

**The Practicum in Teacher Education
in the Maldives:
Current Practices, Issues and Future Directions**

By

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ABSTRACT

The teaching practicum is considered as a crucial core component of a teacher education program that has a significant impact on the quality of graduate teachers. Stakeholders regard the practicum as an invaluable component of pre-service teacher education. However, the recent literature review demonstrates that the value of the practicum is undermined by a range of problems. In short, stakeholders encounter several issues and challenges in their efforts to implement a successful practicum experience for the student teachers (STs) due to the complex and multifaceted nature of the practicum.

This empirical exploratory study investigated the stakeholder perceptions regarding the current practices of the practicum in the Maldives to better identify the key issues, challenges and new possibilities; and to provide research-based evidence for policy and practices pertaining to the practicum in the Maldivian context. The stakeholders participated in the study include: 317 STs, 205 cooperating teachers (CTs), two supervising lecturers (SLs), ten school-based coordinators (SBCs) and three institutional-based coordinators (IBCs) who played the dual role of both IBCs and SLs. Having employed a mixed-method triangulation design and purposive selection of the participants, the study was conducted in four phases. In the first three phases, survey questionnaire for STs (STQ) and CTs (CTQ) were administered in 21 selected placement schools in four different zones (of six zones) across the country. In addition, observational data were also collected from 28 STs from early childhood education (ECE), primary and secondary during these phases. In the fourth phase, a total of 38 semi-structured interviews (face-to-face and telephone) were conducted with the selected stakeholders (12STs, 11CTs, 10SBCs, 3IBCs and 2SLs).

Drawing upon data from these multiple sources and from multiple stakeholders (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs, and IBCs), the findings of the study showed that there were several issues and challenges. Among those the most significant include: content issues that lead to a multitude of classroom management problems for STs, inadequate support from the stakeholders for STs, insufficient training for the stakeholders (in particular CTs) to undertake their essential roles; lack of coordination and cooperation among the key players, especially between teacher education institutions (TEIs) and placement schools; absence of national level policies on the practicum, and the deficiencies in the existing practicum structures, or models to address current issues.

To address these perceived problems, that may undermine the quality of the practicum, and ultimately the quality of the graduate teachers, the study makes specific recommendations, in light of its empirical evidence and with reference to the existing literature. The recommendations were specifically related to the four prominent stakeholder (policy makers, TEIs, placement schools and future researchers) groups who could play a significant role in making the practicum an educative event for all involved. The study recommends that the relevant policy makers establish governing bodies (e.g., national council for teacher education/national teacher certification department at the Ministry of Education, MoE), formulate a national framework for teacher education together with a framework, or a guideline for the practicum. Similarly, the outcomes of the study suggest that the TEIs establish practicum departments, develop pre-practicum programs for STs, professional development programs for CTs, SLs and SBCs. In addition, it is recommended that TEIs revise the current practicum models and make greater use of technology-enhanced practicum possibilities (especially in such a geographically dispersed country). Correspondingly, it is suggested that the placement schools establish formal units that take the responsibility for working with TEIs in a more collaborative fashion to prepare CTs and SBCs, and move towards forming a ‘community of practice’ or a platform for the stakeholders to enhance their professional development.

DECLARATION

“I, Suneena Rasheed, declare that the PhD thesis entitled THE PRACTICUM IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE MALDIVES: CURRENT PRACTICES, ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS is no more than 80,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no materials that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.”

Signature

Date

DEDICATION

To my Children, Manal and Mahil.

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My journey as the first fulltime doctoral candidate at the Maldives National University has been challenging. The pathway hasn't been smooth, but it has taught me numerous invaluable lessons. I am thankful to Allah for giving me this opportunity, patience and determination to successfully complete my PhD journey.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

STs:	Student Teachers
CTs:	Cooperating Teachers
SLs:	Supervising Lecturers
SBCs:	School Based Coordinators
IBCs:	Institutional Based Coordinators
SEP:	School Experience Program
TPP:	Teaching Practice Program
MoE:	Ministry of Education
TEIs:	Teacher Education Institutions
DHE:	Department of Higher Education
ARC:	Academic Review Committee
HoD:	Head of the Department
CCS:	Complement Criticism and Suggestion
CCM:	Constant Comparative Method

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

The teaching practicum, variously called teaching practice, teaching experience, field experience, or school experience, is a crucial core component of any teacher education program that has a significant impact on the quality of the graduates (Al-Mekhlafi & Naji, 2013; Barmao, Ng'eno, & Wambugu, 2013; Petrarca, 2013, Zeichner, 2010). Student teachers (STs) and teacher educators regard the teaching practicum as an invaluable component of pre-service teacher education programs (Le-Cornu, 2012; Kosnik & Beck, 2002; Gursoy, 2013; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). Practicum provides potential opportunities to construct and reconstruct STs' identity and for them to become enculturated into the profession of teaching (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009). The teaching practicum is the time when STs experiment with and apply their knowledge of teaching in an authentic school classroom for the first time and many challenges can be expected. Some of the recent studies indicated that the value of teaching practicum is frequently undermined by a range of problems such as lack of cooperation from stakeholders, insufficient feedback from the cooperating teachers (CTs) e.t.c. (Jusoh, 2013; Papieva, 2006; Pinder, 2008; Vick, 2006). In fact, some researchers have gone so far as to suggest that much of the university activity in regard to the practicum is a rather fruitless exercise (Blunden, 2000).

The practicum is a complex multifaceted endeavour that involves multiple stakeholders: pupils, STs, CTs, supervising lecturers (SLs), school-based coordinators (SBCs) and institutional-based coordinators (IBCs). The research suggests that these stakeholders encounter several issues and challenges during the practicum. For example, Papieva (2006) claimed that STs, one of the key stakeholders, are often not provided with adequate opportunities and freedom to apply much of the learned theories into their practice during the practicum. Apart from that, they face several other challenges such as managing classrooms for the first time, and working under the close scrutiny of their SLs and CTs. They often feel insecure due to the scrutiny of their SLs and anxious about the evaluation of their teaching practice.

STs considered the practicum as the most stressful part of teacher education program. For many STs the practicum can be a frustrating experience and fraught with

unanticipated events and unmet expectations (Kiggundu and Nayimuli, 2009). The practicum sometimes becomes a demoralising experience for STs. In most cases the practicum is insufficient to translate on-campus theory into classroom practice, and the expectations of STs are not met (Gursoy, 2013). As a result, in many cases STs complete their practicum merely as a formal degree requirement without experiencing the deeper learning that is hoped for by teacher educators and possible in such contexts (Papieva, 2006).

This thesis reports a study that investigated the current practices of the practicum in TEIs in the Maldives in an attempt to provide research based evidence for the policy and practices pertaining to the practicum in that context. This introductory chapter begins with a brief background to the study. It then follows the research problem through to possible solutions. Next, the research questions, and rationale for the study are discussed. This is followed by an outline of the scope of the study and then delimitations of the study. Finally, the chapter ends with an outline of the organisation of the thesis. The next section provides an outline of the research problem and proposed solution.

Research Problem

The practicum is a crucial core component of any teacher education program. Stakeholders regard practicum as an essential element of teacher education. “The fact that successful completion of this field experience is considered important to qualify as a teacher makes it highly valued component” in teacher education in the Maldives (Ismail, 1998, p.6). Since the inception of practicum as part of the teacher education in the Maldives in 1977, it has been subjected to several amendments and modifications. However, these changes have not been often supported by any formal research based evidence. Most of the time they were solely based on ad hoc feedback from STs and program reviews. In addition, much of the changes that were meant to improve the practicum have not been efficacious in practice (e.g., general supervisory strategies that fail to meet the unique needs of individual students) (Ismail, 1998).

Apart from that, in the midst of recent socio-political transformations in the Maldives, the education sector has attracted increasing attention from social critics claiming the need for major reviews on multiple facets of the educational system. The relevance of current university teacher education programs has often been contested. Some of the areas of growing concern include the public claims or perceptions on the

gap between theory and practice with the apparent lack of professional accountability and declining level of performance of novice teachers. However, at present, our understanding of these claims of potential problems is very limited and these claims have not been supported with any research based evidence in the Maldivian context. In order to respond to such claims of declining standards of graduate teachers with any authority, formal inquiry into the current situation is imperative.

Therefore, given that the practicum is a vital component of any teacher education program and the dearth of research in this area in the Maldivian context, this study's twofold goal is to investigate stakeholder (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs and IBCs) perceptions regarding the current practices of the practicum to better:

- identify the key issues, challenges and new possibilities; and
- to provide research based evidence for the policy and practices pertaining to practicum, in order to bring enhancements where possible, making the practicum a successful educative event for future STs.

Research Questions

Specifically, the primary purpose of this study is to explore the current practices of teaching practicum in teacher education institutions in the Maldives in order to identify key issues and suggest recommendation and models that might enhance the current practicum experience. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are the main features of the practicum in the teacher education programmes in the Maldives?
2. What are the perceptions of stakeholders (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs and IBCs) about the current practices of the practicum?
3. What are the main issues faced by the stakeholders?
4. What are stakeholders' recommendations to address the key issues identified?

Rationale for the Study

The rationale of the study is that the practicum as a significant core component of teacher education and, as such, needs to feature prominently within the context of teacher education in the Maldives. The rationale can be understood in terms of three levels: global, local and personal.

Global perspectives. The data from overseas studies on teacher education widely published in the international literature suggest that effective teaching practicum or teaching experience during pre-service teacher training serves as the most critical component of any teacher education programme (Al-Mekhlafi & Naji, 2013). The practicum is a complex phenomenon, which involves multiple stakeholders who need to work collaboratively to make the practicum successful. Due to the complex nature of the practicum and its importance in teacher education, there is a concerted effort across the world to improve the quality of teacher education programs, including the practicum as an integral component of those programs (Cox, Deed, & Pridham, 2013).

In addition, there have been growing concerns and debate in the international literature on what form the practicum should take or which model best aids in developing the essential qualities of teachers, which is often regarded as the fundamental purpose of practicum. There are quite a number of different models or approaches to the teaching practicum. For example, the critical intervention model, practicum initiative model, master teacher model, joint problem solving model, to name few, have been used in teacher education programs across the globe (Beckford & Roland, 2010; Ben-Peretz, 2000).

National perspectives. In spite of the vast body of international literature on practicum, the author has been able to find only one study conducted in 1998 on the Maldivian context. Compounding this lack of research is that the context is unlike any other: the inhabited islands are dispersed in an expansive ocean; the support from the teacher institutions is often unavailable; the CTs are usually expatriates from very different education systems; several STs are often assigned to one CT; and no remuneration is given for carrying out the duties of a master teacher. Individually or collectively these factors could have a significant impact on the success of practicum which ultimately could compromise the quality of the learning of the STs.

Personal perspectives. The author had personally experienced the lived experience of the teaching practicum at one of the public teacher education institutions in the Maldives, a decade ago, in 2004, while completing a Bachelor of Teaching Secondary Program. During the consecutive three practicums round model, she was placed in two different schools: one in the capital city and one in the island community. This provided rich experience with regard to the practicum conducted in different

contexts within the country. In addition, the author worked as an external SLs for number of STs at MNU during the last couple of years. This lived experience as a ST and a SL brings important insights to this study, and enabled comparison of past and present practices, and is relevant to the public claims of the declining standard of the graduate teachers. Therefore, given the educational background and professional involvement in the education sector as a chemistry teacher at higher secondary level for many years, and in her current role as a SLs and also a psychology lecturer of many STs the she feels that not contributing constructively to the debate on the perceived declining teacher competencies, in this case, with respect to the practicum, is a dereliction of her professional duty.

In sum, based on personal experience, together with national and global concerns about teacher education, the author was motivated to carry out the current research to explore the present practices of practicum in the Maldives, in an attempt to identify issues, concerns and to propose changes to the current practicum model(s), or potentially propose entirely new practicum model(s) that would address specific needs of the education system in the Maldives.

Contextual Background to the Study

Geographical context. The Maldives is a geographically dispersed island nation, formed into 26 naturally occurring atolls, and is located in the Indian Ocean about 671 km southwest of Sri Lanka. A chain of approximately 1190 small coral islands constitute the archipelago, which spreads across a length of 823 kilometres from north to south and a width of 130kilometres from east to west. Approximately 200 of the islands are inhabited. The total area of Maldives is 90,000 square kilometres, of which 99% is covered with sea. On an average, the majority of the islands have 0.7 square kilometres, and only nine islands are larger than two square kilometres (UNDP, 2014). The population, according to Maldives Population and Housing Census 2014 is 344,023. Approximately one-third (153,379) of the population resides in Male', the capital city, which has approximately two square kilometres. The majority of the islands (123) have a population less than 1000. These geographical features, especially the distribution of islands, impede the implementation of practicum in the island communities. The cost of and difficulties in travelling by sea during bad weather make it challenging for the teacher

educators to visit and personally observe the ongoing teaching practicum in schools in the island communities.

