend, interpret" (ibid, p. 69) their teaching practices. Indeed, Meta awareness, thought collectiveness (TCs) and critical reflection are crucial elements that should to be integrated in the process of preparing foreign or second English language teachers. In the context of pre-service English teacher preparation, though collectiveness refers to pre-service English teacher's "behaviours, responses and general orientation to the world"

(Ramanathan, 2002, p. 28) that are shaped by several "components including …student-teacher conferences, social practices….doing presentation… and participating in related administrative tasks" (ibid, pp. 28-29). Therefore, it can be said that pre-service teachers can improve their critical thinking knowledge by "talking and thinking about how their TCs function and are sustained, and how as teachers they individually contribute to the overall functioning and sustenance of TCs" (ibid, p. 7). Furthermore, Castellanos (2013) asserts that the role of critical reflection is crucial to the pre-service teachers' professional growth. In addition, it has been argued that every pre-service teacher preparation programme "must include a direct challenge to personal beliefs; otherwise, learning among teachers remains shallow and imitative." (Ramanathan, 2002, p. 5). Moreover, critical reflection on teaching practice turns pre-service teachers to professionals rather than "functioning as … factory workers along a production chain, delivering a range of skills and knowledge to a homogenous group of students" (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p.148). It is found that trainee teachers in the United States "are eager to get involved into reflective and problematizing practices despite ideological and institutional constraints." (Al- Rubaie, 2010, p.88).

f) **Technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK)** is one of the missing and ignored elements in pre-service English teacher preparation programmes. I, as a teacher educator believe that technological pedagogical content knowledge should be part of pre-service teacher knowledge base framework. Graham, Tripp and Wentworth (2009) refer to this knowledge as educational technology. Indeed, in the age of globalization and technology revolution, the application of technology in

English language teaching is very appealing as it induces motivating and stress-free learning environment. It is believed that pre-service teachers acquire TPCK when it is applied in real contexts (Koehler & Mishra, 2008). Therefore, teacher educators should focus on modelling the use of technology in English language teaching methodology courses as well as micro-teaching courses. Hall (2006) found out that as a result of University instructors modelling of technology in the methodology classes, pre-service teachers could design effective lessons that integrated technology to support their student language learning.

g) **Experiential and training knowledge** is acquired through the pre-service teachers' involvement in teaching practice in the cooperating schools. The term teaching practice is used in the present study to refer to a compulsory course in pre-service teacher preparation programmes. During this course, pre-service teachers are required to practise teaching in a real English language classroom for a certain number of hours (Ishihara, 2005). In addition, Al-Mekhlafi (2012) defines teaching practice as "a strategy designed to provide pre-service teachers with hands-on experience" (p.161). Three main members are involved in teaching practice: the pre-service teacher who is learning to teach, the College supervisor who supervises and evaluates the pre-service teacher's teaching, and the cooperating teacher whose class is being taught by the pre-service teacher. The literature on pre-service teacher education is rich of terminologies that are synonyms of the term 'teaching practice', for instance, clinical training, practicum, internship, field experience, practica and school based training or school based

practicum. As it mentioned above (refer to 1.1), 'school based practicum', 'practicum' and 'teaching practice' are used interchangeably in the present study. In fact, the proposed conceptual framework of pre-service teacher's knowledge base has addressed important components that every pre-service teacher preparation programme has to extensively consider during the preparation of future teachers.

3.3.3 The practical components of pre-service English teacher preparation programmes

It is clearly indicated throughout the study that the ultimate aim of any pre-service teacher preparation programme is to prepare high-quality English language teachers. It is thus essential to provide pre-service English teachers with effective and efficient practice in teaching English. Therefore, the proposed framework of the pre-service English teacher knowledge base (refer to 3.3.2) emphasizes that experiential and training knowledge is a fundamental component of the pre-service teacher knowledge base. The experiential and training knowledge is actually exhibited in many pre-service English language preparation programmes through two main courses - university / college based practicum (simulated teaching / micro-teaching) and school based practicum (teaching practice / field experience). A brief discussion of the university / college based practicum (micro-teaching) is presented in this section while a separate section is devoted for teaching practice since it is the main target of the present study.

It is noteworthy that pre-service teachers in most pre-service teacher preparation programmes initially practise teaching in the pre-service teacher preparation institutes before moving to authentic settings in the hosting schools. The introduction of the "designed settings", which is referred to as micro-teaching or simulated teaching practice (Lampert, 2005) in pre-service teacher preparation institutes, provides pre-service

teachers with opportunities to practise teaching in a controlled setting before moving to a more authentic setting to gain confidence in teaching. Bell (2007) defines micro-teaching as "to teach a lesson to the peers in order to gain experience with lesson planning and delivery" (p.24). Actually, pre-service teachers practise teaching in artificial learning environments that comprise their peers as learners (Etkina, 2010) and their lecturers as supervisors. At the end of each micro-teaching session, pre-service teachers receive feedback from the lecturer and their classmates.

In fact, the literature on pre- service teacher education consists of several studies that support the introduction of simulated teaching in pre-service teacher preparation programmes. Chien (2014) used oral interviews to explore Elementary school pre-service English language teachers' experience with simulated teaching. The study participants indicated that simulated teaching has added a sense of professionalism to their teaching as they could identify their strengths and weaknesses through the teaching of different topics and language foci, and through the constructive feedback they received from their peers. In addition, Bahçivan (2017); Etkina (2010); Undiyaundeye and Inakwu (2012); Choudhary, Chaudhary and Malik (2013); Niess (2005); Fernandez and Robinson (2006) affirm that micro-teaching positively contributed to the development of pre-service teachers' subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, technological pedagogical content knowledge, instructional knowledge, practical knowledge and effective teaching techniques.

Similarly, Bagatur's (2015) mixed methods study that investigated the attitudes of 72 Turkish pre-service English language teachers towards micro-teaching has showed that all pre-service teachers have a positive attitude towards micro-teaching. In addition,

Ogeyik's (2009) and Dewikat's (2013) studies that also explored pre-service teachers' perceptions of micro-teaching have both revealed that pre-service teachers have a positive attitude towards micro-teaching. Indeed, the pre-service teachers' positive attitude towards micro-teaching that the previous studies have confirmed supports Fernandez's (2010) plea that simulated teaching practice should be integrated in pre-service language teacher preparation programme because it helps pre-service teachers to develop a consistent understanding of language teaching, try out different teaching methodologies and gain confidence in classroom management.

3.4 Teaching practice (School based Practicum)

As it was mentioned in Chapter One that the present study focuses on teaching practice as it is the main pillar of pre-service English teacher preparation programmes. The present study explores the school based practicum from different perspectives. It primarily aims to highlight the potentials of the school based practicum and identify any challenges confronted by the pre-service English teachers and their college supervisors. The study also attempts to suggest solutions for possible problems to improve the quality of the school based practicum course under study. Therefore, this section delineates the importance of teaching practice and its different models in the literature of pre-service teacher education.

3.4.1 Teaching practice and the practicum triad

Teaching practice is "A phase of teacher preparation characterized by extended, intensive clinical experience in which teacher candidates have opportunities to develop and demonstrate professional competencies under the supervision of a mentor or cooperating teacher" (Coward, Hamman, Johnson, Lambert, Indiatsi & Zhou, 2015, p.198). The practicum triad represents the three main members who are actively involved in teaching

practice: the pre-service teacher, the university/college supervisor and the cooperating teacher (refer to 3.3.2). It is worth mentioning that the literature on English language teaching and pre-service teacher education indicates that practicum is the cornerstone of any teacher preparation programme (Cameron & Wilson, 1993). It is considered one of the most influential components of teacher preparation and an essential part of the pre-service preparation of professionals across disciplines. (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009; Farrell, 2003; Ralph, Walker & Wimmer, 2007). In addition, the theory pre-service teachers have learnt in the preparation institute "can be truly meaningful only when it is situated in their own classroom practice through the process of "sense-making" (Johnson, 1996, p.765). Similarly, Perry and Straiton (2011) affirms that teaching practice creates opportunities for pre-service teachers "to apply knowledge, test new skills, and receive feedback" (p.7). Furthermore, there is a consensus in teacher education research that the practicum experience intrinsically induces the pre-service teacher growth and development as teachers (Williams & Katz, 2001; Cooper & Jasman, 2002; Thibeault, 2004; Walkington, 2005; Koç, 2008; Ystifçi, 2011; Perry & Straiton, 2011). It also "assures extensive sense-making opportunities in actual teaching contexts" (Ishihara, 2005, p.153). It is noteworthy that pre-service teachers value practicum experience because it provides them with direct contact and sufficient opportunities to teach English in a real classroom (Coady, Harper & de Jong, 2011). It is also pointed out that during teaching practice, pre-service teachers gain understanding of the daily reality of teaching practice and observe a range of educational philosophies in real classrooms (Aspden, 2017). Most importantly, teaching practice gives pre-service teacher and college supervisors a clear indication of whether the pre-service teacher will survive in an EFL classroom and function as a teacher

(Mellgren, walker & Lange, 1988; Atkinson, Phairee, Sanitchon, Suphanangthong, Graham, Prompruang, & Hopkins, 2008). It is thus important to present the development of teaching practice models in teacher education.

3.4.2 Models of teaching practice

A heated debate has been going on, to identify the best model of teaching practice (Powell, 2000). In fact, different models of teaching practice have been experimented by different pre-service teacher preparation programmes. These models include the traditional model, the partnership model, the clinical supervision model, the apprentice ship or the residency model and the community of practice model.

    a) **The Partnership Model.**

The partnership model of teaching practice involves three individuals into the process of English language teaching preparation: pre-service teacher, college supervisor and cooperating teacher. In this model, the typical teaching practice course takes place at the end of the teacher preparation programme as this model is based on the view that pre-service teachers should be first equipped with teaching and learning theories needed for teaching practice. The partnership model is one of the most widely used traditional models of teaching practice. It was already mentioned that the school based practicum course under study is based on some of the underpinnings of the partnership model (refer to 2.6.2).

In fact, the partnership model allocates pre-service teachers to certain local schools for two or three blocks of school based experience. The teacher educator (college supervisor) visits the pre-service teacher once during the practice period as she has to visit a different pre-service teacher every week. The college supervisor would have no prior knowledge of the student or the school he/she

would visit. At the end of the visit, the college supervisor provides the pre-service teacher with verbal feedback and writes brief comments on the pre-service teacher preparation book. It is obvious that the partnership model provides fewer opportunities for the pre-service teachers to build a "community" in this critical stage of their professional learning development. This traditional model mainly focuses on evaluating the pre-service teachers' teaching abilities than on guiding them to implement teaching methods appropriately. It also lacks the elements of criticality and reflectivity. I believe that practicum should not be viewed as a testing ground but as a learning experience that should be carefully designed and implemented.

a) **The clinical supervision model.**

The clinical supervision model replaced the partnership model. This teaching practice model was developed by Cogan and Associates during the 1950s at Harvard University. Cogan (1973) defines clinical supervision as "the rationale and practice designed to improve the teacher's classroom performance" (p. 9). In other words, it is a "field based approach to instructional supervision" (Sullivan, 1980, p.7). It basically "entails the systematic study and the analysis of teaching and learning events using a carefully planned programme" (Rorrison, 2011). The clinical supervision model goes through different stages that require strong collaboration between the pre-service teacher and the College supervisor. Cogan (1973) has identified the clinical supervision phases as follows:

1. Establishment of the teacher-supervisor relationship

2. Lesson planning by teacher and supervisor

3. Planning the strategy of observation

4. Classroom observation

5. Analysis of the teaching-learning process

6. Planning the strategy of the conference

7. Conference

8. Renewed planning

Cogan (1973) emphasizes that the clinical supervision model is not fixed but instead is flexible as both pre-service teacher and college supervisor participate in decision making, lesson planning, conferencing, and the analysis of the teaching learning process. Although the clinical supervision model aims at developing a collaborative relationship between the pre-service teacher and the college supervisor, it is very generic and lacks comprehensive details for each stage.

c) The Apprenticeship or the Residency Model.

The apprenticeship or the residency model of teaching practice has later replaced the traditional clinical supervision model. The residency model emphasizes that "every teacher candidate is required to complete a residency programme that provides them the time and opportunity to integrate theory and practice under the guidance and support of accomplished teachers who are active partners in programme development." (Coffman & Patterson, 2014, p.2). The aim of the residency model is to prepare teachers to be "profession ready", from day one in the schools. Coffman and Patterson (2014) assert that the residency programme should not only aim at preparing future teachers but also at improving student learning. They also emphasize that all teacher preparation stakeholders should be

active participants, and work collectively to improve the quality of pre-service teachers. The residency model does not only focus on teaching but urges the pre-service teachers to analyse and reflect on their own teaching practice with their supervisors and peers. Based on some of the collaborative tenets of the residency model, a new model of teaching practice, the community of practice model, has emerged in the field of pre-service teacher preparation that views learning as a social practice and part of social praxis where every member in practicum community learn from each other. A detailed discussion of the practicum community of practice model will be carried out in Chapter Six as one of the pedagogical recommendations to improve the quality of the school based practicum course under study.

It noteworthy that research on pre-service teacher education emphasizes that pre-service teacher preparation programmes should evaluate their teaching practice models to assure that pre-service teachers get valuable opportunities to practise teaching in the classroom with sufficient guidance and meaningful feedback. Stones (1984); Bullough, Knowles and Crow (1991); McNally, Cope, Inglis and Stronach (1997); Flores (2001); Caires and Almeida (2005); Hamman, Olivárez, Lesley, Button, Chan, Griffith and Elliot (2006) argue that the quality of the teaching practice model, the ultimate support of the college supervisors and cooperating teachers and the quality of the cooperating schools' learning atmosphere contribute to create a successful teaching practice environment.

3.4.3 Insights from previous research studies on teaching practice

Although teaching practice is an essential component of pre-service English teacher preparation programmes, there is a dearth of research on what takes place during teaching practice particularly during the preparation of non-native ESL/EFL pre-service

teacher (Farrell, 2003) because the process of preparing pre-service English language teachers is very complex and challenging (Brisk 2008; Buck, Mast, Ehlers & Franklin, 2005). Similarly, Rorrison (2008) points out that research about teaching practice is neglected and many teaching practice learning opportunities are wasted.

However, there are still few studies that highlight the crucial role of teaching practice in providing pre-service English teachers with sound practice in English language teaching. Attya (1982) compared the standard performance of 42 EFL teachers who graduated from Faculties of Education with that of 38 EFL pre-service teachers who are still doing their practicum course at Ain Shams University, in Egypt. An observation check- list comprising a number of teaching competencies was employed in the study. The findings show that fresh graduates outperformed pre-service teachers who are still undertaking their practicum course particularly with regard to educational and professional competencies related to the use of teaching methods and preparation of daily lessons. Gami (1986) has also found that the second teaching practice course is more effective than the first teaching practice course on pre-service teachers' teaching competencies through the application of observation format that consists of five teaching competencies namely, lesson planning, lessons implementation, academic and professional competencies, teacher-pupil relationship and evaluation. The participants were two groups of pre-service teachers who were randomly selected. The pre-service teachers doing their second teaching practice course outperformed the first practicum course group in four teaching competencies. Furthermore, Al-Mutawa and Al-Dabbous (1997) investigated the effects of teaching practice on 34 EFL student-teachers' acquisition of the necessary

competencies inside the classroom in the Faculty of Education at Kuwait University. Their study show that practicum accelerates pre-service teachers' teaching capacities.

Moreover, there are several studies that have shown that teaching practice has positively contributed to the professional development of pre-service teacher. Badr and Al-Shabbi (1990) conducted a study at King Saud University to identify the role of teaching practice in developing EFL pre-service teachers' teaching skills. The study aimed at comparing pre-assessment and post-assessment scores of candidates in nine teaching competencies such as lesson planning, visual aids, questioning and pupils' interaction. The findings of the study show positive significant differences between the pre-service teachers' scores in post assessment and their scores in pre- assessment on all the nine competences. A similar study was conducted in an ESL programme in New York City (Gebhard, 1990) to track any change in pre-service teachers' teaching behaviour during the sixteen weeks practicum course. The study also highlights some positive changes in the pre-service teachers' behaviours including competencies such as setting up and carrying out lesson, use of classroom space, selection of content and treatment of student's language errors.

Furthermore, Roskos and Walker (1994); Slick (1998); Myles, Cheng, and Wang (2006); Rozelle and Wilson (2012) claim that initial teaching practice provides a powerful future conception of teaching. It was actually found that teaching practice changes pre-service teachers' conceptions about teaching from being a very simple activity to a very complex action that requires more than just transmition of knowledge. Burgess, Briscoe and Williamson (1994) led a project at Curtain University in West Australia to map 122 pre-service teachers' conceptions about teaching before and after their teaching practice.

Pre-service teachers were asked two questions - "what is teaching?" was asked at the beginning of the practicum course and "How have your ideas about teaching changed and what influenced the changes?" was asked at the end of the practicum course. The findings of the study show that the students' conceptions about teaching change considerably after the practicum course. Initially, the participants perceived teaching as a straightforward activity that only involves transmitting knowledge to students but towards the end of their teaching practice, they indicated that teaching is a more complex activity that comprises different social, cultural and political aspects.

In addition, practicum provides the opportunity to make critical connections between theory and practice, and to assume the responsibilities of a practicing teacher (Ewart & Straw, 2005). It is thus the head of the Institute of Education (1981-1990) in Singapore, developed and introduced a practicum curriculum for the pre-service teacher education institute to create a balance between theory and practice and to establish a professional environment where pre-service teachers "could practice the educational principles learned and be exposed to the changing needs and demands of schools" (Mau, 1997, p.54). However, the cooperating teachers in Singapore observe pre-service teachers only six times during the five weeks practicum, while the cooperating teacher in the USA remains in class when the pre-service teacher practices teaching. In fact, pre-service English language teacher preparation programme in the USA and UK are continually scrutinized to provide quality preparation for pre-service teachers. In addition, there has been an improvement in the relationship between Higher Education Institutes and schools as documented in a case study data from 'Modes of Teacher Education project' in England and Wales (Furlong, Barton, Barrett, Whitty & Miles, 1994). It is indicated that

pre-service teacher preparation programmes in these countries have realized the importance of building strong partnership between Higher Education Institutes and schools to train pre-service teachers and develop their teaching skills.

Remarkably, teaching practice is found to have positive impact on pre-service teachers' level of confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Goh, Wong, Choy and Tan (2009) conducted an exploratory study to examine the confidence level of 189 pre-service teachers in knowledge and teaching skills as perceived by themselves, their cooperating teachers and their supervisors at the end of the two practicum courses in the third and fourth year of the initial teacher preparation degree programme in The National Institute of Education in Singapore. The results of the study reveal a significant increase of the pre-service teachers' confidence level. A similar study was conducted earlier in 2004 by Hascher, Cocard and Moser on 150 pre-service teachers from the University of Bern. It also shows a substantial increase in the pre-service teachers' self-confidence at the end of the practicum course. Additionally, Caires and Almeida (2005) conducted a study of 224 Portuguese pre-service teachers, at the University of Minho, to assess the range of experiences pre-service teachers gain between the beginning and the end of the practicum course on five dimensions of teaching practice (1) learning and professional development; (2) professional and institutional socialization; (3) socio-emotional aspects; (4) support/resources/supervision; and (5) vocational development. The findings show a high level of confidence and satisfaction in all the evaluated dimensions except the dimensions of support/resources/supervision and socio-emotional aspects of teaching practice.

On the other hand, Cheng and Tsang (1996) conducted a study to assess the confidence level of 420 pre-service teachers at the beginning and the end of their teaching practice. They found that there is no significant difference between their level of confidence at the beginning and the end of the teaching practice as they were already confident about their teaching competence before the beginning of teaching practice. Interestingly, Oh, Ankers, Llamas and Tomyoy (2005) supported the findings of Cheng and Tsang's (1996) study as they found that there was insignificant difference in the levels of confidence between pre-service teachers who finished their teaching practice and those who have not taken it yet. The results of Oh, Ankers, Llamas and Tomyoy's (2005) and Cheng and Tsang's (1996) studies could be attributed to the improper implementation of the teaching practice course where both studies were conducted.

3.4.4 Challenges confronted by pre-service teachers and college supervisors during teaching practice.

Although there are many documented benefits of teaching practice, it is also indicated that teaching practice is one of the most challenging and frustrating aspects of pre-service teachers' learning to teach journey (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009; Shwu-yong & Waxman, 2009). The consensus has been that teaching practice as a learning journey can involve struggle, loneliness, stress and conflict (Bloomfield, 2010; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Capel, 1997; Murray-Harvey, Slee, Lawson, Silins, Banfield, & Russel, 2000; Murray-Harvey, 2001). Therefore, Caires and Almeida (2005) emphasize that "through the exploration of the fears, doubts, needs, expectations and the achievements perceived, we can obtain a more complete picture of what happens during this process and its effects on the new teachers' overall development and growth (p.112). In fact, previous studies

have shown that the effectiveness of teaching practice is diminished by a range of challenges that are confronted by pre-service teachers and college supervisors during teaching practice. Thereby, a better understanding of these challenges is crucial to optimize the quality of the school based practicum course and propose critical interventions for effective and smooth teaching practice experience. Al-Farra (1993) conducted a quantitative study to identify the problems that pre-service teachers encountered during practicum in Sanaa University, Yemen. The study indicates that lack of training time was the major problem that the pre-service teachers faced during their teaching practice as they could only visit the cooperating schools once a week. Likewise, the findings of Sabir (1989) show that insufficient training time and dissatisfaction with the evaluation procedures were the main concerns of the college supervisors at the College of Education in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In addition, Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) investigated the challenges confronted by teacher education institutes during practicum in 14 Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers (GCETs) of Punjab province in Pakistan. The study employed a concurrent mixed methodology in which questionnaire and semi-structured interview were used for data collection. The findings indicate that role specifications for the practicum triad were unclear. The study shows that the practicum participants were not aware about their own and others' roles and expectations. In addition, the pre-service teachers in Manzar-Abbas's and Lu's (2013) study complained that the cooperating teachers did not trust their teaching which has negatively impacted on their level of confidence. Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) argue that although practicum is the most influential component of teacher preparation programmes, it has been neglected by Pakistani educators and researchers, and it has thus become a missing

factor in policy making. Furthermore, it can be observed that Davis's (2013) study findings support the findings of Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) as the pre service teachers in Davis's (2013) study also reported that the cooperating teachers were very critical of their modern teaching styles and informed them that their new teaching ideas do not fit in real classrooms. Therefore, the negative feedback has led pre-service teachers to end up teaching as they were taught in schools and it has also supressed their creativity in language teaching. In the same way, Richardson-Koehler (1988) highlights a number of concerns that should be well thought-out during the preparation of pre-service teachers. The first concern is the cooperating teachers' beliefs that they are of no help for the pre-service teachers because they are also still learning to teach from their own experience and a trial and error method. Secondly, the cooperating teachers' teaching misconceptions are sometimes transmitted to the pre-service teachers' teaching repertoire. Richardson-Koehler's (1988) study shows that 80% of the pre-service teacher practices came directly from the cooperating teacher's influence. The third concern is the absence of reflection during teaching practice as the cooperating teachers were unwilling to engage in reflective practice with the pre-service teachers. Metcalf's (1991) study also shares the concern that some cooperating school administrators and teachers were not proficient in English, which led pre-service teachers "to become more custodial and dogmatic and less flexible in their instructional approaches" (p.30). Similarly, Rush, Blair, Chapman, Codner, and Pearce (2008) indicate that the cooperating teachers were uncooperative in terms of providing pre-service teachers with the necessary classroom materials. In addition, several studies (Fives, Hamman & Olivárez, 2007; Hsu, 2005; Moore, 2003) found that pre-service teachers usually face difficulties in adjusting to the

school life as well as connecting positively with the school staff. Meade (1991) and Metcalf (1991) also point out that the uncooperative relationship between pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers is attributed to the insufficient training that the cooperating teachers receive to scaffold pre-service teachers during teaching practice.

On the other hand, Borko and Mayfield (1995); Slick (1998); Steadman and Brown (2011); Chien (2015); Hoover, O'Shea and Carroll (1988) highlight some challenges that hinder effective communication between pre-service teachers and college supervisors including lack of supportive environment, inadequate preparation of the college supervisors, unspecified roles of the college supervisors and lack of constructive and critical feedback. It is indicated in these studies that college supervisors are assigned a large number of pre-service teachers and it is thus difficult to provide pre-service teachers with constructive feedback and monitor their progress and development effectively. Additionally, it is found that the high teaching load that is assigned to college supervisors and cooperating teachers impedes effective teaching practice experience (Edmundson, 1990).

Furthermore, Sarıçoban's (2010) study highlights some problematic issues that hinder effective teaching practice experience. Sarıçoban (2010) classifies these problems as follows: (a) lack of support in terms of materials and equipment, (b) problems resulting from the course book, (c) problems resulting from the curriculum, and (d) problems resulting from the classroom environment. Moreover, Yunus, Hashim, Ishak, and Mahamod (2010) explored the teaching practice experience of 38 Malaysian pre-service teachers. A set of open ended questions was used to identify the challenges confronted by the pre-service teachers during their teaching practice in the cooperating schools. The

findings show that the negative attitude of the schools' students towards pre-service teachers and their low motivational level in learning English have had negative impacts on the pre-service teaching experience. Similarly, Tercanlioglu's (2008) qualitative study with 25 pre-service teachers to investigate their perceptions on their teaching practice experience, reveals that despite the students teachers' positive perception of the concept of teaching practice, they were dissatisfied with the quality of the preparation they received in the schools due to the large number of classroom students, the lack of teaching facilities in the schools and the lack of support they received from their supervisors. Mutlu (2014) has also found that ineffective classroom management, inefficient supervisor's and cooperating teacher's feedback, impractical guidelines and miscommunication between the practicum triad are serious concerns that require urgent attention from decision makers in Higher Education Institutes in Turkey.

 In a wider context, Busher, Gündüz, Cakmak and Lawson (2015) conducted a study with 480 pre-service teachers in three Universities in Turkey and England in 2010–2011 about how well their Universities prepared them for practicum, what made practicum successful and how practicum fostered their professional development. Structured questionnaire was the main data collection method and small amount of data was collected using semi-structured interview. The study shows that practicum prepared pre-service teachers for in-service teaching. However, many pre-service teachers complained that some of their expectations were not met and this has made their experience more challenging. Also, they noted that they did not get enough support from their cooperating schools. Furthermore, Gan (2013) conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews and reflective journals to tackle non-native ESL pre-service teachers' perceptions of their

field-based practicum experiences in Hong Kong. The pre-service teachers reported that they were shocked by the different reality in the classroom and the pedagogical knowledge they were taught in the preparation institute. They also indicated that classroom management was a challenge for them. Likewise, several studies (Ababneh, 2012; Dicke, Elling, Schmeck & Leutner, 2015) also found that classroom management is one of the serious obstacles encountered by pre-service teachers during their teaching practice. Furthermore, Johnson (2015) conducted a phenomenological study guided by the experiential learning theory in order to examine a group of pre-service teachers' perceptions of their practicum experience in a College in Abu Dhabi. The main challenges encountered by pre-service teachers were lesson planning, teaching multilevel classrooms, and lack of effective professional development.

A recent interesting study conducted by Moussaid and Zerhouni (2017) highlights the problems that were encountered by 60 Moroccan EFL pre-service teachers during practicum. An in-depth content analysis of post lesson written reflections and supervisors' feedback revealed that insufficient knowledge of teaching methodology, class control and time management were on the top of the challenges' list that should be immediately tackled and resolved by teacher education preparation programmes. In fact, the findings of Moussaid's and Zerhouni's (2017) are remarkably substantiated by the findings of the most recent study on the challenges confronted by pre-service teachers that was carried out by Alamri (2018) who conducted an action research in an Educational Diploma Programme (EDP) in Taibah University in Saudi Arabia. Alamri (2018) aimed to explore the challenges confronted by 35 Saudi female EFL pre-service teachers in real classroom during teaching practice. A perception opinionnaire was used to collect the data from the

pre-service teachers. The findings of Alamri (2018) indicate that selecting the appropriate teaching and assessment methods, appropriate management of the lesson's time and managing the classrooms efficiently were the main obstacles encountered by the pre-service teachers.

A closer look at the teaching practice studies that have been conducted in the nearby countries indicates a growing interest on the side of practitioners to prepare qualified EFL teachers. On the contrary, there is a dearth of teaching practice research that evaluate the teaching practice components of the limited number of teacher preparation programmes in Oman. Before the present study sees light, there is only one study conducted by Al-Mahrooqi (2011) to investigate the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the teaching practice components of the EFL teacher preparation programme at Sultan Qaboos University. A questionnaire of open ended questions was used to elicit the perceptions of 30 female pre-service teachers on the teaching practice components of the preparation programme, the classroom observations and the feedback from their supervisors. A thematic categorization of the responses was carried out based on the similarities and differences of the pre-service teachers' opinions. However, Al-Mahrooqi's (2011) study participants positively perceived teaching practice as an important element of the teacher preparation programme, they also complained about the numerous problems that they encountered during school based practicum including: irresponsible school students, problems with classroom management, uncooperative school teachers and administrators, gap between theory and practice in the preparation programme, ineffective feedback and inconsistent assessment methods used by university supervisors. Although Al-Mahrooqi (2011) spotlights on the problems confronted by the

pre-service teachers in SQU, she fails to incorporate the perceptions of the university supervisors and the cooperating teachers who are two main figures in the practicum triad. In addition, she did not explore the perceptions of the male pre-service teachers which I believe would have added a different lens to the study and would have effectively helped to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching practice components of the programme in SQU.

It is noteworthy that the previous studies on teaching practice mainly focused on one member of the practicum community - the pre-service teacher and ignored the other two members – the university / college supervisor and the cooperating teacher. It has been observed that most of the teaching practice studies overlooked the important role of the cooperating teachers and college supervisors in promoting quality teaching practice experience. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature of pre-service English language teacher education in the world in general and particularly in Oman. The present study is more comprehensive than the previous studies since it focuses on the views of every member in the practicum triad. In addition, the present study employs a variety of data collection methods -focus groups, on-line semi-structured questionnaire and one to one interviews to capture a wider picture of the practicum triad experience.

3.5 The Sociocultural Theory of Teacher Learning

It has actually been observed that pre-service teachers in the school setting "find that there is limited opportunity—and for a few, limited support—to explore, discuss, and reflect on their developing understandings of these inter relationships" (Sim, 2006, p. 78). In addition, the consensus has been that "A focus of practicum only on instruction with children in the classroom, although important, does not prepare teachers for the full range

of their responsibilities" (Zeichner, 1996, p.217) Therefore, teaching practice should not only focus on the acquisition of teaching skills but it also has to prepare pre-service teachers to fulfil the social aim of teaching which is being a teacher, an inspirer and a director of soul-life (Dewey, 1965). It is thus the sociocultural theory of teacher learning forms the basis of the present study. The sociocultural theory views teacher learning as "not the straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal meditational control by individual learners" (Johnson, 2006, p. 288). Therefore, the "limited and mechanised version of the learning to teach process" (Rorrison, 2006, p.25) should be rejected and pre-service teacher preparation programmes should sought after dynamic and interactive version of learning to teach process. In fact, the sociocultural theory summarizes learning in two stages: it is a social behaviour (learning with others) and an independent behaviour (problem solving). Therefore, pre-service teachers should be prepared for the complex nature of the teaching profession by engaging them into an un-ending thread of exploration and creativity (Groundwater-Smith, 1992). It is noteworthy that social interaction is the crux of learning in the present study as the process of learning actually involves negotiating and sharing meanings with people in different social practices. Actually, the concept of learning as situated social practice is the main tenet of the sociocultural theory of teacher learning and "it includes mediation, discourse, social interaction and participation structures." (Singh & Richards, 2006, p.153).

Furthermore, the present study is also grounded in the constructivist theory which views teacher learning as a social activity that develops through participation in the construction of knowledge and "the opportunity to reflect on one's present assumptions, premises,

beliefs, or conceptualizations'' (Kaufman & Brooks, 1996, p. 234). The constructivist theory also asserts that individuals can make a meaningful construction of reality through interaction. Caires and Almeida (2005) stress on the fact that "the complex, interactive, dynamic and idiosyncratic nature of the process of learning to teach is largely influenced by the interplay between individual and contextual variables." (p.112). It is also documented that although pre-service teachers value support and encouragement during their practicum experience (Sharpe, Moo, Crawford & Gopinatrhans,1994), it has been found that support/resources/supervision' and 'socio-emotional aspects of teaching practice experience are the most fragile and overlooked areas in the process of learning to teach (Caires & Almeida, 2005). It is also worth mentioning in this context that comparing pre-service English language teacher preparation to military training (Mohanraj, 2004) diminishes the humanistic element of teaching. In fact, while teacher training should adhere to the principles of obedience, discipline, rules and time, it is also a field of empathy, affection, intimacy and compassion. Moreover, the term "training" in teacher education has been criticized for portraying teachers as technicians (Schulz, 2005). The term 'training' is a dehumanising term when it is attached to teaching as it is rooted in "the Latin traho" meaning 'to draw along' (ibid). Therefore, the model of teacher training which views teaching as a series of technical acts that "are learned, practiced and repeated" (ibid, p.149) every year diminishes the human intellectual and creative capacities and prepares teachers and students as followers. In fact, a good handle of human relationship during teaching practice will develop a reflective pre-service teacher even though they lack teaching skills. Wardford (2011) asserts that the rapport and empathy facilitated by teaching practice promotes teacher development. Therefore, the

present study also touches on the humanistic theory and its dynamic and positive implications for the preparation of quality pre-service teachers as it helps them to self-explore and express their own capabilities and creativity during the process of learning how to teach.

3.6 Vygotskyan's (1978) socio cultural theory and Zone of Proximal Development

Although Vygotsky passed away before declaring any definitive approach to teacher education, some researchers in the socio-cultural theory (SCT) have applied some of the SCT tenets to teacher education. Vygotskyan's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development and its application to teacher education is thoroughly discussed in this section.

3.6.1 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The zone of proximal development in Vygotskyan's (1978) socio cultural theory has significantly gained trustworthiness among language teachers and educational researchers. It figuratively refers to the distance between the learners' actual capacities and a proximal set of skills and knowledge that they can attain with the help of experts. The Zone of Proximal Development helps the teacher to gradually transfer the responsibility of a task to the students after bringing them to a state of competence that will enable them to complete a task on their own (Mercer & Fisher, 1992). In addition, the ZPD aims "to see students being actively engaged in their learning with the future prospect of becoming self-directed, lifelong learners." (Verenikina, 2004, p.7). The learner in the ZPD is not viewed as passive but "an active organism in an ecosystem, in a social-cultural lifespan" (Lewin, 1943, p.155).

3.6.2 The Zone of Proximal Teacher Development within the sociocultural theory.

Subsequently, the concept of ZPD was transferred to teacher education and referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development to Teacher Education (ZPTD) (Warford, 2011). According to the ZPTD, the process of learning to teach should be socially situated as "A socially situated view of teacher cognition traces the movement of pedagogical knowledge from the inter- to the intramental plane." (ibid, p.252). Therefore, it can be said that the new concept of the Zone of Proximal Teacher development indicates the distance between what the pre-service teacher is able to do (his present level of theoretical and pedagogical knowledge and skills) and what they can perform through the guidance of a mentor or a supervisor (potential level of knowledge to be attained) (Blanton, Westbrook & Carter, 2005). It is important to note in this context that situated learning within Vygotskyan's framework rejects the distinction between theory (scientific discourse) and practice (experiential discourse). Instead, it asserts the importance of blending "the scientific discourse of the college classroom with the experiential discourse of local classrooms" (Warford, 2011, p.253) along with critical engagement of the pre-service teachers in the process of learning how to teach. Therefore, the present study embraces the notion of the Zone of Proximal Teacher development. The process of learning how to teach based on the notion of the Zone of Proximal Teacher Development in the sociocultural theory goes through three stages namely, the self-assistance stage, teacher assisted stage, the internalization stage and the recurrence stage.

   a) **Self-assistance stage:** Pre -service teacher's self-reflection on their prior experience and assumptions marks the starting point of this stage. Pre-service teachers are given freedom to choose their own method of reflection but minor

mediation is provided by the teacher educator in this stage to anticipate analytical constructs. Wardford (2011) asserts that this stage is very critical as it diagnoses the pre-service teachers' affective-volitional and pedagogical dispositions. The role of teacher educator in this stage is of an interventionist who acknowledges pre-service prior teaching and learning experience and gathers important information about the kind of mediation pre-service teachers need for learning to happen. Vygotsky (1998) points out that "a true diagnosis must provide an exploration, prediction, and scientific basis for practical prescription" (p.205).

b) **Teacher assisted stage of the zone of proximal teacher development:** In this stage, pre-service teachers are confronted with a wide range of scientific language of academic and experiential discourses. Pre-service teachers are exposed to live or videotaped innovative teaching practices and field observations. Teacher educators in this stage play the role of interactionist as they discuss innovative and current teaching practices that are carried out in today's actual classrooms. The teacher educator and pre-service teacher dialogue is more obvious and feasible in this stage. Rorrison (2011) in the quest to find the definitive essence of practicum, finds out that pre-service teachers "have very little awareness of educational paradigms, educationalists or theories beyond Steiner, Vygotsky, Piaget, Bronfenbrenner and Montessori" (p.32). Therefore, seven guiding principles of practicum learning that create critical, challenging and transformative practicum experience were have been suggested (ibid). Theories of learning is the first guiding practicum learning principle that should be introduced and well presented to pre-service teachers. The college supervisor in this stage is considered a

collaborator and co-constructor who expose pre-service teachers to past and current language teaching theories to form productive and transformative pedagogies.

c) **The internalization stage:** The internalization stage is characterized by an increase of the pre-service teacher abilities in using pedagogical knowledge and skills adopted by their preparation programme in the sense that they become internal mental functions. This stage places emphasis on social mediation which is based on the concept of intersubjectivity which refers to the shared understanding between the pre-service teacher and his / her supervisor. Vygotskyan approach to teacher education contends that a meditational orientation to progressive supervision model is important. The supervisor is considered "a lever with which the student's thought, with its structural characteristics, is shifted from level to level" (Yaroshevsky, 1989, p.283). The quality of interactions with the scaffolders (college supervisors and cooperating teachers) affect one's development within the ZPD (Diaz, Neal & Amaya-Williams, 1999). Unfortunately, the metaphor of scaffolding in the ZPTD does not capture the three-way relationship between pre-service teachers, college supervisor and cooperating teacher. It only shows one side of the relationship where college supervisor/ cooperating teacher scaffold and support pre-service teachers. Therefore, the present study aims at addressing this gap and presents a clearer picture of the three-fold relationship between pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers. However, the present study embraces the metaphor of "scaffolding" in the ZPTD, it attempts to widen the view of the

relationship between pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers from being college supervisor/cooperating driven and one sided in nature to more collaborative, negotiable, and interactive relationship in order to promote quality teaching practice.

d) **The recurrence stage** bridges the gap between the pre-service teacher preparation programmes and the cooperating schools as pre-service teachers are encouraged to apply theories they study in the programme coursework into practice (Teaching practice). It is noteworthy that teacher educator is not the only scaffolder in this stage but constant reflection, peer evaluation, researchers in the field (TESOL community), college supervisors and cooperating teacher also "serve as scaffolders to affect the progression" (Shabani, Khatib & Ebadi, 2010, p.237). They are considered powerful tools to promote quality teaching practice. Furthermore, reflective practice (RP) is encouraged during this stage as it creates meaningful teaching practice experience. Reiman (1999) defines reflective practice as "a process of problem solving, reconstruction of meaning, and subsequent reflective judgments while persons are engaged in significant new activity" (p.598). Several authors argue that pre-service teachers' experience during practicum should be the starting point for reflection about teaching (Mattsson, Eilertsen & Rorrison, 2011). It is important to note that the notion of scaffolding has been perceived differently by some researchers and language teacher educators. Although, the consensus has been that scaffolding foster mutual collaboration between college supervisors/cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers, some researchers believe that scaffolding encourages teacher

centred approach as the teacher is the main scaffolder in the learning process and the role of the learner as active constructor of knowledge is ignored (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Stone, 1984).Therefore, social and dynamic interaction between pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperation teachers should be emphasized to promote quality communication among the practicum triad and optimize the teaching practice experience.

Throughout the different stages of the ZPTD, pre-service teachers are encouraged to move from their current ZPTD to more advanced ZPTD. They should always "engage in the shifting process and continuously define new ZPDs" (Shabani, Khatib & Ebadi, 2010, p. 242) through problem solving and reflective practice. Rorrison (2011) affirms that "it is difficult to let go of habits of mind unless a crisis or deeply problematic experience leads to a search for a different worldview" (p.24). Therefore, it can be observed that collaborative peers and mentors, TESOL discourse (content and pedagogical knowledge), previous experience of language learning, cognitive and thinking skills and beliefs, technology, and diary writing (reflective and critical) (refer to 3.3.2) are some internal and external influential factors that have direct effect on the zone of proximal teacher development (Shabani, Khatib & Ebadi, 2010). Although these factors are the main motivators of the ZPTD, social interaction is the only activator of the ZPTD to teacher professional development. It is thus the present study is based on the sociocultural theory of teacher learning that embraces the notion of ZPTD. In fact, college supervisors and cooperating teachers play a crucial role in scaffolding pre-service teachers to create their own "vision for education that goes beyond just knowledge and skills" (Goh, Wong, Choy & Tan, 2009, p.123). It is also important that college supervisors and cooperating teachers

"challenge pre-service teachers' existing beliefs and practices" (Borko & Mayfield, 1995, p.502). Therefore, college supervisors and cooperating teachers are advised to move beyond their supportive and evaluative role to take critical stance and provide pre-service teachers with educative experience that helps them "develop a professional vision more in line with ambitious teaching." (Long, Van Es & Black, 2013, p. 181)

It is worth mentioning that the critical role of social interaction during teaching practice induces collaborative approach to teaching practice that promotes pre-service teachers' capacities and skills in adhering to the learners' diverse needs (Wardford, 2011). Furthermore, Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman and Stevens (2009) stress that "Collaborative interrogation within a group of co-learners may allow differences in views and perspectives to enhance learning of all involved." (p. 286). They conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of triad model of teaching practice where pre-service teacher works collaboratively in the classroom with the cooperating teacher. The model was found to be very effective in promoting and maintaining professional support for the pre-service teacher, in providing comprehensive feedback about classroom teaching and practices and raising the pre-service teacher's level of confidence.

Agaoglu and Simsek (2006) also emphasize the importance of collaboration to ensure the quality of any educational institute as there is no achievements without strong collaboration. Research on pre-service teacher education indicates that the relationship between pre-service teacher preparation programmes and cooperating schools is fragile (Hudson & Hudson, 2013) since there is a lack of collaborative and supportive environment (Gavish & Friedman, 2010). Therefore, collaboration between pre-service teacher preparation programmes and cooperating schools is highly emphasized as

"quality practicum would integrate theory and practice at progressive stages of development through strong university-school partnerships" (Hudson & Hudson, 2013, p.9).

3.7 Conclusion

The chapter has provided an overview of the phenomenal spread of English in the world and its consequences on the industry of English language teaching in the outer and expanding circles. Then, the two types of pre-service teacher preparation programmes were critically addressed. The chapter also analysed the different conceptual frameworks of pre-service English teacher knowledge base and accordingly proposed a comprehensive conceptual framework that can be used as a reference for pre-service English teacher preparation programmes. A detailed discussion about the practical components of pre-service teacher preparation programmes was carried out indicating the crucial role of teaching practice in providing pre-service teachers with quality experience in English language teaching. The chapter critically analysed previous research studies on teaching practice particularly the studies that investigated the challenges confronted by pre-service teachers during their teaching practice. The chapter ended by explaining the sociocultural theory and the Zone of Proximal Development that form the basis of the present study.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The research framework, design, methodology, methods, and data analysis procedures are discussed in this chapter. First, the philosophical assumptions that inform the present study is introduced. Then, the chapter goes on to address the research design, data collection tools and its justifications and the analysis procedures. The quality of the research study is also tackled through a discussion of some quality criteria that are considerably important when conducting a study of this nature. In addition, a section on ethical considerations that marks my commitment to research ethics throughout the different stages of the study is included. The study limitations including potential problems in the design of the study and some suggestions to strengthen the design in further studies are highlighted at the end of this chapter.

