

# Improving the Practicum Training of the Kindergarten Program

**Bothina M. Hussien Ali**

Dr. Bothina Mohammed, Assistant Professor, Department of Kindergarten Education, College of Education, Majmaah University, Al- Majmaah 11952, Saudi Arabia

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the degree of availability of comprehensive quality standards (Objectives, Content, Management, The role of academic supervisors, the role of the kindergarten Headmistress, The role of cooperative teachers, the assessment of the practicum) for improvement the practicum training of the Kindergarten Program in Saudi Arabia, and the statistically significant differences in the degree of availability among these standards according to geographic location, cultural, social, environmental factors and GPA (Grade Point Average). The study adopted the interpretive analysis to collect data through questionnaire with seven (7) criteria and detailed aspect for each criterion. The respondents were chosen forty-eight (48) students in the eight (8th) level of the Kindergarten Program. The respondents' gathered data were tabulated and computed by the statistical means that were classified into three levels; high, moderate and low, and to identify the differences of students' average responses, face validity, Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient and ANOVA one-way analysis of variance were used. An analysis of students' open answers was also conducted. Results revealed the program's strengths and weaknesses. There were no statistically significant differences in the degree of availability among the comprehensive quality standards according to location, cultural, social, environmental factors and GPA. In light of the analysis results, we recommended reconsidering the different aspects of the current practicum training to meet the requirements of the specified comprehensive quality standards.

**Keywords:** Comprehensive quality standards; kindergarten program; practicum; trainee students.

## INTRODUCTION

All educational contexts and related literature agree that preservice teachers consider practicum training as a greatly appreciated component of teacher qualification programs (Nghia & Tai, 2017). Therefore, we must address their concerns to improve their practicum experiences. Surveying students' perceptions and estimations of their practicum training will help reconsider the roles of practicum participants and bridge any gaps that might decrease its effectiveness (Novotorov, 2001).

Teaching practicum is a key aspect of teacher education (Farrell, 2008). It refers to a period of guided teaching during which the "teacher-trainee" or "student-teacher" assumes increasing responsibilities for directing the learning of a group of students over 12 weeks (Opara, 2015).

Kindergarten teachers have numerous professional roles and responsibilities that require broad and diverse sets of knowledge. Specifically, they promote learning; meet children's needs and interests; plan for and implement all aspects of the curriculum, organize learning environments; observe; assess; collaboratively work with families; and anticipate challenging situations to work on valid and effective solutions. According to Makovec (2018), the role of the teacher is never uniquely defined, and its definition is influenced by many factors. It is defined by cultural and social events and the environment, and both influence the differences that occur in the conceptions of the roles of teachers within different cultures and societies, including the geographic environment. based on an analysis of the literature, we identify factors that significantly influence teachers' perception of their role and consequently, determine their professional identity we show that factors such as teachers'

beliefs about their own qualifications, as well as years of work experience and subject area, their personality traits, statistically significantly influenced the development of the teachers' professional identity.

The practicum involves real-life professional practice. In many teacher-education programs, preservice teachers commence their program with studies in education to gain essential knowledge about schools and teaching and then apply this knowledge to teaching during the school placement experience. This approach is now regarded as too narrowly focused and not conducive to building skills and knowledge needed by the teachers of the 21st century (Caldwell, 2006). Teaching practicum is a key aspect of teacher education (Farrell, 2008). It refers to a period of guided teaching during which the "teacher-trainee" or "student-teacher" assumes increasing responsibilities for directing the learning of a group of students over 12 weeks (Opara, 2015).

Practicum is a form of experiential learning that could be described as field-based learning, work-based learning, learning

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**Corresponding Author e-mail:** [bm.ali@mu.edu.sa](mailto:bm.ali@mu.edu.sa)

**https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8678-4982**

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by doing or learning from action (Lonergran & Anderson, 1988). Teaching practicum is an opportunity to observe and work with real students, teachers, and curriculum settings. Practicum does not only bridge the gap between theory and practice in learning to teach but it provides the opportunity for preservice teachers to develop their personal teaching competence (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005). The practicum constitutes essential, experiential learning; it is where theory and practice come together. It is through the practicum that teacher candidates hone their teaching knowledge, skills and abilities, and it is through the practicum that they come to understand the complexity of the life of the teacher; its central and most obvious purpose is to expose teacher candidates to teaching practice. The practicum provides candidates with an opportunity to practice the theoretical knowledge, attitudes and skill sets that they have acquired, and to apply these in real-life, classroom situations. The practicum advances the understanding by teacher candidates of the nature classroom, and in particular the diversity of the student population therein (Ontario Teachers' Federation, 2013).

However, studies demonstrate a knowledge gap in this area (Bornfreund, 2011). While a substantial amount of literature has addressed the importance of practicum experience for teacher education worldwide, studies focusing on the Saudi context are rare. Therefore, the present study contribute to present a proposed vision for developing field education that would be applied accurately, and by using continuous evaluation tools that take into account the participation of all parties participating in the program. In order for it to have a positive impact on the female students and the efforts exerted are fruitful.

### Quality standards for practicum training

Many studies demonstrate that the practicum component of teacher education must be more closely guided by accredited professional standards and that its costs and resources must be more carefully considered (Apple, 2001; Wise & Leibbrand, 2001; Huntly, 2005; Ure & Gough, 2009; Sulistiyo, Mukminin, Abdurrahman, & Haryanto, 2017).

Studies have investigated this global need for quality standards in teacher education programs in general and in practicum courses in particular, and practicum courses have been revised on a regular basis (Bornfreund, 2011; Bright & Mattatall, 2019). "Each teacher education program has the authority to design and develop its curriculum to meet the required standards of teacher quality for local needs" (Sulistiyo, Mukminin, Abdurrahman, & Haryanto, 2017, p. 715).