Historical overview of teacher education. The history of teacher education parallels the history of human civilization. Parents have always wanted to ensure that the people to whom they entrust their children for guidance are qualified and morally upright. In fact, Angus (2001) argues that historical references to the issuing of licenses to teach can be found as early as in Roman times, that is, nearly 2000 years ago. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that formal teacher education is an important prerequisite to the licensing of teachers for schools. Initially, licenses were issued on the basis of the experience of the person, but later by an examination of the knowledge possessed by the person in conjunction with demonstrated school experience. Angus (2001) notes that examinations by the licensing body were the predominant means of assessing the competence of aspiring teachers 100 years ago in the US. The institutions that prepared students for the licencing examinations later grew into centres or faculties of teacher education (Edward, 1991).

Teacher education in the Maldives mirrors the evolution of the profession in other countries. Public examinations for teachers and centres for preparing aspiring teachers to pass these examinations existed in the Maldives nearly 40 years ago (Faculty of Education [FE], 2001). Public education then was not so much a state function as it was a community enterprise. In the drive to universalize primary education, beginning in the 70s, this traditional community enterprise was slowly taken over by the state. Gradually, teacher education became a state enterprise although local-level government licensing examinations continued until early 2000s (FE, 2001). The first formal teacher education program was initiated in 1977 in the Educational Project Office within the MoE. Teacher education was then more formally constituted with the evolution of Educational Development Centre. The first specialized state teacher education institution, Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) was established in 1984, though teacher training had been ongoing for several years earlier to that (Hussein, 2001). ITE was later renamed as the Faculty of Education (FE) with the amalgamation of all the higher education institutions to form The Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE) in 1998. MCHE is the precursor to the first ever public university in the Maldives, The Maldives National University (MNU) inaugurated in 2011 through a parliamentary Act.

In 2012, the government transformed the functions of former Education Development Centre (EDC) into an institution under the name The National Institute of Education (NIE) retaining the mandate of in-service teacher training and developing an upgrading program for untrained teachers who are currently working in the teaching profession to Diploma level. This brief history provides a summary of the evolution of the provision of teacher education in the Maldives.

Historical overview of teaching practicum. The history of the practicum, more commonly called teaching practice in the Maldivian context, parallels with the history of teacher education in the Maldives. It was introduced as part of teacher education from the commencement of the primary teacher education program in 1977. At the time, the practicum comprised two separate programs: school experience program (SEP) and teaching practice program (TPP). These two programs are outlined in more detail below.

School experience program. The SEP was intended to introduce STs to the realities of classroom teaching and multiple roles of a classroom teacher. It was initially introduced as a component of the primary teacher education programs. At the time, the SEP was different for the courses in Dhivehi language (an Indo-Aryan language predominantly spoken by about 350,000 people in the Maldives, where it is the national language) and English. For a certificate of primary teaching in Dhivehi, the STs spend one month in schools in their island communities, during the first year of the two-year program. This program was later revised and restructured in 1980s to assist STs to make meaningful observations in schools, and to put that into practice. Although the school experience was undertaken in island communities, the follow up seminars were conducted at the ITE.

Unlike STs from Dhivehi language courses, STs enrolled in English language courses initially had one-week intensive in-class observation prior to the teaching practice. These STs were placed in schools in Male' city. This structure of the SEP was also subjected to changes in 1980s. It was restructured to extend the one-week intensive in-class observations to three-weeks, requiring STs to fill in more detailed observation forms on various aspects of classroom teaching by attending schools for half sessions. The follow up seminars were initially held at ITE, but later it was held in schools once a week with the teacher educators, supervisors from the school, and STs.

In 1996, due to the difficulties in travelling to island communities and complications and constraints faced in conducting on-campus theory classes for those STs, the SEP was revised and restructured to a more common model that comprised of two blocks each of seven-week duration (Ismail, 1998). In each block, STs were required to visit schools two days per week for half sessions. STs were placed in pairs in classes and were required to work with the CTs as helpers or assistants. Initially, they were required to take part in team teaching with their peer and the CT, and needed to conduct a minimum of one lesson individually per week. In addition, they were expected to maintain a reflective journal. However, none of the components of the SEP was considered in assessing the final practicum grade.

Teaching practice program. Unlike SEP, TPP required the STs to undertake the role of a regular teacher where they were expected to take part in all curricular and extra-curricular activities. The duration of TPP for all the teacher education program was 4 weeks, but later in 1995, with the termination of on-campus micro-teaching clinics, the duration was increased to 5 weeks (Ismail, 1998). At the beginning of the TPP, STs were allowed to teach a limited number of classes. The work load was gradually increased whereby the STs took the full responsibility of the classroom teacher by the end of the TPP. Unlike SEP, TPP was assessed by a team comprised of teacher educators, school supervisors, CTs and any other subject teacher who taught the class (Ismail, 1998).

Teacher education today. Being the nation's premier higher education provider and the teacher preparation institution, the FE provides teacher education for early childhood education, primary and secondary level, starting from certificate level to degree level. Apart from the teacher preparation courses offered in the FE, MNU has diversified its role in preparing teachers through the establishment of other faculties. These faculties include, the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FIS) and Centre for Open Learning (COL). COL offers teacher training courses in distance mode across the country, while, FIS trains teachers in the field of Islamic studies. Thus, MNU now provides a fully accredited Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degrees for Maldives students who wish to become teachers.

With the rapid increase in social and national demand for qualified teachers, and with the government approval, private colleges began to provide teacher education for profit, in 2009. The private colleges that offer teacher training include, Mandhu College

(MC), Villa College (VC), Avid College (AC), International Institute for Professional Development (IIPD) which was later renamed as MI College, and Maldives College of Islamic Studies (MCIS) which was later renamed as The Maldives Islamic University (MIU). Among these, AC and MI college offers teacher education courses for Early Childhood Education (ECE), while, VC and MIU offer teacher education for both primary and secondary school level teachers. MC trains teachers for both ECE and at the primary level.

In sum, currently there are two public universities (MNU and IUM) and four private colleges who provides teacher education programs at different levels. In all of these institutions, the practicum is included as part of the teacher education programs.

Teacher registration. There have been no governing bodies that directly regulate teacher education provided during the past 40 years of teacher education in the Maldives. The teacher education programs have been nominally accredited, prior to their commencement, by the Maldives Accreditation Board (MAB) which was established on 14th August 2000, which was later renamed as Maldives Qualification Authority (MQA) on 17th May 2010. The requirements for accreditation are largely administrative in nature and except the accreditation of teacher education program, a formal monitoring of the accredited teacher education programs has not been undertaken. The practicum component of these teacher education programs is organised by the respective institutions. In other words, the MQA has neither particular requirements nor specific guidelines for the practicum. Thus inconsistencies in the practicum are not entirely unexpected among the various TEIs.

Significance of the Study

Several compelling reasons for a formal and a systematically designed study involving all the stakeholders in the practicum have been argued in the outline of the research problem above. More specifically the factors identified in the subsequent section make this study significant.

- First, there has been a growing body of international literature on the practicum. However, there is dearth of research in the Maldivian context pertaining to the practicum – the author came across only one formal research study conducted in the Maldivian context long back in 1998. Therefore, this study will provide research based evidence for the

stakeholders about the current practicum practices, to make a much informed decision on the organisation and implementation of the practicum.

- Second, as this is the first doctoral level study undertaken on the practicum in the Maldivian context, in an island nation, it adds value to the international literature to portray practicums in similar ocean-island states.
- Third, it identifies a broad range of issues and challenges faced by the stakeholders, during the practicum. Together, it sought out recommendations from the stakeholders to address the issues and challenges identified.
- Fourth, the study will analyse current practices and practicum approaches adopted in the TEIs in the Maldives, identifying the relative merits and shortcomings through a comparative analysis of various practicum approaches employed in TEIs across the country.
- Fifth, together with the findings of this study and the extensive review of literature on practicum, the study may provide possible measures to address possible shortcomings in the current practicum approaches in the Maldives, with general recommendations applicable to similar contexts in small ocean-island states (e.g., general supervisory strategies that fail to meet the unique needs of individual students).
- Sixth, this study would broaden the international literature on teacher education, specifically the practicum component.
- Seventh, this exploratory study would provide a comprehensive conceptualisation of the practicum and research based evidence for policy and practice that would certainly serve as guiding principles on how to organise and conduct an effective and educative practicum for the future STs in the Maldives.

In brief, this study is envisaged to make a significant and new contributions to the scholarly literature in teacher education, at the same time providing future directions for improving the practicum practices in teacher education in the Maldives.

Overview of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into six major chapters. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction that outlines how the chapter is organised. The following outline gives an overview of each chapter.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION. This chapter provides an introduction to the study including the research problem, research questions, rationale and contextual background to the study. The contextual background focuses geographical context and on historical overview of teacher education in the Maldives. It follows an outline of the significance and scope of the study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE. This chapter provides a comprehensive and concise literature background to the study. The chapter begins with an introduction which is followed by the conceptualisation of the term ‘practicum.’ Next, the practicum models, structure of the practicum, stakeholder participation and perceptions, issues and challenges, strategies for successful implementation of the practicum and key issues underpinning this study are presented.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. This methodological chapter begins with an overview of research framework and conceptual framework of the study. It then follows the philosophical perspectives underpinning the study, researcher positionality, research paradigm and design, and sources of data. It also describes the construction of instruments, and how their validity and reliability are established, followed by the recruitment of participants, phases of data collection, and data analysis. Finally, how the study enhances its trustworthiness, and ethical considerations are outlined.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS. In this chapter, the results of the study are presented. Both qualitative and quantitative data are collated in response to the research questions. Tables, charts and graphs are used where applicable.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION. This chapter provides a brief summary of the findings, and its interpretation, followed by a discussion of the finding in the context of existing literature. This pattern of organisation is followed to answer the research questions presented in Chapter One.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION. The final chapter provides a summary of the outcomes of the study, limitations of the study and recommendations for the stakeholders.

CHAPTER 2 : REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The primary purpose of this exploratory study is to contribute to current understanding of the practicum in the Maldives, in order to better appreciate and suggest enhancements, where possible, that might benefit all concerned. To achieve this purpose, the researcher explored the main features of the practicum in the programmes of public and private TEIs; the perceptions of stakeholders about the current practices of the practicum; the key issues that they faced; and their suggestions to address the key issues identified in implementing a successful a practicum. To conduct this study, it was imperative to have a critical review of most up-to-date literature. This review, although principally conducted prior to the data collection, was ongoing throughout all the phases of the study.

This critical review is mainly based on the international literature due to the dearth of research in this area in the context of the Maldives. It specifically explores various practicum models adopted by the teacher education institutions across the globe. In addition, it delves into a wide range of literature to understand stakeholder perceptions, critiques and possible changes to make the practicum a successful event for all stakeholders. In light of this, four major areas of literature were reviewed: (1) practicum models, (2) perceptions of stakeholders (STs, CTs, SLs, SBC and IBC), (3) key issues faced by the stakeholders and (4) recommendations, or strategies for an effective implementation of the practicum. A review of practicum models provides an understanding of the main features of the practicum. In addition, exploring the key issues pertaining to the practicum sensitized the researcher to the possible situation in the context of the Maldives. Further, investigating various strategies that the other countries have adopted for an effective implementation of the practicum helped the researcher to identify and recommend, in conjunction with the empirical results from the study, strategies feasible to the context of the Maldives.

To conduct this selected literature review, the researcher used multiple information sources, including books, doctoral and masters' level dissertations, scholarly peer reviewed articles from various journals (for example, *Journal of Teaching and Teacher Education*, *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *Education Research Journal*, *Action in Teacher Education*, *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, *Arab World English Journal*, *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, etc.), conference proceedings and periodicals. To ensure that the discussion is up-to-date, the

literature reviewed in this section is predominantly based on literature related to teaching practicum published over more than decade between 2002 and 2016.

Each of the four sections of this critical review begins with an introduction, discussion and a brief summary of the arguments. In addition, an interpretive summary is included at the end of the chapter that illustrates how this critical review has led to the development of the conceptual framework of this study.

Conceptualization of the Practicum

This section provides a detailed discussion of the conceptualization of the term 'practicum' and the purpose of the practicum; the purpose of including these two sub-sections is to provide an in depth understanding of the purposes of the practicum and how they lead to various practicum models.

Defining 'practicum.' One of the fundamental and significant objectives of teacher education is to prepare capable, competent, effective, efficient and qualified classroom teachers (Ali & Parveen 2013; Elligate, 2007; Karammustafaoglu, 2009). These indispensable qualities are primarily developed in STs by engaging them in hands-on authentic experiences during the practicum. Therefore, without a doubt the practicum has become one of the most crucial and cornerstone elements of any teacher education program (Alger & Kopcha, 2009; Cuenca, Schmeichel, Butler, Dinkelman, & Nichols, 2011; Gursoy, 2013; Gronn, Romeo, McNamara, & Teo, 2013; Loizou, 2011; Lind, 2004; Zhang, Cown, Hayes, Werry, Barnes & France, 2015).