4.2 The pragmatic stance

The present study is guided by a mixed methods approach which resonates on a pragmatist stance. In other words, the study is influenced by the pragmatism research philosophy that "served as a bridge between conflicting paradigms and across the paradigm–methodology–method continuum" (Sharp et al., 2012, p. 36). Therefore, being guided by the pragmatist paradigm, the present study rejects traditional dualism (realism verses antirealism, facts verses values, subjectivism verses objectivism. It essentially endorses moderate philosophical dualism based on how well they work to solve the problem (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). I, as the researcher of the study believe that

there is an external world independent of the mind as well as that lodged in the mind (Creswell, 2009). In my opinion, the world is not exclusively absolute or relative. There may be both singular and multiple versions of reality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Therefore, it is important to note that the present investigation embraces an ontological stance where truth is constructed and rooted in practice. That is to say that truth is what works at the time to provide the best understanding of the current research problem (Creswell, 2009). A professional psychologist, James (1878), asserts that the knower is the coefficient of the truth as human beings are embedded within reality. As Thayer-Bacon (2010) puts it "we are not spectators to Reality reporting on "it" (p.17), we are part of this world, this Universe, affecting "it" as we experience "it." (ibid). In fact, the present study is rooted in the stance that "humans do not have views of the world from nowhere and they cannot see the world from everywhere. Their views of the world are always situated and they come from somewhere" (ibid, p.9)

As a result, the present study employs a pluralistic approach to knowledge that provides a deeper understanding and answers to different research questions that each might entail a different ontology in order to present a more complete picture of the course under study. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) write that pragmatism "helps shed light on how research approaches can be mixed fruitfully; the bottom line is that research approaches should be mixed in ways that offer the best opportunities for answering important research questions (p. 16). As such, we can say that the present study is driven by "multiple worldview" approach "by selecting whatever worldview ''works'' for the purpose of inquiry in question." (Biddle & Schafft, 2015, p.326). In addition, Chatterji (2004) contends that mixed methods are used to discover what works in a particular study. It is worth

mentioning that the choice of methodologies in the pragmatist paradigm is not based on my preferences but rather on the criteria of practicality and "the criteria of fitness for purpose and applicability" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.23). Therefore, the research methods used in the present study were chosen to best answer the research questions rather than being a slave to a single method. The different methods and research designs applied are mainly based on the different practical research purposes that are addressed in the study. Taking a pragmatist stance was useful in drawing an authentic and comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny and it also helped me to mix research approaches appropriately and fruitfully by drawing from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions (Hoshmand, 2003).

In fact, since the present study targets different research groups including the pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers, it essentially embraces "the emotional dimensions of understanding, the mutuality of facts and values, the exploration and rejection of pervasive prejudices, recognition of multiple stand-points, cooperative problem-solving, and valuing the other in their distinctiveness" (Seig-fried, 1997, p.9). I agree with Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) that mixed methods approach is the order of the day since it minimizes the errors aroused from a single approach and enables the research to tackle these errors. It also enables corroboration, triangulation and helps in identifying paradox between two individual data sources (ibid). In addition, Feilzer (2010) declares that pragmatism "brushes aside the quantitative/qualitative divide and ends the paradigm wars" (p.10).

Furthermore, the present study touches upon the core of the philosophical assumptions of pragmatism which is 'practicality' since it investigates the teaching practice

components of the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme. Pragmatism is essentially a "practice driven" approach (Denscombe, 2008, p.280) that aims to find practical solutions of practical problems in the practical world (Cohen et al., 2011). In addition, the present study embraces Dewey's concept of "experience" in the sense that it focuses on the pre-service teachers' experience with teaching practice. Garrison (1994) illustrates Dewey's concept of experience by saying that it "was simply what happened when human beings actively participated in transactions with other natural experiences. … Experience, for Dewey, is simply how the human organism interacts with its environment" (p.9). Ormerod (2009) also asserts that Dewey (1973), shifted the emphasis of pragmatism to "the empirically specific 'retail' problems of specific individuals and groups." (p.902).

Epistemologically speaking, many pragmatists such as Biesta (2010); Dewey (2009); Maxcy (2003) see knowledge as a "constantly revised product of experience" (Biddle & Schafft, 2015). Pragmatism looks at different worldviews derived from lived experiences. Therefore, methodology has to take a multitude of approaches to effectively produce a different understanding of the phenomena under scrutiny. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) state that according to pragmatism, knowledge- "is viewed as being both constructed and based on the reality of the world we experience and live in" (p.18). As a pragmatist, I believe that people gain knowledge through socialization and this knowledge integrates three different types of knowledge in relation to the school based practicum experience - common knowledge, conventionalized practices and emotional processes. This epistemological stance in pragmatism helps to explore different trajectories and roots in the teaching practice experience of my participants to understand the phenomena from

different angles. The process of constructing knowledge is a collective exercise that involves the whole community of practice in relation to my study including pre-service teachers, college supervisors and the cooperating teachers. In this regard, the epistemological stance of the study does not neglect context; instead it is considered of great importance to the school based practicum course under study. Thus, this epistemological stance necessitates "a case study framework to provide a detailed description of the case to understand a particular interpretation of a social phenomenon." (Schiazza, 2013, p.52)

The study also takes a pragmatic social view of knowledge which is referred to as relational epistemology. As a researcher, I believe that the construction of knowledge does not happen without the knower's relationship with one another and their relationship with the social environment and the world around them. In fact, I am adopting Thayer-Bacon's (2010) relational epistemology which views knowledge as" something that is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other" (p.3). As a researcher, I have the experiential knowledge and insider's perspective that has helped me to reflect on the experiences of the pre-service teachers with their teaching practice. In fact, the epistemological nature of the study has driven me to sometimes take "a healthy bias" (Wellington, 2000) with the pre-service teachers' experiences, however, such bias has giving way to being reflective during the data analysis in order to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Furthermore, the present study embraces some critical views in addressing the current practices in the school based practicum course at the college and the cooperating schools. It has been mentioned in Chapter One that the participating institution has witnessed students strike in 2011 through the "Arab

Spring" phase (refer to 1.1). The protestors demanded a change in the evaluation system of some of the courses and the school based practicum was on the top of the list. The study population had not yet enrolled at the College at that time. However, since there has been no changes made to the course since then, I thought tackling this issue again will help to see if the current pre-service teachers still have the same complaints, and to also prepare an agenda for change if deemed necessary. Therefore, the pragmatist stance of the study also incorporates a postmodern turn that is reflective of justice and fair distribution of power. I am consciously aware of power differentials in the research context and I oriented the participants to reflect over these taken for granted practices. As a result, some research methods' questions tackle the issues of unfairness and injustice with regard to the school based practicum evaluation form and the kind of support the pre-service teachers receive in this critical period of their professional experience. In fact, the present study is not only based on the transformative-emancipatory paradigm but more importantly, touches upon some of its tenets in order to uncover the hidden agendas and power structures (Grix, 2004) if there are some. It also constitutes the incorporation of the agency (participants) in order to know how reality is seen by them in their social context and to challenge and question the status quo to bring about change (Crotty, 1998). The adaptation of some of the critical paradigm tenets has helped me to empower the pre-service teachers through the application of focus group interviews and the discussion of some of the taken for granted structures and how they feel about them. It also empowers the participants and urges them to think of an agenda for change if deemed necessary.

The epistemological nature of the study serves to some extent an emancipatory interest (Habermas, 1972) in the sense that it has helped to raise pre-service teachers' consciousness (Freire, 1972) to some of the school based practicum taken for granted practices through challenging and questioning these status quos and seeks to bring about change (Crotty, 1998). This justifies the use of a mixed method approach since some of its potential strengths are "to provide a basis for social change" (Mertens, 2007, p. 212) and to establish a dialectical and qualitative dialogue between the participants in the research (Cohen et al., 2011). In addition, the mixed methods approach "reduces the privileging of only powerful voices in society" (Mertens, 2007, p.220). Therefore, I applied different methods to collect data from the three different research groups in the study because of the power differentials between these groups: the pre-service teachers, college supervisors and the cooperating teachers.

4.3 Research Design

The present study is based on Fetters, Curry, and Creswell's (2013) case study framework that incorporates a sequential exploratory design as a basic mixed method design in the study along with other qualitative and quantitative data collection methods in order to build a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that pre-service teachers and college supervisors encountered during the school based practicum course. In other words, the present case study framework integrates a multi-strategy research design that aims at eliciting different sources of data through the application of different methods. Luck, Jackson, and Usher (2006) assert that the case study framework provides intensive and detailed qualitative and quantitative data about the phenomena under scrutiny. Furthermore, Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) affirm

that the accuracy of a research study can be addressed by employing and triangulating several perspectives and data collection methods. In fact, I support Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) claim that "Taking a non-purist or compatibilist or mixed position allows researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions." (p.15). In addition, the use of multi-strategy method design provides greater validity through the triangulation of findings and depicts a comprehensive picture of the school based practicum course. The research study framework is clearly illustrated in figure 4.1
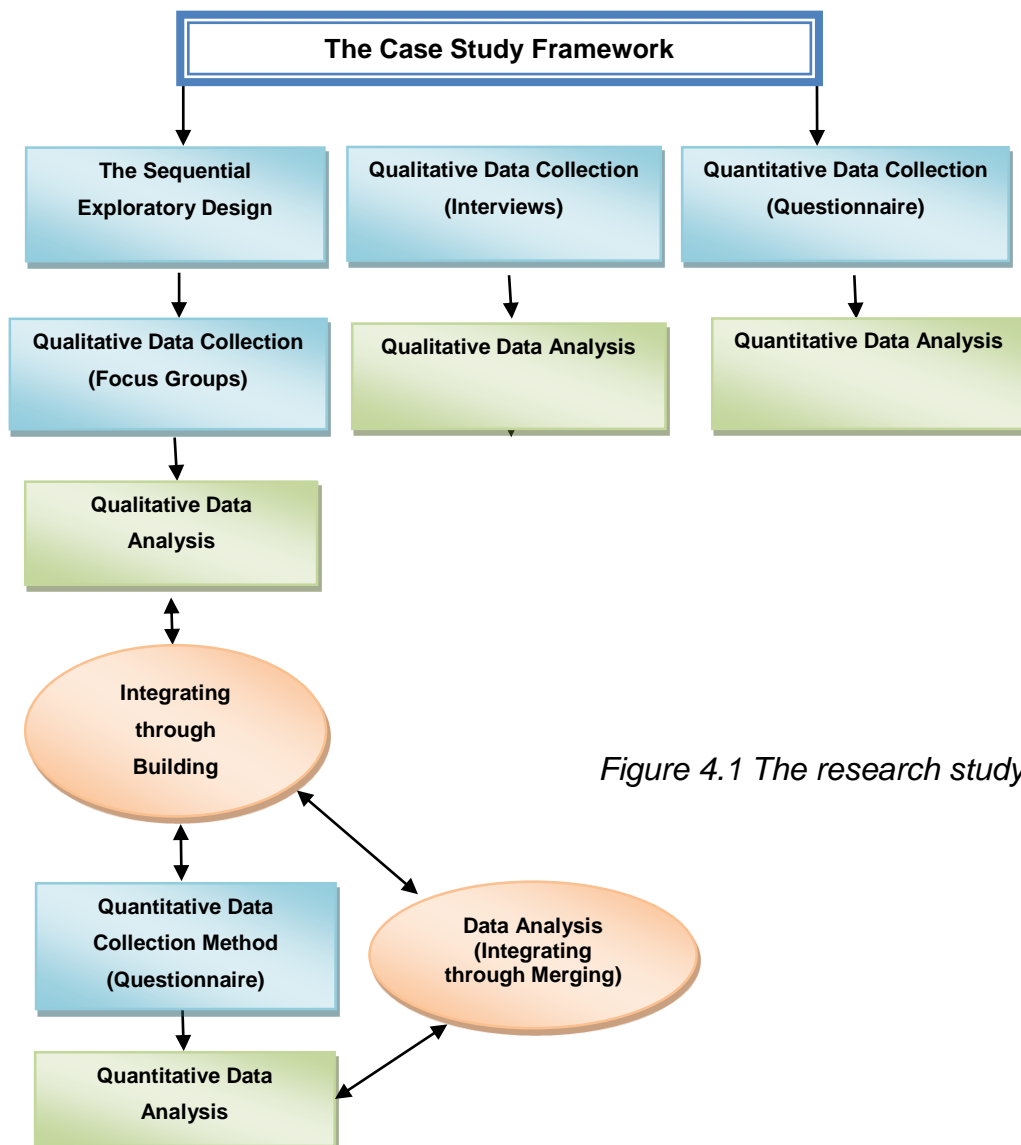
Figure 4.1 The research study framework

As it was indicated above that the present study aims to provide a deeper understanding and answers to different research questions that each might entail a different ontology in order to present a more complete picture of the course under study. Therefore, it can be said that the nature of the research questions has determined the choice of the mixed methods approach that necessitates mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches to depict a comprehensive picture of the school based practicum course under study. The mixed method approach is implemented in the present study in order to answer the following study research questions:

Q1.   What are the opportunities and challenges encountered by the pre-service English language teachers in the school based practicum course in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at a College of Education?

Q2. What do the pre-service English teachers feel needs to be maintained and what do they feel needs to be changed in the school based practicum course?

Q3. What are the opportunities and challenges encountered by the college supervisors in the school based practicum course in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at a College of Education?

Q4. What do College supervisors feel needs to be maintained and what do they feel needs to be changed in the school based practicum course?

Q5. What are the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum course?

The first and second research questions that address the opportunities and challenges encountered by the pre-service English teachers during their teaching practice and their

agenda for change were explored through the application of a sequential exploratory mixed method design. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) assert that "a strong mixed methods study starts with a strong mixed methods research question" and they suggest that such a question could ask 'what and how' (p.207). The purpose of using the sequential exploratory mixed method design was "to elaborate on or expand the findings of one method with another method" (Creswell, 2009, p. 14). I employed focus group interviews which helped to describe the nature of the pre-service teachers' experiences first and provide a basis for the semi structured questionnaire that was later used to elaborate on some of the focus group interview findings and generalize such findings to the whole study population. Furthermore, the third, fourth and the fifth questions were dealt with individually in order to avoid the distortion of some of the theoretical features of the methods used to collect the data for the questions. The qualitative and quantitative approaches "address various dimensions of the main research questions" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The third and the fourth questions were researched qualitatively through the use of semi structured interviews and the fifth question was handled quantitatively through the use of semi-structured questionnaire. Table 4.1 represents research questions and data collection methods.

NO	Research Questions	Research Instruments	Participants
1.	What are the opportunities and challenges encountered by the pre-service teachers in the school based practicum course in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme in the Department of English Language and Literature at a College of Education?	-Focus Groups -Online Semi- structured Questionnaire	Pre service English language teachers (52 male pre-service teachers) (17 female pre-service teachers)
2.	What do the English language pre-service feel needs to be maintained and what they feel needs to be changed?	-Focus Groups -Online Semi- structured Questionnaire	Pre service English language teachers (52 male pre-service teachers) (17 female pre-service teachers)
3.	What are the opportunities and challenges encountered by the school based practicum supervisors in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme in the Department of English Language and Literature at a College of Education?	One to One Interview	Six College Supervisors
4.	What do College supervisors feel needs to be maintained and what they feel needs to be changed?	One to One Interview	Six College Supervisors
5.	What are the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme in the Department of English Language and Literature at a College of Education?	Online Semi- structured Questionnaire	20 School cooperating teachers (10 male teachers) (10 female teachers)

Table 4.1 Research questions and data collection methods

4.4 Research Participants

There are three research groups who are actively involved in the study in order to create

a holistic picture of the pre-service teachers' teaching practice experience. Sample

selection is described as one of the most important stages in mixed methods research

(Sharp et al., 2012)

4.4.1 The pre-service teachers.

The pre-service teachers are fresh Omani graduates (52 males and 17 females) of the English language teacher preparation programme at the Higher Education College. They share the same educational and cultural background. They are between the age of 21 and 23 years old. Some of the pre-service teachers participated in the focus group interviews but the online questionnaire targeted the whole pre-service teachers' group. Purposive sampling was done with the pre-service teachers because I desire to learn more about the course under scrutiny (Sharp et al., 2012). Purposive sampling provides in-depth understanding of the phenomena (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). I have purposely applied a complete collection sampling as a type of purposive sampling by choosing all the 2014/2015 pre-service teacher graduates since they had already completed their two teaching practice courses at the time of the data collection procedure. They will therefore ideally be the best participants who could reflect on their very recent teaching experiences in the cooperating schools.

4.4.2 The College supervisors.

The second research group involves teaching practice college supervisors who supervise the pre-service teachers and evaluate their teaching capacities in the cooperating schools. The total number of the college supervisors in the second semester of the academic year 2014/2015 was 12. In choosing participants from this research group for the one to one interviews, I employed random stratified sampling followed by convenience sampling strategy. The 12 college supervisors were first divided into 3 homogeneous groups based on their educational qualifications and years of experience in supervising pre-service English teachers. As a result of the stratified sampling, six college supervisors

were initially chosen to participate in the study, with two participants from each group. Two College supervisors are Master holders and they are past graduates of the College's English language teacher preparation programme. Therefore, it is believed that they will add more insights to the study as they will reflect on teaching practice from two angles, as past pre-service teachers and as college supervisors. In addition, two supervisors have their doctorate in language teaching and they have nearly three years of experience in supervising pre-service English teachers. The other two college supervisors are pursuing part time PhD with more than five years of experience in supervising pre-service English language teachers. Afterwards, a convenience sampling strategy was applied as two college supervisors were not available and accessible during the data collection phase. Therefore, only four college supervisors participated in the present study.

4.4.3 The cooperating teachers.

The study also targets cooperating teachers in the cooperating schools. The cooperating teachers are in-service teachers who have been working as English language teachers for several years. Some of them have dealt with the English language pre-service teachers during the past years. A random stratified sampling was used to select participants from the cooperating teacher's research group. I have widened the sample frame of the cooperating teachers to include Cycle One and Cycle Two cooperating teachers in the areas surrounding the College. Also, the study covered both boy's and girl's schools. As a result, 10 female cooperating teachers from the girl schools and 10 male cooperating teachers from the boy's schools were chosen to participate in the present study.

I, as the researcher of the study work as a teacher in a pre-service English language teacher preparation programme. I worked as the Head of the Practicum Unit at a College

of Education for two consecutive years in 2010 and 2011 (refer to 1.1 & 1.2). I have not met with the graduate pre-service teachers before nor have I taught them any of the programme courses. While the college supervisors are my colleagues, the cooperating teachers are all new to me. I have got the approval from the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman to conduct the research in the College premises and to contact all the participating research groups. The Ministry of Higher Education has sent a formal letter to the participating College administration requesting them to facilitate my work and to provide me with any information I needed for the purpose of my research (refer to Appendix 5).

4.5 Methods of data collection

It was already mentioned above that the present study incorporates a mixed methods research design that involves "a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches" (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 5) that aims at eliciting different sources of data through the application of different methods. The study employs different methods of data collection including: the sequential exploratory design that incorporates focus groups and an online semi-structured questionnaire to answer the first and second research questions, one to one interviews to answer the third and fourth questions and an online semi-structured questionnaire to answer the fifth research question.

4.5.1 The sequential exploratory design.

The nature of the study has forced me to begin the study with an exploration of some of the pre-service teachers experiences with teaching practice through a series of four semi-structured focus group interviews and then use the emergent findings to develop a semi structured questionnaire to determine the distribution of the phenomenon to the entire

sample of the pre-service teachers (Morse, 1991). Pre-service teachers were asked some general and specific questions during the focus group interviews in order to capture a clear picture of their teaching practice and to use the collected data as a source to design a questionnaire that will be distributed to all pre-service teachers. Jarrell (2000) asserts that a carefully crafted focus group question enhances the quantitative data and provides a holistic view of the situation being studied. Also, focus groups are seen as valuable tools to generate hypothesis. Therefore, it is believed that "stories told by focus group participants can be used in questionnaires or turned into hypothetical-type questions on surveys" (Sagoe, 2012, p.3).

The study adopts Creswell (2011) sequential exploratory design which has gone through four phases:

> **Phase I**. I conducted a series of focus group interviews with a representative sample of the pre-service teachers to explore the challenges and opportunities pre-service teachers faced during their teaching practice and to suggest an agenda for change if deemed necessary.
>
> **Phase II**. I analysed the data qualitatively using thematic content analysis.
>
> **Phase III**. The qualitative data analysis was used for the development of a semi-structured questionnaire.
>
> **Phase IIII**. The semi-structured questionnaire was distributed to the whole sample of the pre-service teachers group in order to explore some of the findings in depth and to generalize the qualitative findings.

In coding the justification for the use of sequential exploratory strategy, I adopted Bryman (2006a) scheme. The adopted scheme includes several justifications that are clearly

manifested in the study for combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The main aim of applying the sequential exploratory strategy was to explore pre-service English teachers' teaching practice experience first through conducting focus group interviews with some pre-service teachers and then to develop a quantitative form of data (semi structure questionnaire) that plays a supporting role in the interpretation of the qualitative findings. Bryman (2007) calls such strategy "*Instrument development".* The sequential exploratory design helps to enhance the validity and reliability of the study through cross checking the finding of the two methods (Bryman, 2006a; Creswell, 2011; Creswell & Miller, 1997). In addition, Sagoe (2012) contends that "focus group discussions, when used alongside quantitative method, can result in a much greater efficiency than either method used alone." (p.3). Furthermore, it promotes "facilitation" which aims at using one method as the theoretical basis of a second method (Hammersley, 1996). It is also "complementary" in the sense that both methods complement each other and aim at identifying "important conflicts between findings from the two kinds of data" (Brannen, 2005, p.176). A through discussion of the methods used in the sequential exploratory design is exhibited below.

   a. **Focus Groups**: Focus group is defined "as thoughtfully planned discussion designed to increase understanding of an area of interest in a comfortable, non-threatening environment" (Kreuger, 1988 as cited in Christensen, 2014, p. 42). The focus groups' questions were formed based on the school based practicum's literature that tackles pre-service teachers' experience with teaching practice. Some of the questions were developed based on my personal experience with

teaching practice as a college supervisor in the context of the study. The focus group interviews aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the opportunities and challenges encountered by the pre-service English teachers in the school based practicum course in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at a College of Education?

2. What do the pre-service English teachers feel needs to be maintained and what do they feel needs to be changed in the school based practicum course?

In order to answer the first two research questions, 15 open ended questions were raised during the focus group interviews. These questions are grounded in the teaching practice literature and my professional experience with practicum (refer to Appendix 6). During the application of focus groups, I tried to "understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.15). Focus groups are useful to determine the effectiveness of a course (Williams & Katz, 2001). In addition, focus groups are highly recommended when studying opinions, perceptions, and experiences (Flick, 2006) as they yield useful information by capturing the micro elements of the phenomena under scrutiny. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) also assert that focus groups are valuable tools to explore how points of views are explained and constructed. Furthermore, I used focus groups to empower and encourage groups rather than individuals to talk about their experience with teaching practice (Morgan, 1988; Krueger, 1988; Bailey; 2008; Robson, 2002). Since focus group participants work collaboratively in the discussion, a thread of trust can be built during focus groups (Kitzinger, 1995) and accordingly groups may explore solutions to the problems

and challenges they confronted during their teaching practice. This could be actually considered a forum for change (Race, Hotch & Parker, 1994) when tackling the second research questions that asks the participants about the things that need to be changed in the practicum course. Focus groups are also known to stimulate the emergence of new themes that may not come out in other methods. Thus, they are very effective in gathering rich data in a short period of time. Sagoe (2012) has comprehensively highlighted the important features of focus groups as organized discussion, collective activity, social events, and interaction.

Focus groups were divided according to gender since female pre-service teachers visit girls' schools and male pre-service teachers visit boys' schools, and this could bring out different experiences. In addition, male graduates outnumber the female graduates. Therefore, I believe that dividing the focus groups according to gender will diminish any gender bias, or the dominance of one gender over another. Also, based on my experience with focus group interviews in the Omani culture, having a focus group of the same gender creates a more intimate and relaxing atmosphere for the participants to express their views in a stress-free environment. I contacted the practicum unit coordinator via email to provide me with a list of the final year pre-service teachers undertaking their teaching practice in the last semester of their final academic year 2014/2015. The list showed that there are 69 pre-service teachers – 52 males and 17 females. I have chosen 16 male pre-service teachers who have been to different cooperating schools in order to avoid experience overlapping. Also 16 female teachers were selected to participate in the focus group interviews. Since the aim of the study is to identify any challenges

and opportunities the pre-service teachers encountered during their teaching practice, I intentionally waited until the pre-service teachers finished their last practicum course in the programme to conduct focus group interviews in order to create a holistic picture of the whole experience.

I conducted two focus group interviews with the male pre-service teachers and two interviews with the female pre-service teachers at the end of the last semester in their final academic year. The availability of participants and common sense were the two guiding principles to determine the number of focus groups needed for the present study. I planned that each focus group was supposed to consist of eight pre-service teachers. According to Krueger (1998) focus group's participants should range from 6 to 8. Unfortunately, it was very difficult to assure the commitments of all participants because the focus groups were conducted a week before the students' final exams' week and some of the participants attended the first half of the interview and they had to leave in the middle of the interview for some academic commitments. Therefore, the focus groups varied between four and six participants which I believe it is an ideal number to get in depth understanding of the participants' experience and it is also easy to manage. All focus groups were conducted in the College meeting room to create a more intimate atmosphere, as the setting of the meeting room diminishes any hierarchy in the relationship between me and the pre-service teachers. Also, the use of the meeting room is believed to overcome one of the focus group's major limitations-that they are conducted in very artificial environments (Greenbaum, 2003). I also did not videotape the focus groups so that the participants would feel at ease and

not behave differently because of the camera. In addition, I ensured that the participants were comfortable speaking to each other as the study targets a homogeneous sample (Williams & Katz, 2001).

I assigned a representative for the female's focus groups and a representative for the male's focus groups to ease communication. I called the representatives and arranged the schedule for each focus group interview, the duration expected for each focus group and the meeting venue. Barnett (2002) advises that participants need to be informed in advance about the duration of focus groups in order to increase commitment and willingness to participate. Therefore, the pre-service teachers were informed that the time frame expected for each focus group is one hour. The representatives were also informed about the aims of the focus groups to "satisfy potential participants' curiosity and ensure that they are interested and willing to participate." (Sagoe, 2012, p.9). I played the role of the facilitator in all focus groups. My role was to keep the conversation on track and to encourage the engagement of all the participants to avoid the dominance of one individual in the discussion. At the beginning of each focus group, I explained to the participants the protocol of conducting focus groups through highlighting some important points:

- The discussion was mainly based on the interaction between the focus group's participants and me as a facilitator.

- I informed the participants that they can use the language they feel comfortable with in expressing their views and opinions.

- I informed the participants that there was no right or wrong answer to the questions raised during the discussion and that they could disagree with other participant's views.

- I assured confidentiality of the focus groups.

- The participants were first asked to sign a consent form stating that they voluntarily agreed to participate in the focus group interviews. I assured the pre-service teachers that participation in the focus group interviews will not affect their final grades. Focus group interviews were held under 'The Chatham House Rule' which aims at providing anonymity to all participants to encourage openness and sharing of information. As a result, the participants felt more relaxed during the interview as they did not have to worry about their future career. The participants were first asked to introduce themselves in order to create an intimate and relaxed atmosphere. I tried to control the time specified for each focus group interview despite the fact that the male pre-service teachers kept diverting from the main focus of the research questions. I reported what was said during the interview and did not identify any participant directly or indirectly. Focus group interviews were tape recorded as using "an audio recorder is much less intrusive and less likely to stifle discussion" (Barnett, 2002 as cited in Sagoe, 2012, p.11). Then all the files were uploaded to my computer drive. Table 4.2 provides brief information about the number of pre-service teachers who participated in each focus group and the duration of each interview.

Focus Group	Gender	Number of pre-service teachers	Duration
MFG1	Males	7	1 hour and 30 minutes
MFG2	Male	6	58 mintues
FFG1	Female	7	1 hour and 51 minutes
FFF2	Females	6	1 hour

Table 4.2 The number of focus groups' participants and the duration of each interview

b) **The pre-service teacher's semi- structured questionnaire**: Since Khan, Anker, Barge, Sadhwani, and Kohle (1991) advise to treat data from focus groups with caution because the findings are sometimes not indicative of the distribution of attitudes or beliefs in the population, I intended to use the questionnaire as a complementary method that would support the focus groups findings and generalize the finding to the entire pre-service teachers' group. The content of the questionnaire aims at exploring some issues that were tackled in focus groups and to confirm the breadth of these issues to the entire pre-service teachers' sample. In addition, some of the statements in the questionnaire were guided by the teaching practice literature (Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013; Roskos & Walker, 1994; Slick, 1998; Myles, Cheng & Wang, 2006; Rozelle & Wilson, 2012; Davis, 2013; Fives, Hamman & Olivárez, 2007; Hsu, 2005; Moore, 2003; Steadman & Brown, 2011; Chien, 2015; Mutlu, 2014) and my professional experience as a college supervisor in the study context. The questionnaire was given to three experts in the field of Education and Applied Linguistics in order to validate it, before using it

as a research tool. Two of these experts are professors and one is an assistant professor in a Higher Education Institute. The valuable feedback I received from these experts allowed me to modify some of the questionnaire's items. Thus, the content of the pre-service teachers' questionnaire was derived from multiple sources which helped to ensure the validity of the study.

 I, at first, distributed a hard copy questionnaire to all pre-service teachers after conducting focus group interviews. Pre-service teachers were asked to keep the questionnaire and hand them back to me after a few days so that they would have enough time to go through the questionnaire and to avoid the pressure caused by my presence (Cohen, et al., 2011). Unfortunately, few of the pre-service teachers returned the questionnaire and it was very difficult to get in touch with them because of the final exams' period, and after that most of the students left the College for good since it was their final academic year. Therefore, I decided to develop an additional online version of the questionnaire. This proved to be a very convenient tool in such situation as it helped me to obtain a large number of responses efficiently from those pre-service teachers who were otherwise very difficult to reach. Based on the 18-returned hard copy questionnaires, I made some changes to the wordings of some of the questionnaire's statements while adhering to the original format. I used my personal G-mail account to create an electronic version of the questionnaire by using Google forms. Google drive offers an option which can be used to generate online surveys and then collate and present the results (Professional Development Service for Teachers, n.d.). In fact, Google forms is a free web-based office suite that allows researchers to create online

questionnaires, edit them and store the generated data. Therefore, I consider Google forms as a valuable and secure option to design the pre-service English teachers' questionnaire and send it to all the targeted pre-service teachers. The data generated through Google drive is confidential and anonymity was safe-guarded. In fact, pre-service teachers' identities were not visible in the generated data.

After designing the online questionnaire, I sent a link of the questionnaire to all the pre-service teachers via WhatsApp as it is the most preferred mode of students' day to day communication (Tawiah, Nondzor & Alhaji, 2014). WhatsApp is a smartphone application that operates on different types of devices that are currently used for communication (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). In fact, social media platforms such as WhatsApp, are becoming popular data collection methods used by researchers across different disciplines and data obtained from these methods is "often now accessible at the mere touch of a button'". (Townsend & Wallace, 2016, p. 4). Several studies indicate that research scholars are extensively using WhatsApp for research purposes (Madhusudhan, 2012; Kenchakkanavar & Hadagali, 2015).

Therefore, every pre-service teacher received an individual message requesting him/her to open the link and fill out the questionnaire. The WhatsApp message contained the aims and potentials of the study in Arabic followed by the questionnaire link. On the first page of the questionnaire, I wrote a brief description of the study where I highlighted the purpose of the study. Also, I informed the pre-service teachers that participation was voluntary and the information collected by

the questionnaire was to remain confidential. Social media applications including WhatsApp provide researchers with "a huge opportunity to gather data that would otherwise have taken much time and resources to obtain" (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). Yet, researchers should ensure that the data obtained from social media applications meet ethical standards. I ensured the validity of the data and sampling issues by sending an individual message that contained some information about the study and the link of the questionnaire, to the pre-service teachers via WhatsApp which has end-to-end encryption. WhatsApp end-to-end encryption has ensured that I and the pre-service teacher could only view and read the message as every message sent via WhatsApp is secured with a cryptographic lock and only the recipient has the key to unlock and view the message. Ethical implications related to WhatsApp are discussed under ethical considerations (refer to 4.8).

The semi- structured questionnaire generally aims at tackling seven main topics with regard to the opportunities and challenges pre-service teachers encountered during their teaching practice. The main topics were decided upon from the focus groups findings. The questionnaire consists of three main sections (refer to Appendix 7). The first section aims to elicit some demographic information about the participants including their gender and whether they are currently working in a school or not. The second section consists of 40 statements to be assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. One may notice that the second section is slightly long, however I see that the 40 statements included in the questionnaire cover important issues related to English language teaching practice that should not be neglected when tackling the opportunities and

challenges that pre-service teachers encounter while undertaking their teaching practice. The last section in the questionnaire includes four open ended questions that aim at catching the authenticity and depth of the pre-service teachers' responses since they were given the freedom to answer the questions either in English or Arabic.

4.5.2 The College supervisor one to one semi- structured interviews.

The application of the qualitative method in the study aims to provide in-depth and detailed understanding of the college supervisors' experience with the school based practicum course and the context of the study (Klein & Myers, 1999). I conducted semi-structured interviews that were characterized by being inductivist (theory emerges from the data). I have chosen to interview college supervisors individually because I believe that they are capable of constructing their own multi-layered and complex reality (Gage, 1989). Also, the theoretical framework of the study and the nature of the third and fourth research questions has determined the implementation of the one to one interview which is considered to be "a social encounter" (Cohen et al., 2011) not just a tool to collect information. In addition, the human embeddeness of interviews makes it a good choice for the present study since it is, to some extent framed around the humanistic theory.

One to one interviews with college supervisors were conducted in the College premise and the interview place was determined by the availability of the meeting rooms at the College. Some College supervisors were interviewed in the English language department meeting room and some were interviewed in the College meeting room. Each interview lasted for almost an hour. All the college supervisors are my colleagues which helped to create an atmosphere of free and easy conversation eliciting a rich, authentic and honest

information about their experiences with teaching practice and their relations with the pre-service teachers, college administration and the cooperating teachers. The college supervisors were informed about the purpose of the study. I procured a written informed consent from the college supervisors who were assured that all the interview information will be confidential and will not affect their job and promotions.

The interview questions were all the open-ended type (refer to Appendix 8) since the present study aims to explore the opportunities and challenges encountered by the college supervisors. The structure of the interviews was informal and very responsive to the uncertain and indeterminate information I got during the interviews in order to capture the complexity of the experience and to understand why the college supervisors said what they said. (Cohen et al., 2011).

4.5.3 The cooperating teachers' semi- structured questionnaire.

The cooperating teacher's semi structured questionnaire aims at tackling the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum course and the nature of the relationship between the practicum triad. The content of the questionnaire was guided by the cooperating teacher's literature (Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013; Richardson-Koehler, 1988; Chapman, Codner & Pearce, 2008; Meade, 1991; Metcalf, 1991; Gan, 2013), my professional experience as a college supervisor and some of the issues related to the cooperating teachers discussed in the focus groups and the one to one interviews. I also used Google Drive to design the cooperating teachers' questionnaire. I sent the link of the cooperating teachers' questionnaire via WhatsApp message to the male and female participants. The questionnaire consisted of three sections (refer to Appendix 9). The first section elicits some demographic information about the cooperating teachers including

their gender, their educational background and the number of their teaching experience years. The second section consists of 30 statements to be assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The 30 items Likert scale questionnaire are distributed into three main topic areas: the preparation for the role of a cooperating teacher, cooperating teachers' perceptions of the pre-service teachers and the nature of communication between cooperating teachers and the College. The cooperating teachers were asked to select one of five numbers which indicates a level of agreement or disagreement (5= Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3= No Opinion, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly Disagree). The last section includes four open ended questions that aim at eliciting a comprehensive picture of the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at the College.

4.6 Analysis Procedures

4.6.1 An integrative analysis approach for the sequential exploratory mixed method design.

Within the sequential exploratory design, the study adopts Creswell and Clark (2011) method level integration procedure which is integration through building. This integration occurs when results from a data collection procedure "informs the data collection approach of the other procedure, the latter building on the former" (Fetters et al., 2013, p. 2140). In the present study, the content of the pre-service teachers' questionnaire was built upon the focus groups data. Initially, I analysed the focus groups' data. Then, the themes inducted from the focus groups' data analysis were used to develop a

questionnaire that was distributed to all the targeted pre-service teachers. After that, I merged the two datasets for detailed case analysis.

a) **Thematic content analysis of focus groups and one to one interviews:**

The study employed a thematic content analysis to analyse pre-service teachers' focus groups and College supervisor's one to one interviews. The analysis of focus groups took an inductive exploratory approach. Thematic content analysis in the present study focuses on what the participants said rather than how they said it (Bryman, 2008). In addition, Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasize that the, theoretical position of a thematic analysis should be made clear. It is believed that thematic analysis will build an understanding of the pre-service teachers' experiences with teaching practice through specifically relating their teaching practice experiences to the pedagogical practices in the English department, and the College rules in general. The thematic analysis of focus groups and one to one interviews delves deep into the pre-service teachers' and college supervisors' experiences to identify "the *underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies" (Braun & Clarke , 2006, p.13). In this regard, the analysis is also guided by a phenomenological approach that aims to give detailed and in-depth reasons for the variation in the pre-service teachers' practicum experiences, and the factors that hinder good teaching experience in the College and the cooperating schools.

The focus groups and one to one interviews analysis have gone through six phases adopted from Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. I transcribed focus groups' interviews and one to one interviews with the college supervisors into written form. Bird (2005) believes that data transcription is "a key phase of data analysis" (p. 227) (refer to Appendix 10 & 11).

2. I read the raw data several times to familiarize myself (Riessman, 1993) with the depth and breadth of the content.

3. I started to identify initial codes and match them with extracts from the entire focus groups data set using NVivo.

4. The different codes were sorted into potential themes and all the relevant coded data extracts were collated within the identified themes and sub-themes.

5. Themes were reviewed and refined. This procedure ensures the validity of the potential themes in relation to the entire data set.

6. I identified the "essence" of each theme and determined specific aspects of data that each theme captures.

7. I ensured that there is no overlap between the themes. The name of each theme was decided at this stage as well.

8. I started the write up of the thematic analysis

b) **Statistical analysis used with the pre-service teacher questionnaire**: As it was mentioned earlier, the pre-service teachers' questionnaire was used to explore some of the focus groups findings and provide precise information about the challenges pre-service teachers encountered during their teaching practice. It also plays a supporting role in the interpretation of the qualitative findings and identifies any conflicts between the two data sets especially amongst the two groups of

female and male pre-service teachers. The process of getting the pre-service teachers' questionnaire responses was eased by using Google drive. All the responses were saved in 'My Drive' in my Google Drive homepage. The responses were also automatically saved in an Excel spreadsheet that was later copied to and analysed using SPSS for windows. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the questionnaire. First, the frequencies and means of the responses to the five Likert scale for each item were obtained (refer to Appendix 12). Then, the means and standard deviation for each topic in the questionnaire was calculated in order to provide "concise descriptions of the pre-service teachers responses to each topic, and facilitated presenting…….discussing and linking their perceptions to concepts and theories in the literature." (Al Hajri, 2014, p.132). Furthermore, the pre-service teachers' responses were tested for significant differences amongst the groups of gender by using the Mann-Whitney U non-parametric test to understand the implications of any difference in the teaching practice experience between the male and the female pre-service teachers since the male teachers practice teaching in boys' schools and female pre-service teacher practice teaching in the girls' schools. The Mann-Whitney test is used because the data obtained by Likert scale is ordinal which is best investigated by non-parametric test (Pallant, 2007).

c) **Integration through merging:** The analysis and interpretation of the sequential exploratory design was guided by an integrative data analytic approach. I brought the two datasets (focus groups and questionnaire findings) together for data merging and case analysis. Through merging the two sources of data, I aim to

"diverge and expand insights of the phenomenon of interest by addressing different aspects of a single phenomenon or by describing complementary aspects of a central phenomenon of interest" (Fetters et al., 2013, p.2144). Data merging or data consolidation as described by Caracelli and Greene (1993) has provided supportive and supplementary information and "displayed a dynamic interconnectedness" (p.201). Therefore, integration through merging the two datasets resulted in comprehensive understanding of the pre-service teachers teaching practice experience as I generated new themes from a merged analysis of the focus groups data and the questionnaire data. It has also drawn a broader picture of the challenges that pre-service teachers encountered during their teaching practice.

4.6.2 Statistical analysis used for the cooperating teachers' questionnaire.

The cooperating teachers' questionnaire aims at exploring the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum course. All the responses were automatically saved in Google drive and then transferred to SPSS programme for analysis. The analysis of the cooperating teachers' questionnaire has gone through the same analysis stages as the pre-service teachers' questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential analysis was carried out to find any perceptions differences between the groups of female cooperating teachers and male cooperating teachers. I first obtained the frequencies and means of the responses to the five Likert scale for each item (refer to Appendix 13). After that, the means and standard deviation for each topic in the questionnaire was calculated. Finally, the cooperating teachers' responses were tested for significant differences

amongst the two groups of gender by using the Mann-Whitney U non-parametric test to understand any differences in perceptions that may be observed between female cooperating teachers and male cooperating teachers.

In addition, the open-ended questions in the cooperating questionnaire were handled qualitatively. I simply identified the themes emerged from the word-based data and analysed them based on the literature that tackle the relationship between pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers. The open-ended questions in the cooperating teachers' questionnaire have elicited more information about the real context of teaching practice in the cooperating schools and their expectations of the English language pre-service teachers and the College administrations.

4.7 The Quality of the Research Study

In fact, social science researchers who adopted a mixed methods approach have been employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative criteria in assessing the quality of their mixed method research. Along with the currently applied quality criteria in mixed method research, the present study employs a set of specific quality criteria for mixed methods research that are proposed by Bryman, Becker and Sempik (2008): relevance to research questions, transparency, the need for integration of mixed methods findings and a rationale for using mixed methods research. A detailed description of the strategies I used to ensure trustworthiness and credibility in the study will be discussed in the light of Bryman, Becker and Sempik's (2008) quality criteria for mixed methods research.

4.7.1 Relevance to research questions

The selection of methods in the present study was mainly based on the type of research questions rather than my own preferences as a researcher. The methods were tailored

to the research questions in order to elicit information that would answer these questions appropriately. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) emphasize that research studies that ask the questions of 'what and how' should employ mixed methods approach to best answer the questions and provide in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study. Therefore, the present study applied a mixed methods approach to data collection as it best suited to answer the study research questions which all start with 'What'. It is thus the research procedures and research findings were judged based on their relevance to the research questions. The present study actually combines a particularistic discourse "viewing mixed methods research as only appropriate when relevant to the research questions being asked," (Bryman, Becker & Sempik, 2008, p.270) and a universalistic approach which views "mixed methods research as providing better outcomes more or less regardless of the aims of the research" (ibid). I believe that the study's data collection methods have answered the research questions in depth and provided a comprehensive picture of the target groups' experiences with teaching practice in the study institute, as will be seen in chapter 5 and 6. Thus, the relevance of the research methods to the research questions has ensured trustworthiness and credibility of the present study Furthermore, the relevance to research questions as a quality criteria for mixed method research is also referred to as methodological coherence in qualitative inquiry (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2008). I tried to ensure sampling adequacy by choosing the study participants who best represented the topic of the study. Daniel (2011) asserts that if sampling is done properly, researchers can ensure valid, reliable and useful findings. In the present study, pre-service teachers are the main group who could judge their own experience with teaching practice and evaluate the school based practicum

course. Actually, graduate pre-service teachers are the best individuals to judge the quality of the pre-service teacher preparation programmes since they encounter multiple experiences with the different educative and practical components of the programme. In addition, the inclusion of college supervisors and cooperating teachers added extra lens to evaluate the school based practicum course from different angles and ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. I have tried to ensure "prolonged engagement" (Shenton, 2004) with my participants especially the pre-service English teachers in order to establish a relationship of trust to enable them to be critical in their evaluation of their practicum experience which helped in producing credible and valid findings.

Furthermore, I have presented a wide knowledge of prior research on school based practicum that is clearly manifested in the literature review chapter. My comprehensive review of the pre-service teacher education literature has proved the unavailability of a uniform conceptual framework of pre-service English teacher knowledge base. Therefore, I have proposed a conceptual framework of the pre-service English language teacher knowledge base that is based on the literature of pre-service English teacher education and my own experience and background as an English teacher in a Higher Education Institute. I have also included a wide range of studies that tackle teaching practice, both locally and globally. In the discussion chapter, I related the findings of the present study to the existing body of knowledge on practicum in order to ensure the credibility of the study. Moreover, based on the study findings, I attempt to fill a gap in the literature by proposing an online practicum community of practice through the implementation of a practicum community of practice mobile application that is hoped to promote effective

communication between all the practicum members and consequently promote quality practicum.