Regarding Saudi Arabia's universities there is ample literature related to the validity and sustainability of practicum training as a fundamental part of teacher education programs and kindergarten teachers (Elraiss & Ahmed, 2019; Alkhasawna, 2017). The Majmaah University will benefit from

a deep investigation on the reality of the practicum experience it offers. Hence, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on successful or unsuccessful dimensions of the practicum training experience in the College of Education.

### Integration among the various aspects of the practicum training program

Studies related to practicums have included recommendations and comments about the crucial need for a supportive learning environment. Reported opinions have stressed the importance of the role of "the other" in creating this milieu (Walsh & Elmslie, 2005). In a study conducted by Johnson, La Paro, and Crosby (2017), some pre-service teachers reported feelings of being energized and relaxed, while others reported feelings of frustration in their practicum classrooms. Feeling energized and relaxed, and students' perception of fit with their cooperating teacher, were found to be positively associated with practicum satisfaction and practicum students' teacher efficacy. Furthermore, feelings of frustration were found to be negatively associated with students' fit with their cooperating teacher, practicum satisfaction, and practicum students' teacher efficacy. Moreover, higher levels of practicum satisfaction predicted higher teacher efficacy. These findings highlight the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of the various aspects of the practicum experience and their contribution in students performance.

Studies have examined the relationship between cooperating teachers and teacher candidates. La Paro, Van Schagen, King, and Lippard (2018) concluded that this relationship is a central element in the practicum experience. This relationship influences and is influenced by other elements of the practicum experience, including communication, beliefs, fit, knowledge, and learning. Furthermore, educational context and different practicum agents (supervisors and cooperating teachers) play a supportive role in trainee success (Craveiro, Silva, Friães, Parente, & Lino, 2018). There is a significant focus in the literature on preparing early-childhood teachers and quality field-based experiences. A cooperating teacher prepared with the necessary skills to provide prospective teachers with a powerful learning opportunity is central to effective practicum experiences (Baum & Korth, 2013).

### Context

Practicum is the backbone of teacher qualification programs, because it provides trainees with the opportunity to apply the theoretical aspects; increases motivation, interaction, and social skills; provides concrete experiences; and helps to adapt to the school system. Despite its careful consideration of its practicum training offer, the College of Education at the MajMaah University lacks appropriate application of quality standards, and the trainee students exhibit poor performance.

Standards means “the degree of meeting the requirements expected or agreed upon by the stakeholders. They represent the integrity of features and characteristics of an outcome or a service in a way that help to meet specific well-known need and requirements. Furthermore, practicum courses have not been adequately evaluated. Thus, we need an approach with a means of on-going evaluation that involves all participants and positively effects trainee performance.

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### Study objectives

- (1) Listing the needed comprehensive quality standards for the practicum in the Kindergarten Program at the Majmaah University.
- (2) Determining to what extent these standards are made available in the practicum.
- (3) Investigation of the influence of various parameters, such as geographical location and grade point average (GPA) on comprehensive quality standards for the practicum.
- (4) Proposing an approach to improving the practicum in the Kindergarten Program at the Majmaah University in light of the comprehensive quality standards.

### The significance of the study

Theoretically, this study highlights the importance of practicum training as a means to improve student proficiency and to acquire educationally and professionally comprehensive behavior. It is the first study that evaluates the reality of the practicum offered at the Majmaah University, thereby helping identify its strengths and weakness.

Practically, the study proposes an approach to improve the current practicum experience in light of the comprehensive quality standards, which will help planners and developers of study programs to reconsider the different aspects of the practicum training to achieve more success. Furthermore, the results should help academic supervisors to avoid negatives and trainee students to improve their functionality and achieve better outcomes in children’s education. . Finally, the study will help to adopt quality system standards in education and draw researcher attention.

### Definitions

Practicum is defined as “a period of student teachers’ qualification in which they have the chance to practically apply the concepts and educational theories in the field and to acquire the instructional skills through observation, participation, and practice” (Hammad, 2005, p.157). In the case

of kindergarten teacher qualifications, it is where trainees apply acquired knowledge under the supervision of experts, during a specific time within a kindergarten, to acquire instruction skills, to apply principles and theories, and to develop an appreciation for the teaching profession.

The Kindergarten Program refers to the academic program offered by the College of Education at the Majmaah University, which aims to teach the knowledge and skills that will enable students to effectively practice teaching.

*Standards* are “the levels of accreditation of the institute or the program that include the expectations of quality and effectiveness, financial resources, conformity with rules and national codes, results and continuity” (Albehwashi, 2007, p. 94). It also means “the degree of meeting the requirements expected or agreed upon by the stakeholders. They represent the integrity of features and characteristics of an outcome or a service in a way that help to meet specific well-known need and requirements” (Alkhatib & Alkhatib 2010, p. 376). Accordingly, the standard can be defined as a measure that defines the qualitative level that must be clearly present in all the basic components and areas of field education in the kindergarten program.

Quality refers to “the international standards of measurement, recognition, and transition of minimum to the maximum culture of quality and excellence and a great future ahead of it” (Alzawawi, 2003, p. 34). It is also defined as “creating a special culture and assuring the correct work performance from the first time, with the highest level of proficiency and promptly as possible” (Salim, 2007, p. 74).

*Comprehensive quality* is defined by Damas (2009, p. 199) as “the standards and characteristics that should exist in all elements of instructional process related to either inputs, processes, or outputs that meet the needs of society and learners”. These standards are achieved through the effective use of all human and physical resources.

An academic advisor is an expert assigned by the university to follow up with, counsel, supervise, and evaluate the performance of trainees. They mediate between the College and the kindergartens to take measures to achieve the aims, depending on the experience they need (70% of the total score).

A *headmistress* is the manager of a kindergarten and is responsible for facilitating the trainee’s missions and assessing their performances (10% of the total score).

A *trainee student* is a student who is registered in the practicum course (KIN462), having completed the prerequisites. They have some responsibilities and duties of a class teacher.

