

STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN FACING ACTUAL LEARNING SITUATIONS IN THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Martha Tombang¹, Markus Deli Girik Allo², Matius Tandikombong³, Farisha Andi Baso⁴

¹SMP Negeri 2 Sangalla, ^{2,3}Universitas Kristen Indonesia Toraja, ⁴Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar

marthatombang345@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the experiences of prospective English teachers during their internships, focusing on how they integrate theoretical knowledge into practice and the effects of this experience on their professional development. A quantitative approach was employed, with a survey design to collect data from seventh-semester students of the English Study Program at UKI Toraja who completed their internships during the academic year 2023/2024. The sample consisted of eighteen students selected through purposive sampling due to their relevant classroom experiences. A questionnaire based on a Likert scale was used to capture students' perceptions and experiences during their internships. The data were tabulated and analyzed using percentage formulas to interpret responses. The findings reveal significant benefits for students, including increased confidence and enhanced teaching skills. However, challenges such as a disconnect between theoretical learning and practical application, inadequate mentor support, and variations in available resources were identified as obstacles to maximizing the internship experience. This research highlights the importance of refining internship programs to better support English language student teachers. Strengthening the connection between academic coursework and practical experiences can lead to more competent and adaptive educators, enriching the overall educational landscape and improving outcomes in teacher training.

Keywords: Internship, English teacher education, practical experience, student teachers, professional development.

INTRODUCTION

The internship is an initiative that aims to prepare prospective English teachers with in-depth practical experience in dealing with actual learning situations in a school environment. As Zeichner (2021) explains, effective teacher education programs integrate coursework and clinical experience in ways that allow teacher candidates to apply what they are learning in real classrooms. As part of the teacher education curriculum, the internship provides an opportunity for students to dive directly into the world of education, putting them in front of real and diverse learning situations—starting from how to prepare lessons, get to know students, manage the class, work and learn from tutors, and how to get along and socialize with all members of the school as a community (Kabilan et al., 2020).

However, to learn the effectiveness of the internship in preparing prospective teachers for real-world challenges, it is necessary to conduct research that explores the experiences of English language students in dealing with actual learning situations in the program. As Rashid and Tarmizi (2020) argue, student

teachers need authentic experiences that bridge the gap between pedagogical theory and classroom realities. This support is reinforced by Zeichner (2021), who suggests that connections between field experiences and academic courses should be strengthened to produce more relevant and effective learning.

The internship is a course created especially to provide students with hands-on experience managing real-world learning scenarios in an educational setting. Actual learning scenarios provide a clear framework for applying the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom to the school environment. This real-time engagement allows teacher candidates to become more responsive to learners' diverse needs and classroom dynamics (Ali & Mohamad, 2022).

Actual learning situations are the main foundation for the development of practical skills and an in-depth understanding of concepts for students in the internship. These scenarios allow students to design and deliver lessons, interact with school staff, and manage class activities. Firsthand teaching experiences contribute significantly to the professional growth and pedagogical confidence of pre-service teachers, according to Huang and Akins (2021).

Student experience is at the core of effective and quality learning in the context of the internship. Ali and Mohamad (2022) emphasize that pre-service teachers who are exposed to real teaching conditions develop reflective thinking, adaptability, and practical skills that are vital to their teaching careers.

While there is some research that explores students' experiences in internship programs, there is a lack of literature that specifically explores the experiences of English students in this context. For example, research conducted by Flockton and Cunningham (2021) highlights the general structure of internships but does not delve into subject-specific challenges. English language students face distinct issues related to language usage, lesson delivery, and student interaction in multilingual environments.

Moreover, the use of English in real-world contexts is a significant aspect that remains underexplored. Copland et al. (2020) highlight, authentic use of the target language is central to language teacher development, yet few studies consider how English students use the language in real-life teaching situations (Baker & Ragan, 2020). Internship experiences carry critical implications for students' development as educators. However, significant issues persist. Zeichner (2021) notes, many teacher candidates report a disconnect between university coursework and school-based experiences, which can hinder their professional readiness. Other challenges include limited mentoring, insufficient feedback (Johnson, 2021), and resource constraints at school placements (Flockton & Cunningham, 2021).

Based on preliminary observations, prospective English teachers face various challenges in managing diverse classrooms. They must develop proper strategies for different student needs, integrate theory with classroom practice, and work within time and material constraints. These challenges underscore the importance of strengthening support systems in internship programs.

METHODS

This study used a quantitative method to process the data. According to Creswell (2012), quantitative research is a method used to test objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. In this study, the researcher used a

survey design, which is proper for collecting numeric data from a sample population. Data were collected from seventh-semester students of the English Study Program at UKI Toraja in the academic year 2023/2024, who had completed the internship program. The total population consisted of fifty-two students, but the researcher selected a sample of eighteen students using purposive sampling, considering that they had meaningful experiences in actual classroom situations during the internship.

The primary instrument used was a questionnaire based on a Likert scale to capture students' perceptions and experiences during their internship. The Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly used in questionnaires, where participants indicate their level of agreement or satisfaction on a symmetrical agree-disagree scale for a series of statements (Creswell, 2012). The data collected were then tabulated and analyzed using percentage formulas to interpret the students' responses. The interpretation categories were based on the following scale:

Table 1: The interpretation categories

Categories	Score	Mean Range
Very Satisfied (VS)	5	84% – 100%
Quite Satisfied (QS)	4	68% – 83.99%
Satisfied (S)	3	52% – 67.99%
Not Satisfied (NS)	2	36% – 51.99%
Very Dissatisfied (VD)	1	20% – 35.99%

The percentage was calculated using the following formula (Creswell, 2012):

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

- P = Percentage
- F = Frequency of student responses
- N = Total number of respondents

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore English students' experiences in facing actual learning situations during the internship program. A total of eighteen seventh-semester students from the English Education Study Program at UKI Toraja participated as respondents. The data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire having ten statements designed to assess key aspects of the students' experiences during internship program.