4.7.2 Transparency.

Clarity and transparency is crucial in gathering and reporting mixed methods research findings (O'Cathain, 2009). It has been argued that many mixed method research studies "lacked clarity in whether the reported results primarily stemmed from qualitative or quantitative findings." (Östlund, Kidd, Wengström & Rowa-Dewar, 2011, p.382). Therefore, the present study has taken this criterion into consideration while designing the study framework. The feasibility and rationale of integrating focus groups and semi-structured questionnaire was clearly explained and justified during the data collection procedure and the data analysis stage as well (refer to 4.3, 4.5 & 4.6). Also, I explicitly indicated the provenance of the findings whether they were yielded from quantitative or qualitative methods as addressing clarity and transparency in every stage of mixed method research helped to ensure consistency and adequacy of combining different methods that are derived from different ontological and epistemological assumptions (ibid).

4.7.3 Need for integration of the mixed methods findings.

I extensively explained and justified the analysis procedures. A clear approach to analyse the data obtained from the sequential exploratory design- the integrative data analysis approach was well outlined and justified (refer to 4.6.1). I intentionally merged the two databases in order to address the different aspects of the school based practicum course and understand the pre-service teachers' experiences from within. The analysis of the pre-service teachers' focus groups and the semi-structured questionnaire quantitative

data sets deductively and inductively, and moving back and forth between the two data sets and then bringing them together resulted in a comprehensive interpretation of the data from a multi-dimensional perspective (Feilzer, 2010).

Furthermore, the integration of the findings from all the different research methods and different research participants *(triangulating via data sources)* in the study has resulted in providing thick description of the pre-service teachers', college supervisors' and cooperating teachers' experiences with teaching practice which in return established trustworthiness and ensured the validity of the study (Shenton, 2004). In the discussion chapter, I brought pre-service teachers', college supervisors' and cooperating teachers' viewpoints and experiences together to verify them against each other in order to provide a rich picture of their practicum experiences. Moreover, themes that I identified in the different data sets were also triangulated, reviewed and refined. I checked that all the themes work within the coded extracts and the entire data set as well. This procedure has ensured the validity of the potential themes in relation to the entire data set. The use of the mixed methods approach also helped to identify the paradox between two individual data sources (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007) since the application of the mixed methods design sometimes leads to heterogeneous results (Feilzer, 2010) as it is the case in the present study. In this regard, I have tried to ensure *paralogical legitimation* (Lather, 1986) – which entails presenting paradox in the data (Al Riyami, 2016), through providing logical interpretation and abductive reasoning (Feilzer, 2010) for these contradictions based on the reviewed teaching practice literature and my experience as teacher (refer to chapter 5).

Furthermore, issues of personal, functional and disciplinary reflexivity (Wilkinson, 1988; Robson, 2002; Maxwell, 1996; Hill, 2006) were addressed in the present study. Generally research studies should include any personal or professional information related to the phenomena under study to ensure the credibility of study (Patton, 2002; Maykut & Morehouse (1994). Therefore, I have provided a short biographical information about my experience as a teacher and a practicum college supervisor (refer to 1.1 &1.2). In fact, my experiential knowledge and perspectives as a previous pre-service teacher myself, as well as a researcher and lecturer helped me to reflect upon the pre-service teachers' teaching practice experiences. Furthermore, my role in this context triggers an arguably "healthy bias" (Wellington, 2000) when analysing the pre-service teachers' experiences. This bias was minimized through being reflective during the data analysis in order to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. In addition, my acknowledgement of the subjectivity that I and research participants brought to the research process (Weber, 2004, p. ix) helped to ensure the dependability of the study.in fact, the application of mixed method design allowed me to conduct an on-going reflection throughout the research processes. As a researcher, I was responsive, holistic and have processional immediacy (Morse et al., 2008) during the data analysis procedures which helped me to relate similar themes that were derived from different data sets.

4.7.4 A rationale for using the mixed methods approach.

Bryman (2006b) and Niglas (2004) noted that a significant number of mixed methods articles do not provide a rationale for its use which consequently affected the trustworthiness or the validity of the study. Therefore, I presented a clear rationale for the use of the mixed method approach in the previous sections (refer to 4.3 & 4.5).

Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) affirm that the accuracy of a research study can be addressed by employing and triangulating several perspectives and data collection methods. As it can be seen that the present study employed different data collection methods– pre-service teachers' focus groups and online semi-structured questionnaire, one to one college supervisors' interviews and cooperating teachers' online semi-structured questionnaire. Generally, the mixed methods approach in the present study is used to discover what works in the teaching practice course through addressing the opportunities and challenges encountered by pre-service teachers and college supervisors as well as exploring the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum course in order to propose an agenda for change if deemed necessary. This kind of in-depth understanding would have been very difficult to obtain with the application of a single method. Therefore, multiple methods were necessary to present a true picture of teaching practice to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Bakioğlu and Kurnaz (2009) emphasize that "the most important factors determining the value of research is that its findings solve a true problem encountered in practice" (p.2).

In addition, the content validity of the pre-service English teachers' questionnaire used in the sequential exploratory design was ensured by prior detailed transcription of the focus groups (refer to Appendix 10) which provided the base for the content of the questionnaire alongside the in-depth review of the literature on the topic of teaching practice. Also the pre-service teachers' and cooperating teachers' semi-structured questionnaires were revised by three experts in the field of education as explained above. Despite of the fact that hard copy questionnaire for the pre-service teachers showed not to yield the expected response rate, I have gained valuable insights from the 18 returned hard copy

questionnaires thus collected, as they helped me to modify some of the questionnaire statements for the online survey.

Furthermore, the integration of the two methods (***methods triangulation)*** in the sequential exploratory design was well justified in the present study (refer to 4.5.1). Sagoe (2012) contends that "focus-group discussions, when used alongside quantitative ……method, can result in a much greater efficiency than either method used alone" (p.3). Therefore, the pre-service teachers' focus groups and online semi-structured questionnaire were both implemented to gather information about the opportunities and challenges encountered by the pre-service English teachers during their teaching practice. In fact, the triangulation of the two methods has provided in depth understanding of the pre-service teaching practice experience. It also helped to determine what is found with one method can be validated against another method (Schiazza, 2013). It has thus ensured the conformability of the study as some of the questionnaire data were used to confirm the findings from focus groups, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985). Therefore, it can be said that the sequential exploratory design offers a greater potential for credibility in confirming the findings which resulted in understanding different aspects of the school based practicum course under study and making "valid inferences, challenge existing theoretical assumptions and develop or create new ones." (Östlund, Kidd, Wengström & Rowa-Dewar, 2011, p.382). Therefore, it is evident that methods triangulation has helped to produce credible findings (Schiazza, 2013) and ensure the validity of the study (Creswell, 2011; Creswell & Miller, 1997). In addition, the use of different methods "compensates for their individual limitations and exploits their respective benefits" (Shenton, 2004 p.65). Therefore, based on the above, I propose that

the term "mutual" (Armitage, 2007) may be a more appropriate term than "mixed" as the mixture of the methods in this study is not just a juxtaposition of two methods but rather a mutual and well-planned integration of the two methods in my sequential exploratory design.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is defined as "a matter principled sensitivity to the rights of others, and that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better" (Canvan, 1977 as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.84). The consideration of research ethics and reflecting on them is very crucial in social science research (Davis, 2006) as it improves "researchers' ethical sensitivity… ethical judgment and willpower" (Davis, 2006 as cited in Flipse, Sanden & Osseweijer, 2013, p.709). The key principles that need to be addressed when tackling the issue of research ethics include study rationale, informed consents, ethical aspects of the methods, confidentiality and ethical principles such as risks, harm and data protection (Smith, 2003). Therefore, the present study has gone through three stages to grant the permission to be conducted in an autonomous and non-harmful atmosphere (Wiles, Heath, Crow & Charles, 2006). The first stage involved getting an approval from the Institutional Review Board (IBR) in Exeter University to assure that the study is compliant with the research ethics. I completed the University Ethics form and submitted it to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the beginning of the study. After gaining the IRB approval (refer to Appendix 14), I obtained another consent from the research council in the General Director of College of Applied Sciences in the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman. The research council in return sent an email to the Dean of the College of Education under study, requesting them to aid my work as a researcher and

to afford help as needed (refer to Appendix 5). The following section discusses the key principles that the study addressed with regard to research ethics.

4.8.1 Study rationale and informed consents.

Informed consent is considered to be the cornerstone of research ethics (Howe & Moses, 1999). Based on this perspective, I obtained informed consents from all the three research groups: the pre-service teachers, college supervisors and the cooperating teachers. I designed a different consent form for each research method in the study. Each consent form addresses the study rationale and any expected benefits of the study (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011). It also contains a "Noncoersive Disclaimer" (ibid) which indicates that participation is voluntary and no harm caused if the participants refused to be part of the study. It was clearly explained to the participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without having to disclose an explanation to me (Shenton, 2004). In addition, reassurance of the confidentiality of the data obtained from the participants is mentioned in the consent forms.

4.8.2 Ethical aspects of the methods.

I designed a consent form for each research method employed in the study: pre-service teachers' focus groups (Appendix 15), pre-service teachers' online questionnaire (Appendix 16), college supervisors' one to one interviews (Appendix 17), and cooperating teachers' online questionnaire (Appendix 18). The consent forms were handed to the focus groups' and one to one interviews' participants in person, after highlighting the purpose of the study and addressing any expected benefits or possible consequences. Before conducting the pre-service teachers' focus groups and college supervisors' one to one interview, I provided verbal detailed information about the aims of the study. I also

explained the protocol of focus groups and how they are usually conducted in social science research. In addition, I briefed the participants on how the data will be analysed. The pre-service teachers were assured that participation in the study will not affect their final grades and the college supervisors and cooperating teachers were also assured that their participation will not hinder job promotions. Personal and sensitive questions were avoided in the interviews to create an atmosphere of trust and honesty. In brief, the focus groups and one to one interviews were very clear in agenda and focus, and conducted in a very conducive environment (Cohen et al., 2011) as it was mentioned in section 4.5. The participants were also given the freedom to withhold from answering any questions that they did not feel comfortable with. In addition, I gained consent from the College under study to conduct the research in its premise (refer to Appendix 19).

In fact, despite some attempts to provide researchers with ethical guidelines on how to use social media applications, there is not yet a clear ethical framework for researchers to use these applications as data collection tools. Thus, the application of WhatsApp as a data collection tool in the present study posed some ethical concerns that I have tried to tackle to protect the privacy of my participants. Every pre-service teacher and cooperating teacher received a private, individual message requesting him/her to open the link and fill out the questionnaire. Also, I informed the participants that participation is voluntary and the information collected by the questionnaire will remain confidential as even I, as a researcher, will not able to identify the participants who filled the questionnaire. I have ensured that the data obtained from WhatsApp meets ethical standards as WhatsApp has end-to-end encryption. WhatsApp end-to-end encryption has ensured that I and the pre-service teachers or cooperating teachers can only view and

read the messages as every message sent via WhatsApp is secured with a cryptographic lock and only the recipient has the key to unlock and view the message. This feature of WhatsApp makes it a secure and valid data collection method and ensures data privacy.

The informed consents of the online questionnaires were handled differently compared the focus groups and one to one interviews as it was impractical to get the participants signature online as this may require a special software which could not be available with all the participants. Therefore, the first page of the online questionnaire provided an overall description of the study rationale and then the participants were asked a question of whether they agree to participate in the study or not. If they choose 'Yes', they will be automatically transferred to the questionnaire but if they choose 'No', they will be signed out from the page. Therefore, by doing so, I believe that I handled an important ethical aspect of informed consent that many online data collection tools neglect which is the participant's right to withdraw from study.

In the present study, the participants were also assured that all information provided will be used for research purposes only and it is only I who can get access to the data retrieved from the online questionnaires without knowing the identities of the participants. It is worth mentioning that it is sometimes difficult to confirm the authenticity of the respondents and responses of online questionnaires (James & Busher, 2007). I am actually aware of this limitation, and kept this in mind when interpreting the data.

Furthermore, anonymity is taken very seriously. Accordingly, the anonymity of the study participants was preserved as no names or identifiable data was collected. With regard to the small qualitative data generated from the online questionnaires, they were aggregated with the focus groups' data as supporting data and there is no way a reader

could identify who said what. Moreover, the data was saved to my Gmail account which is secured by a password. Therefore, the risk of harm that the online questionnaire may bring to the participants have been minimized by a highly protected data.

4.8.3 Confidentiality and other ethical principles such as risks, harm and data protection.

Confidentiality is carefully addressed in the present study because of the sensitivity of the topic and the variety of research methods employed in the study. The name of the College where the study is conducted is kept confidential as the data analysis revealed some sensitive issues that may harm the reputation of the study institute. I also used pseudonyms to refer to the participants in the study in order to protect their identities. I assured the study participants that all the information yielded is confidential and will only be used for research purposes. I also assured the pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers that I can only access the data retrieved from the online questionnaires without being able to identify the identities of the respondents. I informed them that their responses are password protected and it is impossible for anyone else to access or trace their online responses as all the responses were highly secured in my Gmail personal account which is password protected. Drew, Hardman and Hosp (2008) assert that "It is of paramount importance that educational researchers respect the rights, privacy, dignity, and sensitivities of their research populations and also the integrity of the institute within which the research occurs." (p. 57). In addition, I stressed that focus group interviews are held under 'The Chatham House Rule' which aims at providing anonymity to all participants to encourage openness and sharing of information. Furthermore, the study addresses the ethical principle of beneficence which aims at assuring the participants that

no harm is caused to them through the process of data collection in order to make them feel at ease and help to express themselves freely (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011). The participants were given the freedom to withhold from answering any question that they did not feel comfortable answering. The pre-service teachers were assured that participation in the study will not affect their final grades, and the college supervisors and cooperating teachers were assured that their participation will not hinder their job promotions. I also thanked the participants for their participation and made them feel that their feedback is important. In addition, I spent some time with the pre-service teachers and college supervisors after the interviews and discussed some more issues related to the topic under study. Baumrind (1971) contends that researchers should show positive indebtedness to the participants for their contribution in the research study in order to promote the participants' self-esteem and to protect their dignity. The data collected for the study was transcribed and safely stored by me. The data was kept in a pass-word protected drive that can be accessed only by me. All the recorded interviews were to be deleted from the digital recorder. I intend to keep the raw data for five years after completion. After which all the raw data will be destroyed.

4.9 Limitations of the Study

Despite my endeavour to provide an in-depth analysis of the pre-service teachers' practicum experience in the present study and set an agenda for change that is believed to transform the field of teaching practice to the better, imperfection always surrounds human acts. I have acknowledged that the epistemological nature of the study has driven me to sometimes take "a healthy bias" (Wellington, 2000) attitude with the pre-service

teachers' experiences but such bias was minimized by being reflective during the data analysis in order to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Yet, it was sometimes very difficult to avoid bias throughout the data analysis especially when dealing with the participants' own interpretations of their experiences. Moreover, the cooperating teachers involved in the study were only from the rural cooperating schools in the same area of the study institute. I believe that the cooperating teachers' data could be richer if I had involved other cooperating teachers from more urban cooperating schools. In addition, the analysis of the open-ended questions in both the pre-service teachers' questionnaire and cooperating teachers' questionnaire were subject to my categorization bias (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, these analyses were peer reviewed by another faculty member in the English department at the College in order to reduce such bias. I also consulted some professors in the field of educational research to avoid any flaws in the design of the pre-service teachers' and cooperating teachers' questionnaires. Piloting the pre-service teachers' and cooperating teachers' questionnaires would have helped to identify the clarity of the statements and would have provided valuable information about the layout of the questionnaires (Bryman & Cramer 2011). However, while the hard copy pre-service teachers' questionnaire helped to identify some problems with the wording of the questionnaire's statements, piloting the online version of the questionnaire might have added additional insights on the clarity of the statements and the layout in general. Furthermore, I believe that I would have gained additional powerful insights from the college supervisors if I had used focus groups interviews instead of one to one interviews. College supervisors are professionals in the field and some of them have been supervising pre-service teachers for many years. Therefore, they are the most

knowledgeable stakeholders of the school based practicum course and bringing them together to identify the strengths and the weaknesses of the course and explore its potentials may have yielded powerful insights to improve the quality of the current practicum course. Having said this, the individual anonymous interviews that I conducted, may have enabled greater honesty and openness. Thus, using this study as a baseline, further research could employ focus group interviews with college supervisors to yield more powerful thoughts and suggestions to improve practicum at the College.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the pragmatic and epistemological stance of the study. It also briefly highlighted some critical dimensions of the study in terms of encouraging students' teacher to reflect on some of the taken for granted practices and suggest an agenda for change, if deemed necessary. The case study research design that incorporates the sequential exploratory design as a basic mixed method design in the study along with other qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and the rationale for it was discussed in details in the chapter. Furthermore, the chapter tackled the integrative data analysis approach used to analyse the data generated from the sequential exploratory design and the qualitative analysis approach for the one to one interview data. The chapter presented a detailed description of the strategies that I used to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Limitations of the study marks the end of the methodology chapter with some recommendations for a better methodological design for further studies. The practicality and fitness of the data analysis procedures will manifest more in the following chapter through the presentation of the study findings.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The main aim of the study as it was stated in Chapter One– is to gather information from current pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers about their perceptions of the teaching practice components of the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme in a College of Education and get a clear picture of the challenges they encounter to find solutions to maximize the effectiveness of the school based practicum experience. The findings of the study are presented and discussed thoroughly in this Chapter in the light of the current literature on teaching practice. The presentation and analysis of the findings is organized around the five research questions. Sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 answer the first and the second research questions and present the opportunities and challenges that pre-service teachers encountered during their practicum experience and what they feel needs to be maintained or changed in the practicum course. The third and the fourth research questions are answered in sections 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7 where the college supervisors' experience with practicum is explored through presenting the opportunities and challenges they have faced in the practicum course and their insights on how to improve practicum. Section 5.8 answers the fifth research question and tackles the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum and their expectations from the pre-service teachers. In addition, section 5.9 discusses the rationale of proposing the practicum community of practice model based on the findings of the study. The data of the study will be presented into different themes related to each research question and at the end of each theme, I will relate the findings

to the existing literature that has explored the same theme. In this chapter, pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers will be referred to as PSTs, CSs and CTs respectively. Table 5.1 shows the research questions that each section in this chapter tackles. In this chapter, the research questions will be pointed as RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4, and RQ5 with the same order as in section 1.4.

Sections	Research Questions	Data sets
5.2, 5.3 & 5.4	RQ1 & RQ2	1.Pre-service teachers' focus groups 2.Pre-service teachers' semi-structured questionnaire
5.5, 5.6 & 5.7	Q 3 & Q4	3. College supervisor's one to one interviews
5.8	Q 5	4. Cooperating teacher's semi-structured questionnaire

Table 5.1 The chapter's sections and the Research Questions.

As it is stated in the methodology chapter, the present case study framework integrates a multi-strategy research design which aims to elicit different sources of data through the application of different methods. The findings of the study will be drawn from four different datasets. The first dataset includes the pre-service teachers' focus groups and the second dataset is the pre-service teachers' semi-structured questionnaire. The first and the second data sets aim at answering the first and second research questions. Then, the third dataset consists of the one to one interviews which tackle the third and fourth research questions. The fifth research question is answered through the analysis of the fourth dataset which is the cooperating teachers' semi-structured questionnaire.

5.2 Opportunities encountered by pre-service English teachers during practicum.

The epistemological stance of the study helped to explore the teaching practice experience of the PSTs through the application of the sequential exploratory design (refer to 4.5.1). The integration of focus groups and semi structured questionnaire data in this sequential exploratory design has resulted in much greater details of the opportunities and challenges PSTs encountered during their teaching practice experience and developed a comprehensive picture of the school based practicum in the target institute. The two datasets are merged in this section for a detailed case study. The themes inducted from the focus groups (Appendix 20) are presented in this section and also in sections 5.3 and 5.4. In addition, illustrative extracts from the data are provided to support these themes. Furthermore, throughout the presentation and discussion of the study findings in this section and the following sections that tackle the pre-service teachers teaching practice experience (refer to 5.3 & 5.4), I am actively merging the qualitative and standardized PSTs' questionnaire data (refer to Appendices 12 & 20) into the similar themes inducted from the focus groups for data confirmation and to generalize the findings to the whole study population of the PSTs. Pseudonyms have been used to refer to the participants of the focus groups. Table 5.2 introduces participants of the focus groups to their pseudonyms.

Gender	Focus Group	Pseudonyms
Male Pre-service teachers	M FG1	Imad Maher Ameer Haitham Bader Fahad Malik
Male Pre-service teachers	M FG2	Ahmed Hamed Jamal Hilal Bashar Karee
Female Pre-service teachers	F FG1	Deema Huda Basma Eman Farah Salwa Asia
Female Pre-service teachers	F FG2	Asma Salima Dalal Badriya Fatma Amal

Table 5.2 Focus Groups' Participants

In fact, the pre-service teacher's semi-structured questionnaire also plays a supporting role in the interpretation of the focus groups findings and identifies any conflicts between the two datasets especially amongst the two groups of female and male PSTs. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the standardised questionnaire data. New themes were also generated from a merged analysis of focus groups data and the questionnaire data as I followed a non-linear process in analysing the data which involves going back and forth between the two datasets to establish new themes and assign meaning to them by presenting the extracts from the original data that each theme captures. Themes and categories identified in the data were analysed and discussed with reference to the study theoretical framework– the sociocultural theory and zone of proximal development to teacher education. I cited large chunks of the focus groups data to contextualize the data and "clarify the meaning intended by the participants (Khan,

2011, p.81). Some of the PSTs were dominant in the focus groups despite my efforts to involve all the pre-service teachers in the discussion.

The data analysis of the pre-service English teachers' focus groups and semi-structured questionnaire revealed that the school based practicum course has a positive impact on the PSTs as it prepares them for in-service teaching and engages them in reflective practice.

5.2.1 Practicum prepares pre-service teachers to teach in a more skilful manner.

The focus groups data have revealed that pre-service teachers value teaching practice. Most PSTs in all the four focus groups have shown a positive perception of the concept of teaching practice. They believe that teaching in real classrooms during their academic preparation has enriched their repertoire of professional learning. It has backed them up with a good stock of effective strategies to deal with classrooms' challenges. Asma from the female focus group (2) stated that "The first opportunity we had is to be in real teaching situation. I mean we are teaching real students especially cycle one in practicum 3. How to react towards these children."

In addition, practicum experience has helped the pre-service teachers to acquire many skills that a teacher needs including organization skills, communication skills and skills for writing a good lesson plan. Ahmed from the male's focus group (2) commented,

> *"Practicum 3 and 4 taught me how to be punctual and how to organize my time table, how to deal with teachers and how to deal with other students also because in schools there are a lot of students. It is different, different from practicum 1 and 2. So practicum 3 and 4 is useful for us. It helps us to be punctual, it helps us to organize my timetable, it helps us to prepare my lesson plan and to cooperate with my supervisor."*

The study also shows that practicum has built a confident personality of a future teacher in terms of dealing with the school students and school staff including the cooperating teachers and school principals. Both male and female pre-service teachers stated that practicum boosts their confidence level. Interestingly, it has been noticed that during the focus groups' discussion, pre-service teachers used the terms 'teacher personality' and 'professional identity' interchangeably. Imad from the male's focus group (1) stated,

> *"My opinion is that these practicum subject built my personality. Nowadays, I am confident to face people, to cover the problems. Also, I make hundreds of relationships between the teachers in the school. Also, experience in the subject teaching new grammar and new rules. Now I feel 70% of my professional identity or personality is built by practicum."*

In addition, Salima from the female's focus group (2) said,

> *"When you go to school, you know to deal with students and also it builds our personality as teachers because here at the College, maybe you didn't find that you have personality because all of them are like you. Maybe they act like children but whatever they do they cannot be like real students so you can build your personality and you can build how you teach. For example, you choose to be very kind but sometimes you find some students take this behaviour as negative so they don't do their work or they don't write their homework. So from school practicum, you know how to build your personality. So be not very strict and not very kind."*

It is noticeable in the study that the questionnaire qualitative and standardized data validated the focus group finding that highlighted the PSTs' positive perceptions on the importance of practicum in their academic journey to be teachers. The evidence for this is the following PSTs' responses to the open-ended question in the questionnaire which confirmed most of the above perceived advantages of school based practicum.

- *"It helps to apply many different techniques of teaching."*
- *"It shows you how it really looks like in the school environment."*
- *"It helps the pre-service's teacher to practice the theories in real teaching environment."*
- *"It teaches us how to deal with Ss, people who work in the school & issues that we may face when we're going to work there. Also, let us feel later that we are used*

> *to work in school and everything we're going to see is just like something familiar for us and know how to deal with it."*
> ▪ *"It helps pre-service teachers to be more confidents and practice the language properly. As well as, it gives them a chance to deal with different students with different abilities and how to prepare a success lesson and activities use environments subjects."*
> ▪ *"It helps teacher student to manage their lesson time that finish their learning objectives."*
> ▪ *"It provides opportunity for students to collaborate with the professionals."*

Furthermore, the PSTs' responses to the questionnaire Likert scale items (refer to Appendix 12) have confirmed most of the focus group data that will be clearly illustrated through the presentation of the findings in this section. The points 5 to 1 respectively denote Strongly Agree (SA), Agree, (A), No Opinion (NO), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). An item's mean that is equal or greater than 3.5 indicates that most of the respondents agree with a specific item. A mean score that is less than 3.5 signifies that most of the respondents disagree with a specific item.

Item (1) which states that 'the school based practicum course has provided PSTs with direct contact and sufficient opportunities to teach the English language' has scored a high mean of 3.61. In addition, most of the respondents agreed that the school based practicum course has provided them with a powerful future conception of teaching'. This indicates that most PSTs positively perceive the crucial role of school based practicum in preparing them to teach in more skilful manner. Thus, the high mean scores of the questionnaire items that draw on the efficacy of the school based practicum in preparing them for in-service teaching have supported the focus group finding.

In fact, the present study endorses the existing literature on the importance of teaching practice in preparing pre-service teachers to teach in real classrooms. For instance, Langdon, Alexander, Dinsmore and Ryde (2012) stress that "it is only on the job that the

intellectual and emotional complexity of teaching becomes a reality, and it is only in context that certain understandings and skills can be developed" (p. 400). In addition, the pre-service English teachers' positive perception of practicum is supported by Gebhard's (1990) study that was conducted in an ESL programme in New York City to track any changes in pre-service teachers' teaching behaviours during the sixteen weeks practicum course. Gebhard's (1990) study indicates positive changes in the PSTs' behaviours including competencies such as setting up and carrying out lesson, use of classroom space, selection of content and treatment of student's language errors. Similarly, the finding of the present study that indicates positive acquisition of important skills such as organization, communication skills and lesson planning skills during teaching practice validates the finding of Badr and Al-Shabbi's (1990) study at King Saud University which proves that the same skills or teaching competencies were also developed as a result of the teaching practice. Moreover, the role of teaching practice in promoting the confidence level of the PSTs in the present study has confirmed the findings of the several studies mentioned in the literature review chapter (Goh, Wong, Choy & Tan, 2009; Hascher, Cocard & Moser, 2004; Caires & Almeida, 2005) in which all of them show the positive impact of teaching practice experience on pre-service teachers' level of confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

5.2.2 Practicum guides pre-service teachers to adopt a reflective practice in their teaching methodology.

The focus groups data indicated that some practices during practicum engage PSTs in reflective practice which consequently promote their critical awareness of their teaching practices and lead to improvements in the teaching methods they use in the classroom. PSTs are asked, as part of practicum assessment, to write a short reflection of every

lesson they teach (refer to Appendix 4). Some pre-service teachers have realized the important role of reflection in promoting effective teaching practices. Therefore, they ask some of their colleagues to observe their lessons. Asma from focus group (2) said, "Sometimes I ask my friends who are trainees like me to observe me and after the lesson I ask them to comment on my lesson and give me some feedback.to improve my teaching." In addition, Dalal from female focus group (2) stated, "For example, I and my friend teach the same unit so we exchange advice and reflect on each other work."

Similarly, PSTs' questionnaire item (5) which states that the 'school based practicum course has helped pre-service teachers to develop a reflective and problem-solving approach towards teaching' has scored a high mean of 3.63 where 25 of the respondents agreed with the statements. Therefore, it can be said that quite a good number of the pre-service teachers believe that school based practicum engages them in reflective practice that helps in promoting their teaching skills. Such finding supports the findings of Majzub's (2013) qualitative study on the role of self-reflection and self-evaluation during teaching practice. Majzub's (2013) study manifests an increase of PSTs' awareness of their teaching styles and an increase in their ability to handle practicum challenges.

5.3 Challenges encountered by the pre-service teachers during practicum

Despite the overwhelming experience of school based practicum which that had many positive effects on the PSTs' teaching repertoire, the findings of the study have revealed that the whole experience was not stress-free. Most PSTs agreed with the questionnaire statement (8) that 'teaching practice experience was challenging and frustrating'. The item scored a high mean of 3.54 which explains and confirms the many challenges yielded from the focus groups data. In the literature of pre -service teacher education, many

researchers characterized teaching practice as a journey of struggle, loneliness, and conflict (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009; Shwu-yong & Waxman, 2009; Bloomfield, 2010; Capel, 1997; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000; Murray-Harvey, 2001). Yet, there are a few research studies that tackle the challenges English language PSTs encounter during their teaching practice particularly in the Arab World. In fact, challenges confronted by pre-service teachers should be identified and addressed immediately since if they are left untreated, they would have negative effects on the pre-service teachers and their performance in the classroom (Murray-Harvey, 2001). Therefore, the present study is a valuable addition to the literature of pre-service teacher education as it highlights the major challenges PSTs English language face in the cooperating schools in Oman.

5.3.1 The structure of the pre-service English teacher preparation programme hinders effective teaching practice.

The analysis of the focus groups data have shown that most of the PSTs claim that there is a gap between theory and practice in most of the courses offered in the programme. Focus group findings revealed that PSTs encountered difficulties translating the theories they study in the theoretical courses at college to real English language classrooms. Pre-service teachers believe that language teaching theories and methodologies that the programme offers are out of context and inapplicable to the English language curriculum in the Omani schools.   Maher, from the male focus group (1) stated,

> *"Teaching method, yeah, I mean teaching method. For example, in the College, we studied encouraging students and do this and do that but when we went to school, we faced something totally different from what we studied in our College."*

Also, Deema, from the female focus group (1) commented, "When we go to school, we found that their syllabus is different from what we studied in the courses and we found that we couldn't apply what we have studied. We just follow the book".

The findings of the present study show that in spite of the fact that some teaching strategies in the theoretical courses are very useful, PSTs faced difficulties to apply them in the English language classrooms for various reasons including the low English level of school students and their low level of motivation to learn English. Therefore, PSTs prefer to recline in a comfort zone where they apply traditional teaching practices that they feel can be more appropriate and practical than the fragmented teaching theories they studied in the teacher preparation programme. PSTs believe that the content of most theoretical courses in the College represent an ideal view of the English language classroom which claims that all the modern teaching theories and strategies can be applied in a language classroom. Salima, from the female focus group (2) commented,

> *"Sometimes they are teaching us here at the College curriculum that don't fit the atmosphere and things in the school. For example, there is a course which is language through Arts. They teach us how to apply grammar. For example, invite students to create a role play and ask them to go in the front of the class. This is very difficult because the students' level in the class is very low. It is very difficult to apply this. Also for example they ask us to try the activity for the students, visual and auditory. This is very difficult because the level is very low. So I think the subjects we take at the College are not related to the school atmosphere and curriculum."*

Furthermore, some PSTs complained that some courses in the programme present identical contents. They also indicated that most of these overlapping courses are compulsory courses and they have to undertake them to meet the programme requirements. Ameer, from the male focus group (1) mentioned,

> *"Yeah. I get one idea from these two subjects. One idea. How to make lesson plan only. They repeat everything but the teacher want to repeat*

> *what they have studied in practicum one and practicum two. …..Why do you want to repeat what we have learned in practicum one in practicum two and then we will repeat it in the practicum 3 and 4."*

Remarkably, the overlap in the content of various courses offered by the teacher preparation programme under study has been addressed in the literature of pre-service teacher education. In fact, many pre-service teacher preparation programmes are criticized for following the "add-on" mode of response (Grossman, Hammerness & McDonald, 2009) to address any changes in the programme by adding extra courses without paying attention to the content of these courses. Therefore, "this tendency to "add-on" rather than re-think has supported the balkanization of the curriculum of teacher education." (ibid, p.286).

Furthermore, the PSTs in the present study criticized the order of the theoretical courses in the programme. They believe that some courses should be offered in the semester preceding the teaching practice or along with teaching practice. Currently some of the important courses that are directly related to teaching such as 'How to teach vocabulary and writing', 'How to teach speaking and grammar', and 'Classroom management' are offered in the second academic year while practicum is offered in the fourth year. This huge time gap between the theoretical courses and practicum has created a gap in the application of theory into practice as this stretch of time is enough for the PSTs to forget most of the important teaching theories that they covered in the theoretical courses. Ahmed, from the male focus group (1) commented,

> *"I think there is a gap between practicum 3, 4. Some subjects I think there are very important in our major and we must to relate for our practicum 3 and 4. How to teach vocab and writing, how to teach speaking and grammar. They put these two subjects in the second year. Students if they study this subject in the second year, when they go to the third year, they will forget what they have studied in the second year because this subject."*

Asma, from the female focus group (2) also pointed out,

> *"I think it should be at the same time. For example, the ELT course. When we learn different ELT methods as well as the initial course, it was very useful for us and it is better to make in practice at the same time. For example, for one day, we learn something in one day and then we apply it. Yah. But when did we did we take initial course, third year. And school management second year. The teacher himself says that this course should be in the last year."*

In addition, the PSTs indicated that they require more language courses to improve their language skills since they believe that the language courses currently offered in the programme are not sufficient. Therefore, they appeal for more intensive English language courses to be integrated in the programme particularly during the foundation year. Haitham, from the male focus group (1) stated,

> *I think there is a big gap between what we learned in College and what we found in school. For example, as English teacher, we need to improve our speaking, listening, reading and writing but when we learn at College, we didn't find the subject that help us to improve these skills. So most of our friends are bad, a little, are bad in English.*

In addition, PSTs believe that including mathematics and IT as obligatory courses in the newly introduced General Foundation Programme (refer to 2.6) is not based on a valid rationale. Pre-service English teachers in the present study questioned the logic of undertaking mathematics during their preparation to be English language teachers. Therefore, they fervently ask that these courses be replaced by language courses that will greatly help in improving their language skills. Haitham, from the male focus group (1) commented, "It is not logical to take mathematics and computer because we don't study mathematics." Also, Hamed, from the male focus group (2) stated,

> *"Now what is the benefit of mathematics for the English students? In the registration now, you cannot go to the specialization if you have not passed*

> *the mathematics course. Now you go to the registration and ask how many students they are late because of the mathematics course. Three years most of the students, they are waiting to pass the mathematics course. What is the benefit? This is a plan? In the past, the plan in the past before, I think ten years ago."*

Indeed, the PSTs' dissatisfaction of their low proficiency level in English and their demands of more language skills courses support my proposed knowledge base framework for pre-service English language teacher (refer to 3.3.2) that places great emphasis on English pre-service teachers' linguistic knowledge to improve and enhance their command of the language and help them enrich their communication skills. It is striking that the PSTs' awareness of their low language level and their dissatisfaction of the language courses offered in the programme is in line with Al-Shalabi's (1988) study findings since most of the pre-service teachers in an EFL pre-service programme at Kuwait University were dissatisfied with their language competence. Similarly, the present study also supports the results of Gan's (2013) study that shows the inadequacy in English language competence of non-native pre-service ESL teachers from Hong Kong. Therefore, based on the findings of the present study and my experience as a teacher educator and the literature reviewed (refer to Chapter three), it is very crucial to introduce intensive English language courses to pre-service English language teacher preparation programmes to ensure that non-native English language pre-service teachers obtain high proficiency level in English.

It is noteworthy that the disconnection between theory and practice manifested in the focus groups data is validated by the questionnaire qualitative and statistical data. In response to the challenges PSTs encounter during practicum, a pre-service teacher wrote: "The theory we learn in our College is different in real teaching so we need more

focus in practicum." On the same lines, PSTs disagreed with statement (3) which states that 'school based practicum course has created a balance between theory and practice in the programme'. In fact, item (3) has scored the lowest mean of 3.11. Interestingly, most of the respondents also disagreed with item (6) that almost carries the same meaning as item (3). This proves that the pre-service English teacher preparation programme under study suffers from a disconnection between theory and practice. This finding support Al Jabri et al. (2018) claim that "teacher preparation in Oman is excessively theoretical in content, and during their studies teacher students are not given adequate practical tools to cope with everyday life in the classroom" (pp.86-87). In addition, the mean score of the topic that tackles the PSTs' perception of the school based practicum (M=3.4) falls in the disagreement line with only one point far from the agreement line which indicates that despite the PSTs' negative perceptions of the current school based practicum course, they still believe that the course is valuable and has numerous merits that cannot be denied. Table 5.3 illustrates the means and

standard deviation of the PSTs' responses to the questionnaire topic

Topics	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-service teachers' perception of the school based practicum as a standalone course.	3.4	.72
The Omani sociocultural context and its role in supporting good teaching practice.	3.4	1.0
Pre-service teachers' perception of the College supervisors' involvement in practicum.	3.5	.71
Pre-service teachers' perception of the cooperating teachers' involvement in practicum.	3.0	.50
Satisfaction with the current practicum assessment method.	3.1	.79
Practicum experience and career change.	3.7	.90
Towards a quality practicum course.	3.9	.80

Table 5.3 Means and Standard Deviation of the pre-service teachers' responses to the questionnaire topics

The above findings of the PSTs focus groups and questionnaire corresponds to Edwards (1995) argument that academy content and field based experience in teacher preparation programmes are not well connected. As a result, beginning teachers often complain about the fact that, "once in school, they meet many problematic situations for which they were not sufficiently prepared (p.32)". Korthagen and Wubbels (2001) also assert that because of the separation between theory and practice, many studies in teacher education show that pre-service teachers do not use much of the theory taught in teacher education courses. The findings of the present study also support Gan's (2013) qualitative study which reported that PSTs were shocked by the different reality they faced in the classroom and the pedagogical knowledge they were taught in the preparation institute. Therefore, Smagorinsky, Cook and Johnson (2003) assert that "abstract principles are interwoven in worldly experience" (p. 139) and the separation between the University courses and school field placement must be lessened.

5.3.2 Communication challenges.

Based on the social and relational epistemological nature of the study that aims at listening to PSTs' voices and involving them in decisions-making, I have established a dialectical and qualitative dialogue between the participants in the focus groups to raise their consciousness of some of the taken for granted practices in practicum and how they feel about them. During the focus groups discussions, pre-service teachers brought up some issues of unfairness and injustice with regards to the kind of support they get from the college administration, the CSs and the school staff in this critical period of their professional growth. The findings have revealed that PSTs faced many communication challenges that are divided into challenges in dealing with the school administration, the

CTs, and the school students in the school premise and challenges in dealing with the CSs and the college administration at College.

5.3.2.1 Communication barriers between the pre-service teachers, college supervisors and college administration.

The data have revealed that there is a communication breakdown between the PSTs and the college administration including the Dean's office and the Admission and Registration Department. The study has shown that the PSTs have a negative perception of the college administration role in handling their problems with the practicum course. They actually complained about the lack of support that the college administration provides the pre-service teachers. They were also faced with the ineffective College regulations that cannot be changed as Basma from female focus group (1) stated, "They know nothing about us. If we complain, they say ahhhh handle it, few months only and you are finished. There is only one kind of cooperation, the absence but to help us or support us, no." In addition, Deema, from the same female group (1) said, "They say we will do but at the end nothing happens."

It can be observed from that the analysis of the focus groups data that an oppression is being practiced against the pre-service teachers. There is a consensus among all PSTs in all the focus groups that their voices are never and will never be heard. Pre-service teacher, Badriya from focus group (2) commented,

> *"No but even if we ask, they will say this is the regulation. Even we fight for our rights. You don't know the regulation here at the College. Even if we fight, they will say we cannot change and it is always the students who are wrong, not the College or the administration."*

The analysis of the data shows that PSTs were not encouraged to ask for their rights because of the power differentials in the College hierarchal structure which has

consequently led pre-service teachers to underestimate their rights. In spite of the fact that the College has formed a students' council that is supposed to empower students, the reality as revealed by the PSTs shows the opposite. Pre-service teachers state that this council is ineffective as it is mainly run by the College's Dean and the role of the PSTs is deactivated. Imad from male focus group (1) stated,

> *"Yes, we have student council and I was the head of the students. I go to the dean, registration, I say what happened in this case. They say you are a student. it is not your business. Just tell us what the problem and we will solve it. If you say something, they will shout at you because the student council is related to the dean. The dean is the head of the council. How can we solve the problem? Who commit? The people. He commit the problem. We tell them problem about the doctors and the subject. We tell problems about the foundation, how you can help the students."*

Furthermore, there was some variance in the pre-service teacher's responses with regards to the nature of communication between them and the CSs during teaching practice. Some PSTs had relationships with their CSs but some did not. Hamed from the male focus group (2) said, "The relationship between the trainees and the observer is good because the observer give us good feedback. They teach us. They build a good bridge with the trainees." Also, Jamal from the same focus group mentioned,

> *"Every observer has his own experience. His own instructions. I have noticed that some observer has huge experience that just give us negatives, that's maybe to motivate us and some observers give us more positives than negatives, maybe the relationship will be good."*

It is noticed from the two above quotes that the kind of feedback the CS gives, determines the kind of relationship pre-service teachers have with their CSs. Therefore, it appears from the focus groups data that positive feedback entails good relationship with the CS and negative feedback entails a relationship which is filled with challenges and uneasiness.

In addition, the PSTs complained about the lack of support they received from some CSs. They indicated that the role of the CSs was limited to classroom observation and evaluation. They also pointed out that CSs only supported them with the academic issues they encountered in the college. Along the same lines, PSTs' responses to questionnaire item (10) indicated that most of the CSs were supportive and understanding as the item scored a high mean of 3.63 where most of the respondents showed an agreement with the statement. This explains the topic mean score (M=3.5) that indicates a moderate satisfaction of the CSs' involvement in the teaching practice experience of the PSTs. On the other hand, aspects of emotional support during this critical period of PSTs' professional growth was neglected since statement (16) scored a low mean showing that many PSTs believe that some CSs ignored the emotional aspects of teaching practice and did not support them with the numerous problems they encountered in the cooperating schools. Fatma from the female focus group (1) also mentioned, "We cannot see them. They come and observe us. Give us feedback and go. They don't sit a lot with us and see what our problems are".

It can be observed that the present study's findings correspond with Almeida's (2005) study that aims to assess the range of experiences pre-service teachers gain between the beginning and the end of the practicum course on five dimensions of teaching practice: (1) learning and professional development, (2) professional and institutional socialisation, (3) socio-emotional aspects, (4) support/resources/supervision, and (5) vocational development. Both studies indicated lower level of PSTs' satisfaction with regard to the support/resources/supervision and socio-emotional aspects of teaching practice.

5.3.2.2 Lack of communication between the pre-service teachers and the cooperating schools' staff.

PSTs have highlighted some communication problems with the cooperating teachers and the cooperating schools' administrators.

A. Communication challenges with the cooperating teachers

It was noticed through the data analysis that the male PSTs faced the greatest difficulties while communicating with the cooperating teachers in the boy's schools. They related that to the weak management in the boy's schools compared to the girl's schools. Male pre-service teachers indicated that most of the CTs in the boy's schools were not cooperative. Thus, lack of communication has hindered good teaching practice in these schools because PSTs were not even provided with the necessary information about the students and current level of each student in the class. Hilal from the male focus group (2) stated, "When we come in the beginning of the semester, the cooperating teacher didn't give us any information about his students, about what he is doing, about what we have to do." In the male focus group (1), Haitham also said,

> *"To be honest, he didn't know the names of most of them. So how will he tell me who is the weak and who is the strong in the class. I tell him that I have 2 students. They are weak and they are not responding in the class. He tell me ok, write their name and I will go to the headmaster and I will tell them. I will tell his father. I think there is no relationship between us and the cooperating teacher."*

Also, the rules of both male and female cooperating schools do not oblige school teachers to stay in the school during the presence of the PSTs to provide them with guidance and professional support. Therefore, most of the PSTs feel that they

are lost during their teaching practice. Ahmed from the male's focus group (2) commented,

> *"Most of the cooperating teachers in schools feel happy when pre-service teachers come to the schools because they are going to teach their classes. They leave the school and you cannot find them if you need any help or advice. You cannot see the cooperating teachers on the days of student's teachers practice except the schools which have very strict administrative rules."*

Bader from the male focus group (1) also pointed to the disconnection in the relationship between the PSTs and the CTs in the boy's schools. He sadly mentioned that the CTs put all the burden on the PSTs and leave them to struggle with the new experience alone.