A cooperative teacher is a specialist who works in the kindergartens and shares with the supervisor the duty of counseling and managing trainee students’ progress and performance evaluations (20% of the total score).

### Research questions (RQs)

The study aimed at investigating preservice kindergarten teachers' opinions about the availability of comprehensive quality standards in the practicum program of the Majmaah University. To that end, we formulated the following research questions:

- (RQ1) What are the required comprehensive quality standards for the practicum training at the Kindergarten Program at the Majmaah University?
- (RQ2) To what extent are these standards realized?
- RQ3) Is there any significant effect of geographic location, cultural, social, environmental factors, and GPA on the practicum's comprehensive quality standards?
- (RQ4) What is the suggested approach to improve the practicum in light of the comprehensive quality standards?

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

### Participants

A total of 48 female students from the Kindergarten Program at the Majmaah University participated in the study (who spend the training period in cooperative kindergartens in the cities of Al Majmaah, i.e., MA, and Al Zulfi, i.e., ZL). Therefore, we have two different Geographical location, which are Al Majmaah and Al Zulfi cities. They were registered in the practicum training course as a requisite to graduation in

**Table 1:** Distribution of participants

Variable	Place	No.	%
Location	Majmaah city	23	47.9
	Azul city	25	52.1
	Total	48	100
GPA	4.5	31	64.6
	4>	17	35.4
	Total	48	100

**Table 2:** Distribution of questionnaire items among seven aspects of the practicum.

1	Practicum Aspect	No. of sentences
2	Objectives	3
3	Content	8
4	Administration	27
5	Supervisor	20
6	Headmistress of the kindergarten	14
7	Cooperative teacher	16
8	Assessment	12
Total		100

2019. Table 1 illustrates their distribution according to the variables of the study.

We conducted a questionnaire to collect and analyze data on students' opinions about the availability of the comprehensive quality standards. It included 100 statements, divided among seven aspects of the practicum: objectives, content, the administration, the supervisor, the headmistress, the cooperative teacher, and the assessment. It also included three open-ended questions to identify the practicum training's strengths and weaknesses as well as the actions to improve the practicum experience. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of the questionnaire items among the seven aspects of the practicum.

We evaluated the responses on a five-point Likert scale, using standard deviation and arithmetic means. We determined the means of student responses with the following formula: point level = the highest level - the lowest level / number of points (5 - 1 / 5 = 0.8). Table 3 illustrates the point levels according to the Likert scale (Table 3).

An expert panel from the Majmaah University validated the questionnaire. Its reliability was validated by piloting the questionnaire and calculated using Cronbach's alphas. The pilot study included 30 students. Table 4 illustrates the reliability coefficients per practicum aspects.

### Analysis

We informed the students about the survey's objectives and importance. We gathered, classified, and converted the data into a numerical form where "strongly agree" equals 5, "agree"

**Table 3:** Point levels according to the Likert scale.

Likert Scale	Point levels
1-1.8	very low
1.81-2.60	Low
2.61-3.40	Moderate
3.41-4.20	High
4.21-5	very high

**Table 4:** Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for each practicum aspect.

1	Practicum Aspects	Reliability coefficient
2	Objectives	0.81
3	Content	0.82
4	Administration	0.78
5	Supervisor	0.80
6	Headmistress of the kindergarten	0.80
7	Cooperative teacher	0.82
	Assessment	0.83
Total coefficient		0.85



equals 4, “neutral” equals 3, “disagree” equals 2, and “strongly disagree” equals 1. We used the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis.

We classified the means into three levels: high, moderate, and low. To identify the differences, we used face validity, Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients, and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Content analysis, which is a set of techniques used in processing linguistic data, was used, where We analyzed students’ open-ended answers.

## RESULTS

To respond to RQ1 and determine the practicum aspects for the needed comprehensive quality standards, we conducted a comprehensive review of the study literature and its theoretical framework. A list of 100 statements distributed among the seven aspects was judged by the expert panel for its face validity and found appropriate to evaluate the target program.

To respond to R2, we calculated the means and standard deviations of responses.

Table 5. Means and standard deviations of responses to the questionnaire, in descending order.

These results revealed that the comprehensive quality standards are greatly available for the seven practicum aspects. However, there are shortcomings in the application of these standards (Ure and Gough, 2009).

### The first practicum aspect: Objectives

Table 6 shows that the means for the first aspect items range from 3.81 to 3.96. The highest mean is for the first

standard, stating that the practicum objectives are clear to all participants, and the lowest is for the third standard stating that practicum objectives are related to what students learn during their teaching practice.

Identifying objectives is foundational to any educational program. The clarity of objectives, and the correlation between the theories taught in the courses and the practicum training led to the current results. However, the practicum objectives at the Majmaah University needs continuous improvement and evaluation. Furthermore, some objectives must be extended to whole-year training courses, instead of only one semester. Our results support Abdulatif’s (2014) findings that suggest allocating a full semester to practicums.

### The second practicum aspect: Content

Table 7 shows that the means for the second aspect range from 4.23 to 3.88. The highest mean is for the standard indicating that practicum content helps to acquire professional skills for teaching in kindergartens, concerning planning, executing, and assessing activities (means = 4.23, SD = 80). The lowest mean is for the criteria indicating that practicum content is related to its objectives (mean = 3.88, SD = 84).