Theoretically, the practicum is defined as a supportive journey of professional development and learning, gained through immersion in the real world of teachers' workplace (Keogh, Dole, & Hudson, 2006). Several authors have sought to define the term 'practicum' (Al-Mekhlafi, 2012; Dymond, Renzaglia, Halle, Chadsey, & Bentz, 2008; Elligate, 2007; Morrison, 2016). For example, Beak and Ham (2009) defined the teaching practicum as a course which allows STs to play the role of a teacher on the basis of theoretical understanding on teacher education and under the guidance and coaching of a CT to develop practical competence. On the other hand, some authors have highlighted a broader conception of the practicum and viewed it as an invaluable opportunity for STs to experiment and examine the theories that they were exposed to in their theory classes (Hamaidi, Al-Shara, Arouri, & Awwad, 2014). Similarly, Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen (2013) described practicum as an extended field experience under

the guidance of an experienced teacher who is often referred to as a cooperating teacher. Supporting this definition, Elligate (2007) described practicum as a course which allows the learner to perform a practice under coaching from an expert to develop the learner's practical competencies. However, a slight variation is evident from the definition provided by Al-Mekhlafi (2012). He considered the practicum as 'a strategy': a strategic endeavour that provides incremental and integrated real-life experiences for the STs. Another variant is suggested by Ali and Al-Adawi, (2013) who viewed the practicum as a setting designed to learn the task of 'learning to teach' (i.e., a metacognitive component). In this regard, Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen (2013) state that the practicum is an opportunity for student teachers to observe and experience various images of teaching both modelled and articulated by cooperating teachers. This modelling mainly focuses on teaching techniques, impulse, traditions and authority. Thus the practicum is variously defined as a course, a strategy, a setting, or a modelling experience. However, consistent to all definitions is the oversight of an experienced professional.

A variety of terms such as practice teaching, student teaching, teaching practice, field studies, field experience, in-field experience, practical experience, mentoring programs, clinical teaching, professional experience program, school based experience, workplace education, and internships have, at times, been interchangeably used to refer to the relationship between the ST and CT and the practice they are engaged in (Bloomfield, 2009; Cohen, Hoz, & Kaplan, 2013; Elligate, 2007; Elmsile & Walsh, 2005; Gujjar, Ramzan, & Bajwa, 2011; Hagen, 2008; McClure, 2008). Conceptually, all these terms excluding internship have similar meanings. The concept of internship is used in the literature to describe an extended practicum at the end of the teacher training program and sometimes extended into the first year of teaching.

The teaching practicum, by definition, always takes place in placement schools (Barmao, Ng'eno, & Wambugu, 2013; Gujjar, Ramzan, & Bajwa, 2011). Placement schools are the school sites where STs are officially placed to complete the requirement of their teacher education programs. Gujjar, Ramzan and Bajwa (2011) asserted that practicum has three major connotations: the practice of teaching skills and acquisition of 'the role of teacher' to a wide range of experiences in placement schools; and a course of practical hands-on study as distinct from theoretical studies.

Finally, the practicum is a journey of discovery for the STs that includes both ups and downs associated with any such new adventure. Hamman and Romano (2009) defined teaching practicum as a situation where STs discover their own teaching styles and management techniques through experimentation which help them to improve their current teaching practices. Supporting this definition, Atputhasamy (2005) stated that during the practicum, STs attempt to put into practice the many theories they have been exposed to during the teacher education programme in the actual classroom situation, albeit during a period of anxiety, apprehension and adjustment for student teachers.

In brief, the forgoing discussion has described the most common understandings of the term 'practicum' with slightly differing views of authors highlighted in the literature. However, there is a general consensus that the practicum is a core component of teacher education that provides a platform for inquiry into and experimentation of one's teaching practice. It is an avenue to attest career choice. It is an occasion of excitement, anxiety and apprehension. It is the 'real world' of teaching.

Significance of the practicum. In the university setting, where STs spend a greater part of their teacher education programs, they are exposed to the theoretical stance of teaching with limited opportunities to experiment with the many theories learned through micro-teaching sessions with their peers. Despite the benefits, it is still a highly artificial or contrived teaching environment. Having a theoretical foundation of teaching and conducting a few micro-teaching sessions with peers cannot ensure that one is ready and able to teach. Therefore, it is imperative that there is an opportunity for STs to put into practice all the theories and micro-teaching practice sessions that they have been exposed to on campus. The practicum provides a genuine teaching environment to explore, practice, reflect, and refine their teaching. Only in this way can the STs and their supervisors (and regulatory authorities) know if they are sufficiently qualified and well equipped to enter the teaching profession.

A meta-analysis of 113 articles by Cohen, Hoz and Kaplan (2013) on the teaching practicum has identified four important points regarding the significance of the practicum to the teacher education. First, the teaching practicum is considered as an external extension of teacher education programs that is undertaken in authentic classroom settings. Second, it is concurred that the practicum has the potential to reduce the perceived gap between theory and practice by enabling STs to apply the content

knowledge learnt on campus in these settings. Third, it could accustom STs to diverse school settings with sufficient support and assistance from the stakeholders to learn about and better understand key issues related to teaching and learning. Fourth, the practicum is considered as the most desirable ground to develop personal identity construction through framing and reframing of their role as a teacher (Schon, 1987).

Similarly, Hamaidi, Al-Shara, Arouri, and Awwad (2014), argued that the practicum is the first opportunity for STs to experience the ‘real world’ and learning. It exposes their potential shortcomings which, in turn helps them in developing their role as teachers. In other words, practicum enables STs to construct and reconstruct their professional identity and practice. Apart from that, the practicum enables the STs to be well informed of the possible problems and challenges that they likely to face as teachers. It also allows them to understand the individual differences and broader understanding of pupils’ learning needs. In addition, the successful practicum experiences should lead to STs to develop positive attitudes towards the profession. Further, it instils values, habits, and norms of the profession.

In the same way, many authors argued that the practicum provides a real interface between student-hood and membership of teaching profession, or it offers an avenue for the STs to experiment with the knowledge obtained from TEIs and to make it their own (Jusoh, 2013; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009). Therefore, STs perceived it as the most important process of their preparation for the teaching profession and hence, the commencement of this complex endeavour creates a combination of anticipation, anxiety, excitement and apprehension, all of which are essential elements for growth and development. Stressing on the significance of the practicum, Smith and Lev-Ari (2005) indicated that the art of teaching is best learned by engaging in it, first-hand and in the lived experience of a real classroom.

In short, the significance of the school-based experience underscores the importance of practicum as a critical component of pre-service teacher education, for STs in creating and defining their teacher identity. It I felt that nothing else other than immersion in the practice setting can enable this transformation.

Purpose of the practicum. The review of relevant literature suggests that the primary purpose of teaching practicum is to provide STs with an authentic teaching environment to explore, practice, reflect and refine pedagogical concepts they learned

from university (Hudson & Hudson, 2013). Similarly, supporting this assertion, Kwan and Lopez-Real (2005) stated that the main purpose of the practicum is to enculturate student teachers into the 'community of practice' of the teaching profession. Community of practice is defined as a group of people who share common interests, goals, and practices (Ambrosetti, Knight & Dekkers 2013). This community of practice in a practicum setting include STs, CTs and SLs from the university. The benefits from this community of practice largely depends on the quality of interaction among the members and the personal value they bring into it (Lind, 2004).

Similarly, Papiieva (2006) also pointed out that another key purpose of practicum is to get acquainted with curricular and extracurricular activities of the schools, the school teachers and the teaching in general. In other words, one of the main purposes of the practicum is to get involved in the day-to-day routines of school system (McClure, 2008). A study conducted to find out the purpose of the practicum from the perceptions of the stakeholders revealed that the participants have almost common understanding about the primary purpose of practicum, which is to provide practical learning experience for the STs, and to guide them bridge theories and practice (Chandler & Williamson, 2013). In addition, it showed that one of the key players of the practicum, the STs perceived that the practicum is designed to provide safe and supportive learning environment. Alger and Kopcha (2009) claimed that all these things (forming sense of belonging to the profession, developing reflective practice, and enabling their role as a teacher) are central to the understanding the routines of the school systems.

Trent (2010) used the term 'goal' to describe what is defined in the current study as 'purpose'. In articulating the goal, he stated that the goal of teaching practicum includes gaining practical classroom experience, applying theory and teaching techniques, discovering from more experienced teachers, expanding awareness of how to set goals, and questioning, articulating, and reflecting on one's own teaching and learning philosophies. His view echoed what Jusoh (2013), Kwan and Lopez-Real (2005) and Papiieva (2006) have explained as the purpose of practicum. Similarly, in their meta-analysis of 113 articles related to teaching practicum, Cohen and her colleagues identified four broad areas to explain the goals of the practicum (2013). First, enhance professional development of STs through application and integration of particular instructional approaches. Second, familiarization with the school system. Third, promote STs' personal growth, through the development of their cognitive skills. Fourth, on

appreciation of the impact the school systems, to enhance pupils' performance and to ensure mentor teachers to use most up-to-date teaching methods and techniques. This review also indicated that the latter one is the least researched among the four.

In sum, the foregoing discussion explains the overarching purposes evident from the analysis of the literature published during the last decade or two. The next section illustrates various models designed to achieve these purposes.

Practicum Models

The analysis of the relevant literature on practicum demonstrates that to achieve the purposes of teaching practicum mentioned in the foregoing discussion, a wide range of practicum models have been adopted by various TEIs across the world. The term 'practicum model' is used here to describe how the practicum is designed to achieve its primary purposes. In general, there are six general models: many of which have at least one or more variants. Figure 2.1 depicts various practicum models and their variants. The general practicum models and their variants are examined in the next section.

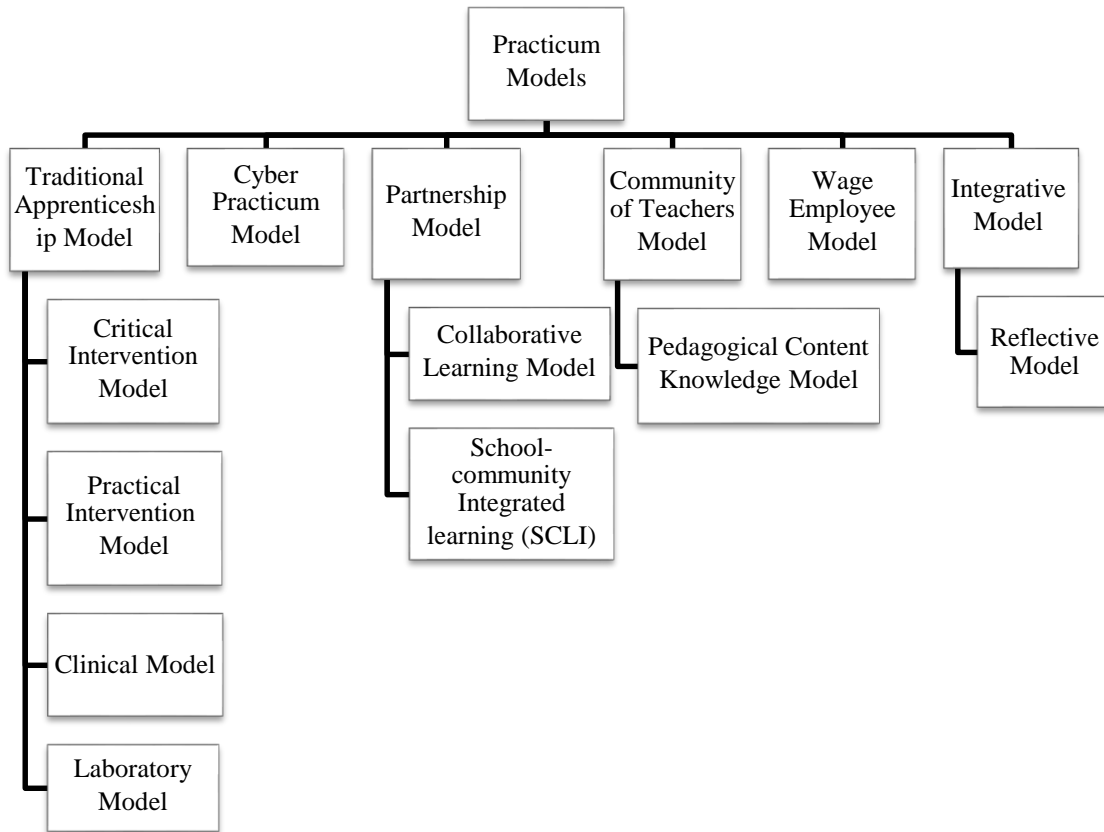


Figure 2.1. Practicum Models and Their Variants.

Traditional apprenticeship model. The traditional apprenticeship model evolved from the historical apprenticeship system of teacher education which considered placing STs under the supervision of more experienced expert teachers in the field (Elligate, 2007). The terms 'traditional apprenticeship model' and 'master teacher model' have been interchangeably used in the literature to describe the process of training a ST under the guidance of a 'master' teacher. In this model the expert teachers constitute a model to emulate through their knowledge, actions and attitudes within that context, and the STs learn principally through observation of 'master' in action (Ben-Peretz, 2000; Ulvik & Smith, 2011). Therefore, the supervision model adopted by the 'master' teacher, the method of feedback, and the extent of the assistance provided all have a significant impact on STs' learning. In this model, the university supervisors have a minimum role in monitoring STs beyond arranging placements and assigning CTs.