> *"When you came, the teacher who teach them, they feel happy. Ohh you came you are fresh. You are new. Go to the students. During this semester, the teacher didn't teach anything. Just he came, do the skills, open the book and read."*

Ameer from male's focus group (1) also said,

> *"In semester one, my senior teacher or the helping teacher. He start to teach in the school before 4 years and he wants to put his work to me. When I am absent for one day, he is nervous and said for my friend. Why …..is absent? But I feel that he don't feel to teach the students and he wants to be put his work to me to finish it."*

On the other hand, the female PSTs' responses regarding their relationship with the CTs have varied from being cooperative and friendly to the extreme feelings of hatred towards the CTs. Saleema from female focus group (1) explained,

> *"The cooperative teacher, it depends, some of the teachers are very kind and helpful like this course, practicum 4, we get benefits from the cooperative teacher but some of our colleagues, they hate the cooperative teacher because she is always shouting and don't respect them and this will reflect on how they will teach their students. For example if your teacher doesn't like everything and*

> *every time she gives you comments, do this and don't do this, they will not create, they will not want to do anything."*

The above quote shows that some CTs disrespect the PSTs and this has reflected negatively on their teaching practice experience as the pre-service teachers claim that it has killed their creativity and passion for teaching. In addition, the female PSTs were not better from the males as they were also neglected and not provided with any supportive information about the school students. They were also not provided any supplementary materials that are required for teaching. Student Fatma from female focus group (1) stated, "From the first day I asked her about the materials, she said I don't have or you can ask other teachers or your friends or even you can access online and print the materials."

Furthermore, the focus group data have also revealed a clash between the two different teaching mentalities of CTs and the PSTs. The data shows that some CTs were less flexible when it comes to the different teaching methods that the PSTs apply in their classrooms. The PSTs claimed that the CTs want them to only apply their teaching methods. Dalal from female focus group (2) stated,

> *"Another challenge is that the cooperating teacher want us to be like her. She wants me to apply her methods of teaching in my class. So I was not convinced by her way. She is like those teachers who take everything seriously and a lot of things like worksheets and a lot of things to work on in the class. I don't like this idea. I like the idea of the communicative approach but she said you cannot do this."*

Fatma in the female focus group (1) also commented,

> *"Also, she has strict rules in the class and she told me to teach the students the same rules that she applies to them. I have to follow her teaching techniques and methods. So it was difficult for me. Even I don't like it."*

The above finding is confirmed by Sinclair, Munns and Woodward's (2005) study as they found out that many cooperating teachers do not allow pre-service teachers to apply any of the teaching methods that they have learned in the methodology courses at the College because they believe that "real learning" takes place during their student teaching practicum (p. 210). In addition, the lack of collaborative relationship between the PSTs teachers and CTs in the present study corresponds with Mitka's (2011) study finding where it was pointed that the pre-service teachers did not have the opportunity to engage collaboratively with the cooperating teachers.

The questionnaire data regarding the PSTs' perceptions of the involvement of the CTs in practicum have confirmed the findings yielded from the focus groups. The statistical results show that PSTs negatively perceive the involvement of the CTs in practicum as the topic scored the lowest mean (M=3.0) among all the topics addressed in the questionnaire as indicated in table 5.3. Most of the items under this topic have scored low mean where most of the PSTs perceive the involvement of the CTs negatively as shown in table 5.3. Item (19) which states that "The cooperating school staff accepted you and made you feel welcome" has scored the lowest mean of (2.52) (refer to Appendix 12). This result supports the focus group findings where PSTs claimed that they felt as strangers in the cooperating schools. As a result, it was very difficult for the PSTs to adjust to the school life and make relations with the school staff as indicated in item (24). In addition, the low mean score of item (20) confirms the focus groups' findings that the CTS do not trust the PSTs' teaching abilities which has shaken the pre-service teachers'

confidence of being good teachers. Therefore, the personal characteristics of the cooperating teachers and their protocol of communication with the pre-service teachers could have either positive or damaging effects on the pre-service teachers' learning to teach experience. This finding is supported by Koerner, Rust, and Baumgartner (2002) who state that pre-service teachers "consider the personal characteristics of the cooperating teacher to be six times more important than supervisors or cooperating teachers belief. This tension in the relationship between the CTs and the PSTs is also one of the main findings of Manzar-Abbas and Lu's (2013) study that investigates the challenges and problems confronted by teacher education institutes during practicum in 14 Government Colleges for Elementary Teachers (GCETs) of Punjab province in Pakistan. Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) found that the CTs do not trust PSTs' teaching and as a result the PSTs in the study institution undervalue practicum. In addition, Keogh, Dole and Hudson (2006); Le Cornu and Ewing (2008); Patrick (2013) have also identified the CTs unwillingness to permit PSTs to try out different teaching methods in their classrooms which in return have had damaging effects on the PSTs' learning to teach experience.

B. Communication Challenges with the School Administration

The PSTs also encountered some communication challenges with the school principal and the staff who deal directly with the PSTs. The data indicates that there is no cooperation between the school and the College on the administrational level which has negatively affected the PSTs' relationship with the school principal and staff and accordingly the PSTs' teaching practice experience in the schools.

Ahmed from the male focus group (2) said, "There is no cooperation. They only sent the absenteeism. No cooperation at all. I think there should be a channel of communication between the school and the College." Furthermore, there is no agreement between the College and the schools regarding the PSTs' duties in the schools. The PSTs have complained that the school administration exploits them as they are given extra administrative duties. Ameer from the male focus group (1) commented,

> *"Also when school teachers are absent, the school gives us substitution lesson. We spoke to the practicum headmaster. She said I already told the school that your job is to teach and you are there for a period of time. if you want to give them extra lesson, give them the English periods only."*

Thus, the data indicates that the PSTs experienced the feelings of unfairness and injustice when dealing with the school administration. They claimed that they were threatened to lose their marks if they do not do any duties given by the school administration. They felt oppressed as they could not ask for their rights dreading to lose their marks. Fatma from female focus group (1) complained,

> *"They exploit us because we are trainees, so they control us and if we have different opinions or if we want to try something else, they keep saying, your marks are in our hands, you don't want mark. If we reject what they say, they usually say, you don't want your mark."*

In addition, Ameer's from the male focus group (1) comment shows how powerless pre-service teachers are in front of the school administration. He stated, "What we can do, we cannot say anything for the administration, the school administration because they have 20 marks. If we say anything, they will say, ok we will cut 5 marks."

The data have also shown that PSTs were not given the opportunity to mingle with the school community. They were not allowed to share the teacher's room with the in-service teachers but asked to sit alone in a small room like the English club room. The PSTs have felt that they were abandoned and not welcomed in the school community. Deema from the female focus group (1) commented,

> *"When we went there, there was no place for us to sit in. it was uncomfortable because they didn't appreciate us. They didn't prepare a place for us to sit in. In this semester, they put us in the store."*

Hamed from the male focus group (1) also said: "They separate. You are trainees? Yah? Go to another room. Don't come to the teachers' room". In addition, Huda from the female focus group (1) added,

> *I mean they were not respectful for us as teachers. They didn't treat us as colleagues. They only order us. Do and do and do but there is no respect. So how do they want us to be collaborative and engaged in the school. It is very difficult for us.*

The data shows that disrespect, humiliation and lack of appreciation have haunted the relationship between the PSTs and the school administration. PSTs expected that they would be treated as colleagues and work as a one group but they were only ordered and not appreciated. This finding was supported by the questionnaire qualitative data as one of the pre-service teachers stated, "The way school administration deal with students. They should respect training teacher and welcome them as real teacher".

Several studies have shown that working in an oppressed and unwelcoming environment affects the performance of any employee negatively (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986;

Eisenberger, Rhoades, & Cameron, 1999). Fatma, from female focus group (1) stated, "In the night before school, I feel very sad because of the teachers and because of the environment. Not because of the student or teaching. I really hated the school." The unsupportive attitude of the school principals towards the pre-service teachers in the present study corresponds with Smith and Lev-Ari's (2005) study findings as school principals were found not to be supportive of pre-service teachers.

C. Breakdown in communication between pre-service teachers and school students.

One of the challenges PSTs faced during their teaching practice in the classroom was the breakdown in communication between the PSTs and school students. Many PSTs have stated that school students' low level of English is the main barrier that hinders good teaching practice and good communication in the classroom. They faced difficulty in applying authentic situations in English because these tasks require a minimum level of English that most of the school students do not have especially the boy's schools. Malik from the male focus group (1) pointed out,

> *"I want to add something, negative things about what we faced in practicum 3 and 4. First thing is the student level in English language in school, their level is very bad and if you want to speak in Arabic, they can understand more but if we speak in English, they don't understand."*

In addition, Basma from the female focus group (1) commented, "If you are doing your first practicum and you find very weak class, you will not know what to do."

The PSTs claim that the low English level of the school students has negatively impacted their performance in the classroom as they could not apply the modern teaching methods they have learnt at College. As a result, the CSs' evaluation of their teaching in the classroom has been negatively affected as they were criticized for not applying communicative tasks in the classroom. Hilal from the male focus group (2) mentioned,

"We face some difficulties because not all students have the ability to make the situation in the class. For if you want to make a shop in the class and how to deal for example if you are the customer and he is the salesman?"

Furthermore, the data have shown that the English language classroom's sociocultural context in schools hinders good teaching practice because of the school students' low level in English. The PSTs claim that the view of the English language classroom as a sociocultural community where students and teachers share meanings and goals (Troudi, 2005) does not exist in the Omani schools because of the students' low level in English which has resulted in difficulties to create and develop a pattern of communication between the PSTs and the school students. Haitham, from the male focus group (1) stated,

"I think it depends on the school curriculum and the student level. For example, to make the students act dialogue or to debate with each other is very difficult because they do not know. I think it is one of the problem we face. And teacher I think the students they learn only English 45 mints in one day. How can they live the situation?"

The above quotations are supported by the questionnaire data where most of the PSTs disagreed that the sociocultural context of the English language classrooms in the Omani schools supports good teaching practice in the cooperating schools. Also, the school students' negative attitude towards English has made teaching

practice a difficult experience. PSTs have noticed that most of the school students lack the motivation to learn English. One of the factors that contributed to the school student's lack of motivation that could be the English language curriculum itself, as some of the pre-service teachers claim. They believe that part of the English language curriculum has ignored the Omani sociocultural context and focus more on the target language culture. Hilal from the male focus group (2) mentioned,

> *"I think …I think one of the most difficulty that we faced in the class is the level of the students. The students in the school they don't have like that foundation and also their motivation to learn English is one of the challenges. Also, the class situation themselves, some classes they don't have enough space. In the curriculum, there are many activities that we have to do. Like for example situational activity. The class isn't suitable for this kind of activity."*

In fact, the low language level of school students and their low motivation in learning English which affect the teaching process of PSTs confirm the findings of Al-Mahrooqi's (2011) study which was conducted in the Omani context as well in one of the prestigious higher Education institution in Oman "Sultan Qaboos University". Al-Mahrooqi (2011) investigates EFL PSTs' perceptions of the teaching practice programme at SQU. Her research group complained about the school students' low level of English and their disinterest in learning English. In addition, Sarıçoban's (2010) study which investigates the problems encountered by PSTs during practicum has revealed that school students lack interest in English and their low level of English language proficiency negatively affect PSTs the teaching process in the classroom. Therefore, I support the inclusion of the social, cultural, and contextual knowledge of the English language classrooms in the

Omani schools as one of the main components of the PSTs' knowledge base (refer to 3.3.2). The social, cultural, and contextual knowledge "will help the teacher understand his/ her students and develop appropriate pedagogy and materials that meet their needs." (Troudi, 2005, p.122) which in turn will create a more interesting and exciting classroom environment and more meaningful learning opportunities for the school students.

Furthermore, **classroom management** considers a very common challenge encountered by pre-service teachers but when it is accompanied by low level of English in an overloaded class, the situation becomes out of the control. The PSTs in the present study indicated that classroom management has been a big challenge for them because PSTs do not take them seriously and consider them as students who are still studying at College. Deema from the female focus group (1) explained,

> *"The class is overloaded. It is very difficult for us to move from College and teach very very low students. I even see them in my dreams shouting. ……….It is very difficult to manage them. They even hit each other in the class as if there is no teacher in the class. It is very difficult for for us as pre-service teachers to have students who are low level and at the same time they are noisy."*

PSTs in the present study blamed the school administration and the CTS for not talking to the students and make them aware that PSTs are real teachers and they are not different from their class teacher. They feel that they lack power in the classroom which has affected their perception of themselves as teachers who deserve respect. Axford (2005) states that lack of power to act or speak in the classroom that pre-service teachers experience have a negative impact on their learning and their perception of themselves as professional practitioners. The

PSTs believe that the CTs should prepare the students for the presence of the PSTs. Dalal, from the female focus group (2) commented,

> *"The cooperating teachers didn't take the responsibility to give us advice and how to deal with our class and how to calm the students down. They don't tell them that these are real teachers and you have to respect them."*

This finding is also consistent with the findings of Al-Mahrooqi's study (2011) that stresses that the unmanageable classrooms and schools' students' negative attitude towards PSTs have made teaching practice an unpleasant experience. The confirmation of the findings between this study and Al-Mahrooqi's (2011) study with regards to school students low level of English and their low motivation level questions the English language teaching policies and strategies implemented by the Ministry of Education in the Omani schools. The findings recommend an urgent investigation into the matter in order to have school graduates who are competent in English which will lower the cost and the time that the Ministry of Higher Education spend on preparing competent English language teachers for the local schools.

It is worth noting that this problem is not unique to the Omani context. Mahmoudi (2016) indicates that pre-service language teachers explained that "managing crowded classes was very difficult and they had stress about controlling the class and time in these classes" (500). It also corroborates with Sarıçoban's (2010) study that indicates that crowded classrooms hinder good teaching practice. As it was discussed in the literature review, classroom management is a crucial component of the pre-service teachers' professional knowledge. The proposed conceptual framework of the pre-service knowledge base places great emphasis on classroom

management as a key success factor for creating an exciting "learning to teach" environment for the PSTs in the cooperating schools' classrooms. Therefore, the literature on pre-service teacher education urges the PSTs to act as co-learners with the cooperating teachers to acquire more classroom management strategies as they learn to teach (Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman & Stevens, 2009). Interestingly, the questionnaire data have shown that the challenges PSTs faced in managing the classrooms have helped them to gain more confidence in dealing with school students as this item scored a very high mean of 3.93. In fact, I believe that PSTs can experience great professional growth in their teaching abilities from going through these challenges.

5.3.3 Challenges related to the practicum assessment methods.

5.3.3.1 The Practicum Assessment Form

The school based practicum course uses a ready-made evaluation form which contains five main categories: personality, language proficiency, lesson preparation, instruction, and classroom management and achievement of aims and it consists of 20 statements. Each statement is awarded marks ranging from 5 as the highest to 0 as the lowest. The CSs are eligible to give 80% of the total mark to the pre-service teachers and the other 20% is for the CTs and school administration. The focus group data have shown that PSTs believe that the practicum evaluation form is vague and does not reflect their actual performance in the classrooms. Most of the PSTs find the criteria in the form not clear. They feel that there should be a rubric for each criterion that thoroughly explains what is expected from them to meet the requirements of each criteria. Hamed from the male focus group (2) commented, "Teacher some statements are just three or four words. No more explanations"

Amal from the female focus group (1) also stated,

> *"I understand them but when we apply them, I don't understand where is the mistake and where is the weaknesses. For example they choose to give excellent, very good, good for the criteria. So there is criteria where I got very good and good. They didn't explain it to us why is it good and what do I have to do to get excellent. They show us the paper and show us what we got, whether good or very good without telling us what we have to do to be better."*

Amal's quote shows that she understands what each criterion means theoretically but when it comes to application, it was not clear why she sometimes got good and other times, she got as there was no clear distinction between the two marks. The questionnaire data have supported such finding as item (31) states that "The School based practicum evaluation form has clear and descriptive assessment criteria" scored a low mean of 2.65 where most of the respondents disagree with the statement. In addition, some of the PSTs believe that some of the criteria are unfair to be included in the form and CSs should negotiate with the PSTs before giving him/her the final mark. Imad from the male focus group (1) commented,

> *"For the evaluation form, I think some points are not fair. For example, the nature of the voice of some students is low. This is his nature. So it isn't fair to give him zero. This is his nature. He can't change it but he can cover it with other strategies. The teachers need to be flexible with this evaluation. He look at the student and talk to him. What's the problem. Maybe he has problem maybe with his body, maybe with his sound. If you give him zero for his low voice and also zero for his appearance. This is unfair."*

Imad has given the example of ST's voice level while teaching. He believes that the College supervisor should understand the ST's nature before attempting to give any student 'zero' for their low voice as this may be temporarily related to sickness or personal problems. The questionnaire data have also shown that PSTs believe that

the school based practicum assessment method is unfair and this claim was also supported by the focus groups' data.

Another issue that was raised during the focus groups discussions was that PSTs were not allowed to see their marks after each evaluation. All pre-service teachers receive their school based practicum final mark by the end of the semester when they are handed their transcripts. One of the main reasons pre-service teachers want to get their practicum result directly after their evaluation is the existing contradiction between the feedback they receive from the CS after each evaluation and the final mark they get by the end of the semester. They noted that there are some CSs who have provided them with good feedback but the final mark was a shock to them as they expected to get better results based on the feedback given to them. Salwa from the female focus group (1) commented,

> *"For example in our first practicum, practicum 3, we thought we will get a good mark because the feedback we got was excellent but when we see our results, we were shocked because all the two schools gave the same marks and all of us in our GPA, they gave 3.3. all the students and some of them less than that and we don't know about the 15 marks. Where is it?"*

Therefore, most PSTs believe that it is their right to know their marks after each evaluation so that they become aware of the marks distribution and how they are being evaluated. On the same lines, the questionnaire item no. 33 which states that "It is the right of the pre-service teacher to know his/her result after each evaluation" has scored the highest mean (4.34) in the questionnaire where 24 of the respondents strongly agree with the statement.

5.3.3.2 The college supervisor's feedback

The focus groups data reveals that there is no agreement between CSs on how to deliver the feedback to the PSTs. Eman, from the female focus group (1) explained,

> *So when we were in practicum 3 and 4 in the schools, you know teachers observe us from the College and those teachers who come from the College, each one of them have different beliefs. So in the first observation when the teacher gave me the feedback, right, when I apply them, the second one gave me different feedback. Sometimes it is the opposite, so we are confused. We lost marks when we apply the first teacher feedback and then the second teacher has different beliefs.*

Also, Deema commented on the contradictory feedback PSTs get from different supervisors,

> *"For example, he said it is very wrong to use repetition but the teacher in practicum 1 said that repetition is very interesting and important but he said this is not good and even he treat the students who are not creative more than the students who are creative so we were not very interested when we studied practicum 2. I even didn't take anything with him. It is a matter of the teacher not a matter of the curriculum."*

Interestingly, the questionnaire data have confirmed such finding as item no.13 which states that "There was an agreement between all College supervisors on the school based practicum observation criteria" has scored a very low mean of (2. 43) where most of the respondents disagree with the statement. In addition, the PSTs get confused and distracted when given two different views from two different supervisors. Thus, the PSTs feel as if they are whirling in a circle and do not know which teaching view to apply in the classroom because they are afraid of losing mark if they apply one supervisor's view and ignore the other one. Furthermore, the nature of the feedback the PSTs receive vary from one supervisor to another as indicated by the PSTs. They claimed that some CSs give detailed spoken feedback but some write the feedback on a piece of paper as bullet points and give it to the students to read. Bashar from

the male focus group (2) said, "Some teachers give us detailed feedback but some only give us written feedback and ask us to read the points only."

Salima from the female focus group (2) also mentioned,

> *"Also, some teachers they depend only on written feedback. They didn't give us verbal feedback. They only give us the paper and we have only to read and sometimes we didn't understand why she said because sometimes they only give us points."*

Moreover, some PSTs claimed that some CSs delayed the feedback session because they were busy with College responsibilities. Badriya from the female focus group (2) said, "Sometimes, some College supervisor take time to give us feedback because they are busy". Similarly, the questionnaire data shows an even distribution of the agree and disagree responses to item no.14 where some of the respondents believe that the CSs allotted enough time for feedback whereas some believe that the feedback time was not enough. The above finding indicates that the PSTs preferred both detailed spoken and written feedback that highlight the positive and negative aspects of their performance in the classrooms. The level of satisfaction with the CS's practicum feedback varied from being satisfied with the feedback and those who were not satisfied with the feedback for reasons mentioned above. Research on pre-service teacher education emphasizes that constructive feedback approach to assessment and support from the supervising teacher, are the key elements for positive practicum (Moody, 2009, p. 159). In addition, the quality of feedback that pre-service teachers receive plays a major role in promoting their learning (Smith, 2010). The present study's findings with regards to the kind of feedback pre-service teachers look for corroborate with Holi and Al-Adawi's (2013) study that was conducted in the same context and aims at investigating PSTs' and CS' perceptions about the nature

of the practicum feedback they receive and the kind of practicum feedback they feel more effective–spoken or written. Strikingly, the results of Holi and Al-Adawi's (2013) study also indicate that PSTs prefer both oral and written feedback.

5.3.3.3 The cooperating teacher's feedback

The PSTs' responses vary from those who said that the cooperating teacher did not observe them at all to those who were observed only one time and for only 5 minutes. Haitham, from the male focus group (1) confessed, "The cooperating teacher didn't observe us". Also, Ameer from the same focus group stated "I think the only time he observe me in the last semester for 5 minutes and then he go. In the second semester, he didn't observe me." Badriya, from the female focus group (2) also mentioned,

> *"She has to evaluate me 3 times at least and she didn't attend with me. Only at the end and I don't know her, who is my cooperative teacher because at first there was a teacher but she moved to another school and who come after I didn't know her and at the end she said I will come to observe you."*

Surprisingly, the questionnaire data have shown that most of the responses are between the scales of strongly agree and agree and only 14 respondents disagree with statement (29) which states that "The cooperating teachers observed your teaching regularly". The result entails that there is quite a good number of CTs who are committed to the learning how to teach process.

Furthermore, the focus group data shows that some cooperating teachers tended to embarrass the PSTs if they commit mistakes during teaching. They ask PSTs to stop teaching and they take over teaching their class. The PSTs believe that the cooperating teacher should wait until the PSTs finish teaching the class and then they can give them detailed feedback of their weaknesses. Imad from the male focus group (1) stated,

> *"This is the big problem I faced in the school. Last semester I taught students a lesson and he observe us and when he observe me, I commit a mistake, a simple mistake in the lesson. Half of the lesson, the teacher stand up and he said to me we need to correct a mistake in here and he took a marker in front of the students and he said to me, this is a mistake. The students maybe will take it serious. Ok no problem with the mistake. I commit a mistake and I know what the mistake is but now how can the student take another lesson from me? He said you have to learn from your mistake."*

The PSTs' responses to items (20) and (22) confirm the above finding as they both scored a low mean of (2.84) where most of the respondents disagreed with the statements that state "the CTs trusted their teaching abilities and displayed positive attitude towards your teaching". As a result, some the PSTs believe that the CTs are unwilling to engage in reflective practice with them because of the CTs' belief that PSTs are still professionally immature and their teaching strategies are ineffective. This finding corroborates with Richardson-Koehler's (1988) study which stated some of the problems that need to be taken into consideration when designing teaching practice models. Richardson-Koehler's (1988) study stresses that one of the barrier in teaching practice course is the absence of reflection as the CTs were unwilling to engage in reflective practice with the PSTs. In addition, it has been stated that the CTs' feedback mainly focuses on classroom management and ignores the other elements of teaching including teaching methods and strategies. Badriya from the female focus group (2) explained, "So when she came to observe me in the class, she always concentrate on how the students behave. She does not concentrate on my teaching. That was a really a big challenge for us."

Likewise, the questionnaire data confirms the above finding and generally shows that most of the respondents disagreed that the CTs provided them with useful feedback. All the above focus groups' quotes and the semi structured questionnaire results with relation

to the CTs' feedback indicate that the CTs require more training on how to supervise PSTs and provide them with effective feedback. Research on practicum states that "the main objective of the cooperating teachers is not only to evaluate the performance of the pre-service teachers, but to provide them with essential feedback in order to facilitate their professional development and practices in order to develop their teaching strategies and motivate them to work better" (Al-Mekhlafi, 2012, p.161). Furthermore, CTs need "the competence to provide clear feedback on the current status of competence and to give constructive feed forward to the next, achievable goal, and to be able to adjust this to the level and personality of the individual candidate" (Smith, 2010, p.38).

5.3.3.4 The Reflection sheet

As part of practicum assessment, the PSTs are asked to write a reflection sheet of what went well and what didn't go well in their classroom. Despite that part of the focus group and questionnaire data have indicated that practicum has engaged PSTs in reflective practice, some PSTs believe that having to reflect on their teaching add nothing to their teaching experience because they were not trained on how to critically reflect on their teaching. The data shows that some PSTs fill the reflection form for the sake of getting marks as Basma, from the female focus group said,

> *"Yes, because they didn't teach us how to reflect. They just asked us to write the positive things and the negative things but not how to reflect. When we write reflection, we write short points. Me I do it for the marks only. I didn't get benefit from it. Because the supervisor doesn't see it so I don't know my mistakes because I don't know what I did well and bad."*

Also, Faisal from the male focus group (2) stated, "We have a form to write our reflection in it. At the beginning, I found it beneficial but with the days, I feel there is nothing to write because I cannot reflect on myself that much". The previous quotes from the data indicate

that PSTs lack critical thinking skills which are essential for any academic programme. Similarly, Baporikar and Shah (2012) indicate that students in HEIs focus only on lower thinking skills, for instance memorization to pass exams. In general, PSTs' satisfaction with the current practicum assessment methods has scored the second lowest mean (M=3.1) in the pre-service teachers' questionnaire. This implies that most PSTs aren't satisfied with the current assessment practices in the practicum course.

5.3.4 Unspecified roles of the practicum triad.

Despite that school based practicum is a core course in the English teacher preparation programme, it is surprisingly the only course that has no course description. The aims of the course are not clear and more importantly the roles of the practicum triad (PSTs, CSs and CTs) are not specified and documented. This blurry vision that surrounds the course has created many challenges that could be avoided if there was a course description that states the aims and vision of the course and indicates the course expectations from every member involved in teaching practice. There is a consensus among all the PSTs in all the focus groups about their unawareness of the roles of each member in the practicum triad. They themselves believe that they have not been oriented well about their rights and duties in the practicum course.

The questionnaire items (7, 18 and 28) where PSTs are asked about the roles specifications of the practicum triad have all scored low means (M = (2.56, 2.29, 2.13) chronologically. This proves that the practicum triad roles are not well identified in the school practicum course. Interestingly, there are various studies that have addressed the lack of clarity in the role and responsibilities of the CSs and CTs (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Bullough & Draper, 2004; Chambers & Armour, 2011). Similarly, Borko and Mayfield (1995) emphasize that poorly defined roles and inadequate preparation for the

task of supervision are the main reasons for not realizing the potentials that PSTs have.

In addition, the finding corroborates with Manzar-Abbas and Lu's (2013) study findings

that show that role specifications for the practicum participants; CS, ST and CT were

unclear. Practicum participants in Manzar-Abbas and Lu's (2013) study were not aware

about their own and others' roles and expectations. Furthermore, Richardson-Koehler

(1988) asserts that "If the College supervisor's role is not defined, understood, or agreed

upon by members of the supervisory triad, then this lack of understanding can create

situations that lead to PSTs' confusion and inability to realize the full potential of their own

work as teachers." (p.30).

5.3.5 Logistics challenges.

The analysis of the data shows some logistic challenges encountered by the PSTs during

their teaching practice. These challenges are divided into school logistic challenges and

College logistic challenges.

5.3.5.1 Logistic challenges in the cooperating schools.

The focus groups and the questionnaire qualitative data have revealed that the

cooperating schools do not provide the PSTs with the necessary teaching aids including

tape recorders, listening cassettes, printers and the updated teacher's manuals.

Therefore, the PSTs lack important resources that help them to acquire good teaching

skills. Imad from the male focus group (1) mentioned,

> *"I told him I need a cassette. Where is the cassette? He said go to another room and search for it. I said to him I don't know how to open it. Do you know? He said no. then one teacher he helped me to open it. Then where the cassette recorder? We spent more than half an hour to open the cassette. Ok , we need a paper to print. Nothing."*

Deema from the female focus group (1) also commented,

> *"Another thing to mention that English subject require lots of activities to give to the children but if you don't have any printer or photocopier. There is a printer but with a password and you have to take the permission to use it. If they allow you, it is ok but if they don't, you cannot use it."*

In addition, some of the cooperating schools suffer a shortage of English textbooks where the school students do not get their English textbooks until week six of the school starting day. In such situations, PSTs face difficulties in teaching as most of the lesson's time is based around the exercises in the textbooks. Also, school students will not be able to catch up with the teachers if they are not provided with enough copies of the tasks. Salima from the male focus group (2) commented,

> *"Till week six from the start of school, student didn't get the book. When I ask the cooperating teacher, he said, I already informed the school administration but they haven't received the books yet. Then they got the book after week six."*

The lack of support in terms of teaching materials in the present study corroborates with the findings of Sariçoban's (2010) study which indicates that lack of support in terms of teaching materials and audio and video equipment affect the outcome of the learning and teaching process (p. 707).

5.3.5.2 Logistic challenges at the College.

Some of the cooperating schools assigned by the College are located far away from the College. Therefore, some PSTs especially the male students face difficulties in going to these schools as they have to take taxis to reach these schools. Kareem from the male focus group (2) said, "Plus we …ahhh a destination. For example most of the students they didn't have a car as a trainee and the school is far. This is a challenge." Wyatt (2013) asserts that assigning schools in remote areas can make life difficult for teachers as travelling "to the school can be more uncomfortable ….or logistically harder to organise"

(p.221). Moreover, the female PSTs complained that most of the time the buses come late to pick them up from schools. Some students have classes at the College after their teaching practice. Therefore, the College should take this point into consideration and make sure to send the buses on time so that pre-service teachers do not miss their classes. Asma from the female focus group (2) mentioned,

> "Also, the College does not care about us. They tell us that by 12 you have to be at the College but they don't send us a bus. We have to wait till 1.30 for the bus. So they have to send more than one bus not only one bus because some schools are far away from the College. I think they need to take care about this point. It is very important."

5.3.6 Teaching practice and career change.

The PSTs' qualitative data have revealed that the practicum experience has been able to convert only small number of pre-service teachers to other professions. Some PSTs have confessed that after experiencing teaching practice and going through many obstacles including unmotivated and low-level school students and uncooperative teachers, unsupportive school administration, they feel that they cannot do the job of teaching. When the PSTs were asked if they still want to be teachers after their practicum experience, Kareem from the male focus group (2) answered,

> "No, no not now because I see a big problem in the schools. 30 students in the school, only one student can read a little bit of English, one can speak a little bit of English. Go to school and see. Maybe you don't believe me."

In addition, Dalal from the female focus group (2) commented, "The English language is very important for us but teaching now after experiencing teaching, we are hesitant about it because of uncooperative teachers." Also, Basma from the female focus group (1) said, "From the beginning I want to be a language English teacher but after going to school, I may change my mind and I need to work more on my weaknesses."

In addition, Asia from the female focus group (1) mentioned, "For me being an English language teacher was my dream but when I experience that I didn't find myself. So I told myself, now you are an English language teacher but why are you not happy." In this context and based on this finding, it is critical to refer to teacher motivation crisis. It is noteworthy, in this regard, that challenges including lack of administrative and professional support, communication and logistic challenges impact negatively on pre-service motivation level and drive them to divert away from the teaching field.

On the other hand, the questionnaire data have revealed that despite the challenges PSTs encountered during their practicum experience, good number of them still want to be teachers. Item (34) where pre-service teachers were asked 'if the school based practicum has given them a clear indication if they can survive in an EFL classroom and work as teachers', scored a high mean of (3.88) where most of the PSTs agree with the statement, followed by an assertion in the statement (35) with a high mean score of (3.56) that most of the PSTs still want to be English teachers in the future.

5.4 Pre-service English teachers' agenda for change to improve the quality of the school based practicum course.

I agree with Beane (2006) that involving students in planning the curriculum with teachers and curriculum designers is a very creative step to make them feel responsible and make them learn the democratic way. Also, students who are involved in making decisions at the institution are more committed to make decisions in other contexts. In Therefore, pre-service teachers were encouraged he data suggests that the school based practicum course should maintain to critically reflect on the school based practicum course. Pre-

service teachers were asked about the effective practices in the school based practicum course that they should sustain and their recommendations to improve the quality of practicum at the College.

PSTs perceive school based practicum is a very important course in their academic journey to be a teacher. Based on the focus groups data, PSTs assert that the school based practicum course should still be the core course in the pre-service teacher preparation programme. Imad from the male focus group (1) stated,

> *"I think it is good to maintain the practicum course. It gives us like a brief about what we have to do and it gives us a good identity about a good self-esteem about ourselves to keep teaching and avoid the mistakes that we will find in the future and improve ourselves. So it is good to have practicum but as I said before it is useful to have one full semester for only practicum."*

Also, Badriya from the female focus group (2) commented, "Going to schools by itself is a good experience for us." Surprisingly, the data only indicates that maintaining school based practicum as a core course in the pre-service teacher preparation is the only thing that PSTs want to maintain while the list of changes that they want to see in the programme is long.

Yet, the same pre-service teachers' data recommends that the school based practicum course should undergo some changes to promote its quality in preparing PSTs for the teaching career. In fact, I have encouraged the PSTs to set an agenda for change that they feel will help to improve the school based practicum course because "the teacher is not merely the one who teaches, but is taught in dialogue with the students, who in their turn, while being taught also teach" (Freire, 1972, p.53). The focus groups' data have included many suggestions from the PSTs to change some of the current practices in the school practicum course in order to improve its quality. Interestingly, the questionnaire's

topic 'Towards quality practicum' scored the highest mean (M=3.9) among all the questionnaire topics. There seemed to be majority agreement with the topic items that scored high mean scores as well. It is worth mentioning in this regard that item 40 indicates that most of the respondents believe that the current structure of the school based practicum course needs to be redesigned as it scored a high mean (M=3.93). The following are the main demand of the pre-service teachers.

5.4.1 The perceived gap between the theoretical and practical courses in the programme should to be lessened.

The findings of the present study look at bridging the perceived gap between the English language teaching theoretical courses and teaching practice. As Shabani, Khatib and Ebadi (2010) emphasizes that "teaching is not a blend of discrete behaviours that can be distanced from the contexts in which they occur and a ready-made package or raw material to be transferred to the novice teachers" (p.243).This call for gap bridging between theory and practice was also raised by Sultan Qaboos University PSTs in Al-Mahrooqi's (2011) study. In fact, the PSTs' demand to bridge the gap between theory and practice supports the theoretical framework of the present study (refer to 3.5 & 3.6) that is based on the tenets of the zone of proximal development in Vygotskyan (1978) socio cultural theory and transferred by Warford (2011) to teacher education. The zone of proximal development to teacher education (ZPTD) rejects the distinction between theory (scientific discourse) and practice (experiential discourse) and asserts the importance of blending "the scientific discourse of the College classroom with the experiential discourse of local classrooms" (Warford, 2011, p.253)

As a researcher, I believe that the first and the second stages in the process of learning how to teach based on the notion of the zone of proximal teacher development in the

sociocultural theory which are 'Self-assistance' and 'Teacher assisted Stage' are activated by blending the theoretical and practical courses in the pre-service teacher preparation programme. PSTs should be exposed to both theoretical and practical courses in language teaching from year one so that their affective-volitional and pedagogical dispositions can be diagnosed from the beginning to correct any false teaching conceptions and attitudes. Rorrison (2011) emphasizes that a better understanding of pre-service teacher's attitudes, beliefs and their current teaching practices is required so that changes in false teaching conceptions and attitudes becomes possible. She considers that recognition of pre-service teacher's different learning needs is a guiding practicum learning principle and it is the responsibilities of the college supervisor and cooperating teachers to tailor the practicum experience based on the pre-service teacher's needs (ibid). Therefore, CSs and CTs in school should expose, support and carefully scaffold PSTs to past and current learning theories to form productive and transformative pedagogies and lessen the existing gap between theory and practice in the practicum classrooms. Remarkably, the Ministry of Education and the World Bank (2012) asserts that the quality of teacher education could be ensured through a solid matching between the theoretical components of teacher preparation and the curriculum they are expected to teach.

5.4.2 From two days a week to block practicum.

All PSTs in the focus groups including males and females agree that going to schools for two days a week in their last academic year is not sufficient. They believe that insufficient training time creates a huge gap between them and the school environment as they cannot catch up with what goes on in the school and their classrooms. Therefore, the questionnaire data of the present study urge the need for implementing an intensive

school based practicum course with clear guidelines and principles as it is stated in item (36) which scored a high mean of (3.64). On the same lines, some PSTs in the focus groups suggest that having block practicum is the best solution for this problem. Block practicum involves one full semester or one year only for teaching practice. PSTs feel that this step should be preceded by a very important decision which is deleting some unnecessary and repetitive courses in the programme (refer to 5.3.1) so that PSTs will have sufficient time for teaching practice. Badriya from the female focus group (2) stated, "Two days are not enough for practicum. We need more days and reduce the subjects we are taking the school. We don't know how to do test and how to give marks. We just go to teach." Also, Bashar from the male focus group (2) commented, "I think since it is the last year for the students, so it should be all for practice. Students should not take another subject."

Actually, the main demand of all the PSTs is to have block practicum but suggestions on how to apply block practicum have varied from having the last academic year spared only for practicum preceded by two practicum days in the last semester of the fourth academic year to having only the last academic year for practicum. Basma from the female focus group (1) suggested,

> *"In my opinion, it is supposed to start in the fourth year, two days a week for practicum and the fifth year is only for practicum because now when we go on Sunday and then go on Tuesday, we find the students forgot what we gave them. If we give them homework, they forget the homework. If you want them to bring something to the class, they forget to bring it. That is why we have this gap in our teaching. We didn't feel that the students have benefited from us. Also the cooperating teachers didn't include the unit we taught in the test. They abandoned it."*

Also, Farha from the female focus group (2) commented,

> *"So, I think one period a day isn't enough because we spent most of the time in classroom management. I think to teach the whole week in school without having other subjects in the College is better because sometimes we have exams, projects and presentation and we don't have enough time for teaching."*

In fact, insufficient training time is a common challenge in many pre-service teacher preparation programme as Al-Farra (1993) and Sabir (1989) indicate that time allocated for teaching practice is limited resulting in poor pedagogical training for pre-service teachers. Interestingly, PSTs' request to give teaching practice greater weight in the English language study plan in the programme under study is aligned with the findings of the Ministry of Education and the World Bank (2012) report that spotlights on the teaching practice components of teacher preparation programmes in Oman stating that "the practical component of teacher education courses is relatively small, is late in the program and carries relatively little weight in the final mark" (p.235). Therefore, it is suggested that greater weight should be given to the practical components in the programme in order to ensure the quality of teacher education.

5.4.3 Rethinking the practicum assessment method.

As it was discussed above, one of the main challenges the PSTs encountered during teaching practice is the ambiguity of the assessment criteria in the practicum evaluation form. Therefore, PSTs urge the College supervisors to modify the evaluation form and include sensible and realistic criteria. Ameer from the male focus group (1) stated,

> *"I think the evaluation form needs to be modified because the teacher write some points and maybe he forgets some points maybe maybe. So he can cover some points in the evaluation form. I think if he puts the mark directly during the lesson is good. They can use pencil and then they go back to their notes and make changes."*

In addition, there should be an agreement between all the CSs on how to evaluate the PSTs. The differences in teaching perspectives between some CSs have confused the PSTs and made them lose marks as indicated by PSTs in 5.2.2.3. Deema from the female focus group (1) stated, "Every supervisor has different perspective. So they need to determine how to evaluate us and all of them should agree on certain criteria."

Also, the College should rethink the current practice of not giving the PSTs their marks after each evaluation. The pre-service teachers believe that knowing their mark after each evaluation will motivate them to do better in the next evaluation and will help them to work more on their weakness. Kareem from the male focus group (2) commented,

"I think it is better to give us the mark after we finish the observation because other observation can help the students to prepare a lot and to do better next time".

The PSTs also ask for more supervisors to be sent to schools so that they will be observed more than four times which will expand their teaching practice experience. Ahmed from the male focus group (2) mentioned, "Increase the observation number. Also, increase the number of the College supervisor from two to four. We learn more from 4 supervisors rather than having two".

Moreover, the questionnaire data reveal that the education faculty at the College should conduct training workshops for both cooperating teachers and CSs to train them on how to use the school based practicum evaluation form to avoid any inconsistencies in the assessment. The importance of conducting workshops to train cooperating teachers for the role of mentoring pre-service teachers in the present study is aligned with Baum and Korth's (2013) study where 95% of University faculty supervising teacher training program believe that providing training for the cooperating teachers is very important.

5.4.4 The selection of practicum college supervisors and cooperating teachers should be based on specific criteria.

The PSTs believe that practicum CSs should be chosen based on some criteria including qualifications, number of years of teaching experience at the College, and a good understanding of the Omani school cultural context. Badriya from the female focus group (2) stated,

> *"Also, there must be identified teachers who go to schools based on their experience and their knowledge about how to teach. Sometimes they choose teachers who don't have experience. For example, teachers who only started last year to teach in the College. They didn't teach practicum before. I think observers should also taught practicum 1 and 2."*

Furthermore, PSTs stress that the cooperating schools and CTs should not be chosen randomly. CTs should be experienced, patient and open minded to the new teaching methods. Salwa from the female focus group (1) commented,

> *"They have to choose the cooperating teachers. The good teachers who have more experience and who are more patient so that they can deal with us and give us feedback. And also the teachers who have new methods not the old teachers."*

The questionnaire qualitative data also highlights the importance of selecting experienced CSs and CTs for the school based practicum course. One of the respondents wrote, "We need more and more experience and observations with teachers who have a high experience and export to get benefits from them"

Therefore, based on the focus groups' and questionnaire's qualitative findings, I believe that a carefully planned and structured teaching practice course along with criterial selection of qualified CTs and CSs will enrich the PSTs' teaching experience and prepare them for the actual journey of learning to teach in real classrooms. Along with the cooperating teachers' selection criteria stated by the PSTs in the present study, the

literature of teaching practice is rich with some of these criteria that could be considered and accommodated to the context of study. Paulson (2014) identified some criteria for the selection of CTs that are similar to the PSTs suggested criteria in the selection of CTs. She stresses that CTs have to be knowledgeable about the content being taught, model the best teaching practices and need to be supportive and provide guidance throughout the experience. In addition, Tuli and File (2009) emphasize that the selection should be based on the College supervisor capabilities to work across both College and school settings so that the communication channel is not limited to the school setting only…..and the selected CTs should have the knowledge, skills and time to mentor, support and evaluate the progress of the pre-service teachers during teaching practice. Johnson (2011) has listed some characteristics of quality cooperating teachers that could be used as pre-criteria to select cooperating teachers for the English language pre-service teachers such as "demonstrating appropriate practices, listens and make suggestions, utilizes a variety of observational tools, works with pre-service teachers and guide him/her into the profession" (p.15). Similarly, Knox and McGovern (1988) state six critical characteristics of cooperating teachers: (a) willingness to share knowledge, (b) competency, (c) willingness to facilitate growth, (d) honesty, (e) willingness to give critical, positive, and constructive feedback, and (f) ability to deal directly with the cooperating teachers. I believe that these criteria could be accommodated to the context of the current pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at the College and proposed as criteria to select cooperating teachers.

5.4.5 Pre-service teacher's creativity should be encouraged and awarded

PSTs emphasize that some theoretical courses at the College have provided them with many creative teaching ideas to apply in classrooms but unfortunately, they are sometimes faced up with some College supervisors and cooperating teachers who prefer to follow the instructions and the teaching methods proposed by the teacher's manual. Pre-service teachers feel that the teacher's manual kills their creativity and creates a huge gap between theory and practice. PSTs believe that they should be given the freedom to apply the creative teaching ideas they were taught at the College and need to be awarded for their creativity. Ameer from the male focus group (1) complained, "Some College supervisors insist on following the teacher's book but I feel some steps in the teacher's book are against the students' creativity."

In addition, Fatma from the female focus group (1) asserted, "They asked us to stick to the teacher's book but we have many creative ideas and activities which are more beneficial for the students." Thus, Dalal from the female focus group (2) suggested, "There should be some awards for the creative students. Those need to be reinforced."