The results indicate that the practicum content offers beneficial scientific and logically organized skills. It is related to the required psychological and educational practices. The results may also be due to the well-defined courses studied as prerequisites for the practicum or the high level of motivation among trainee students. Furthermore, the results of the study also showed that the content of field education lacks the

Table 5: Illustrates the results in descending order.

no.	Practicum Aspect	Means	SD	Agreement Levels	Rank
2	Content	4.08	1.95	High	
7	Assessment	3.98	5.57	High	
1	Objectives	3.90	15.32	High	
6	Cooperative Teacher	3.85	15.26	High	
4	Supervisor	3.80	10.71	High	
5	Headmistress of kindergarten	3.79	13.11	High	
3	Practicum Management	3.39	9.07	Moderate	
	Total	26.79		High	

Table 6: Means and standard deviations of responses for the first practicum aspect, in descending order.

no.	Practicum Aspect	Standards	Means	SD	Agreement Level	Rank
1	Practicum objectives	Practicum objectives are clear to all participants.	3.96	0.77	High	1
2		Practicum objectives are related to the objectives of the Kindergarten Program.	3.96	0.71	High	2
3		Practicum objectives are related to what students learn during their teaching practice.	3.81	0.84	High	3
		Total	11.72	1.95	High	

theoretical side despite its importance and limitation to the applied practical side.

The results are in line with Jeans and Forth’s (1995) finding that there is a need to bridge the two worlds of theory and practice in the design and implementation of preservice teacher education programs. This necessitates increasing credit hours for the practicum and allocating several hours to a theoretical course for the practicum. This was also emphasized by Huntly (2005) who concluded that “practicum is preceded by an extensive course of preparatory lectures and tutorials that cover important aspects of the work of teachers. Students are provided with detailed insights into teaching elements including handwriting, planning, classroom management, ethical behavior, and reflective practice” (p. 19).

**The third practicum aspect: Management**

The means of the third practicum aspect standards range from 1.60 to 4.31, where the highest mean is for “There is a need to have a kindergarten inside the college (mean = 4.31, SD = 0.92), and the lowest mean is for “Practicum management selects the academic supervisor” (mean = 1.60, SD = 0.53). The mean of the total is 3.39 (SD =15.32), moderate rank. The practicum management is not able to achieve all these issues, expressed clearly as the following:

- There is no clear plan including the practicum topics.
- There is a shortage of academic supervisors.
- Supervisors are not specialized in kindergarten education. This, in turn, weakens the trust and reliability between trainee students and supervisors (Matika, 2011).
- The trainee students are not dedicated to practicum full-time and have to attend classes, which add more

burden and duties, consequently increasing anxiety and stress.

- Lack of microteaching sessions deprives the trainee students of the experience in preparing and conducting activities and from receiving enough feedback.
- There is no extended practice in the practicum; the trainee students do not attend the whole week at kindergartens, hindering familiarization and inclusion.
- The distribution of trainee students is randomly conducted, not considering their residential locations.
- There is no clear coordination between the practicum management and the kindergartens in holding meetings and participation.
- There is no resource center in the College for teaching aids and materials that may help the trainee students achieve the objectives. This may be due to financial matters.
- The college library does not offer recent recourses or books in kindergartens.

**The fourth practicum aspect: The role of academic supervisors**

Supervision is widely pointed out as a critical component in a student’s formative process (Wee, Weber and Park, 2014). Our analysis results revealed that the supervisors follow up with their trainee students, adequately fulfill their duties, and are aware of their responsibilities. The university also cares about qualifying the academic advisor. Despite the importance of supervisors’ role in empowering trainee students through counseling, sharing observations, and supporting self-confidence, the results indicate that the supervision system

**Table 7:** Means and standard deviations of responses for the second practicum aspect, in descending order.

<i>no.</i>	<i>Practicum Aspect</i>	<i>Standards</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Agreement Level</i>	<i>Rank</i>
3	Practicum content	Practicum content helps to acquire professional skills for teaching in kindergartens, concerning planning, executing, and assessing activities.	4.23	0.80	High	1
4		Practicum content helps the trainees to develop a positive attitude towards the teaching profession.	4.19	0.84	High	2
7		Practicum content provides teachers with theoretical knowledge helping them overcome curricular problems.	4.19	0.76	High	3
8		Practicum content improves communication skills.	4.17	0.88	High	4
5		Practicum content facilitates the use of new teaching and learning strategies and techniques.	4.10	0.69	High	5
6		Practicum content develops using new teaching and learning technologies	4.00	0.89	High	6
1		Practicum content is clear to the participants.	3.90	0.85	High	7
2		Practicum content is related to its objectives.	3.88	0.84	High	8
Total			32.64	5.57	High	

**Table 8:** Means, standard deviations, and the relative significance (ranks) of the criteria for the third practicum aspect, practicum management, in descending order.

<i>no.</i>	<i>Practicum Aspect</i>	<i>Standards</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Agreement Level</i>	<i>Rank</i>
27	Practicum Management	There is a need to have a kindergarten inside the College.	4.31	0.92	High	1
7		Practicum management adopts the-whole-day system (the student goes to kindergarten for a whole one or two days per week).	4.25	0.78	High	2
5		Practicum management identifies the requirements of success and distribution of marks.	4.6	0.86	High	3
17		Practicum management records the attendance of the students using official forms.	4.4	0.77	High	4
3		Practicum management states the conditions of registration in the practicum beforehand.	3.98	0.83	High	5
4		Practicum management identifies the tasks students are required to perform.	3.98	0.88	High	6
6		Tasks are suitable for credit hours of the practicum.	3.98	0.88	High	7
1		Practicum management is responsible for providing counseling and follow-up services for students.	3.88	0.95	High	8
2		Registration in the practicum starts on time.	3.85	0.94	High	9
14		Practicum management specifies the number of students per each supervisor.	3.71	0.87	High	10
20		Practicum management holds an orientation meeting for students.	3.63	0.98	Moderate	11
22		Practicum management holds meetings and orientation sessions for supervisors.	3.63	0.78	Moderate	12
21		Practicum management provides microteaching sessions for students.	3.56	1.05	Moderate	13
18		Practicum management provides books and references.	3.46	1.20	Moderate	14
26		Practicum management provides improvement and development plans.	3.44	0.89	Moderate	15
23		Practicum management holds meetings with cooperative teachers and the kindergartens' headmistresses to work cooperatively on practicum success.	3.42	1.06	Moderate	16
25		Practicum management provides a summative evaluation to help cope with challenges and problems.	3.40	0.91	Moderate	17
11		Practicum management distributes students among kindergartens according to the availability of labs, libraries, and aids.	3.31	0.94	Moderate	18
19		Practicum management provides transportation for students and cooperative teachers.	3.29	1.27	Moderate	19
24		Practicum management organizes field-visits to identify problems and challenges.	3.15	1.01	Moderate	20
12		Practicum management geographically distributes students among kindergartens.	3.13	1.16	Moderate	21
16		There is a guide that indicates the duties and responsibilities of practicum participants.	3.06	1.19	Moderate	22
13		Practicum management considers student requests when distributing them among the kindergartens.	2.98	1.29	Moderate	23
15		Students are dedicated to the practicum full-time.	2.65	1.29	Low	24
10		Practicum management provides a suitable number of cooperative teachers.	2,27	0.93	Low	25
8		Practicum management provides a whole week's duty for practicum students.	1.79	0.50	Low	26
9		Practicum management selects academic supervisors.	1.60	0.53	Low	27
Total			91.79	15.32	Moderate	