Most countries have a long history of the apprenticeship model in teacher education. Indeed, even today it is prominent in some jurisdictions, for example, many of the Chinese normal universities adopt traditional apprenticeship model in which the theories were taught first and then applied it in the field during the practicum (Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013). Similarly, a comparative analysis of teacher education models in USA, England and Turkey revealed that STs are trained mainly through two models: the apprenticeship model and the integrated model (Karammusthafaoglu, 2009). There are four different variants of traditional apprenticeship model found in the literature: critical intervention model, practical intervention model, clinical model, and laboratory model. These models are illustrated in the discussion below.

Critical intervention model involves a reciprocal and team teaching approach incorporating feedback and direct intervention on the part of CT. It requires the CT to interrupt STs as they teach when deemed necessary. In contrast, practical intervention model defines teacher education as a practical initiation where, the role of the CT is viewed more from a practical standpoint as supporting the STs through the ST first observing the CT's practice and then the ST attempting to replicate that practice in his or her own classroom followed by feedback from the CT. The ST would then be expected to attempt the practice again in an attempt to demonstrate improvement based on the feedback (Beckford & Roland 2010).

On the other hand, clinical model is designed to develop more autonomous approaches to teaching. In this model a greater and more active and collaborative role from all involved is required (Ure, 2009). This model requires specialist teachers who could closely work with the STs to refine their ability to develop a more independent approach to teaching based on the master teacher. Clinical model to some extent is similar to the laboratory model presented by Dewey (1904) cited in Ulvik and Smith (2011). In this model, STs are guided through observation, interpretation and classroom analysis. This model includes dialogue and engagement as well as observation at 'the elbow of the master.' Therefore, this model requires a CT who could conduct dialogue that promotes reflection. It is the analysis of practice by the ST under the guidance of the CT that is central to this model.

Integrated Model. In the integrated model, STs' experience in the TEIs is combined with the experiences at the school (Atputhasamy, 2005). University

supervisors play a major role in teaching, guiding, mentoring and the assessment of the practicum with the less formal input from the school side. This integrated model possesses certain strengths such as provision of opportunities for STs to engage in practicum alongside with the theory classes at the university. One variant of this model is reflective model (Ure, 2009). Reflective model emphasizes the importance of reflective practice which is regarded as a complex endeavour to be supported throughout the teacher education program by moving frequently between schools and universities. The ultimate goal of this model is to help STs to frame and reframe practice as they increasingly become reflective practitioners by having the opportunity to step back from and critically review their practice (away from the press of daily classroom teaching) in light of what they have learned on campus. From an investigation of the practicum offered by eight higher education providers in Australia, it was found that there appeared to be a general tendency for the providers to align their practicum with the partnership and the reflective model (Ure, 2009). Therefore, this model provides opportunities to the STs to have the practicum concurrently with theory classes, so that they could reflect upon both practical and theoretical experience.

Partnership model. In the partnership model, the teaching practicum is planned and conducted on the basis of partnership between TEIs and the placement schools (Atputhasamy, 2005). The review of related literature suggests that this model has been practiced by many countries. For example, El-Kerdany (2013) conducted a study to find out the practicum experiences in two faculties of education in Egypt. One of the objectives of the study was to examine different teacher education programs offered by several countries across the globe. From his examination of the practicum models, he found that particular jurisdictions in US, UK & Singapore adopt school-partnership model.

Some teacher education institutions, for example in US, UK and Singapore adopt partnership model that emphasizes a stronger connection and more collaborative work with the partnering schools. In the partnership model, the school takes a larger and more active role and provides a wider range of opportunities for STs to explore experiment, and exercise what is being taught at university (well beyond the traditional apprenticeship or integrated conception of learning to teach). As highlighted in the literature, the strength of the school partnership model is that it requires the university to provide professional development for SBCs, and CTs. Having well prepared stakeholders is an added

advantage for the STs as CTs as they are positioned as teacher educators in much the same ways, albeit with different contributions, as university supervisors.

One variant of partnership model, as evident in the literature, is the school-community integrated learning model that was proposed by Hudson in 2009, in partnership with the school principals (Adie, Hudson & Hudson, 2015, Hudson & Hudson, 2013). This model was developed exclusively for final year STs. It was designed such that STs could be placed in schools at the beginning of school academic year, to volunteer three days per week until university commenced. Once the university commenced, STs are required to attend university classes and need to visit the school one day per week. This is an additional extension to the normal practicum setting in the teacher education program. The purpose of this model is to further strengthen the theory practice nexus. Placing STs at the beginning of the school academic year provides better opportunities for them to engage in curriculum meetings, whole school planning and other routines of the school such as meeting and speaking with parents. These additional activities contributed to a broader understanding of the many roles a teacher has in a school community. All these activities including having to work with many mentor teachers on an on-going basis throughout the year encompasses the areas under examination from the stakeholders' perspectives in this study.

Community of teachers' model. This model is designed to immerse STs in the school system and that system is the primary site for learning. It requires STs to continue coursework with the school experience concurrently. The underlying principle in this model is that STs need experience in a collaborative learning environment in situ where they are given freedom to practice new methods and strategies with the help of their peers simultaneously with their theoretical course work (Atputhasamy, 2005). The assumptions underlying in this models are twofold: first it assumes that knowledge is situated in the day-to-day lived experiences of teachers and best understood by critical reflection with others who share the same experience; second, it assumes that active engagement in professional learning environment will increase that knowledge base (Adams, Ross & Vescio, 2008). This model is very similar to the learning community model of practicum recently proposed by Le Cornu (2016) and is conceptualised from the perspective of social constructivist view of learning, which stresses the importance of active participation in learning to teach. The primacy of the school setting (and not just the CT and his or her classroom) is critical in this conception.

Another variant of this model is the ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ focused model (Ure, 2009). According to Ure, (2009), this model is focused on the relationship between content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. In other words, it emphasizes to combine both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge for more effective preparation of teachers (Nuangchalem, 2012). As the name suggests, this model is based on the concept of ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ (PCK), which was put forward by Shulman (cited in Evens, Elen & Depaepe, 2015). Shulman believed that separating these two knowledge bases hinders effectiveness of teaching and learning process. In other words, this model is constructed upon the principles of understanding the importance of these two knowledge in combination and in situ. PCK is widely referenced in many teacher education programs, and once again, the primacy of the school experience is central to this model.

Wage employee model. In this model STs are placed in professional development schools for a set duration as wage employees, and are required to attend theory classes concurrently at the university. For example, in Germany, STs are placed in professional development schools for the duration of two years as wage employees and are required to attend theory classes concurrently at the university (El-Kerdany, 2013). Apart from the evaluation by CTs, SLs and principal, they are required to sit a high-stakes state examination for teaching certification. The examination consists of both oral and written examination to assess the content and teaching skills. This model is significantly different from most other models because it regards STs as paid professionals at the very outset of their practicum experience. As such, their role, responsibility, and relationship within schools is more substantive than in other models and therefore substantially changes the character of the experience.

Cyber practicum model. Cyber practicum comprises of online chat rooms, and 3D virtual learning environments that enable STs to design their classrooms, create fictional characters, prepare the lesson plans, and teach in virtual spaces. This model was proposed by Jiyeon as one of the possible solutions to combat the challenges that the teacher education institutions have in finding the placements and CTs (Jiyeon, 2008). In this model, STs can have their personal spaces to practice teaching and get feedback from the registered supervisors who are also online. In addition, it provides opportunities to meet (virtually) and work with STs across the nation and worldwide. Therefore, this model could be potentially viewed as more rewarding in some regards, unlike other

models where STs are often limited to one school and a restricted set of relationships in that school. Jiyoon, Babiuk and Mwet (2004), for example, conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of the cyber practicum. The study confirmed that it was effective to use cyber communication space for supervisors and STs. However, there is still much to be learned about this model and it is still largely experimental at this point in time.

In sum, from the synthesis of extant literature it was apparent that there are six different types of practicum models most of which comprise several variants. Of these models, most of the countries across the globe adopt what might be regarded as a partial integrated model. For example, Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) found from their analysis of practicum structures of ten universities from both developed and developing countries, most adopted a semi or partial integrated model. They also identified that there existed some differences in practicum structures among and within the countries although they all follow a similar model. Nonetheless, the combination of university and school experience, concurrently, is favoured in many jurisdictions.

The preceding section presented various practicum models evident from the review of extant literature. Attributes of these models were also discussed together with the examples from countries that adopt these models. The following section presents the structures of the practicum that govern these models.

Structure of the Practicum

The term ‘structure of the practicum’ here is referred to as how various elements of the practicum such as length, timing, observations, supervision and assessment are organised. From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the type of model governed the structure of the practicum. For example, in the integrated model, many practicum rounds are scheduled throughout the teacher education program, and in some countries it is conducted simultaneously with on-campus theory classes. While in apprenticeship model the practicum is typically conducted towards the end of the teacher education program when university classes have concluded.

The review of recent literature on practicum structures demonstrates that the models and the structure of the practicum vary across the countries (Endeley, 2014; Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013; Min, Abdulla, Mansor & Shamsudin, 2014). Most countries have multi-year program formats (e.g., a 4-year Bachelor of Education degree). Some

countries also have a one-year after degree program formats (that result in a Bachelor of Education degree). This review will focus on multi-year program formats as many of the same issues are at play in one-year after-degree program formats. The decision to focus on multi-year programs avoids unnecessary duplication of what was found to largely common issues regardless format (albeit within a more constrained timeframe for one-year after-degree program).

In some cases, it was identified that there were differences in practicum structures among the universities within the same country. For example, from a comparative study of practicum structures in ten different countries (USA, Canada, UK, Singapore, Brunei, Hong Kong, South Africa, Australia, India and China) Manzar-Abbas and Lu concluded that most of the countries adopt integrated or partially integrated model, but the degree of integration varies significantly among the universities. The University of Glasgow in UK adopts a more integrated model of practicum where a four-year teacher education program comprises a total of seven practicum rounds scheduled across most semesters except the first semester of the final year. However, another university in UK, the University of Edinburgh, offers four practicum rounds in each year of a four-year teacher education program, where the STs are exposed to all the stages of schooling (Nursery, early stage, middle and upper stages of schooling) except the final practicum round where freedom is given to the STs to choose the stages of schooling (Endeley, 2014). The duration of these practicum rounds varies from five-week to 11 weeks.

Similarly, it was evident that universities that have same number of practicum rounds have differences in how they schedule these practicums (Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013; Min, Abdulla, Mansor & Shamsudin, 2014). For example, the University of Queensland and University of Canberra in Australia have four practicum rounds for a four-year degree course but the latter commences their practicum from the second year of the program. Two universities studied from USA showed that one has three practicum rounds starting from the second year of the program, while the other has two rounds, one at the beginning of the program and one in the last year of the program. The countries that report having four practicum rounds integrated throughout the teacher education program include UK, Australia, India, Singapore, Malta and England (El-Kerdany, 2012; Karammustafaoglu, 2009; Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013; Min, Abdulla, Mansor & Shamsudin, 2014). Among these countries, Singapore and Australia start the practicum from second year of the program, whereas the other countries have practicum starting

from first year. In addition, countries like USA, Canada, Brunei, Hong Kong, Finland and South Africa have three practicum rounds that start from the second year of the program, while China, Malaysia and Pakistan have one practicum round scheduled at the final year of the program (El-Kerdany, 2012; Gujjar, Ramzan & Bajwa, 2011; Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013; Min, Abdulla, Mansor & Shamsudin, 2014; Mitchell, Clarke & Nuttall, 2007). From the review of extant literature, it is evident that only Cameroon has two practicum rounds that start from the second year of the program (Endley, 2014). In addition, this review of literature related to the practicum model revealed that Malaysia has the longest practicum (16 weeks) while Pakistan has the shortest practicum (four to eight weeks) compared to the practicum structure (Gujjar, Naoreen & Bajwa, 2010)

In contrast, the practicum model in Germany is quite different compared to the models in other countries noted in the preceding discussion. Most of the teacher education programs in Germany adopts an apprenticeship model where the theory is taught at the first year and the STs are placed in schools as wage employees for the remaining two years (El-Kerdany, 2012). During these two years STs spend one third of their time attending theory classes.

According to Ure (2009), the type of model and the structure of the practicum adopted by the TEIs have significant impact on the quality of learning that STs undergo during the practicum. He further argued that the models that provide multiple exposure to school experience alongside with the theory classes, as in the integrated model, enhances the potential of the STs to integrate their learning from both experiences. Additionally, he claimed that the models that provide prior observation and the one which is designed to have observation and block teaching alternatively in a diverse setting enable the STs to have better understanding about theoretical and practical aspects of their teaching, and the STs were better able to deal with the broader professional demands of teaching compared to the STs who have undertaken teaching separated from theory sessions. Therefore, according to Ure, the integrated model is the preferred model.