Interestingly, PSTs' plea in this study to be given an independent status in choosing the teaching methods they feel appropriate for their classrooms has already been regarded as an important aspect of quality practicum. Pre-service teacher education literature indicates that a high-quality practicum programme is "flexible and encourages innovation." (Tuli & File, 2009, p.111). Moreover, since the present study views teaching as a social practice, PSTs should be engaged into an un-ended thread of exploration and creativity (Groundwater-Smith, 1992).

5.4.6 Communication channels between practicum members should be strengthened.

Since the present study is guided by the sociocultural theory of teacher learning, social interaction is believed to be the crux of learning. Being also grounded in the constructivism theory, the process of learning to teach is considered a social activity where PSTs can make a meaningful construction of teaching practice reality through quality interaction with CSs, CTs and school staff. Therefore, communication channels between all practicum triad should be activated and strengthened in order to fulfil the social aim of teaching. Strengthening communication channels between the PSTs, CSs and CTs corresponds with the third stage of the zone of proximal teacher development within the sociocultural theory which is 'The Internalization Stage'. This stage is based on the concept of intersubjectivity which refers to the shared understanding between the PSTs and his / her supervisor. Therefore, the quality of interaction between the scaffolders (CSs and CTs) in the context of the study and PSTs affect the teaching practice experience within the zone of proximal teacher development. As it is stated in the review of the related literature that the concept of scaffolding in zone of proximal development to teacher education shows only one side of the relationship in teaching practice where CSs/ CTs help and support PSTs. Therefore, the present study widens the view of the relationship between PSTs and CSs/ CTs from being CSs/CTs driven and one sided in nature to a more collaborative, negotiable, and interactive relationship. Based on the findings of the study, I believe that the relationship between the practicum triad should be collaborative and interactive through strengthening the relationship between the cooperating schools and the College– PSTs and CSs and CTs. The following manifests some of the PSTs' suggestions to promote good communication between the practicum triad in a healthy

social environment for teaching practice which focuses on the socio- emotional and humanistic aspects of the learning to teach process.

A. Affective and robust partnerships between the education faculty at the College and the cooperating schools is demanded.

One of the challenges the PSTs encountered during their teaching practice is lack of communication between the College and the cooperating schools. As it is shown in the PSTs data that the traditional dualism that divides College and cooperating schools in two separate worlds with contradictory needs and demands (Allexsaht-Snider, Deegan & White, 1995) is so obvious in the context of the study. Therefore, PSTs call for a successful College-cooperating schools partnership which seeks expanded collaboration between the two entities. The PSTs believe that a notice should be sent to the schools' administration informing them that the College PSTs will be coming to their schools for teaching practice. Some PSTs feel like strangers in their first practicum day because the school administration had not informed others about their visit. Farah from the female focus group (2) commented,

> *"I think the College should talk to the school before because In the first day we feel strangers in the schools and we feel that we are a burden on them and unwelcomed at all as they have to change the timetable many times because of our presence."*

The instrumental human relationships in introducing PSTs to the cooperating school in the present study support Turner's (1994) study finding where he describes PSTs as being thrown in 'at the deep end and left to sink or swim?'. Therefore, the PSTs in the present study believe that there should be a regular contact between the education faculty at the College and the cooperating schools to help PSTs overcome any

challenges they encounter at the beginning and during their teaching practice experience. Bader from the male focus group (1) suggested,

> *"I suggest that there should be a file for every pre-service teacher in the school. Whatever happen with the pre-service teacher in the school should be put in this file, he face problems or excel in something, all of this should be put in his file. After two weeks, the school should send this file to the College."*

Likewise, questionnaire item 38 has scored a high mean of 4.06 where most of the respondents believe that more collaboration between education faculties in the College and cooperating schools is demanded for effective and robust partnerships. The literature on pre-service education shows that "when teacher preparation providers and districts work together in truly mutually beneficial ways, candidates have a more coherent preparation experience" (Coffman & Patterson, 2014, p.10) which in turn results in raising PSTs' achievements. Moreover, Furlong et al. (1994) case study data from 'Modes of Teacher Education project' in England and Wales supports the importance of building strong partnership between Higher Education institutes and schools as it greatly contributes to the development of PSTs' teaching skills. Also, the College administration should select the cooperating schools which are "willing and capable of providing quality places and support for the school-based professional experiences required of its students." (Tuli & File, 2009, p. 112)

B. Establishing a positive relationship with the College supervisors.

The PSTs in the present study assert that the role of CSs should not only be limited to the evaluator or the assessor role. They believe that CSs should play the role of a mentor, an emotional supporter, and an academic advisor. They feel that CSs should visit the schools regularly to provide the PSTs with the necessary support and to help

them mingling in the school environment. Salwa from the female focus group (1) suggested,

> *"I think College supervisors should come twice a week. Sit with us, give us other ideas. That will be beneficial for us. We feel that someone is with us. We aren't alone in this school and someone who can help us and talk for example to another teacher if we cannot."*

Also, the PSTs demand regular meetings with the CSs to discuss practicum related issues and suggest possible solutions for the problems they encounter in the cooperating schools. Imad from the male focus group (1) said, "But in the future if we want to improve these things. The teacher, I mean the observer trust the students and meet with them and they have every point to discuss in the meeting".

What is more interesting that the PSTs' demand of more positive involvement of CSs in their practicum experience is recommended by the pre-service teacher education literature. Rapport and empathy in the relationship between the PSTs and the CSs is found to stimulate healthy learning environment and promote PSTs' development (Wardford, 2011). Also, Ferrier-Kerr (2009) encourages CSs to play the role of a friend to establish effective and successful practicum experience. It is very important for any CS to "take practicum students' emotional blocks into consideration and help them overcome their fear, nervousness, and anxiety" (Soykurt, 2010, p.5324). It is also found that supportive environment is needed to promote PSTs' cognitive development during teaching practice (Yuan & Lee, 2014). In addition, Holi and Al-Adawi (2013) assert that CSs should guide pre-service teachers to make good relationships with school staff in order to establish an inspiring and motivating teaching practice experience.

C. Establishing a positive relationship with the cooperating teachers and school administration.

As it was discussed above based on the findings of the study that the PSTs were not in harmony with their CTs and this has affected their teaching experience negatively. Therefore, the PSTs emphasize that their relationship with the CTs should be filled with respect, understanding and appreciation. Badriya from the female focus group (2) asserted, "We want them to respect us. We want them to consider us as teachers." This quote indicates that pre-service teachers urge cooperating teachers to develop a sense of trust in their teaching abilities. In addition, the PSTs urge the CTs to be more cooperative and share their teaching experience with them. They feel that the CTs should replace the criticism tone with the tone of a caring mentor in a supportive and learning environment. Ahmed from the male focus group (2) mentioned,

> *"Cooperating teachers have to attend with us because we need experience. We don't have any ideas about the English language teaching. Some teachers have a lot of strategies to teach the English language. As trainee teachers, we don't have experience. We need someone who will provide us and guide us to teach the English language in a good way."*

Similarly, the PSTs believe that senior teachers in the cooperating schools should play an active role by conducting workshops on teaching methods and lesson planning. PSTs believe that these kinds of workshops will provide them with practical ideas to apply in the classrooms. Asma from the female focus group (2) stated, "The senior teacher could give us a workshop on teaching and sharing reading. She is more expert. I think they should put a role for her." In addition, the data have shown that PSTs lack the feeling of belonging to the school community as they were placed in a separate room and not permitted to use the school facilities. Although it is reported that pre-service teachers' feelings of

loneliness, isolation and a lack of belonging during practicum are normal (Bloomfeild, 2010), I believe that these feelings have negative effects on the PSTs' practicum experience. The data reveal that PSTs want to feel that they are members of the school community and this will help them to be more productive in the classroom. Smith (2010) emphasizes the need to cross the boundaries between PSTs and CTs "by engaging in dialogues and interaction with an open mind in order to understand the other" (p.37). PSTs' demands of a positive role of the school administration including school principal and CTs to facilitate their practicum experience is described by Ussher (2010) as "creating a village" (p. 103) to help PSTs to mingle in the school environment and allow them to use the school teaching resources (Montecinos, Walker & Maldonado, 2015). Moreover, Patrick (2013) stresses that school staff and management acknowledgment of pre-service teachers as being part of the school community "can make a positive contribution to their identification as teachers" (p.215). The importance of establishing positive relationship between PSTs and CTs also confirms Edwards and Briers's (2001) study which documents that a positive relationship between the PSTs and CTs is a valuable components of successful teacher preparation programmes. Izadinia (2015) stresses that CTs should provide PSTs with emotional and academic support they need during practicum. Interestingly, Kabilan (2013) found out that there is a relationship between the level of pre-service confidence and the kind of support they get from their CTs. Pre-service teachers exhibit more confidence in teaching when they receive timely guidance and support from CTs. Therefore, the quality of interaction between the cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers is critically important to foster an effective teaching practice experience (Ambrosetti, 2014; Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012)

5.4.7 Roles of the practicum members should be identified and documented.

The unspecified roles of all practicum members have made PSTs lose their rights and got exploited by the school staff as it is showed in the data. Therefore, they suggest that the roles of all practicum members should be identified and documented so that everyone is aware of his/her rights and responsibilities. Imad from the male focus group (1) suggested,

> "I suggest to treat this problem, the College has to put a list of paper as conditions. Don't make contradiction between you as a practicum observer, between you, you teach students something. First thing put conditions, all practicum advisors should know these conditions. Also with the students. Also, students have to read. Yes, 1 2 3 … 20 30 40 conditions, I have to follow it. Practicum advisor you have to read it and you have to know it. This thing avoid students and observer to contradiction."

In addition, Ameer from the male focus group (1) asserted,

> "There is a clash between the rules of the College and the rules of the school. I think if there is a note or a model that you can make 3 or 4 papers and make the aims of the practicum, the roles of the teacher trainees, the roles of the headmaster who hold practicum 3 and 4 and roles of the school. This will help us know what we must do."

The PSTs also suggest a practicum handbook that consists of the course description that states all the issues related to teaching practice including aims and vision of the course, role specifications of all practicum members and assessment methods of the course. Deema from the female focus group (1) pointed out, "It is very important to have practicum handbook to know what it is required from us. Will be assessed on decorating the English department room! It should indicate what it is expected from us to do in the school". In addition, Basma, from the same focus group commented, "Yes, it should include our roles, College supervisors and cooperating teachers' roles and the course description for practicum. I think they need to take care about this point. It is very important".

The focus group data regarding this issue is supported by the responses of questionnaire item (39) where most of the PSTs believe that there should be a practicum handbook that consists of practicum objectives, participants' roles and expectations, evaluation procedures. Well-designed teaching practice course includes "jointly determining and clarifying the goals of the experience, as well as the roles of all three players involved in the experience" (Jensen, 2014, p.4). Furthermore, Izadinia (2015) emphasizes that PSTs and CTs should be aware of each other's expectations for more effective and collaborative relationship. The practicum handbook is believed to control the assessment quality for the school based practicum course as stating clear objectives and standardized assessment criteria will ensure that all pre-service teachers are being assessed against the same objectives and criteria (Holi & Al-Adawi 2013). I as a teacher educator believe that the main role of CSs and CTs that should be clearly documented in the practicum handbook is CSs' and CSs' endeavour to challenge PSTs' existing beliefs and practices about teaching and to model the best practices in the language classrooms.

5.4.8 Establishing a psychology council.

The present study reveals that stress, anxiety and lack of support have affected ST's performance negatively. The high number of PSTs who are on probation indicates poor treatment of the pre-service teachers' problems and stress. In fact, the literature on teaching practice shows that teaching practice is characterized of struggle, loneliness, conflict and stress (Bloomfield, 2010; Capel, 1997; Murray-Harvey, 2001; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000). It is also found that stress has a negative impact on pre-service language teacher performance and their future profession as language teachers (Mahmoudi, 2016). Therefore, PSTs feel the need to establish a psychology council at the College. Some of the male PSTs in the male focus group (1) stated that they already proposed the idea of

the urgent need for establishing a psychology council to the minister three years ago on her visit to the College but nothing has been done until now. Despite that the literature on teaching practice provide PSTs with some psychological strategies to help them cope up with stress including good planning and management of time and resources, I support the establishment of a psychology council in the College that handles individual cases and provide effective diagnosis and treatment of the College students' problems in order to help them overcome their struggles with teaching practice and any other academic issues.

5.5 Opportunities encountered by the college supervisors during practicum

This section explores the opportunities encountered by CSs during the school based practicum course. The emerging patterns and themes identified in the CS's one to one interview dataset (refer to Appendix 21) are presented and analysed in relation to the third and fourth research questions and the existing literature on teaching practice. As it was mentioned in the methodology chapter that the CSs' one to one interview data were analysed by following the guidelines set by Braun and Clarke (2006) that consist of six phases of thematic analysis procedure. As a CS myself, I have the experiential knowledge and insider's perspective which has helped me to reflect upon the CSs' experience with teaching practice. I tried to ensure the validity of the study by providing sufficient illustrative extracts from the data. Pseudonymous have been used for all the interviewed CSs. Table 5.4 introduces participants of the one to one interviews to their pseudonymous.

Pseudonymous	Gender	Years of Experience in ELT	Years of Experience in the College
Anna	F	20	10
Khalid	M	5	5
Basim	M	18	6
Ibrahim	M	15	4

Table 5.4 One to one interviews' participants

The themes identified in the College CSs' one to one interviews will be thoroughly discussed in relation with the PSTs' datasets and in the light of the existing literature.

CSs assert that the benefits of the practicum course in any training programme cannot be denied. They all admit that practicum should be the core course in pre-service teacher preparation programme because it is the only line that connects theory with practice. CS Khalid stated, "No one can ignore the importance of practicum in teachers' preparation programmes". In fact, the data revealed that there is a consensus among CSs that practicum is a great opportunity to familiarize PSTs with real English language classroom setting. They believe that PSTs who go for teaching practice don't encounter the feeling of cultural shock when they enter the real field of teaching. They also believe that practicum is a good opportunity for them to scan the situation in the cooperating schools and integrate their experience at the schools in their teaching of theoretical courses at the College. CSs asserted that practicum enables them to explain many teaching theories through the illustration of many live examples that they encountered from their supervision of PSTs. CS Anna mentioned, "Practicum provides smooth transition from learning how

to teach to the real job of teaching. Our students don't experience cultural shock when they start teaching after they graduate". CS Basim, also said, "The supervision experience helped us to integrate some of the PSTs' real teaching examples into our theoretical courses at the College". Moreover, CS Ibrahim claimed that the literature on teaching practice has many convincing evidences of the benefits of practice in preparing PSTs for the real job of teaching. He stated, "There are many studies that have proved the important role of practicum in developing PSTs' teaching skills". All the previous quotes indicate that CSs appreciate the inclusion of practicum in the pre-service teacher preparation programme for its un-denied role in preparing PSTs for in-service teaching. They emphasize the positive effects of practicum in enriching their teaching experience.

5.6 Challenges encountered by the college supervisors during practicum.

The data obtained from the CSs' one to one interviews revealed many challenges that the College supervisors encounter in the school based practicum course. These challenges will be presented and discussed in this section. Surprisingly, the data analysis shows that some of the challenges which the CSs encounter are similar to the challenges faced by PSTs.

5.6.1 Perceived gap between theory and practice

Interestingly, the main challenge that the qualitative data of the CSs' one to one interview reveals, is the disconnection between theory and practice in the programme in general and the practicum course in particular. The interviewed CSs believe that the practicum course is artificial which creates a huge gap between theory and practice. CS Anna commented,

> *"I think what happen is the focus in the fourth year is on practicum. They go out for two sessions a week but to me that's not real teaching. It is still the whole the whole course to me is too artificial and it is not based in practice and it is not based in reality. I asked the question, why did they go out in the fourth year? To me I cannot understand why they spent 4 years at the College and only in the fourth year they go out and they have never been to school."*

Anna believes that the huge gap between theory and practice in programme is the main reason why PSTs do not put what they study in the theoretical courses into practice. She continued,

> *"I think I have told you that for a whole year in practicum and some of them don't make the link between what they are doing in the theoretical class into the practice. I even said to them when we talk about starting the lesson and finishing the lesson which we call framing. There is disconnect between theory and practice. And I think that's where our role is so crucial of the supervisor is to bring in that theory."*

In addition, CS, Basim, has asserted the existence of this gap between theory and practice. He says that in reality, PSTs discard all the theoretical components of teaching practice once they go for teaching practice in the cooperating schools. He commented,

> *"Indeed there is a gap here. I was involved in all the courses, practicum 1 and 2 here: College based and 3 and 4 outside in schools. There is some gap that needs to be worked in there. The theoretical components they take here, which seems to provide fair components in terms of theory but the as soon as the students move outside, what they do there is largely irrelevant to what they see in practicum 1 and 2. So, the practical experience there is not in any way a continuation of what they have seen here. They study some aspects of classroom management in practicum 1 and 2 but when they go outside, they are asked for other things."*

On the same vein, CS Khalid admitted that there is a gap between theory and practice in the teaching practice course but he believes that this existing gap is natural and it almost exists in every field including banking and engineering. He carries on saying that bridging this existing gap between theory and practice in teaching practice is a big challenge and requires lots of hard work. Khalid stated,

> *"There is a gap and in order to bridge this gap, there is a big challenge. In here at the College we teach the students about teaching theories but when it comes to classroom practice, students forget everything and they use their intuition, past experience, the way they were taught and they just start teaching. Sometimes they never even deliver any of the things we taught them because we taught our students when you teach new vocabulary, it is very important to drill that vocab to teach the meaning, the pronunciation and the form but when it comes to classroom, they forget everything. I don't know what is the real problem but sometimes they try to but not a convincing gap. There is a gap not only in education, also in banking, in engineering, it is in every field. It is something natural."*

The data have shown a consensus among the CSs with regards to the existing gap between theory and practice in the pre-service teacher preparation programme. In fact, PSTs have also highlighted this problem in section 5.3.1. The PSTs' data have revealed that PSTs believe that most of the teaching and learning theories they learn at the College are not applicable in real classrooms because of the low English level of school student. As a result, their practices in the classrooms are irrelevant to what they have been taught at the College. It seems that this perceived gap between theory and practice is not a problem faced by only the pre-service English teacher preparation programme in the target institution but also a challenge encountered by most of the pre-service teacher preparation programmes around the world as indicated by Seferoğlu (2006).

5.6.2 Low English language level of some pre-service English teachers.

Practicum CSs have noticed during their supervision of PSTs that some PSTs' English language level is very low. It has been indicated in the CSs data that despite some PSTs have the characteristics of a good teacher in terms of applying appropriate teaching methods and running the lesson smoothly, they are found to be incompetent in English. CS Ibrahim said,

> *"When it comes to academic challenges, the problem is maybe the students when it comes to teaching, they have the teaching methods, the style, they are teaching in a good way but they have language problems and when it comes to the criteria given to them and to ask the supervisor to evaluate them, the problem is that there is nothing about language. It is only that time. So, when you supervise, you see the students run the classes perfectly but the problem is with language."*

In the same line, Anna mentioned,

> *"I have got 7 teachers whose personality, I think teaching it is something to do a lot with personality, they have wonderful personality, confident, charismatic is the word but the language oh, oh, one of them wrote a sentence on the board, he wrote it incorrectly and read it incorrectly."*

The analysis of the CSs' one to one interview qualitative data have revealed three main reasons of the low English language level of PSTs which are: the English language teaching programme intake criteria, low motivation level of PSTs and the national foundation programme exist criteria. It is believed that one of the reasons behind having incompetent English language PSTs is the intake protocols followed by the College. The schools' need for more male teachers has forced Higher Education Institutes to enrol more male PSTs with low English language level. Therefore, good English language ability is not taken as a serious intake criterion in the English language teacher preparation programme. CS Basim, analysed the matter and diagnoses the source of the problem by blaming the programme intake criteria. He says: "It is a big issue. It is a big umbrella. If you want me to go back to the root. The intake criteria right from the beginning." CS Anna also commented,

> *I don't know because they need more male teachers in the schools and so therefore, with females, they take the top females but with males, they are not enough for the top so they take as much as they can and maybe the quality and the language ability. It is not about the characteristics. It is about the language ability.*

CS Ibrahim also supported Anna's and Basim's point of view that the low English language level of the PSTs is attributed to the programme intake criteria,

> *"Boys of course. I don't want to be unfair but some of them are good to some extent but most of them have language problems. I was with students from 2006 batch. If I go back to 2006 and 2007 batches, they are much much better in terms of language than those guys and the problem is with the intake……. Also the intake from the high school is really weak and if you go back to the roots. Nowadays they get scholarships and the cream of the cream go out of the country Uk, US so the level of intake even in SQU is lower, so what about us, the lowest."*

The College of Education Quality Audit Report which was performed by the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) in 2014 documents the institution of the study acknowledgment that "it continues to receive "moderate to low" achievers" (p.25). This documented finding corresponds with the CSs claim that there are no serious intake criteria that demand satisfactory English language level before enrolling pre-service teachers in the English language teacher preparation programme.

Apart from the programme intake criteria, the interviewed CSs also believe that the current foundation programme exist criteria also contribute to produce incompetent English language speakers. In the past, the English language teaching programme has its standalone foundation programme which consisted of intensive English language courses and lasted for a whole year for all the new English language PSTs. In 2008, the study institution adopted the General Foundation Programme which stream students into four levels (A, B, C and D). Nowadays, all new students in all the different specializations including the English language specialization must undergo the national foundation programme which consists of some English language courses along with mathematics and IT courses. CSs think that the new national foundation programme has contributed

to produce incompetent English language PSTs. They believe that PSTs in the English language training programme require a different foundation programme which is more language focused because the requirements of the English language training programme are different from the requirements of other specializations. CS Ibrahim stated,

> *"Also, the foundation programme they had. I mean in the past, they were streamed in a way that the ELT students have their own foundation programme which is really strong, really suitable for the ELT students. But the problem now is that all our students, the business students, IT students and other specialization they do the same foundation programme but it comes to English why not to stream our students right from the beginning."*

Cs Anna also added,

> *"The problem is the exist criteria for the national programme for students following an IT course or business course, they only need to exist on a band 4 in IELTS even maybe their English language teachers, I think the same but they do need a higher level of skill because by the time this is the whole reasoning and sort of thought behind the foundation programme when it is first started so by the time they got to the first year, you no longer are teaching the skills. You are teaching how you teach the language and so on. I think there is a disconnect between what is required to raise the language proficiency of the students for the teaching programme and what is required for the other specialization and I think that could be a problem And I think I do think that a lot of this is do with the fact that students are not motivated and they don't want to be teachers."*

The CSs' belief that the structure of national foundation programme has contributed to produce incompetent English language PSTs is consistent with the findings from the PSTs' focus group data in section 5.3.1 where they blame the foundation programme designers of adding a mathematics course in the programme. They claim that mathematics is not in any way related to pre-service English language teacher preparation and they demand of replacing it with a language course. Similarly, Baporikar and Shah (2012) indicate that the GFP failed to improve English language proficiency of students in Higher Education Institutes. Interestingly, PSTs are aware of their low English

language level and they seek help from the College to provide them with effective English

language courses. Unfortunately, CSs believe that the College lacks proper handling of

the existing problem of the low English language level of the pre-service teachers. They

criticize that the College is handling the issue with the same resources which makes the

situation even worse. CS Basim, believes that to deal with such a problem, the College

has to provide the teachers with more resources and special training. He said

> *"My only concern is that the College is not being able to appreciate the changing situation in the country. Now we are getting lower level students. ….We are dealing with the same situation with the same resources, indeed with less resources and this is the only thing I think the College has to be flexible and to respond to the situation. These students need more time. more time means less teaching hours. It means they recruit more teachers. This is not happening. Resources means that you need to discuss, probably to vary your assessment methods. Again, which means training. We have been trained or probably we have gained some experience in handling some specific level of students. Now we are getting lower level. Some of us aren't trained to do that."*

The study also reveals that PSTs' low level of motivation to be English language teachers

could be a contributing factor to their low English language level. CS khalid stated, "One

of the challenges that I faced with schools is students' commitment. Not all students of

course. Sometimes they don't like to be observed more than two times".

On the same vein, CS Anna commented that some PSTs especially the boys are not

committed to teaching practice because they do not want to be teachers. She highlights

the problem by saying,

> *"There is another problem that I found because I talked to my students, many of them don't want to be teachers. I don't know how they will end up in the programme but they just say it, we don't want to teach. So, this is the biggest problem and they are doing teacher training programme and they don't want to teach. They are not motivated. It is not what they want to do."*

Moreover, CS Ibrahim agrees with other CSs that most PSTs are not motivated to be teachers. He stated,

> *"Most of the students when I talk to them, they are telling me that they are not really interested in teaching either they are forced by their families or they just want to get a job and to get a higher salary. They don't have that intrinsic motivation. They don't have the interest and that is a real problem."*

Furthermore, CS Basim questions the negative perception of PSTs towards teaching and schools despite the great efforts of the Ministry of Education to equip all the schools with the necessary teaching materials as he claims. He comments on the issue that the retain rate of PSTs is dropping down because of lack of motivation and insists that something should be done to retain PSTs in the English language teaching programme especially the male PSTs. He commented,

> *"Some of the students don't have passion of teaching. We are facing big problem even from the foundation year, some students don't even show up. For example, we were given 460 students allocated to this College, I think only 390 of them showed up so something 60 minus. This is something that the whole country is discussing now, how to retain students. It is a big challenge now especially the male sections. So, there is some sort of lack of motivation among the new patches. So far unfortunately we are working within the same resources."*

Remarkably, Wyatt (2013) warns that the education system in the developing countries in general and Oman in particular is threatened by a teacher motivation crisis. The pre-service English teachers' low level of motivation in the present study corroborates with Wyatt (2013) study findings as he also relates teachers' low level of motivation to some factors including lack of training (refer to 5.6.3) and limited professional and administrative support (refer to 5.6.4, 5.6.5 & 5.6.6). Moreover, Baporikar and Shah (2012) affirm that Omani students in Higher Education Institutions in general are found to have negative attitude and low motivation

towards learning and acquisition of knowledge which could be a contributing factors to their low English language proficiency.

5.6.3 Insufficient time to practise teaching in the cooperating schools.

The CSs one to one interview data correspond with the PSTs' focus groups data (5.3.2.2) which indicate that time allocated for teaching practice is insufficient. CS Khalid stated,

> *"The aim of school based practicum is really good. It I a good idea but when it come to the time that our students usually spend in their schools, I feel that students have only 2 days a week. They need to go to schools to teach. I feel that these 2days aren't enough. They need more. They need at least 3 days or 4 days a week in order to learn about the school environment, to practice their teaching."*

Moreover, CS Basim emphasized on the point that teaching practice time has to be increased in order to immerse the pre-service teachers into teaching practice and help them to get acquainted to the school environment. He commented, "I think things to be changed as I told you before, the time allocated for practicum needs to be increased". Interestingly, Cs' dissatisfaction with the time allotted for teaching practice in the present study corroborates with Borko and Mayfield's (1995) study findings where all supervisors also expressed their dissatisfaction with the limited time allocated for practicum.

5.6.4 Lack of school based practicum course description.

One of the main challenges that is faced by CSs is the lack of course description for the SBP course which results in a huge mess in the course and less commitments of the practicum members as they are not obliged by a set of documented roles. In addition, the lack of a course description which tackles all the important elements in the course including: the course objective, the course requirements, role specification for all involved members in practicum, the assessment methods, and the deadlines surely affects the programme instability. CS Ibrahim stated,

> *"There is not and we urged for that but nothing has been done. The idea of having clear course description is very important. We need to be clear about what we need. I mean I am clear about what I am doing because of experience."*

CS Ibrahim also commented,

> *"For me when I first went to school, I was lost, it was not clear what I have to do but after 5 years, almost everything is clear for me. So, I believe that everything should be documented, here you these are your roles. Actually, the practicum coordinator tried her best to write what we can call it job specifications but still there are other things that need to be added. I think we need to work on this to make everything clearer."*

CS Basim also mentioned that one of the consequences of the lack of SBP course description is subjective assessment. He asserted, "That is where I will say it leaves a huge gap for subjective assessment. This is not easy neither for the students nor for us".

The lack of documented and clear role specifications of all stakeholders in the teaching practice course indicated in the present study is also found in Gursoy's (2013) study that states that there is a lack of information about how communication should be done between all stakeholders in the teaching practice course.

5.6.5 Inexperienced college supervisors.

One of the sensitive issue that CSs data raise is the unqualified CSs who evaluate pre-service teachers. The data reveal that qualification and experience should be the main criteria to choose CSs. CS Ibrahim stated,

> *"There are some teachers who don't even have qualifications. I mean they are not qualified in teaching. They are just engineers, psychologists. It is just that they are native speakers, they have SELT……. All what they say to the students, very good, good lesson, tktk, I don't know 80 out of 100. So choosing the right teachers is very important. They must be qualified but not only qualified. They must have experience in the teaching field and I do prefer having supervisors who have experience with our own context."*

CS Anna asserted that CSs should have already taught SBP pre-requisite courses in the College in order to get proper experience to guide PSTs in dealing with unexpected problems in real classrooms. She said,

> *"There are people who have gone to schools who have no a bit of experience. They have never taught practicum. They have no idea. Some people have had in their own country but they don't know what have been taught in schools. I have always requested that if you go to school practicum, at least either have taught College practicum or have taught a course that has micro-teaching components. you need somebody with experience, who has teacher training experience because they have been teachers themselves to be able to assist and help."*

It is worth noting that this finding corporates with the PSTs' finding in section 5.1.2.3. PSTs complained about being mentored by inexperienced CSs who don't foster their learning to teach professional growth.

5.6.6 Logistics challenges.

The analysis of the data shows some logistic challenges encountered by the CSs during their teaching practice. These challenges are lack of resources, the unavailability of an office for PSTs in the school's premises and inappropriate arrangement of the school based practicum schedule.

5.6.6.1 Lack of resources.

CSs' data validate PSTs' data with regards to the lack of teaching resources PSTs need for teaching practice (refer to 5.3.5). The data indicate that there is no agreement between the College and the cooperating schools on whose responsibility to provide pre-service teachers with the necessary teaching materials including textbooks and teacher's manual. The cooperating schools expect pre-service teachers to come to schools to practice teaching having all the necessary material ready with them. On the other hand, pre-

service teachers complain that the cooperating schools are not cooperative and they don't

provide them with the necessary teaching materials. CS Ibrahim commented,

> *"Another thing from the side of the schools is the availability of materials. Some schools they cooperate with our students, they gave them CDs, flash cards, word cards, realia, whatever they need, so our trainees go to schools ready to teach without any kind of challenges, no need to think about the supporting materials but some schools lack these things, maybe the ministry support them with all of these things but teachers in the schools don't make use of these things and they don't support our students. when you go to schools sometimes you find some students, some cases of course, some students complain they don't have their textbooks, they don't have the resources so they are not able to prepare well. So, this could be lack of resources could be one of the challenges."*

5.6.6.2 The unavailability of an office for PSTs in the school's premises.

Moreover, another logistic challenge CSs encounter is the unavailability of a room in the

cooperating schools where they can meet with PSTs to discuss the feedback. CS Khalid

commented,

> *"Sometimes when you go to school, you don't have like a private office where you give your students feedback. In some cases, of course, senior teachers have been doing their best to provide us with rooms but sometimes it is not possible."*

5.6.6.3 Inappropriate arrangement of the school based practicum schedule.

The main institutional challenge that is shared by the cooperating schools and the College

is the arrangement of the school based practicum timetable. There is no mutual

understanding between the two entities to produce a practical timetable for the school

based practicum course to serve the aims of the course. CS Ibrahim admits that there is

sometimes clashes in the timetable where most of the students in the same school are

doing the same lesson which makes it very difficult for the supervisor to observe them all at the same time. CS Ibrahim explained,

> *"I mean sometimes you have as supervisor six students in the school and even more and you have to see them all you know. Sometimes there are clashes between the classes, two trainee teachers in the same time. it is really really challenging to see them all within the period, 6 weeks period."*

On the other side, CS Anna believes that the College administration especially the registration department is not cooperative in terms of arranging a suitable timetable for the school based practicum course. She stated that she approached the registration department not to have practicum on Sunday for some logical reasons as she claims but her request was rejected. She explained,

> *"On Sunday the students are not settled particularly cycle one. They come from weekend and we didn't like the last day of the week because everybody is in the weekend more, everybody alike, staff and trainees and also our trainees travel. They come from far a way. So I asked not to have practicum on Sunday and Wednesday and this is what I was told "registration cannot organize the timetable".*

CSs Anna and Khalid touch upon a very sensitive issue regarding decision makers in the College. They believe that the College is controlled by the registration department and they urge the College deanship that all the departments at the College should work together not in opposition. CS Anna claimed,

> *"Honestly, this College is run by registration. Forget about management, forget about the deanship, there is no management, the registration runs this College. There have been wars with registration in terms of grades, access data base. They are honestly as a system, I am not talking about it individually, as a system as a group, as an organization they control this College and until we get in a situation where we don't work in opposition but working together."*

CS Khalid also commented that the registration department hinders good teaching practice,

> *"Registration department in the College is not fostering good practicum experience in terms of managing the timetable of the pre-service teachers. I think there is no direct involvement from the College administration in the practicum issues."*

5.6.7 Subjective assessment methods.

Most College supervisors coincide that the current school based practicum evaluation form is subjective and vague. Although the form includes different items with relation to teaching methods and classroom management, unfortunately, there is no agreement between all College supervisors about the items of the evaluation form. Every supervisor has his/her own interpretation of each item. CS Anna commented,

> *"I think some are for example, what do they mean by demonstrating skills in questioning. Some of these are not clear. It has different interpretation. What I interpret that in my brain demonstrating skills in questioning means that they put questions appropriately to elicit or check the student understanding or rephrasing the questions or maybe it is not that so there are things that are not clear. For example, what do they mean by presenting the lesson efficiently? So, these things are vague."*

CS Khalid also stated, "I am not really happy with that checklist because evaluating teachers is something difficult. It is subjective. Even though there is no other option right now but I feel ….it needs to be improved." In addition, CS Ibrahim remarked,

> *"College supervisors have different interpretations of the criteria in the evaluation form. One of the main challenges I will relate it to the evaluation sheet or criteria, if you sit with all teachers and ask about the 20 items they have. They will have completely different interpretation of every single item."*

Furthermore, there is a consensus among all the College supervisors that the practicum evaluation form fails to measure pre-service teacher's language ability which is what I believe is a very serious drawback of the evaluation form as those pre-service teachers are going to be language teachers. Therefore, they have to be well assessed in their English language ability. CS Ibrahim commented,

> *"But it gives only one item to measure language which is 5, from 0 to 5 and we have 20 items totaling 100. If you check the calculation, the percentage for it. How much is given to language, fraction, statistically speaking. ………in one way or another, there must be a focus on 3 elements of teaching, presentation, practice, assessment or what it is called teaching, practicing and then assessing. What is the focus? Is it just a matter of teaching the students?"*

In addition, CS Basim added that "the most obvious absent aspect in it is language. It doesn't measure language because the students can get "A" but the student doesn't speak English very well because the evaluation form doesn't measure language in any way." The vagueness of the assessment methods in the school based practicum course in the present study is consistent with the findings of several teaching practice studies where all members involved in teaching practice have not yet reached an agreement about how pre-service teachers should be assessed and what are the criteria that should be focused on during the assessment (Smith, 2010; Tillema & Smith, 2011; Zeichner & Wray, 2001).

5.6.8 Lack of a reciprocal relationship between college supervisor and pre-service teachers.

The current practice in the SBP course which necessitates that CSs stay with PSTs for a period of six weeks in the semester and then another supervisor replaces him/her for the rest of the semester hinders the maintenance of a reciprocal relationship between the CSs and PSTs. CS Anna explained,

> *"I noticed this because the way they designed the programme, we say with them for about 6 weeks and then we change the school and I don't like it because they have just got to know you, you built up the relationship and then you changed."*

Moreover, the data reveals an interesting finding which indicates that relationship between CSs is controlled by grades. CS Basim claimed that PSTs establish good

relationship with the CSs for the sake of getting high grade in teaching practice. He admits that this relationship is a short-term relationship as PSTs get disinterested in this relationship after the feedback session. What is more intriguing that this finding is supported by pre-service teachers' data (section 5.3.3) where pre-service teachers claim that good feedback entails good relationship with the CSs and negative feedback entails difficult relationship. CS Basim mentioned,

> *"Yes, they would establish communication with you. They would try to make you happy but you feel that that is for the grades because in the meeting yesterday we found that the second day when we are not there, it is not the same situation. So basically, there is some sort of lack of long term communication between us but again in terms of communication, there is a humble opportunity of communication at least from our part because when we go to the school, we sit with the students there and we discuss with them but unfortunately lots of them don't seem to be interested. They just get interested in the grades. So, they would see you before the supervision but not after that until the next week and they will try to get in touch with you before that to discuss the lesson plan, potential issues and then after that they are not interested in much of the feedback."*

5.6.9 Lack of communication between college supervisors and the cooperating teachers.

CSs qualitative data reveals that the communication between the CSs and the CTs in the school is quite rare. In the case of serious matters that should be resolved, CSs approach the PSTs. CS Ibrahim commented,

> *"Sometimes you find supervising schools, the cooperating teachers are not really cooperative with you as they are supposed to be. Like they don't give you the schedule. They just put you in the context and you try to find ways to classify the classes and to sort out the students into different levels."*

CS's Ibrahim claim of the lack of communication between CSs and CTs is supported by CSs Basim, Khalid and Anna. They have all asserted the disconnection in the academic relation between CSs and CTs. CS Basim mentioned that communication happens only at higher level and only for administrative purposes. There is no academic discussion

between the CSs and the CTs which if it happens, I believe it will foster the teaching

practice learning process. He stated,

> *"Most of contacts happen with the head teacher so basically is for administrative purposes, to manage the timetable, to explain to them what the students are expected to do with them and what they are not expected to do but there is no sort of academic discussion. There is academic component of this relationship so most of the time it is restricted to the administrative aspects, students who are missing, who are coming late but to my experience I never had the opportunity to discuss anything academic related to classroom management or teaching with the cooperating teachers."*

On the same line, CS Khalid described the disconnection in the relation between CSs

and CTs figuratively. He stated that they are being received as aliens in the cooperating

schools. He explained,

> *"I always talk to the senior teacher because other teachers are usually busy in their teaching. Sometimes they receive you as aliens in their context. So they don't have time because when you go to meet with your mentees, you then go to classes. Even you don't have time to talk to them. We usually talk to the senior teacher and sometimes to the headmaster but we don't have regular contact with other cooperating teacher."*

On the other hand, CS Anna justified this lack of communication due the bulk of duties on

the shoulders of CTs. She said,

> *"The schools have become so busy not as the past. In the past, you used to sit with the cooperating teacher and the cooperating teacher used to come and watch the lesson with you and you discuss it afterwards. I feel there is a disconnect and I feel that the schools are very busy."*

5.7 College supervisors' perceptions of the practicum potentials and their suggestions for a better teaching practice.

In this section, I report the college supervisors' (CSs) own recommendations of how the

quality of SBP and the English language teacher preparation programme in general could

be improved. These findings will help answer the fourth research question. In the one-to-

one interviews, the CSs emphasized the importance of practicum in preparing pre-service

teachers for in service teaching. They suggest that practicum should be the main course

in any pre-service English language teacher preparation programme. However, they

believe that the implementation of this course should not happen randomly. Therefore,

they made some recommendations that they believe will foster the effectiveness of the

teaching practice course. Besides helping to answer the forth research question, the

College supervisors' recommendations reported in this section will also be discussed in

the light of contextual information (the programme study plan) and previous research.

This combined evidence presented in this section will lead to and support the

recommendations for practice that I make in chapter six.

5.7.1 The perceived gap between theory and practice.

According to CSs, the main challenge that needs to be looked at and resolved is the gap

they perceive between theory and practice in the English teacher preparation programme

in general and the practicum courses in particular. In the interviews, CSs asserted that

PSTs should be trained to put theory into practice. CS Basim, for instance recommended

that,

> *"I think we need a more feasible, clear relationship between the theoretical component which is practicum one and two and the school based practicum. That gap is missing and it has to be filled. The students have to go there with a clear vision of what they mean of classroom management and what they mean by lesson plan, so far this is not happening and it is left for the individual teachers."*

Moreover, CS Anna suggested that the transition from the theoretical stage to practice

should happen gradually and smoothly. She stated,

> *"To me I would say that the four components should be like four steps but we need to see them build in a way that one is built on another and one leads to the other in a logical assumption. That's what I say if you start by fully theoretical, lets say, practicum one and then we go to 50 50 practicum*

> *two. By practicum three they will start to shift towards schools so their presence there will be more than presence here and the assessment component will be heavier towards the practical side and the theoretical side and they will end up by the last semester being fully residing in the school."*

Interestingly, the CSs' perceptions that have pointed to the gap between theory, and practice in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at the College validate the PSTs' views that raised the same point, as reported in section 5.3.1. Both datasets indicate that there is a perceived gap between theory and practice in the programme that, according to stakeholders should be resolved in order to prepare qualified English language teachers.

When comparing stakeholders' views with course documentations, I found that the current English language teacher preparation programme study plan (refer to Appendix 1) supports the stakeholders' perceptions as this lacks some of the important knowledge base elements that I mentioned in the proposed conceptual framework of pre-service English language teacher preparation programme in section 3.3.2. In the following, I will compare the study plan with my proposed conceptual framework of pre-service English language teacher preparation programme.

The study plan actually shows that the focus of the linguistics knowledge in the programme is mainly on the first and the second year. It seems that it is a gradual continuation of the foundation year in presenting the linguistic knowledge to the PSTs. However, the CSs and PSTs views have revealed that the linguistics knowledge offered in the programme through some language courses is perceived to be insufficient. The need for greater language training, seems to be confirmed by the perceived low language ability of the pre-service English teachers which is reported by both the PSTs and CSs

(refer to 5.3.1 & 5.6.2). The PSTs themselves as it is mentioned in section 5.3.1 also report that they perceive their levels in the English language to be low and they urge for more effective English language courses to address this. Likewise, CSs as reported in section 5.6.2, also draw the attention to the perceived low language ability of the PSTs which then say, negatively impacts on the PSTs teaching practice and the development of their professional identity of becoming English language teachers

The recommendations by the CSs reported in this section need to be looked at in conjunction with the recommendations made in the study institution audit report that was done by Oman Academic Accreditation Authority in 2008. The Panel has recommended a revision of students' entry criteria to the College bachelor programme including the English language teaching programme to ensure the enrolment of suitable candidates to the teacher preparation programme. It concluded that

> "The setting, implementing and reviewing of student entry standards to Bachelor programmes needs attention at the College. There is a need for the final exit exam for the English Language component of the GFP to be reviewed and revised to ensure that it aligns with an IELTS level not lower than 5.0." (OAAA, 2008, p. 24)

PSTs and CSs also queried the usefulness of the course content: they claimed that the content of these courses is not applicable in the English language classroom in the Omani schools (refer to 5.3.1, 5.3.5, 5.6.1 & 5.6.6) because of the perceived low level of the school students and lack of teaching materials. In addition, based on the interviews, CSs and PSTs seem to have reached a consensus that there is an overlap in the content of some methodology courses in the programme (refer to 5.3.1 & 5.6.1). Therefore, they recommend that the programme needs to be reviewed so that there is less duplication in the content of its courses. Moreover, based on the perceived short-comings of the

practicum course, and the understanding of constructive teacher education, outlined in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2, I also noticed, the social, cultural and contextual knowledge is missing in the programme, as there is no single course in the programme that addresses such important aspect of English language teaching.

Furthermore, critical reflective thinking is not presented in the study plan neither in a single course nor impeded in the available courses (refer to 5.6.7). Further points raised relate to reflective practice and the use of technology, CSs urge for encouraging reflective practice during teaching practice and believe that critical thinking should be implemented in the assessment methods of most of the programme courses (refer to 5.7.6.2 & 5.7.6.4). In addition, CSs commented on the fact that the programme offers only one educational technology course which they believed to be insufficient in the current world of technology where technology should be to on the top of the list in any language teaching programme. Point that technology fosters language teaching is supported by Hall (2006).

In sum, I have shown that stakeholders still perceive a gap between theory and practice, and that practice is largely absent in the study plan. Indeed, the PSTs and CSs datasets reveal that both groups feel there is an important gap between theory and practice in the school based practicum course with regard to the linguistic knowledge and the training knowledge that pre-service teachers should acquire for quality teaching experience. This is a shortcoming that had already been identified in the study institution audit report in 2008. The importance of reconciling theory and practice in a study programme is also supported by Schon (2003) who argues that, "teaching is a profession in which theory is embedded in and inseparable from practice" (as cited in Allen, 2011, p. 742).