**Table 9:** Means, standard deviations, and relative significance (ranks) of the standards for the fourth practicum aspect, the role of academic supervisors, in descending order.

<i>no.</i>	<i>Practicum Aspect</i>	<i>Standards</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Agreement Level</i>	<i>Rank</i>
20	The role of academic supervisors	The supervisor shows respect to kindergarten leaders and teachers.	4.29	0.87	High	1
17		The supervisor responds to the trainee students' questions and remarks.	4.10	0.90	High	2
19		The supervisor avoids subjectivity and prejudice in performance assessment.	4.08	0.96	High	3
18		The supervisor carefully reads the assessment form at the beginning of the practicum.	3.96	1.07	High	4
16		The supervisor cares about the psychology of the trainee students.	3.88	1.00	High	5
15		The supervisor supports the positive attitudes of the trainee students.	3.85	0.94	High	6
12		The supervisor follows up with the trainee students' execution of instructions and remarks during visits.	3.83	0.98	High	7
7		The supervisor effectively plans to promote creativity and to avoid monotony and stereotyping.	3.79	1.09	High	8
9		The supervisor holds regular meetings with the trainee students to identify their problems and suggest solutions.	3.79	1.14	High	9
10		The supervisor discusses with the trainee students the remarks recorded during a class visit.	3.79	1.05	High	10
13		The supervisor directs the trainee students in executing the curricular and extra-curricular activities.	3.77	0.92	High	11
11		The supervisor provides immediate feedback to the trainee students to direct performance.	3.75	0.97	High	12
14		The supervisor adopts mutual persuasion to build closer relationships with the trainee students.	3.71	0.96	High	13
6		The supervisor selects available resources and the supervising techniques suitable for the trainee students.	3.69	1.03	Moderate	14
5		The supervisor spends the whole time with the trainee students in the kindergarten.	3.65	0.95	Moderate	15
2		The supervisor provides activity plans to the trainee students.	3.56	1.00	Moderate	16
4		The supervisor regularly visits the trainee students in the kindergarten.	3.54	1.05	Moderate	17
8		The supervisor plans for mutual visits among the trainee students in the kindergarten.	3.52	1.05	Moderate	18
1		The supervisor holds a meeting to explain the goals and their relation to instructional skills.	3.50	1.14	Moderate	19
3		The supervisor discusses the elements of the prepared plan before the class.	3.46	0.98	Moderate	20
Total			76.06	15.26	High	

does not achieve the required outcomes, as many students reported a shortage of supervisors and their negligence of important responsibilities. Jeans and Forth (1995) stress that much of a teacher's professional identity depends on three important features provided by supervision: mentoring, modelling, and feedback. They concluded, "students construct a professional self-image using the information provided by the significant credential others who are recognized as competent members of the profession" (p. 3).

Indications of this can be stated as follows:

- The supervision depends on class-visits and meeting with the trainee students, and it ignores varied approaches of learning. This may be due to a lack of knowledge of the new trends in educational supervision and rare opportunities for training and qualification.
- The limited number of academic supervisors may be attributed to the shortage of time, high workloads, a high number of trainee students and kindergartens to be visited, and sometimes the far locations of these kindergartens, and the lack of the expertise in the field.



- The supervisors' might not be able to solve some problems if they are not specialized in kindergarten education.
- The supervisors do not provide modeling activities that might help the trainee students acquire the required skills. This is due to the high workload and the high number of students that they have to follow up with.
- The supervisors do not follow up with the trainee students' planning and preparation of activities due to the high number of trainee students.
- The role of cooperative teachers is more active and important than that of the academic supervisor, because the former accompanies the trainee students all day and is available all the time while the latter visits the kindergartens at certain times.

**The fifth practicum aspect: The role of the kindergarten Headmistress**

The kindergarten is the basic field of training, and much of the trainee students' success depends on the appropriateness

of the kindergarten resources. The current results refer to a clear lack of teaching aids and printing and copying machines, resulting in stress and problematic situations that affect the trainee students' performances. These results support others that assure the importance of the role of kindergartens to guarantee the success of practicum training and to help students cope with practicum stress and anxiety (Capel, 1997; Goh & Matthews, 2011; Williams, 2013).

The results also indicate that the headmistresses are performing their duties. They select the cooperative teachers, solve the problems faced by trainee students, keep a record of their attendance and behaviors, inform them about the instructions and roles, and encourage them to participate in the activities to achieve integration of work. However, results indicate that the headmistresses do not sufficiently hold regular meetings with trainee students, attend classes with them, or review their notebooks. This may be due to high workload, poor communication with the College, and lack of incentives provided by the University.

**Table 10.** Means, standard deviations, and relative significance (ranks) of the standards for the fifth practicum aspect, the role of the kindergarten headmistress, in descending order.