Similarly, several other authors argued that the duration and the timing of practicum have a significant impact of STs learning during the practicum (Endeley, 2014; Gujjar, Ramzan & Bajwa, 2011; Karammustafaoglu, 2009; Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013; Min, Abdulla, Mansor & Shamsudin, 2014; Ure, 2009; Wyss, Siebert, & Dowling, 2012). These authors argued that an integrated model with an extended duration of time is

essential for the STs as teaching is highly skill oriented and a practical profession that requires a great deal of practice. It was pointed out that a longer practicum enables STs to develop stronger relationships with their pupils and other stakeholders, and appreciate more fully their personal professional growth as teachers. Additionally, it provides more opportunities to STs to integrate and experiment with many theories that they have learnt (Wyss, Siebert, & Dowling, 2012). Further, having an extended practicum provides extensive exposure to the experienced expert teachers in the field, thus enabling STs to refine their teaching skills even more (Zeichner, 2006). However, some cautions about extended exposure to practice settings (leading to conformity rather than creativity) has also been recorded (Mickelson, 1990).

As has been illuminated earlier, the timing of the practicum can have a significant impact on achieving the intended outcome of the teacher education program. For example, Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) recommended that it is best to schedule the first practicum round during the first year of the program. The implication of having practicum at the beginning of the program is that it assists STs to attest their career choices which is one of the purposes of the practicum noted in the preceding section. In addition, Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) also highlighted that provision of multiple exposure (early, middle, and late) to various contexts is highly imperative for the STs to understand the diversity of learning needs of pupils from variety to socio-economic backgrounds. It also helps STs to better prepare for the next practicum round by reflecting upon and refining early practicum experiences. Consistent with this position, the literature demonstrates that scheduling practicum at the end of the teacher education programs impedes STs' overall professional development by not allowing for early reflection on practice throughout one's program.

In sum, this review of literature indicates that there are clear differences between the models described above. The extant literature related on various models and the structure of the practicum indicates that most of the countries across the world adopt a version of the integrated model. Moreover, it indicates that there are variations in practicum structures among the countries that adopt similar or the same practicum models and it even differs among the universities within the same country. In addition, the recent literature demonstrates that the type of model and how the practicum is structured significantly impact STs' learning during the practicum. It is evident from the literature that multiple exposures in a variety of practicum settings possess several

advantages over one single practicum placement. Correspondingly, a longer extended practicum experience also provides numerous benefits to STs compared with a shorter practicum placement (assuming that sufficient reflection in an on practice takes place). However, as with all issues presented thus far, this too comes with cautions.

Stakeholder Participation and Perceptions

As mentioned in the preceding discussion, the stakeholders involved in the practicum include STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs, IBCs, and principals or heads of the placement schools. The following section describes these stakeholders' participation and perceptions pertaining to the implementation of the practicum.

Perceptions of STs. STs are the key figures of the practicum for whom the practicum is constructed and conducted, and through which they are exposed to the school contexts to experience the realities of teaching (Lawson, Cakmak, Gunduz & Busher, 2015). Research on STs' perceptions has been in progress for at least 26 years since 1990 (Caires, Almeida, Vieira, 2012). Since then, there has been a continuous effort from the researchers to investigate and explore STs' perceptions of their teaching practicum. During the early stages of research on this dimension of the practicum, most of the studies adopted a qualitative approach where direct access to the STs' voice was sought.

The subsequent sections provide an account of STs' perception about six major dimensions of the practicum: pre-practicum preparation, feedback, professional support they receive from the placement school, assessment of the practicum, institutional socialization, and professional development.

Pre-practicum preparation. All the activities that TEIs plan and conduct for the STs prior to the practicum placement are considered to be pre-practicum preparation. Two prominent areas discussed in the literature are micro-teaching and method classes.

As the extant literature has demonstrated, the practicum is a critical component of the teacher education, and due to its multifaceted nature, it requires preparation by all the stakeholders for it to be a fruitful event for STs, and all involved. STs, being the key players of the practicum, need to be aware of the expectation and responsibilities regarding the practicum. On the other hand, the CTs and SLs who engage in the supervision of STs need to have a clear understating of their respective responsibilities

during the practicum. Though, this should be the case, the review of literature indicates that SLs and CTs receive only limited or no training on their essential roles in the practicum (Elligate, 2009).

Elligate (2009, p.65) stated that "prior to the practicum student teachers need to undertake a series of academic lectures related to skills and knowledge necessary to complete the practicum." Likewise, Turnbull (2002, p.32) stated that "prior to the practicum student teachers need opportunity to learn explicit skills and competencies for teaching. They also need reflective skills, communication skills, advocacy skills and knowledge of procedures for dealing with concerns during the practicum." Similarly, Hollins (2011) emphasized that the pedagogical modules are important in teacher training programs as it puts greater emphasis on application of contents, modelling of observed behaviours, and opening academic dialogues among lecturers, STs, and peers.

Micro-teaching is one of the strategies that teacher education programs adopt to practice the many skills that Turnbull and Elligate have pointed out. The related literature cited several definitions of the concept 'micro-teaching.' For instance, Ramesh (2013) defines microteaching as a teacher training technique to improve the art of teaching and to provide the deeper knowledge of teaching. While Mahmud and Rawshon (2013) define micro-teaching as an instrument for teacher education that provides STs the opportunity to practice teaching activities under simulated teaching situation.

The review of the related literature shows that micro-teaching has been used extensively in the teacher education programs, and it is found to be a proven method to improve STs' pre-practicum instructional skills. Studies on STs perceptions and merits of micro-teaching in teacher education programs revealed that it offers a range of benefits to STs including, promoting effective teaching strategies among STs, provision of opportunities to observe and get feedback from peers, acquisitions of skill in managing classrooms and lesson planning (Ghafoor, Kiani, Kayani and Kayani, 2012; Kilic, 2010; Ogeyik, 2009; Sen, 2009).

Due to the diversity of benefits it possesses, Nwanekezi, Okoli and Mezieobi (2011) recommended that TEIs have a micro-teaching laboratory where STs can have a series of micro-teaching sessions before being placed in the schools for the practicum. From the findings of an investigation conducted to find out the effect of microteaching

on STs' teaching practicum, the results showed that it not only reduces the anxiety level but also develop self-confidence (Sonmez, 2012).

Turning to the issue of the TEI's curriculum, if the STs are to become successful teachers, then they should be well prepared for it. The review of the related literature indicates that for any teacher education programs to be successful, their curriculum must be well formulated with clearly defined outcomes. According to Roofe and Miller (2013), it is the curriculum that defines how well STs are prepared for their future role as a teacher. In addition, findings of his study on STs' concerns about their preparation at the TEIs revealed that beyond micro-teaching experiences, more pedagogical modules lead better performance during the practicum (i.e., method classes). Similarly, Jusoh (2013) concluded from his study on exploring STs' perceptions of teaching practicum, that they were not adequately prepared to the real world of teaching and lacked methodological understandings. For example, he found that they lack the right skills and knowledge for managing the classrooms. In addition, he concluded STs were mentally and emotionally not ready to take up such a huge monumental responsibility of a regular teacher, and hence he strongly recommended the teacher education institutions to better prepare STs with strong curriculum grounding for their teaching. Similarly, a study conducted by Ismail (1998) in the Maldives regarding the perceptions of STs on the effectiveness of the school experience program revealed that STs regarded 'preparation for teaching practice' as one of the least effective aspects of the program.

Additionally, inadequate preparation has been identified as one of the main sources of anxiety that STs experience during the practicum. Many authors agreed that the lack of experience in teaching is another factor that intensifies STs' anxiety during the practicum (Incecary & Dollar, 2012; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Zhengdong, 2013). As these sources of anxiety have a significant impact on the performance of the STs during the practicum, and ultimately the success of the practicum, it is imperative for the TEIs to adequately prepare STs for the practicum with strong curriculum and pre-teaching grounding for their teaching.

Provision of feedback. Feedback is considered as an essential element of the practicum (Agudo, 2016; Ali & Al-Adawi, 2013). Ramirez (2013, p.215) defines feedback "as a raising awareness strategy which intends to shed light on the flaws or weaknesses of STs' teaching practices." It is considered as one of the main sources of

knowledge regarding teaching, thus, it guides the ST to capitalize on their professional development during the practicum (Le & Vasquez, 2011). Many authors acknowledge the value of feedback during the practicum (Agudo, 2016; Ali & Al-Adawi, 2013; Le & Vasquez, 2011; Percara, 2013; Shute, 2008). Ali and Al-Adawi (2013), for example, stated that effective practicum feedback is highly imperative and essential to STs for them to cultivate and consolidate their pedagogical and instructional skills.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) described effective practicum feedback as clear, concise, comprehensive, purposeful, meaningful, and reflects the existing level of knowledge and provides logical connections. They further argued that effective feedback answers three key questions: where am I going? (Feed Up), how am I doing? (Feed Back) and where to next? (Feed Forward). That means, effective and constructive feedback would help the learner to confirm the learning outcomes; reinforce them as they move on; enable them to check whether they are on the right track or not, and guide them to set out their next steps in learning. In the same line, from their review of the literature on feedback, Scheeler, Ruhl, and McAfee (2004) concluded that the most effective feedback is that which is specific, positive, corrective, and given immediately after the observation. They also concluded that the feedback that gives corrective measures brings lasting change in teaching behaviour of the STs.

However, the literature indicates that, providing effective and constructive feedback to STs is a highly challenging task, because it requires acquiring certain qualities and skills. According to Le and Vasquez (2011), acquiring effective communication skills, analytical skills, and good interpersonal skills are challenges for CTs. Apart from that, there may be tension between CTs and STs due to power imbalance. In the practicum context, CTs have high institutional authority and expertise, while the ST is normally treated as an outsider who is new to the profession with little professional knowledge. Therefore, it is possible that CTs to play a more directive role which may lead to less effective feedback.

In addition, the literature suggests that, for feedback to be effective, several conditions need to be met. Arribas and Arevalo (2010) cited in Percara (2014) for example, found out that feedback should not be given immediately after the observation as it is important to allow time for the STs to reflect on their practice. Additionally, during post-conference sessions, the STs should be first given the chance to articulate her

opinion, and when commenting, the CT should use positive, polite and objective expressions. The point that Arribas and Arevalo stress regarding the timing of giving feedback is contrary to the conclusion made by Scheeler, Ruhl, and McAfee (2011). They concluded from their study that the feedback should be given immediately after the observation. These conflicting findings represent the complexity of 'learning to teach.'

Although feedback is considered as an essential component of the practicum, the way it is being communicated to STs play a vital role in improving or detracting from significant learning that takes place (Percara, 2013). Therefore, the task of CT or the SL, during the feedback process, is to ensure that the given feedback is challenging, stimulating and thought provoking, and guides student teachers with a clear and comprehensive description of their current level of competencies (Smith, 2010). Well communicated constructive feedback helps STs in many ways. For example, it helps to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching, enhances self-confidence, and promotes reflective and critical thinking skills (Percara, 2013; Salleh & Tan, 2013).

Methods of giving feedback. The review of literature reports several approaches in giving feedback. For example, the results of the project carried out by Starkey and Rawlins (2011), to examine the learning experience of STs and their mentors during practicum indicated that CTs adopt a range of methods to provide feedback to STs. These include informal discussion about teaching practice; scheduled meetings, or post-conference meetings to discuss teaching progress; allowing independent planning for learning; verbal feedback on individual lessons; written feedback on individual lessons; shared goal setting; giving feedback on lesson planning prior to the learning event and co-planning for effective learning (Starkey & Rawlins, 2011). Furthermore, participants of the study ranked, informal discussions and verbal feedback as the most frequently used strategies compared to the rest of the strategies. Starkey and Rawlins (2011) attributed that the reason for these two strategies being dominant is due to its instant nature and may also reflect the busy schedules of the CTs and not necessarily the most efficacious forms of feedback.

According to Harrison, Lawson, and Wortley (2005), CTs adopt five different approaches in giving feedback during the post-observation discussions with the student teachers: telling, coaching, guiding, inquiring, and reflecting. They believe that each of these approaches has a significant impact on the overall development of the STs. For

example, a CT who does not follow a reflective approach is unlikely to instil the habit of reflection in STs. Reflection is a vital component in teaching and learning, as it informs the learner of his or her strengths, weaknesses, and contextual differences (Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005). Soslau (2012) also stated that understanding contextual differences help the STs to adapt teaching expertise, which is considered as a vital components of quality teaching. Findings from the multiple-case study conducted by Soslau, to identify the feedback approaches of university supervisors revealed that they often do not use critical dialogue with STs, which impedes the development of competencies like justifying, decision making, and experimenting on the part of STs.

Nature of the feedback. As has been stated STs expect to receive clear constructive feedback from their supervisors, especially from their CTs (Agudo, 2016; Ferguson, 2011; Percara, 2014, 2013). However, it was reported in many of the studies that STs are unsatisfied and frustrated with the feedback they receive from their supervisors, and a lot of criticism has been directed at the usefulness and nature of the feedback provided (Arnold, 2006; Atptahamy, 2005; Bech & Kosnik, 2002). In addition, it showed that most of the STs wanted to receive well-balanced feedback where negative comments are sandwiched between positive ones (Le & Vasquez, 2011).