5.7.2 The perceived need for block practicum.

The one to one interview qualitative data demonstrates an agreement between all the interviewed college supervisors that the current school based practicum course is perceived as artificial. Therefore, they believe that block practicum should be implemented in the English language teacher preparation programme to allow pre-service teachers to get prolonged live teaching experience. In addition, CSs believe that block practicum will help them to mingle in the school environment. Anna commented enthusiastically,

> *"Yes. Block practicum because it is real, real. This is sort of the dream. I don't know how this would work………At the moment, the courses are very theoretical and there is little practice but actually they need the practice for the reality of going to school. I firmly believe this, I firmly believe it that the students because they aren't experiencing, it is not real for them, they go down in the bus and they get there and they watch the assembly, they go to their little room and they teach their one lesson, then they go back to their little room and maybe they have substitution lesson, some of them are marking and some of them are …. But a large number of them are not doing that."*

Furthermore, CS Ibrahim has asserted that block practicum is more effective than two days teaching practice. He said,

> *"I think going to schools for only 2 days is difficult even in terms of organizing the courses. The students themselves will not feel comfortable. Right. Because the cooperating teachers may not be there during the day so they will not cover the content that they have to cover and they may have to go back and forth so according to feedback from our trainee teachers, they think that having practicum in one block, one go I think it is better to feel the situation."*

CS Basim supports the suggestion of block practicum but he believes that the application of block practicum requires a revision of the current programme and a concise evaluation of the offered practicum courses to bridge the gap between theory and practice (refer to

5.7.1) and rearrange the courses in a way that allows enough time for teaching practice.

CS Basim commented,

> *"We need therefore to re structure the prerequisite courses so that we can make striking balance between them. We can make the first semester of the third-year observation, coming up with observing and co teaching. Second semester go and teach and last year more focus on teaching and maybe going twice a week in the second semester of the third year is fine but final year they have to go daily to teach."*

It is noteworthy that the CSs' perceived need for block practicum is also one of the PSTs' main demand in their agenda for change that is mentioned in section 5.4.2. Therefore, any attempts to redesign the pre-service English teacher preparation programme should take CSs' and PSTs' plea to extend the practicum period into consideration for the convincing reasons mentioned in the study (refer to 5.2, 5.3.1, 5.3.5, 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.5 & 5.6.3) and effective outcomes of block practicum that have found in the literature of teaching practice. Rock and Ring (2010) indicate that block practicum afford PSTs with sufficient time for theory and skills application and make them function as part of the school community. In addition, Curl and Cary (2014) assert that with the application of block practicum, there will be "no distraction of coursework, missed experiences, or other classroom responsibilities interrupting the field experience" (p.3). As a result, PSTs will have sufficient time to develop effective relationship with cooperating teachers and school staff. Interestingly, CSs' and PSTs' preference of block practicum in the present study corresponds with Curl and Cary's (2014) study where both field instructors and students preferred block practicum format over concurrent practicum format.

5.7.3 The perceived need for greater communication between all the stakeholders involved in practicum.

CSs have suggested in the interviews that a strong connection between all the stakeholders involved in practicum need to be maintained in order to achieve the aims of teaching practice. The data have revealed that lack of communication between the College, cooperating schools and the outside community as outlined in sections 5.3.2, 5.6.8, 5.6.9 and 5.8.3 results in producing unqualified teachers as CS Khalid commented,

> *"I feel that the most important thing that they need to do is to bridge the gap between the schools, the Ministry of Education, the ministry of higher education. It is very important because at the end of the day, the purpose here of the teacher training programme is to provide qualified teachers to teach in schools so Ministry of Education is required to offer help in order to bear these students to be potential teachers for the sake of Ministry of Education and for the sake of the country. If the College is isolated from the Ministry of Education, I don't think it is gonna help. We don't know what they are doing there, the problem that they face"*

According to CSs, teaching practice will be revived through building a strong bridge between industry, Higher Education institutes and the English language teacher preparation programmes. For instance, CS Khalid has suggested that curriculum writers for the English language teacher preparation programme have to visit the schools and the Ministry of Education to see the changes in the school syllabus and modify the English language teaching methodology and practicum courses accordingly. He explained,

> *"People need to go to school, to go to the industry to find out the new trends of teaching, the new demands and then accordingly they can prepare the new syllabus for micro-teaching and teaching practice. So one of the basic thing is to build a bridge between industry and what we call the teacher training programme here, the teacher training programme in Oman in general."*

It is noteworthy that the importance of effective communication between the practicum triad is also emphasised by PSTs in section 5.4.6. Therefore, as it is recommended by

the CSs and PSTs, there is a perceived need for an effective channel of communication

between all the stakeholders to enhance the quality of the practicum course.

Remarkably, several studies (Allen, 2011; Coffman & Patterson, 2014; Furlong et al.,

1994; Johnson, 2011; Moody, 2009; Tuli & File, 2009; Young, 2015) have emphasized

that the relationships of professional collaboration between the practicum triad should

be developed and strengthened as robust and strong collaboration between the

practicum members promote effective teaching practice experience. For instance,

Mockler (2013) stresses that genuine relationships that are based on trust and

reciprocity are actually "built between people, not between institutions" (p.286) and this

is, indeed, one of the central criteria to authentic school/college partnership and a key

success to high quality and effective pre-service teacher preparation programmes.

5.7.4 The perceived need for careful selection and training of college supervisors.

Interestingly, the analysis of the one to one interviews have shown that CSs support the

PSTs plea for criterial selection of CSs (refer to 5.4.4). According to CSs, qualification

(knowledge and expertise) in teacher education and good experience in English

language teaching are perceived to be the main criteria for the selection of CSs. For

instance, CS Ibrahim stated that CSs "must be qualified but not only qualified. They

must have experience in the teaching field and I do prefer having supervisors who have

experience with our own context". It is worth mentioning that CS Ibrahim's assertion on

qualification as an important criterion for the selection of CSs actually corresponds with

Waite's (1993) study as he also emphasizes the importance of skills, knowledge and

expertise of CSs. In addition, the CSs have suggested that extensive workshops should

be run to train and prepare inexperienced CSs who are new to teaching practice but

who must be sent to schools because of the unavailability of sufficient number of

experienced CSs. For instance, CS Khalid stressed the importance of training CSs' on

how to mentor PSTs especially those CSs who are new to the Omani context and those

who lack content knowledge. CS Khalid suggested,

> *"I think they need to train sometimes the supervisor because of their background and some of them come just from different culture, the way they view teaching is different and this will affect their teaching. Some of them come from literature background. They don't have sufficient expertise in TESOL, TEFOL and applied linguistics. I think they need to select them carefully. They need to have criteria for that."*

In fact, CSs' perception of the importance of training workshops to train inexperienced

practicum supervisors in the present study is consistent with Dakhiel's study (2017) that

identifies training courses as one of the essential characteristics required for the EFL

practicum supervisors from their perspectives. College supervisors in Dakhiel's (2017)

study believe that "training courses should be held for the supervisors in order to raise

their efficiency, and a special guide for the practicum supervisors should be developed

(p.1021)

5.7.5 The perceived need for pre-practicum classroom observations and training workshops.

One of the practical suggestions raised by the CSs is the perceived need for more pre-

practicum classroom observations and training workshops to be attended by PSTs before

practicum. According to CSs, there should be a gradual transition from classroom

observations to classroom teaching. This transitional stage is believed to enable PSTs to

draw a practical picture of a real classroom and accordingly be mentally and emotionally

prepared for real teaching. In the one to one interviews, CS Anna mentioned that she

noticed the renewed motivation of the PSTs after they observed real classrooms in the cooperating schools. Therefore, she suggests that classroom observations should happen regularly throughout the study years of the English language teaching programme. CS Anna declared,

> *"I asked these ladies if they could organize with the local schools, here right 5 minutes from to take my ladies down to the school and let them observe and that what we precisely did. We went one morning and we observed …oh the motivation after that because they saw the real thing. They saw the classroom. After we came back from the College there was a renewed motivation, having seen what is going on."*

Strikingly, the CSs' recommendation of increasing the number of PSTs classroom observations in the present study aligns with Gürsoy's (2013) study recommendations as he also suggests increasing the number of PSTs classroom observations to provide them with the support they need during teaching practice.

5.7.6 The perceived need for rigorous, comprehensive and objective practicum assessment methods.

With regards to the practicum assessment methods, the CSs share their dissatisfaction with the current practicum assessment methods. Some of them have proposed some solutions for effective assessment methods.

5.7.6.1 The perceived need for rigorous, comprehensive and objective checklists.

The interviewed CSs admitted that the evaluation criteria listed in the currently used school based practicum evaluation form (refer to Appendix 2) are interpreted differently among CSs which result in some inconsistencies in the evaluation process of PSTs as it was mentioned in section 5.6.7. Therefore, CSs suggest a modification of the SBP evaluation form in order to reach a shared understanding of the evaluation criteria and

reduce the discrepancy in evaluating pre-service teachers' teaching performance. Accordingly, CSs recommend a written rubric that provides a thorough description of each criterion in the form. CSs emphasized that this written rubric should be prepared and made available to new CSs and PSTs. CS Basim commented,

> *"I am with changing the evaluation form to the better, I mean improving it and having clear rubric for each item. We need to break it down into measurable, behaviorable, observable inside the classroom…we need to understand what we mean by each criterion and we need to convey it to the students and also to the cooperating teachers in the schools."*

In addition, CS Anna emphasized,

> *"The evaluation form still it needs lots of work. The practicum teachers need to sit together to come up with more criteria that are based on what they actually see and what they want to assess ….I haven't had the time to sit down to look at it in great depth…but they need to be a space where we look at their preparation, looking at their lesson plans, looking at the delivery of the lesson from start to finish."*

It is noteworthy that the CSs' recommendation to modify the SBP evaluation form is actually supported by PSTs data in the present study. In fact, the PSTs also showed their dissatisfaction with the SBP evaluation form the practicum and they indicated that the form is vague and does not reflect their actual performance in the classrooms (refer to 5.3.3). Therefore, in the focus groups, PSTs urge CSs to modify the evaluation form and include sensible and realistic criteria (refer to 5.4.3).

In fact, the literature on pre-service teacher education has also pointed to the college supervisors' lack of understanding about the practicum assessment requirements for the pre-service teachers (Allen, 2011). Therefore, pre-service teacher education research correlates quality practicum with clear and transparent assessment criteria. For instance, Eyers and Hill (2004) have stressed that for quality teaching practice, PSTs should be

assessed against explicit criteria and expectations of their role as future teachers. Thus, developing shared meanings and understandings of the assessment criteria in the SBP evaluation form as suggested by CSs is believed to ensure consistency in their judgment of the PSTs performance in the cooperating schools. Similarly, Holi and Al-Adawi (2013) suggest that this can be done through "processes of consultation, negotiation and application of standards to achieve consensus or agreement" (p.136) as it was recommended by the CSs in the present study.

5.7.6.2 The perceived need to enrich the practicum evaluation system

College supervisors in the present study, have appealed for multiple assessment methods in the SBP course as they believe that the current practicum assessment method does not adequately measure PSTs teaching abilities. For instance, CS Basim criticized the reliance on one assessment form that is used for the four practicum courses in the programme of the study. Therefore, he suggested a mini thesis writing as part of SBP assessment method. CS Basim believes that pre-service teachers should be engaged in self-reflection, the highest level of thinking, by asking them to write a mini thesis of their teaching practice experience. He stated,

> *"Instead of relying on this same form for 4 years or for 4 courses, If the students are residing there, we can ask them to write a mini thesis sort of reflection of the whole programme for the whole year and that would probably be more beneficial for them. I think it is a combination of assessment. It is the highest level of assessment. ..we want to build it inside the students so that wherever they go, they have to build in that system of self-reflection to improve their own production."*

Moreover, CS Khalid trusts that including multiple methods in the evaluation of PSTs' teaching would give more accurate indication of the pre-service teachers' teaching abilities. He explained,

> *"In the same time, I would suggest sort of variation in the assessment criteria and the assessment method itself. You can start by pen and paper exam, then go to form and then from the form probably at some stage, you need to sit with the students and get observation, qualitative method, observation, videotaping and come here discuss with the students and the last method will be the self- reflection form or the mini thesis that the students can write. By doing this we have assured that there some progression and we have exposed the students to a variety of methods which will be more accurate in terms of the performance of the students."*

However, there is a dearth of research related to the practicum assessment methods as it was indicated in section 5.7.6.2, varying the assessment methods is known to positively impact the learner's willingness, desire and capacity to learn….and encourage the learner to direct energy towards growth, rather than well-being" (Wiliam, 2011, p.13). Furthermore, Smith (2010) stipulates that "any assessment activity that college supervisors and cooperating teachers adopt, should be valid in terms of construct and consequences and it needs to be repeatedly tested for its value within the professional community" (p.41).

5.7.6.3 The perceived need for standardised feedback.

According to the CSs, the stages of the practicum feedback given to pre-service teachers should be identified and agreed by the practicum triad. During the interviews, College supervisors emphasized the importance of giving consistent and standardised feedback to PSTs after their teaching practice. For instance, CS Basim said,

> *"My advise as one of the team is we have to expose to the same experience and the students have to get very standard feedback from me, from x , from y, from anybody else. We select the things that are more important to their teaching and to have to keep bombarding them at that level. The first session of feedback lets say would be about lesson plan, so all over the school, they will get the same thing and when we talk about the lesson plan, we talk about the same thing. The second session lets say would be about classroom management, any structure*

> *we agree on but as long as the students when they come down and discuss, they feel that there is a system working."*

Moreover, CS Khalid stated that as a result of the lack of systematic and standardized feedback, PSTs are assessed against some personal experience of the CSs who supervise them. Therefore, he suggested that the current piece meal approach in feedback delivery should be replaced by a comprehensive approach. He asserted,

> "*The students feel they are assessed by the teachers according to their own experience. This reduces the whole training to a negotiation of that session so when I go and supervise my students, I will get my feedback from what I saw in that session there so it is becoming piece meal approach rather than a comprehensive approach for training. To me this is the main source of challenge now that I don't see the students benefiting from the feedback they are getting because the feedback does not look systematic."*

Actually, the perceived need for standardised feedback as suggested by the CSs and their demand of consistent feedback procedures that should be followed by all CSs, could resolve some of the PSTs concerns with regards to the practicum feedback that they currently receive from CSs (refer to 5.3.3). In point of fact, the quality of practicum feedback is a key element to the success of teaching practice (Copland, 2009; Moody, 2009; White, 2007). Quality practicum feedback is necessary to help pre-service English teachers to make adoptive adjustments to their teaching practices. However, there is paucity of empirical studies on the practicum feedback conferencing frameworks that guide college supervisors to provide PSTs with quality feedback. For instance, Copland (2009) proposes practicum feedback conferencing framework that consists of five stages- self-evaluation, practicum supervisor's feedback, peer feedback, pre-service teacher and college supervisor dialogue and the clarification stage. A closer look at

Copland's (2009) framework shows that the role of cooperating teacher is missing and not considered. Therefore, CSs in the present study could adopt a comprehensive feedback framework that involve the practicum triad to enrich the practicum feedback and promote better and effective teaching practice.

5.7.6.4 The perceived need to encourage pre-service teachers' reflective practice.

CSs responses affirm the effectiveness of reflective practice to promote PSTs teaching abilities. Most College supervisors believe that there should be a serious attempt to encourage pre-service teachers to reflect on their own teaching. Currently, pre-service teachers are asked to fill a reflection sheet where they reflect on their own teaching but they are not being assessed on doing that. College supervisors believe that pre-service teachers need more training on reflective practice. They require more guidance on how to reflect critically and the best strategies that they need to apply during the reflection process. CS Basim commented, "We do encourage that because in my experience, I mean my own reflect as soon I meet the students after their teaching, I say how you would do it otherwise. They reflect. I do encourage them to do that". In addition, some CSs indicated that they ask their students to observe their peers' teaching and write a reflection of what they have seen but these are still some individual attempts that need to be considered by the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme and be part of the SBP assessment methods. CS Basim said,

> *"I also encourage some of them to attend their colleagues lessons. One thing I want to add in here is having the students work collaboratively. When I go to schools, I can see one of them is really high level and understand almost everything and the rest are kind of weak, lost, they don't understand what to do even in terms of planning. I always encourage my students. It is ok, it is ethical to sit together a couple of*

> *days before your lessons and discuss your lesson plans together and even come to my office and discuss your lesson plans."*

In addition, CS Khalid commented,

> *"Whenever students go to the classroom to teach, I ask them to reflect immediately. Sometimes also whenever I go to school, this is my approach, I always ask one of my trainee to attend the class with me and write a report. When we come to the feedback session, I ask this observed trainee to tell us about his lesson and I ask his colleague to give us positive points and maybe one or two negative points. So I always encourage them to reflect on their teaching."*

In fact, the literature on teacher education emphasizes the importance of developing pre-service teachers' reflective skills. Reflection is characterized as disciplined, conscious, explicit and critical thought which contributes to the intellectual and moral development of a person (Dewey, 1910 as cited in Armutcu & Yaman, 2010). In addition, Gursoy (2013) declares that "trainees learn better when they find out their weaknesses themselves rather than being told by others, which leads to autonomy, the development of critical thinking skills, and increased awareness of their actions and decisions" (p.421). Furthermore, Abu Majid's (2008) study reveals that using reflective journals as an assessment tool promote pre-service teachers' confidence and motivational level. Therefore, reflective practice is considered a key success to quality practicum experience and it "needs to be integrated into the teaching practice course by giving STs opportunities to reflect-in-action and on-action" (ibid, p.424).

Furthermore, the social and relational epistemological nature of the study supports the College supervisors' demand of integrating and encouraging the practice of reflection during practicum. Reflective practice in the scope of the present study is considered to be a powerful tool to enable pre-service teacher to make educated judgments during their teaching. In addition, the study finding which indicates that all CSs should have a shared

understanding of the assessment criteria and they should make them clear to the PSTs (refer to 5.7.6.1 & 5.7.6.3) support the findings of Rorrison's (2010) study that suggests a more reflective, transparent, ecological and human attitude towards the assessment of practicum in teacher education.

5.8 Cooperating teachers' perceptions of school based practicum.

As it has been noted in chapter three that most of the existing teaching practice research studies have focused on pre-service teachers and ignore the important role of cooperating teachers in facilitating the pre-service teachers' learning to teach experience (Koeppen & Davison-Jenkins, 2007; Bacharach, Heck & Dahlberg, 2010). Therefore, the present study provides a significant contribution to the literature of pre-service teacher education through exploring the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the SBP at the College as it is believed that the cooperating teachers play a major role in the development of pre-service teachers learning to teach repertoire (Clarke, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Sanders, Dowson & Sinclair, 2005; Russel & Russel, 2011).The cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum and their expectations from the pre-service teachers is discussed in this section through the analysis of the cooperating teachers' semi-structured questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential analysis of the cooperating teachers' semi-structured questionnaire is presented and interpreted in this section to find out the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum course. The open-ended questions in the cooperating teachers' semi-structured questionnaire are handled qualitatively.

A 30 items Likert scale questionnaire was administered to survey the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum course. As it is indicated in section

4.5.3, the cooperating teachers were asked to select one of five numbers for each item. Each number indicates a level of agreement and disagreement. The points 5 to 1 respectively denote Strongly Agree (SA), Agree, (A), No Opinion (NO), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). An item's mean which is equal or greater than 3.5 indicates that most of the respondents agree with a specific item. A mean score which is less than 3.00 signifies that most of the respondents disagree with a specific item (refer to Appendix 9). The CTs' questionnaire items were organized into four main topic areas: the preparation for the role of cooperating teachers, cooperating teachers' satisfaction with the pre-service teachers' performance in the schools, the nature of communication between the cooperating teachers and the College and the support that the cooperating teachers need from the College. The mean and standard deviation of the cooperating teachers' responses to each topic of the questionnaire were calculated in order to obtain an overview of their perceptions of the preparations for the role of cooperating teachers, their perceptions of the pre-service teachers, the kind communication between them and the College and the support they need from the College to enhance pre-service teachers' practicum experience. In-depth statistical analysis of the means and standard deviation of questionnaire topics will be carried out. The mean scores of the questionnaire's topics are interpreted the same way as its items. A mean score which is equal or greater than 3.5 indicates that most of the respondents agree with a specific item. A mean score which is less than 3.00 signifies that most of the respondents disagree with a specific item. In addition, the analysis of the mean score of each item in the questionnaire will be imbedded throughout the analysis of the topic that it belongs to. Table 5.5 shows the means and standard deviation of the CTs' questionnaire topics.

Topics	Mean	Standard Deviation
The preparation for the role of cooperating teachers	2.9	.53
Cooperating teachers' satisfaction with the pre-service teachers' performance in the schools.	3.5	.65
The nature of communication between the cooperating teachers and the College	3.1	.67
The support that the cooperating teachers need from the College.	3.7	.76

Table 5.5 Means and Standard Deviation of the CTs' responses to the questionnaire

The results show that the cooperating teachers feel that they are not adequately prepared for the role of cooperating teachers as the mean score for this topic falls in the disagreement line (M= 2.9). Such finding corresponds with Salazar's (2017) phenomenological study which explored the relationship between pre-service teachers and their cooperating teachers during practicum and how this relationship affects the professional development of pre-service teachers. Salazar's (2017) study has revealed that the cooperating teachers are not adequately prepared for the role of mentoring pre-service teachers. The responses to most of the topic items range between (2.7) and (3.3) which indicates poor preparation of the cooperating teachers to scaffold pre-service teachers during practicum. On the other hand, the results reveal that the cooperating teachers seem to be satisfied with the pre-service teachers' performance in the schools. The cooperating teachers' satisfaction with pre-service teachers' performance scores a mean of 3.5 and most of the topic items' means are higher than 3.5 which signifies the CTs' positive perception of the PSTs' performance in the schools except for items (13) and (14) which respectively score a mean of (3.3) and (2.9). The low mean score of item

(14) which indicates that the cooperating teachers perceive the pre-service teachers' management skills as being ineffective correlates with the pre-service teachers' data which list classroom management as one of the biggest challenges pre-service teachers encountered during their teaching practice. What is more intriguing in the analysis of item 16 which falls under the CTs' perceptions of the PSTs performance in the school is the high mean (M=4) that it scored in the data. It statistically implies that most of the cooperating teachers agree that their relationship with the pre-service teachers is interactive and negotiable. Such finding contradicts the pre-service teachers' claim that most cooperating teachers are uncooperative.

Interestingly, the lack of communication between the practicum triad which has revealed in the pre-service teachers' and college supervisors' datasets, is also indicated in the cooperating teachers' dataset. The topic which tackles the nature of communication between the cooperating teachers and the College (M=3.1) indicates that there is lack of communication between the cooperating teachers and the College including the College supervisors. The low mean score implies that cooperating teachers negatively perceive the role of the College in promoting good communication between the practicum triad. In addition, the results show that the role of the cooperating teachers is marginalized in practicum. A closer look at the responses of items 19, 20 and 22 respectively shows that most of the cooperating teachers responded with 'No Opinion' to these items. These responses probably entail uncertainty about the role of a cooperating teacher with regards to their rights and responsibilities.

Moreover, the CTs' statistical data shows that considerable number of CTs seek support and collaboration from the College to enhance pre-service teachers' practicum

experience. CTs' questionnaire topic which tackles the support that the cooperating teachers need from the College has scored the highest mean (M= 3.7) in the questionnaire. There seemed to be a majority agreement with the statements that demand pre-practicum meetings between all the practicum triad to ensure more collaboration. In addition, the cooperating teachers request for training workshop that will guide them to evaluate pre-service teachers efficiently as indicated in Item (24) which scores a high mean of 3.9.

Furthermore, Mann Whitney U test was carried to determine whether there is statistically significant difference between the male and female CTs responses to the questionnaire topics. Table 5.6 indicates the male and female CTs responses to the questionnaire items.

Topics	Mean Rank	
	Male pre-service teachers	Female pre-service teachers
1. The preparation for the role of the cooperating teachers	9.45	9.56
2. The Cooperating teachers' satisfaction with the pre-service teachers' performance in the schools.	9.80	9.13
3. The nature of communication between the cooperating teachers and the College	9.90	9.0
4. The support that the cooperating teachers need from the College.	10.40	8.38

Table 5.6 Male and female CTs' responses to the questionnaire

The results show that there are no significant differences between the male cooperating teachers' responses and the female cooperating teachers' responses to the three topics namely: The preparation for the role of the cooperating teachers, the Cooperating teachers' satisfaction with the pre-service teachers' performance in the schools and the nature of communication between the cooperating teachers and the College. On the other

hand, the results reveal a slight significant difference between the male and female cooperating teachers' responses with regards to the support they need from the College. This could be attributed to the existing unstable management system in the boys' schools and the presence of pre-service teachers add an additional burden to the school administrations which make them seek help and support from the College.

Furthermore, I have identified the themes emerged from the word-based data and analysed them in relation to the fifth research question and teaching practice literature that tackles the relationship between PSTs and CTs (refer to Appendix 22) .

5.8.1 Cooperating teachers' expectations from the pre-service teachers

The qualitative data in the cooperating teachers' semi-structured questionnaire have generated a set of cooperating teachers' expectations from the pre-service teachers. Some of these expectations are disciplinary related expectations and others are professional related expectations. The disciplinary related expectations include being punctual, responsible and respect all the school staff. The professional related expectations comprise of being creative, taking teaching seriously, building more positive attitude towards teaching and knowing how to deal with school students' differences. It is believed that addressing the cooperating teachers' expectations from the pre-service teachers provides opportunities for optimal learning as pre-service teachers would be aware of what is expected from them and they will work towards meeting these expectations to make the most of their learning to teach experience. The findings of the present study in addressing the cooperating teachers' expectations from the pre-service teachers confirm the findings of Rajuan, Beijaard and Verloop's (2010) study where the

cooperating teachers' expectations focus mainly on the organization of time frame, build up new ideas and encourage and support school students. In addition, some of the cooperating teachers' expectations from the pre-service teachers in the present study are consistent with Russel and Russel's (2011) cooperating teachers expectations from their pre-service teachers who list being knowledgeable, professional and reflective on the top list of their expectations along with good communication, patience, trust, respect.

5.8.2 Cooperating teachers' opinion of the role of the College in preparing them for the task of monitoring and evaluating the pre-service teachers.

The cooperating teachers' data indicate that the College does not provide the CTs with guidelines on how to monitor and evaluate the PSTs. Such practice is believed to frustrate the cooperating teachers and make them feel guilty as they are left with no guidelines to follow in assessing pre-service teacher's performance in the classroom that may lead to discrepancy in their assessment. Similarly, the lack of assessment guidelines has created feelings of anxiety as CTs feel anxious about the assessment of the pre-service teachers. The feelings of guilt and anxiety reported by the CTs in the present study corroborate with Hastings's (2004) study findings where the cooperating teachers experienced the same feelings of guilt and anxiety while assessing their pre-service teachers because of the lack of guided orientation of the CTs before the practicum course. The lack of comprehensive and coordinated preparation for the role of cooperating teachers to work as effective mentors in the present study is also indicated in the findings of Paulson (2014); Russel and Russel (2011); Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009). Therefore, cooperating teachers in the present study believe that formal mentoring preparation prior

practicum would enhance their role as cooperating teachers. Many research studies point out that cooperating teachers who receive adequate preparation are better to assist pre-service teachers with classroom management and problem-solving (Russel & Russel, 2011; Evertson & Smithey, 2000). This supports the cooperating demand of good preparation before the practicum course and continuous support during the process of mentoring the pre-service teachers.

5.8.3 Factors that may ease/hinder the role of the cooperating teachers

The cooperating teachers have highlighted some factors that may ease their role in monitoring and evaluating the pre-service teachers. They believe that CTs should be chosen based on specific criteria such as long experience in language teaching and good management of everyday issues of the pre-service teachers. Interestingly, the same criteria that CTs proposed for the selection of CTs are mentioned by Russel and Russel (2011) in order to insure the selection of effective cooperating teachers. Furthermore, the CTs indicate that pre-service teachers' enthusiasm for teaching practice creates positive work environment which help to sustain good relationships with the school staff.

On the other side, CTs claim that PSTs' low level of motivation and their unwillingness to cooperate with the school staff impede good communication between them and PSTs. In addition, the overloaded schedule of the cooperating teacher maximizes the communication breakdowns with the PSTs. These findings correspond with Hastings's (2004) study where she lists some of negative emotions that cooperating teachers experience such as frustration and feeling guilty due to the limited time they have to support pre-service teachers.

5.8.4. Cooperating Teachers' demands of support and power to scaffold PSTs.

The cooperating teachers' qualitative data have revealed some of their demands from the College and PSTs. Interestingly some of these demands are also stated by the CSs and PSTs. The data indicate that the cooperating teachers seek support and more cooperation between the College and school administration. CSs and PSTs have also appealed for effective coordination between the College faculty and the cooperating school as it is mentioned in sections 5.4.6 and 5.7.3. The data have showed that good communication between the two entities require providing the cooperating schools with a clear plan for teaching practice that should comprise of sufficient information about the course, pre-service teachers and the evaluation process. In addition, the CTs believe that it's the College responsibility to provide PSTs with the teaching aids and the necessary teaching materials. Also based on their interaction with unserious PSTs, CTs feel that the College should adequately prepare PSTs for the teaching responsibilities. They believe that the College should give them more powers to control the process of learning to teach. Similarly, Paulson's (2014) major finding was the desire of cooperating teachers for power and respect in order to manage practicum smoothly. Furthermore, CTs assert that PSTs need more classroom observations before they start teaching. What is more intriguing that the need for more classroom observations before the school based practicum course is validated by the CSs data as they also requested for more classroom observations in section 5.7.5. Interestingly, the demands of the cooperating teachers in this study correspond with Graham's (2006) cooperating teachers' demands in terms of requesting practicum handbook that should describes the roles and responsibilities of practicum triad

and explains practicum evaluation criteria and building open, flexible and collaborative communication among all practicum members. In addition, Hastings (2004) and Leary (2000) support the cooperating teachers' plea for a supportive mechanism that would enhance their role as cooperating teachers.

5.9 Rationale of the practicum community of practice model.

The findings of the study have revealed that there is a wide spread communication breakdown within the practicum triad. It was striking that all participants reported a communication breakdown (refer to 5.3.2, 5.6.8, 5.6.9 & 5.8). The pre-service teachers' data analysis has revealed that the PSTs encountered many communication challenges that can be divided into challenges in dealing with the school administration, the CTs, and the school students and also challenges in dealing with the CSs and the college administration at the College (refer to 5.3.2 & 5.9). In addition, the analysis of the college supervisors' data supported the findings of the PSTs' data and showed that there is a lack of a reciprocal relationship between CSs and PSTs and also lack of communication between CSs and CTs (refer to 5.6.8 & 5.6.9). Interestingly, lack of communication between the practicum members revealed in the pre-service teachers' and college supervisors' datasets, is also indicated in the cooperating teachers' dataset (refer to 5.8). The findings indicate that many cooperating teachers negatively perceive the role of the College in promoting good communication between the practicum members. The cooperating teachers also feel that their role in the practicum triad is marginalized (refer to 5.8). Thus, all the research groups have emphasized that the communication channels between the practicum triad should be strengthened and a bridge of communication should be built between all the stakeholders involved in practicum in order to ensure quality teaching practice (refer to 5.4.6 & 5.7.3). Therefore, based on the findings of the

study, I identified the need for reconceptualisation, re-planning and redesigning the current school based practicum course.

In fact, the findings of the study particularly, the perceived lack of communication within the practicum triad which was a recurring challenge has been highlighted in all the three data sets from all the three research groups, has motivated me to seek for a transformational model to be implemented in the practicum course at the College. Thus, I propose the practicum community of practice model to build an interconnected practicum community that involves all the practicum stakeholders. It is a transformative model of teaching practice based on sociocultural principles. In fact, the proposed model is built on the theoretical framework of the study that embraces the Zone of Proximal Teacher Development in the sociocultural theory (refer to 3.5 & 3.6). Additionally, the concepts of collaboration and effective communication, that the current school based practicum lacks, form the basis of the proposed practicum community of practice model which consists of some underlined tenets that are believed to produce quality practicum. The notion of scaffolding (refer to 3.6) in the proposed model aims to foster joint collaboration between the college supervisor, the cooperating teacher and the pre-service teacher as social interaction is believed to be the only activator of the ZPTD to teacher professional development, drawing on previous work (Goh, Wong, Choy & Tan, 2009).

In order to state the rationale behind proposing the practicum community of practice model, I will refer to Gert Biesta concept of 'coming into presence of others' (Mattsson, Eilertsen & Rorrison, 2011, p.ix). Biesta argues that schools are not factories where students are produced but a complex entity governed by existing social, political, religious, professional orders and comprises different domains of knowledge, skills and

socialization (ibid). Similarly, Singh and Richards (2006) view the hosting school as a complex ecological site where pre-service teachers have to navigate multiple artefacts to be able to participate in learning. On the same stream, Feiman-Nemser (2001) asserts that "if we want schools to produce more powerful learning on the part of students, we have to offer more powerful learning opportunities to teachers," (pp. 1013-1014). Therefore, the theoretical basis of the proposed practicum community of practice is rooted in the sociocultural theory of learning. Wenger (1998) has emphasized that learning is mediated by social practices and it is a process of participation in communities of practices. He defined community as "the social configuration in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence" (p. 5). Furthermore, Wenger (1997) argues that the process of teacher identity formation occurs through belonging to communities of practice and that there are three different modes of belonging: engagement, imagination, and alignment. Engagement is an active involvement in mutual processes of negotiating meaning; imagination is defined as creating images of the world and making connections across time and space; and alignment is the coordinating of energy and activity to contribute to broader enterprises (ibid). Therefore, the proposed model of practicum community of practice engages with Wenger (1998) sociocultural learning theory that stipulates socially situated learning through COP as a primary condition for meaningful learning.

Moreover, the practicum community of practice model views teaching as a social practice that is described as "ways of doing, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short practices—[that] emerge from mutual endeavour" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 464). Communities of practice are defined as "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'' (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). Thus, pre-service teachers as a group who has the same ways of doing and talking, beliefs, values and they share similar needs and experiences can form 'a community of practice' that leads to more effective interaction and encourages peer reflective practice. Lave and Wenger (1999) believe that by being participants in a community of practice, pre-service teachers will learn how to act wisely. Furthermore, Wenger (1998) illustrates three dimensions of community building: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Based on the findings of the present study, these three dimensions are absent in the current school based practicum course. Therefore, the proposed practicum community of practice model is an attempt to overcome and resolve the challenges that hinder effective teaching practice experience. Wenger's (1998) three dimensions of community building will be defined in the context of the present study. Mutual engagement refers to the involvement of all members of the practicum community of practice that can be manifested through collective actions to promote collaborative relationship between the practicum triad. As a result, all practicum members will set a joint enterprise or common goals and actively interact with each other towards fulfilling the aims of the practicum community. The shared repertoire comprises of a set of role specifications for every member in the practicum community and agreement about the materials to be used in the school based practicum course and the mode of communication between all members of the practicum community. Thereby, the main challenges encountered by the practicum triad revealed in the data including 'communication challenges' (refer to 5.3.2, 5.6.8 & 5.6.9), 'the unspecified roles of the

practicum triad' (refer to 5.3.4), 'lack of practicum course description' (refer to 5.6.4) and 'the logistic challenges' (refer to 5.3.5 & 5.6.6) are expected to be resolved by establishing a practicum community of practice.

What is unique about my proposed practicum community of practice model is that it necessitates the memberships of all the practicum triad– pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers. Hou (2015) defines it as "a group of intellectual people engage collectively in planning, enacting, reflecting on their joint enterprise and try to improve what they do and care about" (p.6). However, Ford (2009) argues that the practicum community of practice is not homogenous as it involves members who "have a multiplicity of knowledge, experience, social, cultural and "racialised practices" (p.4) , I believe that pre-service teachers will benefit from their involvement in such community of learning that provides timely guidance and support, good engagement and involvement in meaningful discussions about professional learning practice with college supervisor, cooperating teachers, educational leaders and the wider community (Rorrison, 2011) . In addition, pre-service teachers in their community of practice can share their concerns and negotiate meanings in order to reach shared goals. The community of practice model will enable pre-service teachers to express their feelings and concerns and share them with college supervisors and cooperating teachers who in return will try to give advice and the necessary support to enhance pre-service teachers' practicum experience. In addition, teaching practice research indicates that COP provides "structured opportunities" (Hou, 2015, p.6) to promote pre-service teacher's professional growth (Boulton & Hramiak, 2012; Clarke, 2009).

As it is indicated in section 3.6, the metaphor of scaffolding in ZPTD does not capture the two-way relationship between the College supervisor / cooperating teacher and the pre-service teacher. It only shows one side of the relationship where college supervisor / cooperating teacher help and support pre-service teachers. Therefore, the practicum community of practice model aims at addressing this gap in order to widen the view of the relationship between pre-service teachers and College supervisors/ cooperating teachers from being College supervisor/cooperating teacher driven and one sided in nature to a more collaborative, negotiable, and interactive relationship between all the practicum triad. Thus, the relationship between the practicum triad will be established and strengthened through a set of collective actions.

5.10 Conclusion

The chapter presented a thorough discussions of the three data sets collected to answer to highlight the potentials of the practicum course and the also the challenges confronted by the practicum triad. The chapter has also offer agendas for change from the three data sources. Interestingly, it is found that the findings of the present study are in line with the findings of Mahmoudi (2016) which explore the stress generating sources that pre-service teachers face during their practicum experience including the communication breakdown with the college supervisor and the cooperating teachers, inappropriate feedback, lack of educational instruments in the schools, difficulties in managing the classroom and ineffective practicum evaluation methods. Therefore, special attention need to be paid to these challenges to avoid any negative impact on the PSTs' development. It is highly important to consider the PSTs' and CSs' agenda for change in order to foster effective learning to teach experience. I believe that PSTs and

CSs agendas for change are very comprehensive and they addressed many issues that

are believed to ensure quality practicum.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

As it is stated in section 1.3, the main aim of the present study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the current school based practicum course in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme at a College of Education through an exploration of the opportunities and challenges encountered by the practicum triad and their views of what should be maintained or changed in the course in order to produce a quality practicum course that empowers pre-service teachers and contributes to their professional growth. The present study is more comprehensive than the existing practicum studies (refer to 3.4.3) as it covers, for the first time, the potentials and challenges encountered by all members of the practicum triad– pre-service teachers, college supervisors and cooperating teachers and accordingly offers an agenda for change to improve the quality of practicum. The study also makes a significant contribution to the literature of pre-service teacher education through exploring the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the SBP at the College as it is believed that the cooperating teachers play a major role in the development of pre-service teachers learning to teach repertoire (Clarke, 2001; Kasperbauer & Roberts, 2007; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Sanders, Dowson & Sinclair, 2005; Russel & Russel, 2011).

The study adopted a case study framework that incorporates a sequential exploratory design as a basic mixed method design in the study along with other qualitative and quantitative data collection methods (refer to 4.3 & 4.5) in order to build a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges that pre-service teachers and college

supervisors encountered during the school based practicum course. The first and second research questions were answered through an exploration of the pre-service teachers' experiences with teaching practice through a series of four focus groups. I then used the emergent findings of the focus groups data to develop a semi-structured questionnaire to determine the distribution of the phenomenon to the entire sample of the pre-service teachers. The third and fourth research questions were answered through conducting one to one semi-structured interviews with four college supervisors to provide in-depth and detailed understanding of the their experiences with the school based practicum course. In addition, a semi-structured questionnaire was used in the study to answer the fifth research question. The questionnaire tackled the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum course and the nature of the relationship between the cooperating teachers and other members in the practicum triad.

The findings of the study indicate that despite the effective role of the school based practicum course in preparing the pre-service teachers for in-service teaching and creating a professional learning and teaching environment, tremendous challenges minimize the expected outputs of the course. These include, the huge gap between theory and practice, lack of structured course description, ineffective and subjective practicum assessment methods and the fragile relationship between the practicum triad. Since the aim of the study is to also empower pre-service teachers and involve them in decision making, pre-service teachers were encouraged to prepare their own agenda to list the changes that they would want to happen in the course. College supervisors as professionals in the field of teaching practice were also asked to suggest solutions for the identified problems in the course to maximize the effectiveness in producing quality

English language teachers. Interestingly, the findings reveal that there are some shared views between the college supervisors and pre-service teachers regarding the changes that they would want to happen in the SBP course including bridging the gap between theory and practice in the course, the implementation of block practicum, strengthening the relationships between the practicum stakeholders, the use of rigorous, comprehensive and objective practicum assessment methods. Furthermore, the cooperating teachers as one of the main scaffolders for the pre-service English teachers, have appealed for more effective coordination between the College and the cooperating schools. They have also requested that pre-service teachers should show a more positive attitude towards teaching and implement creative teaching methods. Therefore, based on the findings of the study particularly, the perceived lack of communication within the practicum triad which was a recurring challenge that has been highlighted in all the three data sets from all the three research groups, has motivated me to propose a transformational model to be implemented in the practicum course at the College. Thus, I have proposed the practicum community of practice model to build an interconnected practicum community that involves all the practicum stakeholders (refer to 5.9).

6.2 The practicum community of practice mobile application.

As it is indicated in chapter five (refer to 5.9), the present study suggests the implementation of the practicum community of practice model to build an interconnected practicum community that involves all the practicum stakeholders. In fact, the implementation of the practicum community of practice could be enhanced by technology and the virtual sphere. The literature on teacher education indicates that "the use of discussion forums, blogs, micro-blogs and wikis has become an interesting topic especially in university education to explore the new practice (Leinonen, Keune,

Veermans & Toikkanen, 2016, p.187). In fact, the potentials of online communities of practice have been addressed in many research studies in the field of pre-service teacher education. Herrington, Herrington, Kervin and Ferry (2006); McLoughlin and Lee (2010); Hanson-Smith (2006); Paulus and Sherff (2008) assert that online CsOP are found to provide support and promote positive relations between practicum members that the practicum triad in the present study actually lack (refer to 5.3.2, 5.6.8, 5.6.9 & 5.8). Also, the implementation of online communities of practice promotes collaborative professional learning (Hou, 2015; Baran & Cagiltay, 2010; Clarke, 2009). It is noteworthy that promoting collaborative professional learning through practicum is indicated in the agenda suggested by the college supervisors in the present study (refer to 5.7.5) In addition, one of my ultimate goals of proposing practicum community of practice, in the context of the present study is to stimulate collaborative professional leaning environment as indicated in chapter five (refer to 5.9).

Furthermore, Hough, Smithey and Evertson (2004); Stiler and Philleo (2003) assert that online CsoP encourage critical reflective practices that the college supervisors clearly emphasized in the present study to promote the quality of pre-service teachers' practicum experience (refer to 5.7.6.4). CsoP also enable pre-service teachers to link theories with practices (Dibbon & Stevens, 2008). Therefore, it is believed that the application of technology to the proposed practicum community of practice model will help to overcome one of the main challenges confronted by the pre-service teachers and college supervisors in the present study– the gap between theory and practice in the pre-service teacher preparation programme (refer to 5.3.1 & 5.6.1).

Therefore, based on the findings of the present study that pointed to a wide spread communication breakdown within the practicum triad and the documented benefits of online CsOP discussed in this section, I recommend designing a mobile application that is specific to practicum. Pre-service teachers, college supervisors, cooperating teachers, senior teachers and school principals will need to sign up in the suggested mobile application that can be named *practicum community of practice application (PCOP app)*. It is believed that the suggested mobile application will ease and enhance the implementation of the practicum community of practice model. In addition, it is hoped that PCOP will provide interconnected channels of communications between all practicum members. The effectiveness of PCOP app could be raised by including many interactive features such as uploading practicum related videos or audios. Pre-service teachers could document their practicum experience by writing critical reflections of their classroom teaching practice supported with photos to make it more interesting and attractive. Other members of the PCOP application could comment on the pre-service teachers' reflections in order to achieve the aim of PCOP where reflection is seen as a social practice not as "private endeavor undertaken in isolation" (Hou, 2015, p.6). The PCOP application should enable college supervisors, cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers to carry on online discussions. The Head of the Practicum Unit could play the role of broker (mediator) who coordinates, makes meanings transparent and negotiate spaces for joint participation (Montecinos, Walker & Maldonado, 2015). The communications with the cooperating schools in terms of pre-arrangement of pre-service teachers' timetables and monitoring pre-service teachers' presence in the schools could be done through the PCOP application. I suggest that the implementation of PCOP app should be followed by

empirical based research to raise its expected effectives to the learning to teach experience.