<i>no.</i>	<i>Practicum Aspect</i>	<i>Standards</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Agreement Level</i>	<i>16Rank</i>
4	The role of the kindergarten headmistress	The headmistress records the trainee students' attendance.	4.19	0.98	High	1
2		The headmistress informs the trainee students about the instructions, rules, and internal codes of the kindergarten.	4.15	0.85	High	2
5		The headmistress encourages the teachers to cooperate with the trainee students.	4.00	1.11	High	3
6		The headmistress provides the trainee students with the opportunities to benefit from labs, the library, and teaching aids.	3.96	1.05	High	4
11		The headmistress encourages the trainee students to participate in the activities of the kindergarten.	3.92	1.04	High	5
1		The headmistress welcomes the trainee students in the kindergarten.	3.90	1.15	High	6
12		The headmistress solves the problems faced by the trainee students.	3.88	1.02	High	7
10		The headmistress adopts educational skills to deal with the trainee students.	3.85	0.98	High	8
3		The headmistress offers a place for trainee students' meetings with their supervisor.	3.81	0.93	High	9
13		The headmistress informs the trainee students about the items of an official form of assessment.	3.75	1.02	High	10
14		The headmistress gives documented feedback to the academic supervisor and practicum management about trainee students' progress.	3.73	0.91	High	11
9		The headmistress holds regular meetings with the trainee students.	3.50	1.09	Moderate	12
8		The headmistress attends classes with the trainee students.	3.33	1.19	Moderate	13
7		The headmistress reviews the trainee students' notebooks.	3.15	1.16	Moderate	14
Total		Total	53.10	10.71	High	

**The sixth practicum aspect: The role of cooperative teachers**

The cooperative teacher plays an important role in developing the skills of the trainee students during practicum training. The results indicate that the cooperative teachers are an important source of support for the trainee students, as they treat them respectfully and affectionately and encourage them to ask questions and participate. This is due to the experience of the cooperative teachers and their awareness of the importance of building good relations with the trainee students to create a calm environment. Furthermore, the cooperative teachers are specialized in kindergartens, and they treat well and support the trainee students. They value their roles as evaluators and coordinate between the practicum management and the kindergarten administrations. This argument has been supported by Campbell-Evans and

Maloney (1995) who concluded that "... moved from the role of supervisor to the role of mentor. This shift resulted in teachers finding a balance between providing assessment, offering advice, and challenging thinking." The nature and purpose of a cooperative teacher's role must be carefully examined to identify key features that will empower them to provide the type of mentoring that leads to quality field experiences for trainee students (Baum & Korth, 2013).

Our study results differ from that of Abo Namera (2002) that revealed problems related to cooperative teachers who considered practicum training as a confusing and time-wasting experience for them and their students. This stand leads to a negative attitude towards the trainee students and treating them in embarrassing ways. as well as the resort of some cooperating teachers to intervene in the educational situation, which causes embarrassment to the student teacher in front of

**Table 11.** Means, standard deviations, and relative significance (ranks) of the standards for the sixth practicum aspect, the role of cooperative teachers, in descending order.

<i>no.</i>	<i>Practicum Aspect</i>	<i>Standards</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Agreement Level</i>	<i>Rank</i>
15	The role of cooperative teacher	The cooperative teacher affectionately and respectfully treats the trainee students.	4.08	0.96	High	1
2		The cooperative teacher has a personal desire to participate in practicum training.	4.02	1.02	High	2
11		The cooperative teacher interferes at a suitable time and in a suitable way during the class.	3.96	0.96	High	3
14		The cooperative teacher encourages the trainee students to achieve outstanding performance.	3.96	0.96	High	4
6		The cooperative teacher helps the trainee students in planning and executing activities.	3.94	0.95	High	5
8		The cooperative teacher directs the trainee students to use the best instructional techniques.	3.92	0.94	High	6
16		The cooperative teacher writes regular reports on trainee students' performances.	3.92	0.91	High	7
3		The cooperative teacher models different instructional situations for the trainee students.	3.90	0.97	High	8
1		The cooperative teacher has enough experience.	3.88	0.95	High	9
5		The cooperative teacher provides the trainee students with non-recurring authentic tasks.	3.83	0.88	High	10
9		The cooperative teacher helps the trainee students in classroom management.	3.81	0.89	High	11
4		The cooperative teacher stays in the classroom during teaching the trainee students to lessons.	3.79	1.09	High	12
7		The cooperative teacher helps the trainee students in selecting and preparing the needed teaching aids.	3.77	1.01	High	13
10		The cooperative teacher helps the trainee students in selecting suitable assessment techniques.	3.73	0.96	High	14
12		The cooperative teacher invites the trainee students to regular meetings with school teachers.	3.71	1.09	High	15
13		The cooperative teacher invites the trainee students to regular meetings with parents.	3.44	1.30	Moderate	16
Total		Total	61.64	13.11	High	

the students. Our study indicates a shortage in the cooperative teacher's role in inviting the trainee students to meet with kids' parents. This may be due to the ignorance of their real duties, high workloads, or lack of experience and skills. According to Walsh and Elmslie (2005), cooperative teachers considered attending preparatory symposia as a valuable preparation in pre-empting issues that may arise during the practicum. This study also recommends that equipping cooperative teachers with information about expectations and duties is a key procedure that can contribute to the success of the practicum.

**The seventh practicum aspect: The assessment of the practicum**

These results are due to staff members' willingness to objectively evaluate trainee students and to share the assessment card with them so that they carefully examine the criteria. This helps students learn the skills they have to adequately and systematically master.