A similar study conducted by Percara (2013) to find out STs' perception about the ways in which supervisory feedback is communicated during the practicum showed that those SLs who do not provide good feedback often has insufficient time to discuss the lesson as they have many other STs to observe. Additionally, it was found that STs felt uncomfortable and frustrated when they were given negative comments because they were not balanced by positives ones. Participants also emphasized that feedback should be given carefully in a supportive environment to enhance self-confidence and self-esteem. All the STs pointed out that it is important to receive feedback that promotes discussion, reflection and critical thinking. They perceived that ego-oriented feedback (for example “you did well” or “good idea”) is less useful. What they expected from their supervisors is feedback that is based on specific situations with concrete examples. In other words, task oriented feedback was expected. This is in line with the findings of the study conducted by Starkey and Rawlins (2011).

Similarly, a study conducted by Agudo (2016) to find out what type of feedback STs expect from their CTs during the practicum revealed that most of the participants

valued continuing, supportive and constructive feedback. At the same time, those participants highlighted their desire to get more feedback, and more importantly, detailed constructive feedback. Along the same lines, White (2007) conducted an investigation to find out what type of feedback – written or oral – that STs considered most useful. The findings showed that most of the STs expected to receive oral feedback that guides them as to what they could do to improve their teaching on a day-to-day basis. Consistently, the findings of a study conducted by Ferguson (2011) revealed that STs prefer oral feedback. Further, it was also noted that, if written feedback is given, it should explicate the current performance and should provide suggestions for further improvement rather than providing a single word, or unexplained short phrases. In addition, a study by Hudson (2014) found out that both CTs and STs considered oral feedback more effective than written feedback. Nonetheless, written feedback has its place, particular in the formative and summative assessment of STs (see below).

Timing of giving feedback. As has been stated earlier, timing of giving feedback is considered as an important factor for a feedback to be effective. A study conducted by Percara (2013) found that the STs perceived that feedback should be delivered immediately after the observation, and they should be given opportunities to communicate to justify their actions in teaching. This finding is also consistent with the idea of Hattie and Timperley (2007) that feedback should be given in a timely manner. However, the findings of the Percara's study revealed that the SLs were too busy to have the discussion right after lesson as they often have many other STs to observe. This raises an important issue of how many STs should one person supervise at any one time. Consistently, a study by Traister (2005) also found that STs preferred to get the feedback immediately after their classroom observation. In other words, they wished to have the post-observation conference right after the observation. In addition, he found that having feedback sessions as early as possible enable STs to recall reflect and evaluate their teaching more accurately. A key here is allowing sufficient time for reflection during the feedback conference.

In brief, this review of literature related to feedback revealed that effective feedback is critical to the professional development of STs. However, it is equally challenging for the CTs and SLs to provide constructive feedback due to insufficient skills and time constraints. Many of the studies reported that STs consider receiving constructive feedback that provides practical suggestions and advice that can be

considered to improve their performance. Among the two types of feedback – written and oral – most of the STs prefer to receive oral feedback as it provides open dialogue with the SLs that is considered more beneficial than having to receive only a single word or unexplained short responses as a written feedback sometimes does. Additionally, oral feedback provides greater opportunity for STs and mentors to articulate and construct knowledge on and about teaching in situ.

Professional support received (or lack thereof). As has been previously mentioned, the practicum is a critical period for the STs. It is the time when they experience the realities of classroom teaching for the first time. As has been said earlier, they face the practicum with a great deal of apprehension and anxiety. And at this critical period, they seek assistance, guidance and support from various sources, especially from the CTs. In addition, they seek emotional support to deal with constraints and complexities of teaching, and assistance and guidance regarding curriculum related matters and interpersonal relationships. For example, Altan and Saglamel (2015) concluded from their study on student teaching from the perspectives of CTs and pupils that support from the CTs is imperative during the time when STs face the realities of the teaching profession. The CTs is considered as the only immediate source of help for them, thus their assistance and guidance is highly valued by the STs. In the same way, Smith and Levi-Ari (2005) stated that CTs, SLs, and the post-conference meetings are main sources of support that STs have during the practicum. However, recent research revealed that many placement schools did not provide the support required by the STs, and in many cases they did not feel welcomed in the schools. STs lack essential teaching skills and have inadequate content knowledge due to this neglect (or in some cases, rejection). Another important point to be noted regarding the lack of support from CTs is that in some circumstances they were not prepared to successfully fulfil their roles as CTs. The task of guiding a STs is not an easy task and it cannot be considered simply as an extension of normal teaching (Arnorld, 2006).

Assessment of the practicum. Assessment in the context of the practicum in school settings can be conceptualised as making professional judgments about STs' performance (Haigh & Ell, 2014). More specifically, it can be defined as making judgments about the current knowledge, skills and practices of STs and making inferences about the attainment of standards for qualification (Aspden, 2014).

CTs and SLs act as key actors in carrying out the practicum assessment. Though, these two key actors engage in assessing STs' performance, research indicates that the practicum stakeholders have more confidence in assessment provided by the cooperating teachers, as it is believed that they are able to more accurately judge the STs' performance (Tillema & Smith, 2009). This assessment can be both formative (weekly feedback reports) and summative (final practicum report).

In formative assessment, or 'assessment for learning' feedback plays a vital role in helping the ST to understand and interpret what is required of them (Tillema, Smith & Leshem, 2011). Therefore to achieve this, the feedback should answer three key questions: Where you are?, where to do to get where you have to go? and, How do you get there? This type of feedback provided by CTs certainly fulfils one of the dual purposes of the practicum assessment: to help promote and proliferate STs' professional development (Zhang, Cown, Hayes, Werry, Barnes & France, 2015). Along the same line, Cochran-Smith (2005) and Al-Mekhlafi (2012) also claimed that assessment should not be seen only as a means to decide whether the student teachers have attained a certain set of learning objectives, rather, it should be considered as a tool for learning.

Although, formative assessment offers several benefits to the STs, it is a longer-term and challenging process where the CTs progressively compile information on performance of STs throughout the practicum. On the other hand, summative assessment, 'assessment of learning', which occurs towards the end of the practicum, is often seen as less challenging and time consuming (Aspden, 2014). In summative assessment, for example, the SLs visit and observe a few lessons, and make a judgment on performance of the STs. This type of assessment focuses on assessing STs' performance against a set of standards leading to certification. Thus, it may not be less beneficial to the STs from a learning point of view. However, it is one way in which teacher educators are seen to be and are able to be accountable to the various stakeholders, beyond the STs themselves (Tillema, Smith & Leshem, 2011).

Tillema and Smith (2009) claimed that the type of assessment adopted has significant impact on STs' professional development and the professional relationships with the key actors. These authors argued that the type of assessment necessitates professional interactions and provisions of information regarding the STs performance. They further stressed that assessing student teachers learning should move beyond giving

mere informative feedback, it should articulate the achievements toward program requirements and preferred teaching actions. Thus, all stakeholders should acknowledge that not all feedback is for the purpose of summative assessment.

According to Kaphesi (2013), formative assessment enhances STs' professional growth during the practicum. However, he further explicates that summative assessment is equally important as it serves as a gate keeping function, determining whether the student teachers are qualified to join the profession or not. In this respect, both formative and summative assessments are equally important to the practicum, but complexities arise when the same person is expected to carry out these two (sometimes contradictory) forms of assessment. Kaphesi (2013) argued that it is ineffectual for a CT to carry out both formative and summative functions of assessment. As summative assessors, they are expected to evaluate the performance of STs by either grading them, or by awarding a pass or fail. As formative assessors, they are required to check lesson plans, delivery of the lessons, and how STs behave as a member of the profession and provide potential feedback accordingly. The challenge lies in attempting to do both roles in a judicious and supportive fashion.

Though it appears challenging to carry out both the functions simultaneously, it is important for SLs to give both forms of feedback, in order to promote STs' learning during the practicum. The review of literature attests that the provision of feedback by the SLs enhances STs' self-confidence and their motivation (Kaphesi, 2013). So, it is imperative for both formative and summative feedback to provide comments rather than giving grades without justification. Findings from a study conducted by Kaphesi (2013) on assessing final year undergraduate STs on school based teaching practicum showed that often there was a mismatch between the comments and the grades given by the SLs. Findings indicated that the participants were encouraged by the positive comments, but the negative comments discourage and demotivate them. Based on the findings, Kaphesi recommends that the comments given should reflect the grades, and if it impossible, then the two types of assessment should not be carried out by a single person.

A comparative qualitative study conducted in Norway, Israel and Netherland on perceptions on assessment in mentoring relations during practicum indicated that CTs and STs' perception differ slightly in relation to the key aspects of assessment, but agreed with the way it is applied (Tillema, Smith & Leshem, 2011). With regard to the

assessments, most of the STs in the study preferred guidance oriented approach, a formative assessment, rather than appraisal based only on a standard, summative assessment approach. The findings of the study concluded that it is important to empower mentors in ‘assessment for learning’ to enhance STs’ professional development.

The review of related research also reveals that one of the prominent structures for assessment is the triadic model (Aspden, 2014). As the name suggests, this model comprises three key actors of the practicum – STs, CTs, and SLs. A formal triadic meeting, most commonly called a post-conference meeting is held after the scheduled observations to make a decision about the performance of the STs. This meeting is initiated by the SL and the decision is made based on the consensual agreement of the triad members. This model possesses several advantages as it facilitated open dialogue among the members and therefore a shared understanding about the STs performance. But the literature attests that it implicates plethora of unresolved problems such as disagreements between the SL and CT about the STs performance.

In brief, the review regarding assessment revealed that although the formative approach of assessment, as opposed to summative approach, is perhaps more challenging, it is found to be more effective as it provides opportunities to monitor the progress over time. In addition, the triadic model of assessment where the key players are involved – STs, CTs, and SLs – is sometimes considered more efficient compared to that of solo assessments by only SLs or CTs. Nevertheless, summative assessment has its place and cannot be avoided.

Institutional socialization. Socialization, according to the Hushman (2013, p.81), is "the process of gathering knowledge and constructing it in a social context." Teacher socialisation refers to the process through which the teacher learns the professional rules, habits and culture and environment of the profession (Chou, 2011). In the context of teacher education, ST socialization can be conceptualized as the process by which the STs construct knowledge of the teaching profession through their interactions, both at the university and in school settings.

Wright, McNeil, and Butler (2004) stated that, in the context of teacher education, STs undergo three distinctive phases of socialization: recruitment, professional socialization, and occupational socialization. The initial recruitment counts the experiences that STs had during his/her schooling as a pupil, while, the professional

socialisation phase encompasses both the experiences that they have when joining the teacher education program, and the proficiencies they acquired through the teacher education process. The final phase is the occupational socialisation, which is defined as the stage when STs start working as an independent teacher in a school setting. Wright, McNeil, and Butler stated that, the practicum plays a vital role in bridging the various phases.

It is during the practicum that STs get to experience and experiment with the many learning experiences that they had at the university – professional socialization. And, it is through practicum they learn the habits and cultures of the teaching profession, school environment, and become fully fledged: occupational socialisation. Therefore, based on the conceptualization of professional socialization and occupational socialization, institutional socialization could be conceptualized as encompassing all the experiences that STs undergo during the practicum in a school setting.

Institutional socialization or enculturation into the profession is one of the prime purposes of the practicum. During this socialization process, STs' beliefs, attitude, behaviours and teaching philosophies are influenced (Hushman, 2013). The most influential person in this process is found to be the CTs, because STs spend most of their time with the CTs. CTs play a vital role in helping the ST to become socialized into the profession. They are considered as agents of socialization for STs during the practicum. From a meta-analysis of CT related research, Clarke, Triggs and Nielsen (2014) concluded that CTs have a significant impact on ST socialization. Due to the significant role that they play in socializing STs, Clarke, Triggs and Nielsen asserted that it is equally important to the TEIs to make the CTs well aware of the many ways that they can help the STs become socialized to the profession (rather than it being only an implicit process).

In short, it is through the practicum that STs learn the habits, values and culture of the profession. CTs are considered one of the key players who have a significant role in assisting STs get socialised to the profession. Therefore, they need to be professionally prepared on the ways that they can enhance the socialization process.

Professional development. Many authors viewed the practicum as not only demonstration, or application of many theories STs learn from TEIs, rather, is meant to be an educative event which opens a range of opportunities to explore and develop

professionally. As such the practicum play a variety of other roles in the professional development of STs.

Overcome anxiety. The review of related literature demonstrates several definitions of anxiety. For example, Boadu (2014) viewed anxiety "as an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes which can affect performance." Whereas, Danner (2014) defined anxiety as an unsettled feeling of fear which may lead to stressful conditions if not dealt with properly (Danner, 2014). In the context of practicum, the term anxiety may usually be defined as the disconcerted feelings that the student teachers experience in relation to the practicum. The practicum can create a mixture of anticipation, excitement and apprehension (Danner, 2014; Quick & Sieborger, 2005). This mixture of feelings may lead to anxiety as anxiety is human reaction to any unknown situation.