6.3 Other recommendations for further research

As the present study recommends the implementation of the practicum community of practice mobile application based on the foreseen effectiveness of its theoretical groundings, it also calls for further research to investigate its applicability, affordability and effectiveness in the SBP course. Further research could also be conducted to widely explore the PSTs teaching practice experience in the cooperating schools through observational field visits to realistically spot the light on the problems they encounter and how to handle them for smooth and effective practicum experience. In addition, I propose establishing demonstration schools in the same district where the College is located. The College could approach the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Education for financial support to establish two demonstration schools that will be used for practicum purposes. Pre-service teachers from all the educational specializations at the College will practice teaching in these schools which will be run under the College. I believe that demonstration schools will solve many of the existing communication problems between the College and the cooperating schools. Further research could survey the College educationalists views on the applicability and effectiveness of demonstration schools in the College context.

Furthermore, the College could run a pre-practicum fully funded residential professional development programme in the summer for the cooperating teachers to educate them theoretically and pedagogically on how to monitor pre-service teachers on practicum. This initiative would be a good opportunity for the cooperating teachers to get familiar with the

recent teaching methods and approaches to apply them in their classrooms. Another suggestion is that the College could run formal mentoring workshops for the cooperating teachers to adequately prepare them to guide, support, advise, train and evaluate pre-service teachers. The College could run credited workshops on preparing CTs for the role of mentoring PSTs. By a successful completion of a number of credited consecutive workshops, English language school teachers will be given a license that enable them to work as cooperating teachers in the cooperating schools. Those selected cooperating teachers can also be asked to train new cooperating teachers to mentor PSTs. On the other hand, college supervisors could run professional development workshops in the cooperating schools as part of community service. The College, for instance, could also invite cooperating teachers to attend pre-practicum orientation sessions along with pre-service teachers and College supervisors. Then all three members could meet and discuss practicum related issues. These meetings should be held regularly to ensure quality practicum. I believe that the interaction between the practicum triad should be based on Wenger's (2000) three qualities of boundary processes: coordination, transparency, and negotiability to encourage effective and joint participation of all the practicum triad. This helps develop trust and "turf wars never emerged" (Goldring & Sims, 2005, p.245). Le Cornu (2012) points out that high quality practicum experience could be fostered through cooperative and reciprocal learning communities of pre-service teachers, college supervisors, cooperating teachers and school administrators.

Moreover, pre-service teachers could invite their cooperating teachers to co-teach with them. Gallo-Fox (2010) indicates in his study that co-teaching provides pre-service teachers with confidence, and encourages them to apply innovative teaching methods in

the classroom. As the data revealed uncooperative relationship between the pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers (refer to 5.3.2 & 5.8), I believe that co-teaching will promote effective relationship between the pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers based on mutual respect and appreciation. Beck and Kosnik (2002) stress that appreciation and recognition of pre-service teachers by cooperating teachers, school administration and school students is essential to build their confidence and make them feel worthy.

Moreover, based on the present study findings particularly the findings related to the limitations of the pre-service English teacher preparation programme study plan (refer to 5.3.1, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.6.1, 5.6.2 & 5.6.7), I believe that the whole programme should be reviewed and evaluated. The programme study plan should be benchmarked against the best practices with full consideration of the Omani context. The reform of the English language teacher preparation programme will definitely require massive auditing, planning, coordination and implementation. Actually, based on these findings of the study and my experience as a faculty member in the programme, I suggest deleting the 'Communicative Language Teaching' course from the study plan (Appendix 1) and integrate its content in the 'English Language Methods of Teaching' course which is offered in semester 4. In addition, topics on the social and cultural context of the Omani English language classroom could be impeded in the methodology courses offered in the programme or there could be a standalone course which addresses the sociocultural context of the English language classroom in the Omani schools along with the best teaching practices that could be successfully applied in the Omani English classrooms with the available resources in the schools. In addition, 'Introduction to

Linguistics' course could be merged with the 'Phonetics and Phonology' course and instead a methodology course that tackles the latest English language teaching methods could be introduced in the plan. The elective language and literature courses need to be rethought and new more contextualized learning courses should be offered. For instance, the elective course 'Discourse analysis' could be replaced by an applied discourse analysis course as based on my experience, the current discourse analysis course is purely theoretical and not in any way related to pre-service English language teacher preparation. Most importantly, the low English language level of the pre-service English teachers as revealed in the data (refer to 5.3.1 & 5.6.2) necessitates adding more intensive language courses to the programme along with good revision of the intake criteria and foundation year exit criteria. Also, some educational courses should be delivered in English not Arabic like the school management course so that PSTs benefit from the content and the language of the course. I also suggest that the school based practicum coordinator call for a workshop that involves all the English language college supervisors at the College and internal or external English language teaching assessment experts to discuss and negotiate the current practicum assessment methods. The workshop should also address the practicum evaluation form in order to establish a common understanding of the assessment criteria in the form. Some PSTs may be invited to attend the workshop in order to share their insights and suggestions to improve the school based practicum assessment methods. In fact, under the umbrella of the social and constructivist theory, meta-awareness in thought collectives (TCs) should be one of the main aims of the practicum community of practice model. Pre-service teachers can practise meta-awareness when "they begin talking and thinking

about how their TCs function and are sustained, and how as teachers they individually contribute to the overall functioning and sustenance of TCs" (Ramanathan, 2002, p. 7). It is worth mentioning that the critical reflection is an important element in the proposed framework of pre-service teacher knowledge base (refer to 3.3.2). Meta awareness or what I call "Critical Reflective Practice" will enable pre-service English teachers to critically analyse their practicum experience. This could be done through asking pre-service teachers to write mini theses where they document and analyse their practicum experience or they can keep a regular record of critical reflections of their teaching practice and discuss it with a group of trainees, their cooperating teachers or their college supervisors. I believe that these activities will prepare pre-service teachers as intellectuals, leaders, professionals, thinkers and researchers. Therefore, by implementing the above suggested recommendations into the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme study plan and the school based practicum course particularly, it is expected that pre-service English teachers will be academically and professionally well-prepared for the teaching profession. Finally, the findings and recommendations of the present study make an important contribution to knowledge as the study can be considered a scientific reference for policy makers in the Ministry of Higher Education to critically rethink the educational policies that are currently applied in the programme under study. Furthermore, the study informs future policy initiatives and it is valuable for stakeholders and policy makers to improve the quality of future teachers and accordingly improve the quality of education in Oman.

6.4 Conclusion

The present study is based on the perception that a better student teaching programme will result in better future teachers (Paulson, 2014). Therefore, based on the findings of the present study, many suggestions are proposed in order to maximize the effectiveness of the SBP course. Technically, these suggestions will never see the light without financial support from both the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education. In addition, any changes for the better in the programme requires the contribution and dedication of all the stakeholders involved in practicum. The pre-service teachers' and college supervisors' agendas for change along with the proposed practicum community of practice model and PCOP app are transformational suggestions to empower the practicum triad and maximize the effectiveness of the school based practicum course.

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Appendix (1): ELT Study Plan

Study Plan for English Language

تخصص اللغة الانجليزية

Semester 1   Academic Year   /

Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 1224	Listening and Speaking	3	2	2	Foundation
COMP 2001	Introduction to Computer I	2	1	2	Foundation Year
ENSP 1122	Advanced Writing I	3	2	2	Foundation Year
ENSP 1121	Advanced Reading and Vocabulary	3	2	2	Foundation Year
ENSP 1123	Grammar and Usage I	3	2	2	Foundation
ENSP 1212	Phonetics and Phonology	3	2	2	Foundation Year
		17	11	12	

Semester 2   Academic Year   /

Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 1225	Advanced Writing II	3	2	2	ENSP1122
ENSP 1226	Grammar and Usage II	3	2	2	ENSP1123
COMP 2002	Introduction to ComputerII	2	1	2	COMP 2001
ENSP 1111	Introduction to Linguistics	3	2	2	
ENSP 2151	Literature I	3	2	2	
EDUC 600	Educational Foundations	3	3	-	
		17	12	10	

Semester 3   Academic Year   /

Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2113	Morphology and Lexical Semantics	3	2	1	ENSP 1111
ENSP2228	Report Writing	2	2	-	ENSP 1225
ENSP 3217	Readings in Applied Linguistics	3	2	1	ENSP 1111
ENSP 3134	Reading and Writing Skills Development	3	2	2	
PSYC 210	Educational Psychology	2	2	-	
ISLM4405	Islamic Culture	2	2	-	
Arab 2003	Practical Arabic Language Skills	2	2	-	
		17	14	4	

Semester 4   Academic Year   /

Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2114	Syntax and Structural Semantics	3	2	1	ENSP2113
ENSP 3135	Vocabulary and Grammar Language Skills Development	3	2	2	
ENSP 4152	Children's Literature	3	2	2	
HIST1008	Oman Across History	2	2	-	
CURR 107	ELT Methods of Teaching	3	3	-	
CURR 088	Educational Technology Using IT	3	2	2	comp2002
		17	13	7	

Semester 5   Academic Year   /

Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2232	Initial Literacy Skills Development	3	2	2	
ENSP 4221	Advanced Listening Comprehension	2	1	2	
ENSP 4222	Creative Writing				
ENSP 4223	Debating and Communication				
ENSP 3228	Error Recognition and Correction	3	2	2	
EDUC 800	School Management	2	1	2	
CURR 170	Practicum 1	3	0	6	CURR 107
ENSP 4245	ELT School Curriculum Analysis	2	1	2	
PSYC 250	Assessement	3	3	-	
		18	10	16	

Semester 6   Academic Year   /

Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2215	Language Acquisition	3	2	1	
ENSP 3211	Psycholinguistics	2	1	2	ENSP 1111
ENSP 3212	Sociolinguistics				
ENSP 3213	Discourse Analysis				
ENSP 3133	Oral/Aural Language skills Development	3	2	2	
PSYC 240	Developmental Psychology	3	3	-	
CURR 180	Practicum 2	3	0	6	CURR 170
CURR 108	Classroom Research & Teacher Development	3	3	-	
		17	11	11	

Semester 7   Academic Year   /

Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 2231	Communicative Language Teaching Development	3	2	1	CURR 107
ENSP 3241	Language Through Stories	3	2	2	
ENSP 3116	General Translation	3	2	1	
ENSP 4251	World Literature	2	1	2	ENSP 2151
ENSP 4252	Literature 2				
ENSP 4253	Contemporary Literature and Poetry				
CURR 190	Practicum 3	5	0	10	CURR 180
		16	7	16	

Semester 8   Academic Year   /

Course Code&No	Course Title	Credit hours	Theory	Practice	Prerequisites
ENSP 4143	Differential Learning and Independent Learning	3	2	2	
PSYC 4138	& Research Methodology Statistics	2	1	2	
ENSP 4142	Language through the Arts	3	2	2	
CURR 200	Practicum 4	5	0	10	CURR 190
		13	5	16	

Appendix (2): School Based Practicum Classroom Observation Form

Student trainee's name: Period:
Group: Class:
School: Lesson:
Supervisor's name: Date:

Category	5	4	3	2	1
Personality: 1. Having self-confidence					
2. Using a clear voice					
Language proficiency: 3. Uses language accurately and fluently					
4. Uses language appropriate to his/ her students' level.					
Lesson preparation: 5. States clear lesson aims					
6. Uses effective teaching strategies					
7. Applies appropriate timing					
Instruction: 8. Uses pre-teaching effectively					
9. Presents the new lesson efficiently					
10. Provides students with enough practice					
11. Demonstrates skill in questioning					
12. Provides students with appropriate reinforcement					
13. Provides students with appropriate feedback					
14. Gives clear instructions					
15. Utilizes teaching aids effectively					
16. Distributes participation fairly among students					
17. Checks students' understanding					
Classroom management and achievement of aims 18. Maintains appropriate classroom behaviour					
19. Offers assistance to students during activities					
20. Achieves lesson aims					

Total mark: Supervisor's signature:

General comments:

Appendix (3): Cooperating School Principal Evaluation Form

Academic Year: **Semester:**

Date: **School:**

Student's Full Name:

	Items	Performance Scale				
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	**Takes care of his/ her general appearance.**					
2	**Cooperates well with his/her colleagues, cooperating teachers and the school administration.**					
3	**Respects school regulations and instructions.**					
4	**Accepts Advice and direction from the school administration.**					
5	**Participates in school activities.**					
6	**Makes use of the school teachers' experiences.**					
7	**Punctual in daily attendance during the practicum.**					
8	**Uses a variety of learning resources in lessons.**					
9	**Treats pupils in a humane way.**					
10	**Accepts criticism from the school administration.**					

Mark (out of 50) :   **Mark (out of 10):**   **School Principal**

_____

Appendix (4): School-Based Practicum -Self-Reflection Form

TraineeTeacher:_____**Date:**_____

School: _____**Period:**_____ **Grade:** _____

1. What went well and what did not go well in your lesson? Why?

2. To what extent do you think your students were productively engaged in your lesson? How?

3. To what extent do you think that you achieved your intended learning outcomes?

4. If you were teaching this lesson again, what would you do differently?

Appendix (5): The MoHE permission to conduct the study

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Higher Education
Directorate General of Colleges
of Applied Sciences

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التعليم العالي
المديرية العامة لكليات العلوم التطبيقية

Seintific Research Center

مركز البحث العلمي

التاريخ: 10/05/2015

الرقم: 5/6

رقم المرجع: م.ب.ع/13\5\2015

المحترم

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد،،،

الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة الباحثة / فخرية بنت خميس بن سالم القاسمية

نود إفادة عنايتكم الكريمة بأن الباحثة / فخرية بنت خميس بن سالم القاسمية- تقوم بإعداد رسالة الدكتوراه بجامعة اكستر بالمملكة المتحدة بعنوان:

An Evaluative Study of Teaching Practice in the English Teacher Training Program at Rustaq College of Applied Sciences, Oman

حيث تهدف الدراسة إلى تقييم برنامج التربية العملية لتخصص اللغة الإنجليزية في الكلية والعمل على تطويره من خلال تحديد نقاط القوه وتعزيزها وتحديد نقاط الضعف والعمل على تقويمها وتطويرها للرقي بالمستوى التدريسي لخريجي الكلية وتزويد الحقل التدريسي بمعلمي لغة إنجليزيه كفؤ.

عليه يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة لإجراء هذه الدراسة. علماً بأن البيانات سوف تستخدم لأغراض البحث العلمي (مرفق).

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم الدائم،،،

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام

شيخة بنت سليمان العوفية
مديرة مساعدة لمركز البحث العلمي

** المدير العام
*** صاحبة العلاقة
* رئيس قسم النشر والتوثيق-خادم بن محمد البلوشي

نحو تعليم عال ذي جودة عالية يلبي متطلبات التنمية المستدامة
سلطنة عُمان ص.ب: 82 روي - الرمز البريدي: 112 - هاتف: 24340580 / فاكس 24340578
Sultanate of Oman, P.O.Box: 82 Ruwi, PC 112, Tel:24340580 / Fax 24340578   www.mohe.gov.om

Appendix (6): Pre-service teachers' Focus Groups Questions

Topics	Questions
Research Question (1) The opportunities and challenges encountered by the pre-service teachers in the school based practicum course.	1. How do you perceive English language teaching? 2. How do you view practicum and how does it form your professional identity as an English language teacher to be? 3. To what extent does the structure of the teacher preparation programme at the College help bridging the gap between theory and practice? 4. To what extent does the structure of the school based practicum courses (practicum 3 & practicum 4) prepare you for in-service teaching? 5. What is the nature of the relationship between you and your supervisor? What do you think promote or hinder good communication between you? 6. What is the nature of the relationship between you and your cooperating teacher? What do you think promote or hinder good communication between you? 7. To what extent does the College administration foster/hinder good practicum experience? 8. To what extent does the cooperating school foster/hinder good practicum experience? 9. To what extent does the school practicum course places language teaching within a socio cultural context? 10. To what extent does the assessment method (practicum evaluation form) give a clear indication of the pre-service teacher actual performance? 11. How effective is the College supervisors' and cooperating teachers' feedback? 12. To what extent are the supervisors and cooperating teachers engage in reflective practice with the pre-service teachers? 13. How well are the roles of College supervisors, cooperating schools, pre-service teachers being identified in the school based practicum courses? 14. What kind of challenges did you face in the classrooms?
Research Question (2) What do the pre-service teachers feel needs to be maintained and what do they feel needs to be changed?	The question will be answered in the light of the following points: 1. The structure of the programme (the introduction of theory and practice) 2. The structure of the practicum courses 3. Communication between College supervisors and pre-service teachers 4. Communication between school cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers 5. Role specifications of each member in the teaching practice 6. Collaboration between the College and cooperating schools 7. Assessment method used to evaluate the student performance 8. College supervisors and cooperating schools feedback

Appendix (7): Pre-service English teacher Online Questionnaire

Dear Graduates,
You are invited to answer the following questionnaire that explores and evaluates the teaching practice components (School based practicum) of the English teacher preparation programme at the College. The completion of this questionnaire will help me to identify any good practice and challenges you experienced during your teaching practice in the cooperating schools. It will also help me to set an agenda for change, if deemed necessary, to improve the quality of the school based practicum course and the pedagogical and professional aspects of the English language teacher preparation programme at the College. All of the information collected by this questionnaire will remain confidential. Participation is voluntary at all times. Your help is highly appreciated and important to complete this study.

The questionnaire consists of (3) sections:
Participant's information
A number of statements to be assessed on a five-point likert scale
Open ended questions

Section (1): Please circle the most appropriate answer.

Gender	*1. Male*	*2. Female*
Are you employed in a school at the moment?	*1. Yes*	*2. No*

Section (2): Choose the number that most represents your opinion.

Topic	Item	SA 5	A 4	NO 3	D 2	SD 1
Pre-service teachers' Perception of the school based practicum as a standalone course	1. The school based practicum course has clear aims and vision.					
	2. The school based practicum course has provided you with direct contact and sufficient opportunities to teach the English language.					
	3. The school based practicum course has created a balance between theory and practice in the programme.					
	4. The school based practicum course has provided you with a powerful future conception of teaching.					
	5. The school based practicum course has helped you to develop a reflective and problem-solving approach towards teaching.					
	6. The school based practicum has established a professional environment for you to practice the different teaching methods you learned at the College.					
	7. Your role as a pre-service teacher was well identified in the school based practicum course.					
	8. The school based practicum course was challenging and frustrating.					
2. The English language Sociocultural context and its role in supporting good teaching practice.	9. The socio-cultural context of the English language classrooms in the Omani schools supports good teaching practice.					
3. Pre-service teachers' perceptions of the involvement of the College supervisors in practicum	10. The College supervisors were supportive and understanding.					
	11. There was a strong collaboration between you and your College supervisor.					
	12. The College supervisor's feedback was constructive.					
	13. There was an agreement between all College supervisors on the school based practicum observation criteria.					
	14. Your College supervisor allotted enough time to give you the feedback.					
	15. Your College supervisor has given you written and oral feedback.					
	16. The College supervisor focuses on the emotional aspects of learning how to teach process.					
	17. The Omani College supervisors were more understanding because they are more familiar with the Omani educational context.					
	18- The College supervisor role was well identified in the school based practicum course.					

4. Pre-service teachers' perceptions of the involvement of the cooperating teachers in practicum	19. The cooperating school staff accepted you and made you feel welcome.					
	20. The cooperating teachers trusted your teaching abilities.					
	21. The cooperating teachers shared their teaching experiences and accomplishments with you.					
	22. The cooperating teachers displayed positive attitude towards your teaching.					
	23. You were encouraged to reflect on your teaching and your relations with the students.					
	24. It was very easy to adjust to the school life and make relations with the school staff.					
	25. You have gained confidence in dealing with school students.					
	26. The cooperating teachers were not properly trained to supervise the pre-service teachers.					
	27. The cooperating teachers were willing to engage in reflective practice with the pre-service teachers.					
	28. The cooperating teacher's roles are well identified in the school based practicum.					
	29. The cooperating teachers observed your teaching regularly.					
	30. The cooperating teachers provided you with useful feedback.					
5. Satisfaction with the current practicum assessment method	31. The School based practicum evaluation form has clear and descriptive assessment criteria.					
	32. The school based practicum assessment method is fair.					
	33. It is the right of the pre-service teacher to know his/her result after each evaluation.					
6.Practicum experience and career decisions	34. The school based practicum has given you a clear indication if you can survive in an EFL classroom and works as a teacher.					
	35. After your practicum experience, you still want to be an English language teacher.					
Towards a quality practicum course	36. An intensive school based practicum course with clear guidelines and principles needs to be implemented.					
	37. More workshops for cooperating teachers and College supervisors need to be conducted.					
	38. More collaboration between education faculties in the College and cooperating schools is demanded for effective and robust partnerships.					
	39. A practicum handbook that consists of practicum objectives, participants' roles and expectations, evaluation procedures should be provided					
	40. The current structure of the school based practicum course needs to be redesigned.					

Section (3): You are kindly requested to answer the following questions, in Arabic or English.

What are the advantages of school based practicum as it is offered in Oman?
What are the major challenges that you encountered while attending school based practicum?
What do you feel needs to be maintained in the school practicum course?
What do you feel needs to be changed in the school practicum course?

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire.
To contact me, please e-mail to: fakhriya_alqasmi@yahoo.com

Appendix (8): College Supervisors One to one Interview Questions

Topics	Questions
Research Question (3) The opportunities and challenges encountered by the school based practicum supervisors in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme.	1. How do you perceive English language teaching? 2. How do you view practicum and how does it form pre-service teachers' professional identity? 3. To what extent does the structure of the teacher preparation programme at the College help bridging the gap between theory and practice? 4. To what extent does the structure of the school based practicum courses (practicum 3 & practicum 4) prepare pre-service teachers for in-service teaching? 5. What is the nature of the relationship between you and the school based practicum students? What do you think promote or hinder good communication between you? 6. What is the nature of the relationship between you and the cooperating teachers? What do you think promote or hinder good communication between you? 7. To what extent does the College administration foster/hinder good school based practicum experience? 8. To what extent does the cooperating school foster/hinder good practicum experience? 9. To what extent does the school practicum course place language teaching within a socio cultural context? 10. To what extent does the assessment method (practicum evaluation form) give a clear indication of the pre-service teacher actual performance? 11. How well are the roles of College supervisors, cooperating schools, pre-service teachers being identified in the school based practicum courses?
Research Question (4) What do the college supervisors feel needs to be maintained and what do they feel needs to be changed?	The question will be answered in the light of the following points: - The structure of the program (theory and practice) - The structure of the school based practicum courses - Communication between college supervisors and student teachers - Communication between college supervisors and cooperating teachers - Role specifications of each member in the teaching practice - Collaboration between the college and cooperating schools - Assessment method used to evaluate student performance

_____

Appendix (9): Cooperating Teachers' Semi Structured Questionnaire

Dear Cooperating Teachers,
You are invited to answer the following questionnaire that explores cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum in the pre-service English language teacher preparation programme in the Department of English Language and Literature at the College. The aim of the present study is to explore and evaluate the teaching practice components of the English teacher preparation programme at the College. It is an attempt to identify any good practice and challenges pre-service teachers experienced during their teaching practice in the cooperating schools and to set an agenda for change, if deemed necessary. The study also explores the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum course in order to improve the quality of the practicum courses and the pedagogical and professional aspects of the English language teacher preparation programme at the College.
Your help is highly appreciated and important to complete this study.

The questionnaire consists (3) sections:

1. Participant's information
2. A number of statements to be assessed on a five-point likert scale
3. Open ended questions

Section (1): Please circle the most appropriate answer.

Gender	*1. Male*	*2. Female*
Educational Background	*2. Bachelor*	*2. Master*

Grade level you taught   ....
Number of teaching experience year (s)   ....
Number of pre-service teachers you mentored   ....

_____

Section (2): Circle the number that most represents your opinion

Topic	Items	SA 5	A 4	NO 3	D 2	SD 1
The preparation for the role of a cooperating teachers	1. Your role and responsibilities as a cooperating teacher are clear.					
	2. You are provided with clear guidelines on how to mentor pre-service teachers.					
	3. You feel that you are prepared well to supervise pre-service teachers.					
	4. You have received enough information from the College about practicum.					
	5. You had an orientation session about mentoring pre-service teachers prior the school based practicum course.					
	6. You were provided with enough information about the pre-service teachers prior the practicum course.					
	7. The College provides detailed guidelines about its expectations from the cooperating teachers.					
Cooperating teachers' satisfaction with the pre-service teachers' performance in the school	8. You feel that pre-service teachers are adequately prepared in content pedagogy.					
	9. Pre-service teachers are open to constructive criticism.					
	10. Pre-service teachers have sufficient content knowledge.					
	11. You are comfortable with pre-service teachers who try different teaching strategies in your classroom.					
	12. Pre-service teachers apply different teaching skills in the classroom.					
	13. Pre-service teachers are unwilling to do additional school work such as grading and planning extracurricular activities.					
	14. Pre-service teachers' classroom organizational and management skills are ineffective.					
	15. The relationship between you and the pre-service teachers is interactive and negotiable.					
	16. You were asked to engage in reflective practice with the pre-service teachers.					
The nature of communication between the cooperating teachers and the College	17. There is a conflict between your role as a cooperating teacher and the role of the College supervisor.					
	18. Your professional knowledge is neglected by pre-service teachers and College supervisors.					
	19. Your input as a cooperating teacher on students' teaching programme is highly appreciated by the College.					
	20. There is a lack of agreement between you and the College supervisors regarding the role of pre-service teachers.					
	21.There is lack of communication between you and the College supervisors					
	22.The current practicum course doesn't reflect any collaborative partnership between the College and the cooperating schools					
	23. You need assistance from the College supervisor to evaluate the pre-service teachers.					
	24. College supervisors should conduct in-service training to train you on how to evaluate pre-service teachers					
The support cooperating teachers need from the College	25. You need more support during the transition from a classroom teacher to a mentor.					
	26. A pre-semester meeting between you and the pre-service teachers is highly demanded.					
	27. A pre-semester meeting between schools' administrations and the head of the practicum unit is highly demanded.					
	28. A collegial relationship between you and the College supervisor needs to be developed and maintained.					
	29. More collaboration among all the stakeholders (pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and College supervisors) would enhance students' teaching experience.					

_____

Section (3): You are kindly requested to answer the following questions, in Arabic or English.
What roles the College supervisors play in preparing you for the task of mentoring and evaluating pre-service teachers?

What are your expectations of the pre-service teachers?
What factors help or hinder your role as a cooperating teacher?
What type of preparation and support you need when you work with pre-service teachers?
What do you feel needs to be done in order to develop a better learning environment for the pre-service teachers?
What powers that you believe the College should give you in doing your job as a cooperating teacher?

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire.
To contact I, please e-mail to: fakhriya_alqasmi@yahoo.com

_____

Appendix (10): Transcribed Pre-service English Teachers' Focus Group

I: How do you perceive English language teaching?

Dalal: interesting

Badriya: it is a global language so it is an important language.

Salima: it is an important aspect to focus on it because now English becomes very popular and the most language used in the world and therefore, we should consider about this topic because in Oman they don't focus on any language, only English because it is very important so I think we have to force or motivate students to learn English. Each major require English so it is very important.

I: Let's talk about the English language preparation program at the college. Do you think that the English language preparation program at the college bridge the gap between theory and practice?

Fatma: you mean the courses that we have studied here.

I: Yes, the program courses. I mean the content knowledge courses and practicum

Fatma: yah but not that much because when we go to school, we found that their syllabus is different from what we studied in the courses and we found that we couldn't apply everything that we have studies. We just follow the book.

I: The tecaher's book?

Fatma: yes. The teacher book. Also our teacher there, teachers who taught the class in the school, each teacher has her own strategies and ways in teaching and they forced us to follow them and as you know they evaluate us. So if we dont do that, we will lose the marks.

Salima: sometimes they are teaching us here at the college curriculum that don't fit the atmosphere and things in the school. For example there is a course which is language through Arts. They teach us how to apply grammar. For example invite students to create a role play and ask them to go in the front of the class. This is very difficult because the students level in the class is very low. It is very difficult to apply this. Also for example they ask us to try the activity for the students, visual and auditory. This is very difficult because the level is very low. So I think the subjects we take at the college are not related to the school atmosphere and curriculum.

Amal:. but let us focus on practicum 1 and 2. They were very useful for us because they gave us very major things that we have to focus on. For example, the students level, students' feelings. Also the atmosphere. Also at the college, we wonder how the classroom environment is like. We were told that we may be teaching at the college for 30 mintues but in school , it takes more time. yes, we have faced this difficulty in school and we cannot apply everything. Sp practicum 1 and 2 are very useful for us because they give us lots of theory, different methods of teaching, how we deal with our students especially practicum 1 because our teacher was a great teacher. Early a great teacher, she opened our mind on lots of things. They taught us the classroom is student – based not teacher based and to see from Amal: yes not from your eyes.

I: What about the other courses?

Badriya: yes, there is highly theoretical course and some methods from the past till now but you can choose on of them and apply what is the suitable for the students. For example grammar translation method, maybe you can use this for literature when you ask your students to read about something. And there is of course a lot. How to teach vocab, how to teach grammar and how to teach writing and these provide us with a lot a lot of idea but we are as students, we sit for exams and forget after it and that the problem is from us not from the book.

Fatma: the problem is not on the subject and the content of these subjects, the problem is on the way of teaching these subjects. I remember I took a subject on how to teach vocabulary and grammar. It was very interesting. It was full of interesting ideas on how to teach vocabulary but the teacher was introducing it as something to memorize. They killed the creativity with us . They didn't allow us to apply the different methods so that we can remember them. Now most of the ideas we forgot them. Why? Because there is no practical experience on how to apply this. It was just theory.

I: So does it mainly depend on the teacher as you said something about the grammar course that the teacher was not that creative and she didn't let you practice what you have taken in the course. On the other hand, you said something about practicum 1 teacher that she was creative and she was more into practice rather than asking you to memorize the theories.

Fatma: another thing I remember about this practicum. It depends on the teacher. I think the book and the curriculum we studied are very interesting and they constructed our knowledge but when a teacher comes after another teacher and try to break everything that the other teacher did, there is a problem in here. For example in practicum 1 our teacher was very great and he was very enthusiasm in everything. I remember that I was writing every note because he is really interesting and even I have the book. When it is his lecture, I write everything, every note. I even relate it to his own ideas. In practicum 2, I remember another teacher came. What is interesting about him that he is from the same country. He is from arab country but he tried to break everything. I remember I told him that you are breaking

the construction. For example, he said it is very wrong to use repetition but the teacher in practicum 1 said that repetition is very interesting and important but he said this is not good and even he treat the students who are not creative more than the students who are creative so we were not very interested when we studied practicum 2. I even didn't take anything with him. It is a matter of the teacher not a matter of the curriculum.

Amal:. According to her points about the teachers have different points and different beliefs. So when we were in practicum 3 and 4 in the schools, you know teachers observe us from the college and those teachers who come from the college, each one of them have different beliefs. So in the first observation when the teacher gave me the feedback, right, when I apply them, the second one gave me different feedback. Sometimes it is the opposite, so we are confused. We lost marks when we apply the first teacher feedback and then the second teacher has different beliefs.

Fatma: what is unbelievable that the teacher we consider excellent in practicum, they took him away from practicum. He was the coordinator but they took him away from practicum. We were very sad because the teacher who we consider excellent in practicum, they got him away. Even we complain to the dean about the teacher who taught us practicum but nothing changed.

I: Lets talk about practicum. How do you view school based practicum and how it forms your professional identity as English language teachers?

Fatma: it depends on your self. If you want to be a good teacher, you need to work for yourself. No body can enhance you. They only force you do things that more exhausted you. For example when they giving us set up classes more than our ability. For example in beginner schools, it is very difficult to take 3 or 4 classes a day and set up classes for children . Very very difficult to monitor the children all the time and shouting. Very difficult.

I: How many grades do you teach?

Fatma: only one but they give us at least 3 set up classes

I: What do you mean by set up?

Fatma: extra. In Arabic (ihtiyat)

I: Substitution. Do you teach during this lesson?

Fatma: no, but monitoring them or shouting at them. That's kills you. Kills your creativity especially if the set up class is before the class you teach.

Dalal: this is the problem we face. We are going to teach and we work for the school more than teaching.

Fatma: and at the end they say you didn't do anything.

I: What do they say

Badriya: you were not active

Salima: they want us to work a lot and we are coming from the college and we have lots of subjects. No one appreciate us.

I: Ok lets focus on school based practicum. To what extent you feel that school based practicum is useful

Salima: it is very useful because it gives you the idea how the atmosphere in the school. It is very very different from the college. When you go to school, you know to deal with students and also it built our personality as teachers because here at the college, maybe you didn't find that you have personality because all of them are like you. Maybe they act like children

but whatever they do they cannot be like real students so you can build your personality and you can built how you teach. For example you choose to be very kind but sometimes you find some students take this behavior as negative so they don't do their work or they don't write their homework. So from school practicum, you know how to build your personality. So be not very strict and not very kind.

Badriya: also I experienced several time, I tried to use powerpoint, so I felt that students were mre engaged with me and like using power point. I have this experience so when I am real teacher, I try to use technology for the whole semester.

I: So you tried it out while practicing teaching and you found it very useful so you will apply it when you go to in service teaching. Ok. What about you?

Fatma: it was beneficial when I was teaching in the class but in the school it was better. I wasn't comfortable with the senior teacher because when we went there, there was no place for us to sit in. it was uncomfortable because they didn't appreciate us. They didn't prepare a place for us to sit in. they exploit us because we are trainees, so they control us and if we have different opinions or if we want to try something else, they keep saying, you marks are in our hands, you don't want mark. If we reject what they say, they usually say, you don't want your mark. In school, I was teaching two classes, both of them were grade 7 and I liked the experience of teaching. It was really beneficial and I learned a lot out of it. The only problem with me was the number of students in the class. I was trying to involve all of them. I want all of them to practice the language and they were motivated. They want to practice it. They want to participate but the time was limited and there were 33 students..ahhhyah 33 students but I wasn't able to participate all of them and they were frustrated when they didn't answer. When they didn't take the chance to answer. So that was the main problem for me.

Fatma: in addition to what my friend said about the teachers, I remember this semester, I remember I was walking to the English club, I don't remember what I was I doing but teacher was monitoring a class taking an exam and they asked her that they want their teachers to come because they want to ask her a question about the exam. So she

were calling me "hey" go to call teacher ….blah blah blah but I was shocked. At least she should say 'excuse me' because I am a teacher like her. Yes we are teacher trainees but they have to respect us in front of the students as teachers. So I didn't notice her and I was going to the students and ask her what do you want? I asked them myself what do you want? They said to me we want teacher. ….. and I went to call her. Another thing that happened, I remember they told us that they want the English club because we were sitting in the English club. They said go to the store until we finish with the activity. Grade two, we want to make an activity for them. I was the last one who got out the club. One of my colleagues forgot her phone. The teacher said in front of the students, one of the students forgot her phone. The students were asking each other, is there any student here having a phone in the school. I went and picked the phone in front of the students and the students were saying, oh she means these students. I mean they were not respectful for us as teachers. They didn't treat us as colleagues. They only order us. Do and do an do but there is no respect. So how do they want us to be collaborative and engaged in the school. It is very difficult for us.

I: What are the other challenges you have faced during your experience with the school teachers and college supervisors? you have talked about some of the points if you can elaborate more.

Salima: as my friend said, the supervisors, most of them have different views and when they evaluate us, they give us different things and make us confused and the schools, the cooperative teacher, it depends, some of the teachers are very kind and helpful like this course, practicum 4, we get benefits from the cooperative teacher but some of our colleagues, they hate the cooperative teacher because she is always shouting and don't respect them and this will reflect on how they will teach their students. For example if your teacher doesn't like everything and every time she gives you comments, do this and don't do this, they will not create, they will not want to do anything. Maybe they will teach and go out of the class but if your teacher encourage you and give you feedback, that will help you and this will reflect how we will do in practicum.

I. What is the nature of the relationship between you and the college supervisor?

Fatma: there is a gap?

I: In which way?

Fatma: we cannot see them. They come and observe us. Give us feedback and go. They don't sit a lot with us and see what our problems are.

I: They don't ask you, they don't communicate with you?

Fatma: some of them, yes. During the semester, maybe one time they will ask you but some of them they will not ask you. They come to observe and go

I: What do you think promote or hinder good communication between you. Explain the question in Arabic.

Fatma: they are very official (she said the word in Arabic rasmiyat)

Salima: I think the supervisors should come everyday we go to practicum because there is only two days. They come only one day during the week and observe 2 or 3 students and they go and the week after they observe another 3. I think they should come twice a week. Sit with us, give us other ideas. That will be beneficial for us. Maybe we will not like because we will be observed all during the semester but is good for the teacher trainees for the supervisor to be them . We feel that someone is with us. We aren't alone in this school and someone who can help us and talk for example to another teacher if we cannot.

I: Have you asked for the supervisors' help in managing your situation there in school? Have you asked for help?

Fatma: yes, we did

I: Were they helpful

Fatma: no, they said go talk to the senior teacher or the head of practicum unit but they didn't help us.

I: Lets talk about the situation when they give you the feedback. Explain the situation in general including feelings, including the way of delivering the feedback.

Salima: reading from the form they write. You sit in front of him and he writes the points that he noticed from your lesson and some of them will ask you why you did that and some of them will give you the feedback only and that's it. There is no interaction between you.

Fatma: there is there is.

Salima: sometimes.

Fatma: especially in the first practicum, I remember one teacher was giving me notes about how to teach time. she was giving me an interesting idea about how to teach time. For example, she told me if you want to teach words, half, equal, bring an apple and cut it. It was very interesting for me and I applied for the next lesson. So for myself, I personally I benefited from the feedback.

Badriya: in practicum 3, my supervisor feedback encouraged me so much. He always say. You did this, this is good but if there is negative, he didn't say, this is bad and you did this and you have to change but he said but you did for example little mistake. It is better to do another thing. He give me lots of advise but in a better way that encourage me.

I: Lets talk about the evaluation form. do you understand all the criteria in the evaluation form?

Dalal: no no. I undertand them but when we apply them, I don't understand where is the mistake and where is the weaknesses. For example they choose to give excellent, very good, good for the criteria. So there is criteria where I got very good and good. They didn't explain it to us why is it good and what do I have to do to get excellent. They

show us the paper and show us what we got, whether good or very good without telling us what we have to do to be better.

I: So do they hand you the evaluation form after each evaluation and you get your mark?

Badriya: no

Dalal: we didn't get our mark.

I: When do you get your mark?

Badriya: not now. In GPA we see it.

I: So you don't have a look at your results after each evaluation?

Salima: no

I: Are you happy about this protocol or you are against it.

Salima: I think it is better for us so that we don't feel depressed when we see our marks.

Fatma: yes as she said

Salima: if we don't know anything, it is better for us. We have one shock not every time we get get shocked.

Amal:. it is better for the results to be at the end

Dalal: for me I prefer to get my results during the semester because if my marks are low, I will do my best to improve them.

Salima: you can know from the feedback if you did well or you didn't well.

I: Don't you think that some supervisors give really good feedback but it is not necessary that you will get good results. Don't you think that you have to follow up with your marks.

Badriya: maybe

Salima: yes. For example in our first practicum, practicum 3, we thought we will get a good mark because the feedback we got was excellent but when we see our results, we were shocked because all the two schools gave the same marks and all of us in our GPA, they gave 3.3. all the students and some of them less than that and we don't know about the 15 marks. Where is it?

I: 3.3 B or A

Students. B

Salima: it is B. no one got A

Dalal: it is B plus yah.

Student B and this is the same supervisor supervising the same school and another school, another teacher was supervising and all of them got 4 and that is the differences. We asked why we got only 3.3 and the other school because there is another evaluator and all of them got 4. All the girls.

I: So don't you think that getting your mark after the observation is better than getting it only when you are handed your transcription.

Students . yes

Badriya: from this point yes.

I: Ok. Let us talk about the relationship between you and the cooperating teacher in school?

Fatma: in practicum 3, my cooperating teacher was the senior teacher so it was very difficult for me. From the first day I asked her about the materials, she said I don't have or you can ask other teachers or your friends or even you can access online and print the materials and also she has strict rules in the class and she told me to teach the students the same rules that she applies to them. I have to follow her teaching techniques and methods. So it was difficult for me. Even I don't like it.

I: What about you guys?

Fatma: our cooperating teacher was very cooperative.

I. In both practicum courses?

Students D. no, in practicum 4

Badriya: in cycle 1, my teacher was Egyptian and she didn't attend with me any lesson. Only last lesson I taught the students, she attend with me

I: Because she has to evaluate you

Badriya: she has to evaluate me 3 times at least and she didn't attend with me. Only at the end and I don't know her, who is my cooperative teacher because at first there was a teacher but she moved to another school and who come after I didn't know her and at the end she said I will come to observe you

I: So there there was lack of communication between you.

Badriya: yes, lack of communication. I didn't get benefit from her at all. When I need benefit, I go to the senior teacher.

I: What about in terms of dealing with your students in the classroom. Did you find it very easy to deal with them.

Badriya: yes, they gave me for example grade 3/5 and when I attend with them, they were very low level and make noise a lot even I shout a lot. I couldn't explain anything and I asked to change my class because I cannot do anything with them. So I changed my class was very quiet and they learned from me a lot I think and they liked me a lot and I could teach them because they were a little bit quiter than the other class and they were excellent. There is some low level students but you can concentrate on them and give them extra work but if you are doing your first practicum and you find very weak class, you will not know what to do.

Fatma: this is one of the difficulties that we face when we go to school. They gave us the students who are very weak and the class is overloaded. It is very difficult for us to move from college and teach very very low students. I even see them in my dreams shouting. They were very bad. You have to monitor every one because they are very low level and very exhausting. It is very difficult to manage the. They even hit each other in the class as if there is no teacher in the class. It is very difficult for for us as student teachers to have students who are low level and at the same time they are noisy

Badriya: and this will affect our marks.

Fatma: they have to take us in their mind.

Badriya: the supervisor doesn't know the situation and they say you have problems in managing your class. They don't know how we are tired to manage the class.

Fatma: also my colleague her cooperative teacher was monitoring her all the time. she even complained at her to the headmistress that she not moving in the curriculum. When we asked her, she said, there is only two phase and I am delaying it when the supervisor comes to observe me. Like one day she was explaining to the students grammar and she was using inductive. She was monitoring her at the back of the classroom. When my friend started to explain, she told her sit there and I will explain. She was very frustrated by the way and she asked her , she said to her why did you give them examples and then the rule. She said this is very difficult for them and this is very wrong way. She said to her that this is the way we studied at the college. She said to her, no. she told her don't use warm up in the class room because this will waste time and the third time is unbelievable. She said to her don't let the weak students to read because they will waste time. they want only to finish the curriculum. And even in my class, grade 8, when they write, they write the words together.

Fatma: I saw my cooperative teacher only 2 times during the semester. The first time she gave me the feedback and the second time she didn't give me the feedback. She just evaluated me. In the second semester, the cooperative teacher evaluated me 3 times and she gave me the feedback 3 times but there was no relationship between us at all.

I: What about the feedback. Was it effective?

Fatma: yes, it was effective. I learned from her feedback and her feedback was related to the theory we have studied. She is an excellent teacher but we don't have any relationship with her.

I: What do you mean by relationship?

Fatma: we didn't sit with them.

I: So you are saying that the atmosphere in school was not that friendly.

Students. We feel very isolated.

Fatma: in the night before school, I feel very sad because of the teachers and because of the environment. Not because of the student or teaching. I really hated the school.

Fatma: in this semester, they put us in the store. There is no any kind of thwiya (she said the word in Arabic).

I: What about the college administration at the college. To what extent the college administration foster or hinder your practicum experience.

Badriya: they know nothing about us. If we complain, they say ahhhh handle it, few months only and you are finished.

Fatma: they say we will do but at the end nothing.

I: So do you feel there is lack of cooperating between the college and the school?

Students. Yes.

Fatma: there is only one kind of cooperation, the absence but to help us or support us, no.

Fatma: in think we should have a list of criteria for the school and for us and I think we should know about these criteria. What we have to do in these schools. t us

Badriya: also they have to care about us. We are going to school but no one knows about us. That is why the cooperating teachers are doing like this. They say no one is observing and no one say anything to us. No one can help them. Even the supervisor, come and evaluate and go.

Fatma: another thing to mention that English subject require lots of activities to give to the children but if you don't have any printer or photocopier. There is a printer but with a password and you have to take the permission to use it. If they allow you, it is ok but if they don't, you cannot use it.

Badriya: they require lots of things from us, you have to do activities and you have to make an open day.

I: Ok. What about the assessment method for practicum 3 and practicum 4. The portofoloi is new to you? So do you feel it is useful?

Badriya: they want to see the portfolio just to see what we have done during the semester because they come once a time and maybe during the whole semester. For us we keep our things in the portofolio.

I: Don't you think it is very useful for you to keep a track on what you have achieved?