The results also revealed some shortcomings, such as the unsuitability of the evaluation forms, limited number of visits, and limited alternative techniques such as peer and self-assessment. Moreover, in many cases, the supervisors are not specialized in kindergartens. Consequently, they

assess the trainee students' performances in a routine way, fail to identify right or wrong practices, are unable to discuss evaluation results or give suggestions for further classes. Therefore, peer and self-assessment should be considered as important tools that supervisors can adopt to improve criticality and objectivity as important personal traits of good, positive teachers. To respond to R3 and determine statistically significant differences ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) according to pre-service kindergarten teachers' opinions about the availability of comprehensive quality standards for the practicum, attributed to variables of geographic location and GPA, we conducted a one-way ANOVA test to identify the effect of geographic location and GPA on trainee students' expectations from the practicum training, as shown in Table 13.

As mentioned early, to investigate the effect of geographic location, the study depended two different area (Al Majmaah and Al Zulfi cities). In regards to GPA, it is an indicator of the student's performance, and a standard that measures the level of the student during her studies at the university, and it is the most important criteria on which to judge the student's academic performance. In other words, the higher this average, the more this indicates the good performance and achievement of the student, and vice versa, i.e., the lower the average, this

**Table 12:** Means, standard deviations, and relative significance (ranks) of the standards for the seventh practicum aspect, the assessment of the practicum, in descending order.

no.	Practicum Aspect	Standards	Means	SD	Agreement Level	Rank
2	The assessment of the practicum	The assessment includes all activities of the trainee students in the kindergartens.	4.15	0.92	High	1
9		The supervisor assesses the trainee students' performances at the end of the practicum training according to the criteria on the observation card.	4.10	0.92	High	2
10		A portion of the score is given by the headmistress of the kindergarten.	4.06	0.90	High	3
11		A portion of the score is given by the cooperative teacher.	4.06	0.95	High	4
4		The trainee students read the assessment card at the beginning of the practicum.	4.04	0.84	High	5
5		Several assessment techniques are used, such as peer assessment, self-assessment, and portfolios.	4.04	0.82	High	6
1		Several criteria-based, objective tools are used to assess trainee students' performances at the end of the practicum.	3.96	0.98	High	7
7		Assessment techniques are based on creativity.	3.94	0.99	High	8
8		The trainee students participate in evaluating all elements of the practicum (objectives, content, administration, and participants)	3.94	0.95	High	9
6		Assessment techniques offer ongoing feedback.	3.88	0.86	High	10
3		The assessment evaluates personal traits as well as instructional performance.	3.85	0.89	High	11
12		Practicum training participants of practicum are allowed to evaluate the assessment.	3.77	0.88	High	12
Total			47.79	9.07	High	

indicates the poor performance of the student in her studies and her low level. The researcher believes the importance of this factor in determining the results of this research as it is linked to the student's performance level

The F value (0.05) was found to be statistically insignificant for the two variables; the trainee students' expectations from the practicum training is not affected by location or GPA. This may be because all trainee students have similar socio-economic backgrounds and experiences in their educational institutions, are taught by the same staff members, and receive training in the same kindergartens. Accordingly, this give an indicator that the female student teachers' opinions regarding their evaluation of field education in the kindergarten program at Majmaah University in light of the overall quality standards are not affected by some variables such as geographical location and GPA. This result may be due to the fact that the students belong to similar social and economic environments, and the experiences of the students are similar, which makes their view of the aspects of field education are similar. Especially since the teaching tasks assigned to them are equal, and the conditions, environments and systems of the kindergartens are almost similar, which does not show any differences in their attitudes towards field education. These results support those of Khasawna's (2017) that revealed no significant statistical differences ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in the trainee students evaluation of the Practicum Program due to the trainee students' GPA.

Based on the results of the empirical research, we show that factors such as teachers' beliefs about their own qualifications, as well as years of work experience and subject area, statistically significantly influenced the development of the teachers' professional identity. The main findings of the study are that teachers with several years of service experience feel better qualified to perform their duties (tasks related to planning and teaching were rated the most highly) than teachers with less work experience, and that teachers with more work experience evaluated the claims related to their educational activity statistically significantly higher. An important finding is that teachers define their professional identity and consequently, their role through their personality traits, which shows that we must not ignore teachers' personality traits, as they play an important role in teachers' professional development and identity.

### Strengths and weaknesses of the practicum

According to the trainee students' responses to the open-ended questions, strengths and weaknesses of the practicum training can be stated as follows:

#### Strengths

- The possibility of changing routine and place. It means changes the boring routine they used to when giving lectures.
- Providing feedback. The feedback is of great importance in the learning process and its importance stems from its use in modifying and developing behavior for the better. In addition, its important role to stimulate the motivation of learning, through the supervisor's help to her students to discover the correct responses to prove them and delete the wrong responses or cancel them.
- Cooperation with academic advisors, headmistresses, and cooperative teachers.
- Content that improved the creativity of the trainee students, increased their self-confidence and professionalism and supported their understanding and abilities to manage the class and interact with others.

#### Weaknesses

- The limited experience of the trainee students because of intermittent training. It provides a separate field education method (teaching the student for two days each week). Thus, it does not allow her to get used to the system in the kindergarten and integrate with the kindergarten family and make the kindergarten director deal with the student teacher as one of the teachers in the kindergarten.
- Unspecialized supervisors.
- Limiting practicum training for the final level in the program. Consequently, the period of time for education is short and insufficient for the student teacher to acquire basic skills in teaching and learning.
- Lack of preparation for the trainee students.
- Lack of consideration of the economic conditions of the trainee students.

**Table 13:** Variance, sum of squares, degree of freedom, and significance of students' responses to the questionnaire.

Variable	Variance	Sum of squares	Degree of Freedom	Means of squares	F Value	Significance
Geographical Location	Among groups	1.265	3	0.422	1.321	0.269
	Within groups	51.707	45	0.319		
	Total	52.972	48			
GPA	Among groups	2.831	3	0.944	3.048	0.03
	Within groups	50.124	45	0.310		
	Total	52.972	48			

- Lack of materials needed as teaching aids and means.
- Lack of available space to store materials and aids. Its lack of these requirements could affect the performance of female students, their activities and their abilities during the training period.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Founding a kindergarten in colleges to facilitate practicum training.
- Adopting full-time practicum training.
- Increasing training hours.
- Adding a practicum training course to all the levels of the program.
- Ensuring that supervisors are qualified.
- Direct interaction between supervisors and trainee students.