For many STs, the beginning of the practicum is perceived as particularly stressful and demanding, involving many cognitive, emotional and physical changes (Caires, Almeida & Martins, 2010). Changes such as experiencing substantial amounts of distress, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, perception of weakened self-esteem and higher level of vulnerability, and, thus, it is not surprising that many STs describe practicum as the most stressful time of their teacher education process (Caires, Almeida & Vieira, 2012). According to Lakateb (2016), these reactions are believed to be the consequences on the STs preconceived notion of teaching that they had formed from their previous experience in the education system as a pupil, and the high expectations that they have regarding their success on practicum.

A study by Colla and Donald (2005) indicated that practicum related anxiety that the STs had prior to the commencement of the practicum puts them in difficult and disheartening situations. Consequently, their self-esteem fluctuates throughout the practicum depending on the nature of each individual, his/her energy level, how well she was able to manage the professional demands being a ST, personal pressures including her own expectations and also the support he/she received. In addition, it has been reported that lack of role clarification, evaluation procedures, unsuccessful lessons, difficulties with classroom management, not knowing the expectations of the CT, feeling the need to fit into the existing culture of the school, and lack of adequate professional support creates further anxiety (Baodu, 2014; Bhargava, 2009; Caires, Almeida &

Martins, 2010; Colla & Donald, 2005; Danner, 2014; Merc, 2011; Paker, 2011). Among the range of factors, Barahmeh, (2016) found classroom management, time management, and lesson planning as main sources of anxiety.

Many of the STs, however, manage to overcome these high level of stress and are able to accomplish growing levels of acceptance and recognition, professional affiliation, and approval, as well as enhance their performance, self-esteem, self-confidence, decision making and problem solving skills (Caires, Almeida & Vieira, 2012; Friedman, 2006; Newman, 2000). A comparison of STs' self-perception on their professional growth during three successive practicum placements found that, by the time they reach their second practicum placement, most of the concerns and many of their anxieties have decreased significantly (Choy, Wong, Goh & Low, 2014).

In sum, STs perceived that the practicum is the most stressful part of the teacher education program though the practicum is considered to be the most valuable component. There are a range of factors that are associated with the stresses or anxiety during the practicum. Of the many cited in the literature, the most prominent ones comprised lack of role clarification, evaluation, classroom control, unsuccessful lesson, and inadequate professional preparation.

Construction and reconstruction of teacher identity. Teacher identity is generally understood as a teacher's 'professional self' and how they feel or perceive themselves as professional teachers (He & Lin, 2013). There are several interpretations of the term "professional identity." In the context of teaching and learning, professional identity is defined as how a teacher identifies him or herself in the field of teaching (Lerseth, 2013). It is evident from the literature that that the construction of STs' professional identity is a complex social process rooted within their beliefs, perceptions and sociocultural contexts (Ozbas, 2015).

The review of related literature demonstrates that the practicum experience is vital for the construction and reconstruction of STs' professional identity, or how STs shape the way they value themselves (Gu, 2015; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Khalid, 2014). According to Lamote and Engels (2010), professional identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences (Lamote & Engels, 2010). Personal beliefs, personal history, social interactions and the cultural contexts influence the formation of professional identity.

Cattley (2007) stated that an in-depth understanding of the complexity of a teacher identity is imperative in the construction of professional identity formation. For example, STs enter the teacher education programs with their preconceived notions of teaching which they had formed from their cumulative experiences of school lives. These accumulated experiences inform their understanding of the current teaching practice, thus serve as a frame of reference for the construction of their emerging professional identity on completion of the program. Besides the cultural and personal experiences, the teacher education context is considered as a critical aspect in professional identity formation (Annemie, Antonia & Peter, 2009). Further the formation of professional identity is continually challenged during the teacher education process (Chong, Ling & Chuan, 2011).

As has been noted in the forgoing discussion, the context of teacher education especially, the practicum placement plays a key step in student teachers' professional identity construction. In addition, contextual factors such as the school administration, the diversity of pupils, the impact of attached teachers, and other staff all influence the construction and reconstruction of STs' professional identity during the practicum (Flores & Day, 2006; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). Further, it is evident from the review of relevant literature that the reflective practices that the STs undertake during the practicum play an essential role in construction their professional identity (Margarida, Ana, Amandio & Paula, 2012). Through this process of reflection, they learn to attribute meaning to their experiences, and thus help to configure and refigure their professional identity.

In sum, it is clear from the preceding discussion that STs continue to construct and reconstruct their identity as a teacher during their programs. In this construction, the practicum is considered as an important context that has a significant impact on how they define themselves as teachers. Therefore, it is imperative that all the stakeholders involved in the practicum, put a concerted effort to assist STs in constructing their professional identity during the practicum.

Perceptions of CTs

Conceptions of CT. The concept of Cooperating Teacher (CT) emerged in North America after World War II (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014). The major reasons for the emergence of the term CT include: the change of teacher education institutions to

universities which made the faculty members distance themselves from the schools and saw teachers as merely cooperating with the universities, closure of most laboratory schools due to budget cuts, and the rapid growth of student population demanding increased practicum placements from schools. However, since, the faculty members saw themselves as experts they expect that classroom teachers ‘to cooperate’ with them. In other words, it was at the time a condescending not a complementary term. However, during mid-1980s, due to public and political criticism of university-based teacher education, some institutions began to call CTs ‘mentors’ or ‘associate teachers’ as this relationship began to be reviewed and appreciated more fully. Though the practicum has been considered an important aspect of teacher education since 1948, benefits of the practicum are still not fully reaped, and conditions of effective mentoring have not yet been met.

The term CT is still the most commonly used in the context of teacher education to describe the teacher who works with the student teacher during the time of practicum. CTs are most often experienced classroom teachers who are assigned a ST for an extended period of time (Atputhasamy, 2005). They host, supervise, and work with the ST on a daily basis during the field experience, and play a fundamental role in the STs' growth and development as a professional (Petrarca, 2013). According to Wilhem (2007), a CT is variously described as a mentor, supporter, coach, and evaluator. In support of this description, the meta analysis by Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen (2013) also provided other terms that are in use such as school advisor, school associate, supervising teacher, sponsor teacher, school based teacher educator and mentor. Their meta-analysis revealed that there have been three commonly accepted conceptions highlighted in the literature regarding the role of CTs. Those include; classroom placeholder, supervisor of practicum, and teacher educator. The Figure 2.2 depicts their level of participation (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen 2014).

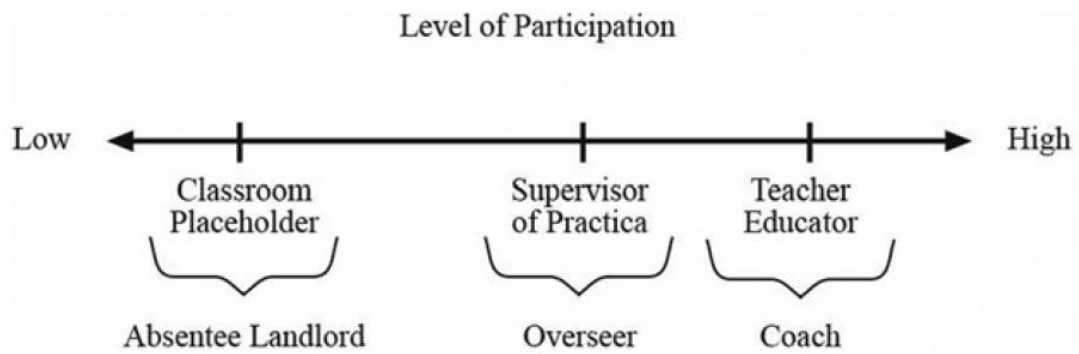


Figure 2.2. CTs' Level of Participation.

Each of these conceptions illustrates different roles and levels of responsibility. For example, the classroom placeholder often acts as an absentee landlord in the practicum setting – the least engaged of all three conceptions. These types of CTs most often emulate their own CTs when they were student teachers. Their role is for the STs to replace them in the class as soon as s/he commences the practicum. On the other hand, the supervisor of the practicum operates as an overseer. As the name suggests, this type of CT supervises the work of STs by observing, recording and reporting their success, or failure of the ST. The deficiency in this type is having unidirectional interaction, where the ST acts as a passive receiver. However, the conception of the CT as teacher educator has maximum involvement in coaching, guiding, encouraging, facilitating and eliciting meanings in concert with the ST. This category demands that the CTs be equipped with most up-to-date knowledge and debates related to working with STs.

STs seek a lot of support from CTs to develop their teaching skills (Arnold, 2006). They consider CTs to be the most important person to them in making a successful entry to the profession (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen 2014). It is evident from the literature that the support from CTs is highly imperative as it gives STs opportunity to develop their teaching skills through observing and modelling CTs (Jusoh, 2013). Therefore, the greater level of participation by the CT, the more significant the role they play in the process of ST development. This differing level of participation (see Figure 2.2) stems from the level of their motivation to become a CT and the rewards or benefits arising from their participation. The following section illustrates what motivates teachers to become cooperating teacher.

Motivation to become CT. The review of related literature demonstrates that CTs are usually selected based on the recommendations of the principals, years of service and

the teachers desire to participate in the practicum (Wilhem, 2007). It was evident from the literature that, in many cases, when selecting CTs, the skill required is underestimated. The common assumption is that, if they are good at classroom teaching, they are considered to be effective in dealing with STs (Ambrosetti, 2012). In some cases, it was found that teachers who volunteer as CTs do not inherently know how to mentor the STs (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). A key reason for volunteering is their personal desire of broadening their horizon of knowledge through student teachers. In other words, they are motivated to learn or gain most up-to-date knowledge from someone who is learning to teach. Several studies have found that working with STs allows the CTs to reflect on their teaching. Additionally, it also requires them to be more engaged with curriculum related activities like construction of lesson plans, preparing worksheets, designing teaching aids and unit planning, which serve as a professional development for them.

Another motivation that is consistently highlighted in the literature is the desire of rendering their valuable experience in service of preparing qualified teachers for the profession (Ambrosetti, 2012). This is consistent with the findings of the research conducted by Wilhem, (2007). Many participants of Wilhem's study perceived that their role as a significant contributor to the future of the profession. In addition, they highly valued their engagement with the university. They perceived that working with a ST is as an opportunity to gain new knowledge from the direct interactions with the faculty members. However, findings revealed that the faculty members did not engage with them in this regard. Although, working with STs enriches and enhances CTs professional growth, some CTs fail to see it as a growing process (Wilhem, 2007).

Finally, the review of related literature demonstrates that CTs sometimes avoid accepting STs due to disappointing past experiences with STs and the lack of commitment from STs to the profession (Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martina, 2006). These reasons for their avoidance do not necessarily indicate that they are not motivated to assist STs, but rather, it indicates that they are more concerned about the performance of the STs and its impact on their own students.

Therefore, in sum, the related literature showed that CTs are normally selected based on three criteria: recommendations from the head of the schools, the years of experience that one has as CT and their expression of interest to become one. It also showed that teachers are motivated to participate in the practicum mainly for two reasons:

to contribute their rich experience to the process of teacher education, and review, revise and renew their knowledge through interacting with STs. In some instances, they decline to be part of the practicum process as they are more concerned and conscious about the commitment and performance of the STs. The following section explains the variety of roles that they play during the practicum.

Role of the cooperating teachers. CTs are considered to be one of the key persons who have the most powerful influence and pivotal role in shaping the behaviour of STs (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen 2014; Le Cornu, 2010; Thorsen, 2016). They play a significant role in the professional, social, and emotional development of STs as they are the people who spend most time with the STs (Beckford & Roland, 2010; Jusoh, 2013).

The review of vast body of literature on CTs revealed that they play a range of roles (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). These include provider of feedback, counsellor, observer, a role model, an equal partner, a critical friend, and an instructor. Similarly, a mixed methods research conducted on 264 mentor teacher teachers revealed that they played roles such as provider of support, provider of feedback, modellers of practice, teach teacher, critical evaluator, providers of context, and supporters of reflection. In addition, these roles were reflected in a meta-analysis of literature on CTs by Clark et al (2014).

From their meta-analysis of 400 papers published within the past 60 years, Clarke and his team categorized eleven different ways that CTs participate with STs during practicum. These categories were identified based on pragmatic philosophy are shown in the Figure 2.3, and a review of each follows.