Badriya: not much. Because if we keep it. We don't know how long we will keep it because we don't know when we will work teachers.

I: To what extent you have been engaged in reflective teaching. Do college supervisor engage you in reflective teaching? Do they ask you to reflect on your teaching? What are the things that went well and what are the things that didn't go well?

Fatma: for each class, for each lesson you have to write a reflection sheet.

I: Do you do this because you will be marked or you want to be engaged in reflective teaching?

Badriya: me for the marks only. I didn't get benefit from it. Because the supervisor doesn't see it so I don't know my mistakes because I don't know what I did well and bad

I: It is a higher thinking skill. Do you feel that you need more training on that.

Badriya: yes because they didn't teach us how to reflect. They just asked us to write the positive things and the negative things but how to reflect. When we write reflection, we write short points.

Fatma: for me the points that get my attention, I will write them. From the cooperative teacher, I don't remember anything, just for example if there are 6 questions in the exercise, I should divide the students into six groups.

Badriya: and I think you…(name of the teacher trainee) write in your reflection sheet a lot of things. Do you think you get benefit from it?

Fatma: yes, a lot.

Fatma: some of them ask us to reflect on our lesson but some of them no.

I: So do you do this because someone asked you or because you want to reflect on your teaching?

Fatma: we have a form to write our reflection in it. At the beginning I found it beneficial but with the days, I feel there is nothing to write because I cannot reflect on myself that much.

Fatma: I want to mention something, honestly sometimes it is not because of the schools or the teachers. It is really because of us. At the beginning lots of teacher trainees were absent. The school teachers were ok at the first but then they became more strict because these students are repeatedly absent. So there should be strict rules for being absent.

I: How well are the roles of college supervisor, cooperating teachers and student teachers identified in the 2 practicum courses?

Fatma: they tell us at the beginning that you should do open day, teaching,

Salima: for them they were told but no one told us.

Students. They also monitor us every week. They ask, have you started doing it …

I: Who monitor you

Fatma: the cooperating teacher and the senior.

I: Do you know any the roles of the cooperating teachers when it comes to practicum? What should they do?

Fatma: they give us a list of how to observe us. They give us a list of what we have to do.

I: So do you know any of the cooperating teacher roles?

Students . no

I: And what about the college supervisor?

Amal:. only that they will observe us.

I: What about the course description?

Students. There is no course description.

I: Are the aims of school based practicum 3 and 4 clear to you as student teachers.

Students. No. no. not clear.

Badriya: we think that they have to give us the aims. What we have to do. We receive only how we will be evaluated. 3 forms of evaluations.

Fatma: I just want to say one thing that they killed the creativity inside us. Really. Because they treat the students who work hard like the students who don't even attend.

I: So what do you feel needs to be maintained and what needs to be changed. Lets talk about the duration of practicum. Do you feel it is enough for you.

Badriya: two days are not enough for practicum. We need more days and reduce the subjects we are taking the school. We don't know how to do test and how to give marks. We just go to teach

I: So you don't get into real teaching?

Students. No

I: So when do you think you should start practicum?

Fatma: I think even before practicum, we need to go for more observations.

Salima: the difficulty that we study and we have practicum. So it is better for only the second semester we have practicum.

I: What about the college supervisors. do you feel they are all experienced?

Amal:. supervisors have experience but we want them to come to school everyday we go to school because there is only 2 days and stay with us so that we get benefit from them.

Salima: the oral feedback is better than written feedback

Student A. some of the supervisors don't have experience with the omani context. Sometimes they gave us feedback but we cannot apply them

Fatma: every supervisor has different perspective. So they need to determine how to evaluate us and all of them should agree on certain criteria.

Researchers. What about the cooperating teacher?

Salima: They have to choose the cooperating teachers. The good teachers who have more experience and who are more patient so that they can deal with us and give us feedback. And also the teachers who have new methods not the old teachers

Resracher. What about the assessment method

Fatma: I am happy it
Badriya: I want it to be more clear.
I: What about the feedback?
Student D, they should not treat us as if we are doing the micro teaching for the first time. we are more advanced. Not just like flash cards
Dalal: they have to listen to us. Why we apply a certain method. They need to listen
Fatma: there should be some awards for the creative students. Those need to be reinforced.

Appendix (11): Transcribed College supervisor one to one interview

I. Thank you dr. for accepting to have this interview. I will mainly focus on the school based practicum and it is an attempt to identify any good practice and challenges. First I just want to know about your perceptions of English language teaching globally and in the Omani context

College Supervisor. Thank you for having me in this interview. I have had some experience in Tunisia, Russia, and Oman in English teaching and I would say that the program of teaching English in Oman or training teachers looks quite standard. I am happy with what I say. I have been here for the last ten years of my life. I have set my own key performers indicators and I have that Omani students compare fairly well compared to students overseas. I have seen lots of my students go for higher studies in Australia, the UK and they felt very well in terms of schools and also they didn't have any delays in their courses. They seemed to be very confident in their courses which gives us sort of informed assessment or feedback that the courses. They are taking are up to the standard. This is as long as the English program is concerned but for the practicum component I am not sure to be honest if it is up to that level but in terms of language, it terms of level as a bachelor of English, it looks fine. Practicum preparing them for teaching, It looks like a bit of another story for me.

I. So how do you view practicum here at the College, in terms of the structure of the practicum courses? We are focusing here on school based practicum, practicum 3 and practicum 4 and to extent these courses help form professional identity for the student teachers?

College Supervisor. As you said your main focus on practicum 3 and 4 but it is never to be talked without the relation with practicum 1 and 2. The so called theoretical components based on which practicum 3 and 4 will build if we talk about the system. Indeed there is a gap here. I was involved in all the courses, practicum 1 and 2 here College based and 3 and 4 outside in schools. There is some gap that needs to be worked in there. The theoretical components they take here, basically we use Harmer teaching practice book, the practice of English language teaching which seems to provide fair components in terms of theory but the as soon as the students move outside, what they do there is largely irrelevant to what they see in practicum 1 and 2 so the practical experience there is not in any way a continuation of what they have seen here. They study some aspects of classroom management in practicum 1 and 2 but when they go outside, they are asked for other things.

I. So are you saying that the structure of the school based practicum does not help to bridge the gap between theory and practice?

College Supervisor. It needs an extensive work to achieve that goal. Yes. So far. It is not. I was pushing myself that we reconsider the evaluation form in light of the aspects identified by Harmer so that the students are assessed against things that they already know, they already see them. We have already explained to them in practicum 1 and 2. It hasn't worked so far. I am hoping that one day the College gets to that level where they reunion their theoretical components with school based practice. So far it requires some work. Yes

I. Could you talk more about the challenges you have faced during your supervision.

College Supervisor. I think this is the source of the main challenge because when we go there with the students somehow unprepared because as soon as they walk into in the school, they are assessed against things that they didn't see before. This opens extensive big gap for subjectivity, so basically the students feel and it is their right to feel so that they have been assessed against some personal experience of the teacher they go with them because they are no objective criteria for the students to really know. When we go there, I assess the students against my own experience and my colleague do the same which brings a lot of confusion and variety for the trainees which although is rich. It can be advantages in the long term but at the training phase, it does not help. The students need to be exposed to the same jargons here and there. There is some consistency required there. It does not exist now. My advice as one of the team is we have to expose to the same experience and the students have to get very standard feedback from me, from x , from y, from anybody else. We select the things that are more important to their teaching and to have to keep bombarding them at that level. This is not happening so far because of the lack of this transparent standard system, the students feel they are assessed by the teachers according to their own experience. This reduces the whole training to a negotiation of that session so when I go and supervise my students, I will get my feedback from what I saw in that session there so it is becoming piece meal approach rather than a comprehensive approach for training. To me this is the main source of challenge now that I don't see the students benefiting from the feedback they are getting because the feedback does not look systematic.

I. You mentioned something about standard feedback. What do you mean exactly by standard feedback?

College Supervisor. I suggested at some point that if we go to the students four times to the schools for example, the first session of feedback let's say would be about lesson plan, so all over the school, they will get the same thing and when we talk about the lesson plan, we talk about the same thing. The second session lets say would be about classroom management, any structure we agree on but as long as the students when they come down and discuss,

they feel that there is a system working. The form itself, the form has 20 criteria and we don't seem to agree on what they mean. If you remember the first criteria about confidence, how do you measure confidence? Confidence itself is abstract. We need to break it down into measurable, behavioural, observable inside the classroom but did we agree to? We didn't. We have never done this. I pushed this side but it hasn't worked so far but I am hoping that one day, we get like the IELTS scoring criteria explaining what you need to see from the students to give them the 5 or 4. Something that you can observe and measure inside the class.

I. Like a description for each criteria

College Supervisor. Yes yes. Eye contact for me is an indicator of confidence, entertaining students enquires is a sign of confidence but I am not sure what my colleagues are doing. So the students keep asking what do you mean by confidence so that next time I do it and maybe because they have exposed to many teachers, they may be coming up with different criteria. So this is what I mean by standardization. At the level of form itself, we need to understand what we mean by each criteria and we need to convey it to the students and also to the cooperating teachers in the schools because the students go there twice a week. One day we take charge of them and the other day the school takes charge of them but because we are not agreed on these criteria, we will never know what is happening over there. We have another challenge coming from lack of standardization. To me I always believe that when you talk about the system, you talk about standard criteria, so far it is not. It is not happening.

I. Let's talk about another point, the nature of the relationship between you and your student teachers. What do you think promote or hinder good communication between you and your student teachers?

College Supervisor. Most of the students you would have taught them before going there. So you would have established sort of a relationship with them, some rapport which may work either way. If your relation, t with them stands here the contact with them will be affected. That the most direct contact we have with them because here we deal with them in large group but then when you go there, it will go down to 5 or 6 so they try to avoid you so most of the time you meet most of the students before going there. Again in a situation like this that I described before, they also tend to look at things from great perspectives. Yes they would establish communication with you. They would try to make you happy but you feel that that is for the grades because in the meeting yesterday we found that the second day when we are not there, it is not the same situation. So basically there is some sort of lack of long term communication between us but again in terms of communication, there is a humble opportunities of communication at least from our part because when we go to the school, we sit with the students there and we discuss with them but unfortunately lots of them don't seem to be interested. They just get interested in the grades. So they would see you before the supervision but not after that until the next week and they will try to get in touch with you before that to discuss the lesson plan, potential issues and then after that they are not interested in much of the feedback.

I. So you are saying that students care only about the results? Would you generalize that?

College Supervisor. I wouldn't generalize this, I wouldn't. I don't want to be gender bias but I see more interest on the side of the girls. They seem to take feedback into account and most of the time when they are given feedback, you see immediately the next session or the session after, yah yah, you can see the outcome.

I. What is the nature of the relationship between you and the cooperating teacher in schools?

College Supervisor. There is some conflict. Of course I have to tell you that the participation of the school in this project is voluntary and the participation of teachers within each school is also voluntary. So they can say no. this is organized up the high level between the College and the department of education in the region district. So when we go there, the system already established. We are told which school to go and then most of contacts happen with the head teacher so basically is for administrative purposes, to manage the timetable, to explain to them what the students are expected to do with them and what they are not expected to do but there is no sort of academic discussion. There is academic component of this relationship so most of the time it is restricted to the administrative aspects, students who are missing, who are coming late but to my experience I never had the opportunity to discuss anything academic related to classroom management or teaching with the cooperating teachers.

I. And what about the cooperating teachers. They don't approach you to tell you about the student teachers performance in the school if they are not happy with their performance or if they want to discuss something related to their teaching in the class.

College Supervisor. It is quite rare. I don't know to what extent I am blaming the culture but they tent to praise the teachers and for some reason, I don't know if it is administrative again they have to contact the coordinator here and they expect to get the information from the coordinator. I have noticed that most teachers avoid to talk about these issues and they leave it for the head teachers. The teachers yah I have seen some head teachers who are willing to address the issue of the level of the students in the schools especially the boys schools but again they don't have much to give because their own teachers in there some of them are not experienced let's say and our students presence in there comes in addition to their work. So I would say between bracket putting some burden on them and they try to alleviate that burden by not willingly getting into the debate that will cost them. If they raise the issue, then we would expect them to address it. Maybe they just want to avoid that but I have to note that our students go there and they constitute an additional burden on these teachers. I was about to suggest last week we have to reach a formula where our presence there will be also an advantage for them but what are we giving in return of receiving this service from school so far nothing is happening. My suggestion was in especially practicum 4, the students will be fully residing there so the students will take charge of one or two sections of the teacher's timetable so that in return for that relief, the teacher will give feedback, will have time to look at them and give them feedback but this require

extensive change here at the curriculum level that the subjects planned for semester A have to push down to semester 2 and 3 and 4 to leave the students free for the last semester. I push this even 4 years ago with Mr. Simon but still nothing is working. I am not sure why because this will lift probably practicum to the world standards because in most of the systems I am aware of, the semester, in some countries even the last year. It is fully school based. I was pushing for enriching the evaluation system as well instead of relying on this same form for 4 years or for 4 courses. If the students are residing there, we can ask them to write a mini thesis sort of reflection of the whole program for the whole year and that would probably be more beneficial for them but so far it is not working here.

I. Do you think that student teachers are involved in reflective teaching in schools?

College Supervisor. We do encourage that because in my experience, I mean my own reflect as soon I meet the students after their teaching, I say how you would do it otherwise. So at that meal piece approach, they reflect, I do encourage them to do that. Indeed we do that even here in practicum one and two because there is a reflection sheet that they feed in after each demonstration they give and that count as part of their assessment but as a whole system I am not sure whether the students are reflecting on what they are doing. Again I want to go back to the same point. I see that the girls too and I drive that from the improvement in their teaching so when you see the teaching sort of developing, you can deduce that they are reflecting whether together or with you but there is some reflection and there is some input coming back into the lesson plan and into the lesson. With some people it does not. You can see people getting the same mistake and getting the same level of teaching all the time. so again this is an indication that there is no systematic reflection because it works for some people but it doesn't work with others. So it is left to the individuals to decide. That is why I had this idea of writing the entire experience of the student teacher. That would be one year reflective project since the students will have to write their feedback after each session.

I. And do you think this mini thesis should be part of the assessment?

College Supervisor. It has to be. I think it is a combination of assessment. It is the highest level of assessment. That's why I was suggesting that it would happen in semester A the last semester because that would the high level because if you want to encourage the students to be reflective, then the highest level is when they get engaged into self evaluation. I can evaluate you yes but the day you are away from me, the only way to keep you developing and progressing as a teacher is to develop your own mechanism to evaluate yourself which is the highest level even in blooms taxonomy, evaluation is the highest level and you want to build it inside the students so that wherever they go, they have to build in that system of self reflection to improve their own production.

I. Ok what about the College administration dr. in terms of fostering your work as a College supervisor. Do you the College administration is cooperative with you and they give you the green light to do whatever you want to do or you have to be restricted to rules.

College Supervisor. The framework work of cooperation between the College and the ministry of education is quite old. It is older than the management here. There are some basic procedures here that we are abide by. Some rudeness of a system working here. My only concern is that the College is not being able to appreciate the changing situation in the country. Now we are getting lower level students. The country has decided to upgrade its offering so they decided to send the first class student to overseas, to United States, UK and Australia and the second category go to Sultan Qaboos University and now we are getting batches of lower level students who understandably should require more resources. We are dealing with the same situation with the same resources, indeed with less resources and this is the only thing I think the College has to be flexible and to respond to the situation. We are facing big problem even from the foundation year, some students don't even show up. For example we were given 460 students allocated to this College, I think only 390 of them showed up so something 60 minus. This is something that the whole country is discussing now, how to retain students. It is a big challenge now especially the male sections. They don't seem to believe in education anymore. If they get job offer, they leave immediately, military, police they drop off the boat, so 60 dropped immediately and I think other 90 dropped a year later. So there is some sort of lack of motivation among the new patches and I don't know why but it looks like it is a national issue if not an international one so the question is how to retain students here and how to turn them into useful people in the future, teachers so the challenges are becoming double now. So far unfortunately we are working within the same resources. The College is providing lots of things but in terms of long term planning, we don't seem to have clear vision of what is going on and where we are heading to. I wish they could have give us more resources.

I. What kind of resources?

College Supervisor. These students need more time. More time means less teaching hours. It mean they recruit more teachers. This is not happening. Resources means that you need to discuss, probably to vary your assessment methods. Again which means training. We have been trained or probably we have gained some experience in handling some specific level of students. Now we are getting to lower level. Some of us aren't trained to do that. You know that dealing with limited students require special skills. There is no training off this. There is even no acknowledgment of this. The College doesn't seem to acknowledge that we have problems like this and this is affecting our outputs but the students don't have the patience to come here and sit for 5 years. Some of them leave after the foundation, some after one year, two years, they drop.

I. So you are talking here about boys and girls.

College Supervisor. It is more among the boys.

I. So the English department isn't stable.

College Supervisor. The stability of the department will be paved up if we have clear criteria and clear long term planning. What we want because this sort of touches on omanisation. We want to see the Omanis being trained for what they expect to do and they are happy and stable and after they get their training, they can produce. Again so far, personally I don't see much planning. I see people going for higher studies and some areas decided by the ministry. We don't know why. On which ground they decide that people have to go for assessment or teacher training or applied linguistics. We have seen some people transferred to communication. So we have lost some of our staff. Some of them were asked to go back again to English.

I. So there is no vision of what to do

College Supervisor. Unfortunately no, no. clear vision is one criteria or pre requisite for stability know where you are going. You start planning from now. Things go smoothly. There is not at the College level and at the department level. There is nothing like this. I am sorry to talk only about the negative thing but I have to sort of diagnose the situation. There is some talk now that they are centralizing or delegating some major planning into the department.

I. To what extent does the school based practicum place English language teaching within the socio cultural context?

College Supervisor. I think the student contact with the culture. I would describe that into 2 levels. First at the level of their management. So the way they deal with the class so because they are all Omanis, they are very successful in handling the Omani situation. Indeed they know to handle it better than me. At that level there is little worry. They know how to handle it better than me, how they do it with the students. The curriculum content now that's where we get the problem. Personally I do encourage them to refer to the Omani context, to contextualize what they teach the students for many reasons. First of them is because one of the aim of the curriculum is to promote the national identity and second because I feel to me when the concept is closer to the students life, that would make the whole linguistic concept easier to grasp, to know their country, it is more motivating, it is more relevant to them. So I always encourage the students. I am not against UK but instead of talking about a tunnel or bridge in the UK or Australia, talk about something relevant in here in Oman and you will find that it will save you a lot of time and a lot of efforts. The problem is that these trainees go there and take over their cooperating teachers there, they are given only one chapter but they are required to teach that chapter to follow the book step by step including giving examples because they don't want them to interfere with the students preparation for the national exam at the end of the year, again centralization problem here. We do encourage the students to take into account the cultural aspect and the content of the syllabus but they seem to be blocked.

I. There is no course description for the school based practicum. What would you comment on that.

College Supervisor. That is where I will say it leaves a huge gap for subjective assessment. This is not easy neither for the students nor for us.

I. To what extent the evaluation form give clear indication of the students' performance?

College Supervisor. Well, unfortunately it doesn't because the most obvious.

I. It doesn't at all?

College Supervisor. Partly, let's say. Because the most obvious absent aspect in it is language. It doesn't measure language so because the students can get "A" but the students but the student doesn't English very well because the evaluation form doesn't measure language in any way. It only measures and what goes on inside the class. So again it is a piece meal approach that measures only what you do during those 40 minutes. The form fails to measure English which is a shame because these students will be English language teachers. It focuses mainly on the technicality and management but not on the language. It does measure well the personality of the teacher, classroom management, interaction but not the content, English. I suggest if we manage to develop a course outline for practicum 4, it would be one of the main objective, by the end of this course, the students will be able to phrase, lets say, a clear good objective of lesson.

I. But why there is no course description for this course. I think all the courses have courses have course description except this course?

College Supervisor. I think it is built on the assumption that this is a school based practicum and they will tell you this is practicum. It carries its name in it. So we cannot control what goes there.

I. And what about role specification for each member of the practicum. I don't think the roles of the practicum members are specified.

College Supervisor. Again because we go one day and they take charge of the other so we only assume that they will be doing the same thing. Although the feedback from the students doesn't say this.

I. Have you attended any of the orientation sessions with the student teachers before they go to schools.

College Supervisor. I did.

I. Do you tell them that this is what is expected from you to do?

College Supervisor. The students are told but the schools are not. Again that is why one of the ideas that floated yesterday that we should be inviting the representatives of the schools to come here for that orientation but again because it is one day, a lot of information and a lot of details that the students don't take. But yes, that's another area that can be explored. We need to strengthen our communication channels with the school's first so that we know what they doing and how we can complement each other. Are we duplicating each other? I believe that part of our commitment to the program that give something back to the schools by training their trainees there. If their teachers want to get some training with us, we will be so happy to provide this because this is you know very interesting because we need to make sure that our students are getting the right feedback from them and get exposed to the

right training and it is very important for our students that we and the school teachers talk the same language and talk about the same issues. So far this is minimum and this an area that can be touched and it can be improved. So we need to exactly structured what to tell the students and how we say it and at what stage. Both, us and the school teachers.

I. To the last point doctor, what do you feel needs to be maintained and what do you feel needs to be changed?

College supervisor. I think we need a more feasible, clear relationship between the theoretical component which is practicum one and two and the school based practicum. That gap is missing and it has to be filled. The students have to go there with a clear vision of they mean of classroom management and what they mean by lesson plan, so far this is not happening and it is left for the individual teachers. So that's one area. The school based needs to be regulated. It cannot be left again for the destruction of the individual teachers because there is some variance. I have 20 years of experience, some have 30 years. Some of them are even the output of this system itself. Again for the lack of human resources. I don't think they wish to be there but they are forced anyway. The communication of the school needs to be improved. The whole system needs to be standardized.

I. What about the structure of school based practicum in term of going only for two days in each semester?

College Supervisor. To me I would say that say that the four components should be like four steps but we need to see them build in a way that one is built on another and one leads to the other in a logical assumption. Now it is not happening. From practicum one, we use just the same form. So even the students themselves it will look burden for them. They will say for the last two semester, I am using the same form. They don't see things improving. That's what I say if you start by fully theoretical, let's say, practicum one and then we go to 50 50 practicum two. By practicum three the pendant will start to shift towards schools so their presence there will be more than presence here and the assessment component will be heavier towards the practical side and the theoretical side and they will end up by the last semester being fully residing in the school. In the same time I would suggest sort of variation in the assessment criteria and the assessment method itself. You cannot rely on one method for 4 courses. It doesn't give the perception that things are moving up. You can start by pen and paper exam, then go to form and then from the form probably at some stage, you need to sit with the students and get observation, qualitative method, observation, videotaping and come here discuss with the students and the last method will be the self-reflection form or the mini thesis that the students can write. By doing this we have assured that there some progression and we have exposed the students to a variety of methods which will be more accurate in terms of the performance of the students. That's why when I said the weakness of any form in the word.

I. What about the evaluation form given the cooperating teachers?

College Supervisor. It is the same and again some of them do come and ask what they mean by some statements for the sake of standardization but some others don't. We need to give something back to the school and we need to standardize the language. So when the students are evaluated, we need to make sure whether we are there or not that they are being evaluated against the same criteria. So far they are not.

I. What about the mark distribution for the school based practicum?

College Supervisor. I was in favour because again from the feedback from school, they say that students don't take the second session seriously when the supervisor is not there. I was in favour of lifting the weight to equal. We leave the 20 % for the principal for management aspects and instead of having only 4 observations by the lecturers here, we can get to the 8 and they will be getting the same weight. So on Sunday I go there. I assess the students but on Tuesday when I don't go, the students will be assessed by the teacher and it will count at the same level as mine so by that time, the students will get 8 observations and they are all the same way. That will put the students to work twice a week at the same level. So 10% for the teacher observation does not seem to carry any weight. As long as the students get 80% for them that is their major concern.

I. How to change this kind of mentality with the students that they are only concerned about grades.

College Supervisor. I think this is something long term. It doesn't happen there and it will be unfair to lay it on the shoulders of the trainers. It has to be happen from secondary school. It has a whole culture in the country. Again, this is quite universal and people are losing faith in education now. People don't seem to trust education anymore but if you want to do this you have to explain to the people their interest in this, why they want to become to be teachers, to motivate them at that level because you want to be useful to your country and this is what you can do a teacher. I feel that the self-image of the teacher is being touched and this is affecting the potential teachers. They don't want to become teachers because they see what is happening to teachers so I think we have to work at the national level they need to work on this that teachers have big role to play in this country. You cannot quantify this money wise. We have to explain to people. We have to acknowledge the role of teachers. It is simple to say but it is a long term plan. We the media, with the government. People need to see things on the ground happening in the favour of the teachers to feel proud of being a teacher.

I. Have you heard of the community of practice model?

College Supervisor. We are doing few things that may end up in the development of this system. We ask the students to assess each other and we are asking each trainee to develop a portfolio and one main document in this portfolio is the students' student assessment. We want to see that. They are even marked on that. So we are helping the students to come together and sit and discuss with each other. I go there. The requirement now when I go there I have to invite one of the students to come with me and to assess with me. We are still in phase one because in the culture the students are still unwilling to confront each other. What they do they discuss with you? So I would invite

her or him and ask how you do see your colleague performance and I see very priceless and very interesting feedback. There are areas that I cannot see but they do. We need to make them sit and discuss. Again I tell them don't take this as criticism. It is just exchange experience and this is how you become an experienced teacher. Personally, I am taking another initiative where during the day, I give the feedback as a comprehensive package. Don't give individual feedback. I tell my students when I go to session one, can I write, let's say some feedback, let's say how to phrase an objective so I don't do it with my second students to give myself room to focus on other things and I do expect you to sit together and read all the feedback because if it is in his paper, it does not mean that it isn't relevant to you. So it started to work. So we sit together after all the sessions. So you read your feedback, session one and we explain what we mean by that. So they all go and read about that. So it is a small thing that will help the students to shift towards this community where they can sit and discuss and at the end they will discover that they can even improve without us. So by the end of the program, you are heading them towards the student centered learning. The good thing is that you see them developing as independent learners where they can develop. This community thing is the only way because they can stay in touch with each other and they can improve their teaching indeed.

I: Thank you very much for this informative interview. Is there anything else you would like to add?

College Supervisor. Thank you very much for researching this important topic. Wish you all the best.

Appendix (12): Frequency and Means of Pre-service teachers' Responses to the Questionnaire Items.

Topic	Item	SA 5	A 4	NO 3	D 2	SD 1	Mean
1. Pre-service teachers' Perception of the school based practicum as a standalone course	1. The school based practicum course has clear aims and vision.	8	24	5	5	2	3.70
	2. The school based practicum course has provided you with direct contact and sufficient opportunities to teach the English language.	5	28	3	5	3	3.61
	3. The school based practicum course has created a balance between theory and practice in the programme.	9	8	7	19	1	3.11
	4. The school based practicum course has provided you with a powerful future conception of teaching.	8	17	7	10	2	3.43
	5. The school based practicum course has helped you to develop a reflective and problem-solving approach towards teaching.	7	25	4	5	3	3.63
	6. The school based practicum has established a professional environment for you to practice the different teaching methods you learned at the College.	10	11	7	13	3	3.27
	7. Your role as a pre-service teacher was well identified in the school based practicum course.	1	9	8	22	4	2.56
	8. The school based practicum course was challenging and frustrating.	11	16	5	10	2	3.54
2. The English language Sociocultural context and its role in supporting good teaching practice.	9. The socio-cultural context of the English language classrooms in the Omani schools supports good teaching practice.	1	9	7	23	4	2.54
3. Pre-service teachers' perceptions of the involvement of the College supervisors in practicum	10. The College supervisors were supportive and understanding.	12	18	4	6	4	3.63
	11. There was a strong collaboration between you and your College supervisor.	8	14	11	9	2	3.38
	12. The College supervisor's feedback was constructive.	8	20	4	8	4	3.45
	13. There was an agreement between all College supervisors on the school based practicum observation criteria.	5	4	7	17	11	2.43
	14. Your College supervisor allotted enough time to give you the feedback.	12	13	6	12	1	3.52
	15. Your College supervisor has given you written and oral feedback.	14	13	8	8	1	3.70
	16. The College supervisor focuses on the emotional aspects of learning how to teach process.	6	10	15	12	1	3.18
	17. The Omani College supervisors were more understanding because they are more familiar with the Omani educational context.	9	16	5	12	2	3.40
	18- The College supervisor role was well identified in the school based practicum course.	3	3	5	26	7	2.29
4. Pre-service teachers' perceptions of the involvement of the cooperating teachers in practicum	19. The cooperating school staff accepted you and made you feel welcome.	5	6	3	23	7	2.52
	20. The cooperating teachers trusted your teaching abilities.	7	9	2	22	4	2.84
	21. The cooperating teachers shared their teaching experiences and accomplishments with you.	7	11	5	17	4	3.00
	22. The cooperating teachers displayed positive attitude towards your teaching.	8	6	6	19	5	2.84
	23. You were encouraged to reflect on your teaching and your relations with the students.	4	14	2	22	0	3.04
	24. It was very easy to adjust to the school life and make relations with the school staff.	6	12	4	14	8	2.86
	25. You have gained confidence in dealing with school students.	18	16	2	5	3	3.93
	26. The cooperating teachers were not properly trained to supervise the pre-service teachers.	7	17	5	12	3	3.29
	27. The cooperating teachers were willing to engage in reflective practice with the pre-service teachers.	6	11	12	15	0	3.18
	28. The cooperating teacher's roles are well identified in the school based practicum.	0	1	15	17	11	2.13
	29. The cooperating teachers observed your teaching regularly.	8	18	4	14	0	3.45

	30. The cooperating teachers provided you with useful feedback.	6	12	4	16	6	2.90
5. Satisfaction with the current practicum assessment method	31. The School based practicum evaluation form has clear and descriptive assessment criteria.	4	12	3	15	10	2.65
	32. The school based practicum assessment method is fair.	3	10	4	16	11	2.50
	33. It is the right of the pre-service teacher to know his/her result after each evaluation.	24	14	3	3	0	4.34
6.Practicum experience and career decisions	34. The school based practicum has given you a clear indication if you can survive in an EFL classroom and works as a teacher.	12	19	10	2	1	3.88
	35. After your practicum experience, you still want to be an English language teacher.	13	13	8	6	4	3.56
7. Towards a quality practicum course	36. -An intensive school based practicum course with clear guidelines and principles needs to be implemented.	11	22	5	5	1	3.84
	37- More workshops for cooperating teachers and College supervisors need to be conducted.	18	16	7	3	0	4.11
	38- More collaboration between education faculties in the College and cooperating schools is demanded for effective and robust partnerships.	17	18	5	3	1	4.06
	39- A practicum handbook that consists of practicum objectives, participants' roles and expectations, evaluation procedures should be provided	17	15	2	10	0	3.88
	40. The current structure of the school based practicum course needs to be redesigned.	13	22	5	1	3	3.93

Appendix (13): Frequency and Means of Cooperating Teachers' Responses to the Questionnaire Items.

Topic	Items	SA 5	A 4	NO 3	D 2	SD 1	Mean
The preparation for the role of a cooperating teachers	1. Your role and responsibilities as a cooperating teacher are clear.	5	5	2	4	2	3.3
	2. You are provided with clear guidelines on how to mentor pre-service teachers.	0	8	1	8	1	2.8
	3. You feel that you are prepared well to supervise pre-service teachers.	0	3	8	7	0	2.7
	4. You have received enough information from the College about practicum.	3	5	4	5	1	3.2
	5. You had an orientation session about mentoring pre-service teachers prior the school based practicum course.	2	4	0	11	1	2.7
	6. You were provided with enough information about the pre-service teachers prior the practicum course.	1	4	4	9	0	2.8
	7. The College provides detailed guidelines about its expectations from the cooperating teachers.	1	5	2	10	0	2.8
Cooperating teachers' satisfaction with the pre-service teachers' performance in the school	8. You feel that pre-service teachers are adequately prepared in content pedagogy.	5	5	4	3	1	3.5
	9. Pre-service teachers are open to constructive criticism.	4	8	2	4	0	3.6
	10. Pre-service teachers have sufficient content knowledge.	3	8	5	2	0	3.6
	11. You are comfortable with pre-service teachers who try different teaching strategies in your classroom.	8	5	2	3	0	4
	12. Pre-service teachers apply different teaching skills in the classroom.	5	7	3	2	1	3.7
	13. Pre-service teachers are unwilling to do additional school work such as grading and planning extracurricular activities.	4	6	2	4	2	3.3
	14. Pre-service teachers' classroom organizational and management skills are ineffective.	2	6	2	5	3	2.9
	15. The relationship between you and the pre-service teachers is interactive and negotiable.	5	10	2	1	0	4
	16. You were asked to engage in reflective practice with the pre-service teachers.	5	6	4	3	0	3.7
The nature of communication between	17. There is a conflict between your role as a cooperating teacher and the role of the College supervisor.	3	4	3	6	2	3
	18. Your professional knowledge is neglected by pre-service teachers and College supervisors.	3	3	3	5	4	2.7
	19. Your input as a cooperating teacher on students' teaching programme is highly appreciated by the College.	0	6	9	1	2	3.0

the cooperating teachers and the College	20. There is a lack of agreement between you and the College supervisors regarding the role of pre-service teachers.	4	2	6	4	2	3.1
	21.There is lack of communication between you and the College supervisors	2	8	2	5	1	3.2
	22.The current practicum course doesn't reflect any collaborative partnership between the College and the cooperating schools	4	5	7	1	1	3.5
	23. You need assistance from the College supervisor to evaluate the pre-service teachers.	2	8	3	3	2	3.2
	24. College supervisors should conduct in-service training to train you on how to evaluate pre-service teachers	7	6	2	3	0	3.9
	25. You need more support during the transition from a classroom teacher to a mentor.	1	9	5	3	0	3.4
The support cooperating teachers need from the College	26. A pre-semester meeting between you and the pre-service teachers is highly demanded.	7	6	1	3	1	3.8
	27. A pre-semester meeting between schools' administrations and the head of the practicum unit is highly demanded.	9	6	1	2	0	4.2
	28. A collegial relationship between you and the College supervisor needs to be developed and maintained.	9	4	1	4	0	4
	29. More collaboration among all the stakeholders (pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers and College supervisors) would enhance students' teaching experience.	8	5	1	3	1	3.8

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Appendix (14): Ethical Research Approval

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

<u>Title of Project:</u>   An Evaluative Study of Teaching Practice in a Teacher Preparation Programme at a Higher College of Education, Oman

<u>Researcher(s) name:</u> Fakhriya Khamis Salim Al-Qasmi
<u>Supervisor(s):</u>   Dr Gabriel Meier
<u>This project has been approved for the period</u>
From: 18.05.2015
To: 18.05.2016
<u>Ethics Committee approval reference:</u>   D/14/15/48

Signature: Date: 19/05/2015

(Dr Philip Durrant, Chair, Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee)

Appendix (15): Pre-service Focus Group Consent Form

Title of Research Project: An Evaluative Study of Teaching Practice in the Teacher preparation Programme at a Higher College Education, Oman.

The study explores and evaluates the teaching practice components of an English teacher preparation programme at a Higher Education College in Oman. The study is an attempt to identify any good practice and challenges pre-service teachers experienced during their teaching practice in the cooperating schools and to set an agenda for change, if deemed necessary, to improve the quality of the practicum courses and the pedagogical and professional aspects of the English language teacher preparation programme at the College. The study also explores the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum courses. I will examine opinions from the pre-service teachers, College supervisors and cooperating teachers.
Your help is highly appreciated and important to complete this 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 and may also request that my data be destroyed

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 or academic conference or seminar presentations

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 data collected will not affect my final grade.

I will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

Focus group interviews will be held under The Chatham House Rule which aims at providing anonymity to all participants. I will only report what was said during the interview and will not identify directly or indirectly who said what.

.......................…………………..   ....
(Signature of participant)   (Date)

…………………
(Printed name of participant)

Contact phone number of researcher:

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Appendix (16): Pre-service teachers' Questionnaire Consent Form

Title of Research Project: An Evaluative Study of Teaching Practice in the Teacher preparation Programme at a Higher College Education, Oman.

The study explores and evaluates the teaching practice components of an English teacher preparation programme at a Higher Education College in Oman. The study is an attempt to identify any good practice and challenges pre-service teachers experienced during their teaching practice in the cooperating schools and to set an agenda for change, if deemed necessary, to improve the quality of the practicum courses and the pedagogical and professional aspects of the English language teacher preparation programme at the College. The study also explores the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum courses. I will examine opinions from the pre-service teachers, College supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Your help is highly appreciated and important to complete this 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 and may also request that my data be destroyed

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 or academic conference or seminar presentations

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 data collected will not affect my final grade.

I will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

...................................………………..   ....
(Signature of participant)   (Date)

……………………
(Printed name of participant)

Contact phone number of researcher:

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact: Project Supervisor:

Appendix (17): College Supervisor Consent Form

Title of Research Project: An Evaluative Study of Teaching Practice in the Teacher preparation Programme at a Higher College of Education, Oman.

The study explores and evaluates the teaching practice components of an English teacher preparation programme at a Higher Education College in Oman. The study is an attempt to identify any good practice and challenges pre-service teachers experienced during their teaching practice in the cooperating schools and to set an agenda for change, if deemed necessary, to improve the quality of the practicum courses and the pedagogical and professional aspects of the English language teacher preparation programme at the College. The study also explores the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum courses. I will examine opinions from the pre-service teachers, College supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Your help is highly appreciated and important to complete this 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 and may also request that my data be destroyed

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 or academic conference or seminar presentations

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.

All information I give will not affect my job and job promotions.

I will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

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(Signature of participant)   (Date)

……………………

(Printed name of participant)

Contact phone number of researcher:

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Appendix (18): Cooperating Teachers' Consent Form

Title of Research Project: An Evaluative Study of Teaching Practice in the Teacher preparation Programme at a Higher College of Education, Oman.

The study explores and evaluates the teaching practice components of an English teacher preparation programme at a Higher Education College in Oman. The study is an attempt to identify any good practice and challenges pre-service teachers experienced during their teaching practice in the cooperating schools and to set an agenda for change, if deemed necessary, to improve the quality of the practicum courses and the pedagogical and professional aspects of the English language teacher preparation programme at the College. The study also explores the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum courses. I will examine opinions from the pre-service teachers, College supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Your help is highly appreciated and important to complete this 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 and may also request that my data be destroyed

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 or academic conference or seminar presentations

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.

All information I give will not affect my job and job promotions.

I will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

...................................………………..   ....
(Signature of participant)   (Date)

…………………….
(Printed name of participant)

Contact phone number of researcher:

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Appendix (19): Institution Consent Form

Title of Research Project: An Evaluative Study of Teaching Practice in the Teacher preparation Programme at a Higher College of Education, Oman.

The study explores and evaluates the teaching practice components of an English teacher preparation programme at a Higher education College in Oman. The study is an attempt to identify any good practice and challenges pre-service teachers experienced during their teaching practice in the cooperating schools and to set an agenda for change, if deemed necessary, to improve the quality of the practicum courses and the pedagogical and professional aspects of the English language teacher preparation programme at the College. The study also explores the cooperating teachers' perceptions of the school based practicum courses. I will examine opinions from the pre-service teachers, College supervisors and cooperating teachers.
Your help is highly appreciated and important to complete this study.

The institution has been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project. The institution understands that:
There is no compulsion for it to participate in this research project and, if it does choose to participate, It may at any stage withdraw its participation
The institution has the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about it

Any information which the institution gives will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information, which the institution gives, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

All information the institution gives will be treated as confidential

I (s) will make every effort to preserve the institution anonymity

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(Signature of participant) (Date)

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(Printed name of participant)

Contact phone number of researcher(s)

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

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 I(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 (20): Themes and sub-themes identified in the focus groups' and pre-service teachers' questionnaire qualitative data

Research Questions	Themes	Data sets
Q1. Opportunities encountered by pre-service teachers during practicum	1. Practicum prepares pre-service teachers to teach in a more skilful manner. 2. Practicum guides pre-service teachers to adopt a reflective practice in their teaching methodology.	1. Pre-service teachers' focus groups

Q1. Challenges encountered by pre-service teachers during practicum	1. The current structure of the English teacher preparation programme at the College hinders effective teaching practice
	
	2. Communication challenges:
	  A. Communication barriers between the pre-service teachers, the College supervisors and the College administration.
	  B. Lack of communication between the pre-service teachers and the cooperating schools' staff.
	  C. Breakdown in communication between the pre-service teachers and the cooperating schools' students
	3. Challenges related to the practicum assessment methods
	  A. The Assessment form
	  B. College supervisor's feedback
	  C. Cooperating teacher's feedback
	  D. Reflection sheet
	4. Logistic challenges
	  A. Logistic challenges in the cooperating schools
	  B. Logistic challenges at the College
	5. Teaching practice and career change
	6. Unspecified roles of the practicum triad
		2. Pre-service teachers' semi-structured questionnaire

Q2. Pre-service teachers' perception of the things that need to be maintained in the practicum course	School based practicum course should still be the core course in the pre-service teacher preparation programme.	
Q2. Pre-service teachers' perceptions of the things that need to be changed in the practicum course.	1. The current perceived gap between the College theoretical courses and school teaching practice should be lessened. 2. From two days, a week to block practicum 3. Rethinking the practicum assessment method. 4. The selection of practicum College supervisors and cooperating teachers should be based on specific criteria. 5. Pre-service teacher's creativity should be encouraged and awarded 6. Communication channels between practicum members should be strengthen	

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| | A. Affective and robust partnerships between the education faculty at College and the cooperating schools is demanded.
B. Promoting the relations between pre-service teachers and College supervisors
C. Promoting the relations between pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers
7. Roles of all practicum members should be identified and documented.
8. Establishing a psychology council | |

Appendix (21): Themes and sub-themes identified in the College supervisors' one to one interviews

Research Questions 3 & 4	Themes	Data set
Opportunities encountered by College supervisors during practicum	1. Practicum has enriched College supervisors' teaching experience. 2. Practicum familiarizes pre-service English language teachers with the school classroom setting.	College supervisors' one to one interviews
Challenges encountered by College supervisors during practicum.	1.Perceived gap between theory and practice 2. Low English language level of some pre-service teachers. 3.Insufficient training time 4.Lack of course description 5.Inexperienced College supervisors 6.Logistics challenges: a. Lack of resources b. The unavailability of an office for PSTs in the school's premises. c. Inappropriate arrangement of the school based practicum schedule 7.Subjective assessment methods 8. Lack of a reciprocal relationship between College supervisor and pre-service teachers. 9. Lack of communication between College supervisors and the cooperating teachers.	
College Supervisors' perceptions of the things that need to be changed in the practicum course	1. The perceived gap between theory and practice. 2. The perceived need for block practicum. 3. The perceived need for greater communication between all the stakeholders involved in practicum. 4. The perceived need for careful selection and training of CSs. 5. The perceived need for pre-practicum classroom observations and training workshops. 6. The perceived need for rigorous, comprehensive and objective practicum assessment methods. a. The perceived need for rigorous, comprehensive and objective checklists. b. The perceived need to enrich the practicum evaluation system c. The perceived need for standardised feedback. d. The perceived need to encourage pre-service teachers' reflective practice	

Appendix (22): Themes inducted from the open-ended questions in the cooperating teachers' semi-structured questionnaire

Research Question 5	Themes inducted from the qualitative data in the semi-structured questionnaire	Data Set
Cooperating teachers' expectations from the pre-service teachers.	To be inventive To be punctual To be responsible To build a more positive attitude towards teaching To know how to deal with students' differences To show respect to all school staff To take teaching seriously	Cooperating teachers' semi-structured questionnaire
Cooperating teachers' opinion of the role of the College in preparing them for the task of monitoring and evaluating pre-service teachers.	The College does not prepare cooperating teachers to evaluate pre-service teachers which causes feelings of being lost and anxious.	
Factors that help or hinder cooperating teacher role.	Factors that ease the role of the cooperating teacher: Good communication between the pre-service teachers and the cooperating teachers Pre-service teachers' enthusiasm for teaching practice The more experienced the cooperating teacher is in teaching, the more capable he is in handling the pre-service teachers' issues in the school Factors that hinder the role of the cooperating teachers: Lack of cooperation between the cooperating teachers and College supervisors. Lack of pre-service teachers' motivation Cooperating teachers' overloaded schedule	
Preparation, support and power the College should provide cooperating teachers with while they scaffold the pre-service teachers.	A clear plan for teaching practice should be provided from the College More classroom observations is required before starting teaching practice More cooperation between the College faculty and school administration is required The College should prepare the pre-service teachers for the teaching responsibility The College should provide sufficient information about the course, the students and the evaluation process The College should provide the pre-service teachers with teaching aids and the necessary teaching resources	