### Suggested approach for improving the practicum

We suggest the following points (in response to R4) to determine an approach to develop a practicum for the Kindergarten Program at the Majmaah University in light of the comprehensive quality standards:

#### Basics of the suggested approach

- The criteria for the comprehensive quality standards must be applied in the Kindergarten Program. Analyzing documents and survey responses revealed many shortcomings that necessitate updating and developing the practicum training to address new challenges.
- The approach should respond to rapid and continuous changes in the field of professional development of teachers and keep up with international trends in practicum training and microteaching.
- It should be supported by the developmental plans in KSA in light of the future vision.
- Practicum training is key in forming the personality of trainee students and improving their proficiency and instructional skills.
- The new approach should address the active roles of supervisors, cooperative teachers, and headmistresses.

#### Objectives of the suggested approach

Based on the general objective to develop practicum training in a kindergarten program in light of the comprehensive quality standards, the suggested approach aims to:

- Encourage the application of the comprehensive quality standards.
- Overcome the shortcomings of practicum training.
- Keep up with international changes in quality requirements.

- Develop the required social and professional traits for trainee students.
- Support positive attitudes among trainee students towards the teaching profession.
- Develop reflection, self-criticism, and tolerance to criticism.
- Reorganize practicum course contents.
- Allocate time to according to contents.
- Increase the number of activities and teaching aids.
- Improve the role of practicum management.
- Improve the performance of supervisors, cooperative teachers, and headmistresses.
- Design on-going and objective assessment tools to improve the instructional practices of trainee students.

#### The elements of the suggested approach

The suggested approach addresses two audiences: the target group and the executive group. The former includes the trainee students, and the latter includes universities, colleges of education, supervisors, headmistresses, and cooperative teachers. The success of practicum training depends on each element's recognition of their roles and responsibilities for self-improvement and communication.

#### The principles of the suggested approach

The suggested approach is based on basic principles such as the belief in the necessity of improvement, creating an appropriate environment, adopting a suitable theoretical base, the clarity of objectives, satisfaction of trainee students' professional needs, adopting proficiency-oriented practicum training, the achievement of conformity and alignment between theories and practices, and enabling self-fulfillment and self-growth.

#### The mechanics of achievement

The suggested approach depends on certain mechanisms distributed among the practicum aspects as follows.

- Practicum objectives should be clear and announced to all participants; suit the ages, interests, and abilities of trainee students; be regularly developed according to the challenges and changes in the educational system; and be inclusive of all aspects of learning.
- Practicum contents should include personal, professional, academic, and technical aspects; should suit the time allocated to teaching; and include modern strategies depending on technology and active interaction among training elements.
- Academic advisors must hold regular meetings with trainee students; continuously communicate with them and discuss their performance before and after classes; spend more time with them; facilitate an encouraging climate of training; model activities; adopt various



supervision techniques; and consider individual differences among trainees.

- The practicum management should hold regular meetings with headmistresses to raise their awareness of their roles and the importance of their cooperation and should offer all types of incentives. Headmistresses should encourage trainees to use available teaching aids and switch from an authoritative stand to providing modeling and support.
- Cooperative teachers should be specialized in kindergarten education, have at least three years of experience in teaching, be in the kindergarten all the time, accept the assigned duties of supervising trainee students, have the required professional counseling and communication skills, not assign any extra duties to trainee students, and adopt an objective and friendly way of discussion when observing defaulting behavior from trainees. The practicum management should hold regular meetings and workshops to teach them the suitable techniques of practicum and its tasks.
- All participants involved in the assessment process should adopt the approved techniques and forms of assessment such as portfolios as well as meta-cognitive tools such as planning and self-assessment cards. Trainees should read the assessment criteria to help them improve their performance. They should consider the assessment process as a cooperative one that requires integration and continuity.

### Challenges

Expected challenges must be identified to suggest solutions. These challenges are summarized as follows:

- **Limited time:** More hours should be allocated to practicum training, separate from other courses, depending on self-learning and technology. Furthermore, courses should be integrated to alleviate the burdens on trainees.
- **Limited number of academic supervisors:** New staff members should be employed, and more cooperative teachers and online and self-learning technologies should be utilized.
- **Lack of facilities:** Monetary rewards should be dispersed to trainees. Partnerships with society associations should be established to get sponsorships.
- **Resistance to change and development:** The ministry of education should adopt a perspective that meets the ambitious emerging trends of teacher and planner qualifications.

### The validity of the perspective

To the verification of the effectiveness of the suggested perspective, it was judged by a jury panel. Some modifications were recommended to increase the applicability of it.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop the acceptance and selection criteria for the Kindergarten Program.
- Modify the program's study plan to achieve more coherence between theoretical courses and the practicum.
- Include four courses for the practicum to levels from five to eight.
- Include new courses in the study plan to match the future needs of trainee students.
- Use available literature and research published and related to teacher-qualification programs.
- Adopt a skill -based approach in teacher-qualification programs.
- Eliminate barriers of communication and encourage teamwork.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Conducting a study similar to the current study to evaluate field education, and involving all parties concerned with the program, including academic supervisors, cooperating kindergarten directors, and cooperating teachers in the evaluation process.
- Conduct an evaluative study based on surveying opinions and attitudes of academic advisors, cooperative teachers, and headmistresses.
- Conduct a comparative descriptive study on the reality of the practicum in kindergarten programs within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Identify the criteria of selection for practicum schools according to trainee students' opinions.
- Investigate the effectiveness of the suggested program to improve the supervisory skills in light of the comprehensive quality criteria.

### Declaration of conflicting interest

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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