The data were analyzed by calculating the percentage of responses using the formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

- P = Percentage
- F = Frequency of responses per category

N = Total number of respondents

Below is a summary of the results:

Table 2. Percentage of Questionnaire

No	Statement	Score				
		VS	QS	S	NS	VD
1	How would you rate the support provided by your supervisor during internship?	33%	22%	28%	17%	0%
2	How would you rate the guidance provided by your mentor teacher at school?	56%	28%	17%	0%	0%
3	How satisfied were you with the facilities provided by the school during internship?	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%
4	How would you rate the readiness of the subject matter you taught during internship?	17%	33%	50%	0%	0%
5	How satisfied were you with the interaction and communication that took place between you and the students in the classroom?	50%	28%	22%	0%	0%
6	How would you rate your classroom management during internship?	22%	56%	22%	0%	0%
7	How satisfied were you with your classmates' support in facing challenges during internship?	50%	28%	17%	6%	0%
8	How would you rate the time distributed for each activity during internship?	28%	28%	44%	0%	0%
9	How satisfied were you with your ability to motivate students during internship?	0%	61%	39%	0%	0%
10	How would you rate your overall experience of internship?	61%	17%	22%	0%	0%

Based on the data presented, the findings indicate that students had a positive experience during their PLP 2 internship. The highest percentage of "Very Satisfied" responses (61%) was recorded for the overall experience of the program, suggesting that most participants viewed the internship as meaningful and beneficial. Key areas that received strong positive feedback include:

1. Mentor guidance at school (56% Very Satisfied),
2. Interaction and communication with students (50% Very Satisfied),
3. Support from classmates (50% Very Satisfied).

These findings suggest that interpersonal relationships, both with peers and students, played a significant role in shaping positive internship experiences. On the other hand, aspects like university supervisor support and classroom management showed more mixed responses. Only 33% of students were very satisfied with supervisor support, while 28% were merely satisfied, and 17% were not satisfied. This points to a need for better supervisory engagement during the internship. Additionally, while classroom management had no negative responses, the lower percentage of "Very Satisfied" (22%) shows room for development in this area. Interestingly, none of the students reported being Very Dissatisfied in any category, which underscores that even the areas needing improvement were not considered highly problematic.

The findings align with Creswell's (2014) emphasis on the value of quantitative methods to describe trends in the population, and the results reflect students' real experiences, thus serving as a valuable feedback mechanism for program evaluation. Furthermore, consistent with Johnson & Golombek (2011), these experiences suggest that reflective practice and peer support are critical for teacher development, while Flockton & Cunningham (2021) emphasize that structured mentoring enhances the learning experience in field-based settings. In conclusion, the overall results indicate that 94% of respondents expressed positive experiences (combining "Very Satisfied," "Quite Satisfied," and "Satisfied" responses), confirming that PLP 2 was a rewarding program that helped shape the professional skills of future English teachers. However, improvements in mentor support and classroom management strategies are recommended for future internship cohorts.

CONCLUSION

The internship serves as a vital part in the preparation of prospective English teachers, providing them with practical experience that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. Through engaging in actual learning situations within school environments, students are equipped to understand the complexities of classroom dynamics and develop essential teaching skills. This firsthand experience fosters not only their pedagogical competence but also their ability to adapt to diverse learning needs among students.

Despite the benefits, challenges remain in the internship experience. Issues such as the disconnect between theory and practice, inadequate support from mentors, and the presence of varying resource availability hinder the full realization of the program's potential. Addressing these concerns is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of the internship, leading to better-prepared educators who can thrive in contemporary educational settings.

Furthermore, ongoing research focused on the specific experiences of English language students during their internships will offer critical insights into how to improve teacher education programs. By understanding their unique challenges and perspectives, educational institutions can enhance support structures and curricula to foster the development of competent, reflective, and adaptive

educators. Addressing these areas will not only help the students themselves but also elevate the overall quality of education in English language teaching, preparing future generations of teachers to meet the demands of a dynamic and diverse educational landscape.

REFERENCE

- Ali, H., & Mohamad, A. R. (2022). Pre-service teacher learning through school-based experience: Challenges and competencies. *Journal of Education and Learning, 11*(3), 145–155.
- Baker, L., & Ragan, T. (2020). Language practice in EFL internships: A missing piece of the professional development puzzle. *TESOL Journal, 11*(2), e00433.
- Copland, F., Garton, S., & Mann, S. (2020). Reflective practice in English language teacher education. *ELT Journal, 74*(2), 146–155.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Flockton, L., & Cunningham, J. (2021). Re-imagining practicum in teacher education: Toward a relational model. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 104*, 103396.
- Huang, M., & Akins, D. (2021). Strengthening practical competence through experiential learning in teacher education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 49*(1), 23–38.
- Johnson, K. E. (2021). Emerging practices in mentoring pre-service teachers: A collaborative perspective. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 48*(3), 89–106.
- Kabilan, M. K., Maginggi, J., & Subramaniam, G. (2020). Teaching practicum and its impact on pre-service teachers' professional development: A case study. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction, 17*(1), 1–25.
- Rashid, R. A., & Tarmizi, H. (2020). Exploring the efficacy of practicum in teacher preparation: Voices from student teachers. *Journal of Education and Practice, 11*(10), 79–86.
- Zeichner, K. (2021). Rethinking the connections between university courses and field experiences in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 72*(4), 379–391.