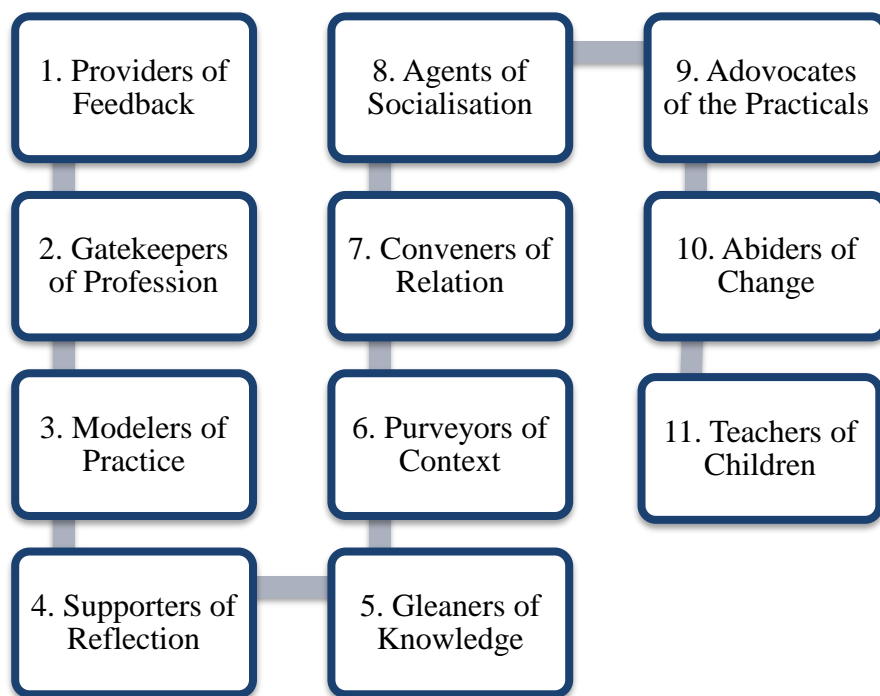


Figure 2.3. Various Roles of a CT.

Providers of feedback. The first and foremost category identified is CTs' role as the providers of feedback. It was reported in the review that providing feedback to ST is the most important role of CTs. However, the feedback they provide usually tends to be particularistic, technical, and does not reflect the underlying reasons for the feedback. In other words, very rarely do CTs provide constructive and reflective feedback to STs. The most common types of feedback tend to be the 'follow me model' where CTs offer uni-directional conversation. Authors have noted that CTs are more confident with giving oral or verbal feedback than that of written feedback. The underlying reason for the provision of ineffective written feedback is the lack of necessary skills required to provide this sort of feedback. On the contrary to this view, Kwan and Lopez-Real (2005) found from their study that some CTs provide very constructive written feedback to enhance the development of STs' own teaching style. They also have noted that the type of feedback is independent of the type of teaching model. In addition, the type of feedback tends to be the same, irrespective of the stages of the practicum and the developmental levels of ST. This means that STs who are in different level of development tend to get the same type of feedback.

Gatekeepers of profession. CTs as the gatekeepers of the profession is identified as the second category. As the name suggests, CTs shoulder the responsibility of deciding

STs entry into the profession by providing a summative evaluation at the end of the practicum. During the mentoring process, CTs are required to evaluate the teaching and learning undertaken by STs. To take this critical decision, the CTs need to be competent enough for summative evaluation. But, the literature suggests that the CTs perform this essential task without having sufficient formal preparation. They do not have adequate knowledge on summative evaluation procedures and lack the relevant tools for this sort of evaluation. Neither do, the tools used by CTs measure the individual differences and the standards of performance of STs accurately. As a result, both halo and leniency effects plague CTs when doing evaluations. Apart from this challenge, due to the deficiencies in available tools, CTs are unable to give detailed accounts of individual differences. Thus, they tend to report only the general impressions and often cannot make a clear distinction justifying pass or fail for STs. All of these roles make their gatekeeping role complicated.

Modelers of practice. Analysis of the literature demonstrates that modelling is an essential aspect of CT participation in teacher education. During the practicum, STs may work with many CTs in different contexts. In other words, the practicum provides a great opportunity for the STs to observe a variety of images of teaching. This modelling by the CT mainly focuses on, techniques, impulses, traditions and authority which are in consistent with the focus of the apprenticeship model. However, the tension in this modelling arises when the CTs expect STs to simply emulate their practices without integrating other approaches that STs have learnt on-campus, which may have significant impact on learning to teach. Two different categories of CTs are evident from the recent literature on modelling by CTs. That is, ‘maestros’ and ‘mentors’. Maestros follow expert-novice approach to modelling, which is similar to the previously mentioned apprenticeship model. But, those who use a mentors’ approach to modelling follow a different approach where they discuss and analyse the classroom teaching, and related matters with the STs. Apart from that, they allow the STs to construct their knowledge in light of the observations and discussions. However, most of the CTs expect the SLs to play the role of mentor rather than themselves. Further, CTs believe that the university course works is too theoretical, so they balance this by acting as modellers of practice and largely as maestros. The literature suggests that student teachers undergo two distinctive stages underpinned by a modelling approach. That is, initially, they mimic

experts teaching styles and then (hopefully) move onto more independent and reflective styles of their own teaching.

Supporters of reflection. CTs act as supporters of reflection. Reflection in the context of teacher education is defined as framing and reframing of teaching practice in light of past experience or new knowledge (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2013). Almost universally, teacher education programs emphasize reflection. In addition, CTs are usually familiar with this essential feature of the reflection. However, the degree and extent to which they employ it varies greatly. According Stegman (2007), CTs use different strategies to improve their reflective process Those strategies include: telling stories, providing advice and insight, and validating good practice and preparation. Keogh, Dole and Hudson (2006) argued that the most effective and efficient CTs' exhibit and support reflective dispositions which lead to inquiry into practice by the student teachers.

Purveyors of context. One of the vital roles that the CTs play in practicum is to provide knowledge about the contexts of schooling to STs (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2013). They introduce STs to both concealed and unconcealed dimensions of teaching, and mediate the STs' interactions with and among contexts. The contexts provided as part of the STs' learning environment by CTs determines whether STs acquire the necessary skills required for them to be successful in the profession. In addition, the contextual factors are recognized as more important than the individual interactions that take place among stakeholders. Therefore, CTs need to be aware of the cultural and political contexts of the schools and must be well informed about the changes in the contexts, so that they could manage the contexts well to ensure that practicum is beneficial to the STs.

Convenor of relation. As convenors of relation, the CTs relationships with STs and other stakeholders are very important. Especially, a personnel connection with ST and CT is important for them to benefit from all that the CT has to offer. A strong relationship with the ST is the key enabler of the success, and it is considered as the second largest contributor to a positive practicum experience. The ideal relationship is not just doing what is required; it is more than sharing required information. It is and is dependent on the network of collaborative relationships developed and established during the practicum to which the ST then has access.

Agents of socialization. CTs act as agents of socialization. They socialize STs into ideologies, dispositions and habits of the professions. Their influence is greater than the influence of SLs on STs' socialization. This process of socialization, discussed in detail earlier, becomes more effective and efficient when the values of CTs and STs match each other. However, the STs deeply held beliefs about teaching are often unaffected by this process of socialization. The most challenging features of socialisation for STs is in fact that they become more controlling in their relationship with pupils and conforming to the existing school culture.

Advocates of the practical. One of the major roles of CTs is to introduce STs into the practicalities of the school classroom. As mentioned before, during the mentoring process, CTs carefully introduce STs into the practicalities of the profession. The emphasis on practicalities together with the emphasis on reflective perspectives and critical judgment are equally essential for the practicum. But, CTs are so preoccupied with the practicalities of daily practice like constructing lesson planning, the effective use of teaching aids, and classroom management that their observations by ST may overlook the essential role of reflection and critical judgement.

Abiders of change. A further category identified is CTs as abiders of change. CTs abide by the many uncovered and unacknowledged dimensions of their practice while working with STs. For example, working with STs is an interruption to their classroom routines and their normal life in the school but they typically accept this interruption silently. Wilhem (2007) has identified many other drawbacks of being a CT. Those include, substitution of CT from the class, overloading the responsibilities of guiding a ST, invasion of privacy by breaking the 'isolation of the teacher', and disruption of classroom management techniques. Other downsides of being a CT include, difficulty of handing over one's own class to a stranger; disappointment and embarrassment caused due to the under-performance of STs, and the lingering effect of unpleasant, unsuccessful past STs that may influence their work with current STs. In simple terms, there are a number of issues which are challenging for a CT in their work with STs. However, CTs often conceal the emotional labour associated with being a cooperating teacher. Other dimensions of these challenges include controlling what they say and do, always having to always have a positive attitude, and withholding feedback that they feel is too sensitive. Further, CTs' identity is also affected by having a ST: they are no longer 'the classroom teacher' which potentially creates underlying feelings of displacement.

Teachers of children. Beyond and above all the duties and responsibilities of being a CT, the teachers who supervise student teacher on practicum are teachers of children, which was identified as the last category of their participation in teacher education. CTs feel that having a ST is an add-on to their principal work as teachers of children. However, some CTs enjoy the opportunity to observe their own students' being taught by STs and see it as an aid to better understanding their individual needs. Nonetheless, the primary duty of any CT is to teach their own pupils and taking care of their wellbeing at school. Dealing with STs is always a distant second. These changes in priorities and the possession of dual roles of being a classroom teacher and CT conflict with their loyalty to children. Even so, this tension is not usually discussed or considered when assigning STs to classroom for the practicum.

The foregoing discussion indicates a range of pivotal roles that the CTs play during the practicum. Apart from enacting these essential roles as a professional mentor for the STs, they are fulltime teachers of the pupils, thus, they have to act on these two, equally demanding, professional roles simultaneously (Thorsen, 2016). Their influence on ST is found to be more than the influence of supervising lecturer and the college courses (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014; Nquyen, 2009). Despite the essential roles that they play in preparing STs, all the CTs are not equally competent, effective or successful. Consequently, in some cases, STs end up being exposed to ineffective teaching methods and out-dated pedagogical practices which ultimately impede the application of new innovative methods learned at the university. Therefore, to make the practicum worthwhile to the STs, CTs need to be well prepared and fully supported to enact their roles effectively and efficiently. However, the literature indicates that there exist a lack of support, collaboration, and training to assist CTs (Petrarca, 2013). This is in accordance with what Clarke, Triggs and Neilsen (2014) concluded from their meta-analysis of literature related to CTs. They indicated that CTs are, in general not professionally prepared to undertake their role. Similarly, a study by (McClure, 2008) found that though the training of CTs has proven to have significant impact on STs, only few universities offer training for CTs.

Further, Barmao, Wambugu and Ng'eno (2013) indicated that STs face several problems with their CTs. These include abandoning STs when they start teaching; not checking their lesson plan books; and being busy with other pupils while STs are engaged in teaching the class. Similarly, a study by Mannisto, Peltokallio and Talvitie (2000)

found that some CTs do not invest sufficient time and interest in supporting STs during the practicum due to their busyness with other tasks. For example, they typically undertake this activity together with a range of other teaching duties (Jusoh, 2013; Mannisto, Peltokallio, & Talvitie, 2000; Ure, 2009). According to Ure (2009), CTs normally get only a short period of release time to attend to STs' program and practical needs, and this time constrains limit how well-informed they are about the nature and substances of the practicum.

However, not all the issues are negative, and authors such as Beckford and Roland (2010) reported that CTs enthusiastically support STs as newcomers to the profession, and act as an experiential learning specialists providing the reality of classroom experience, and sharing pedagogical techniques and skills. Further, they state that the provision of orientation programs concerning their role; including practicum protocol and procedures, have made the cooperating teachers more influential as school-based teacher educators. Thus, while there is much cause for optimism, clearly significant work still needs to be done in many jurisdictions to support and facilitate the work of the cooperating teachers.

Major stages that CTs undergo. Wilhem (2007) identified six different stages that CTs go through when working with STs. The first stage is anticipation/excitement. At this stage the CTs are more curious about finding more about ST and will anticipate how things would go in the classroom. Stage two is confusion/clarity stage where the CT forms the first impression, and decides on how to deal with the ST. On-stage/back-stage is the third stage where CTs model teaching and take a back seat when ST takes charge of the class. The fourth stage is represented as letting go/hanging on. In this stage, the CT allows the ST to continue taking class if s/he is competent enough and, if not, they intervene by reinserting themselves back into the classroom teaching. The fifth stage is co-teacher/solo-teacher. This stage is reached only when the ST feels and is able to work as a member of the team with the CT and then is allowed to engage in more independent teaching. The final stage is loss/relief stage where the CT feels sad to see the departure of ST and yet relief in taking over the ownership of her own class again. These findings are in agreement with the extant review of the literature provided by Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen (2014). They also highlighted the phases of CTs' interaction with STs. Those phases include, “tensions such as anticipation and excitement, feeling of inadequacy and

being judged, experiencing the ups and downs of daily life in the classroom, and feelings of loss and relief at the practicum's conclusion" (p.184).

In sum, the review of literature related to cooperating teacher indicates that apprenticeship model is most dominant way in which CTs participate in teacher education. The principal focus of CTs is on their pupils and they are less likely to give critical or reflective comments to STs preferring to stick with modelling of classroom practice and emphasising the practicalities of the day-to-day task of teaching. Furthermore, though some teacher education institutions offer training for CTs, they are usually under-prepared for their role as mentors (Wilhem, 2007). As a result, some CTs feel alienated from what is happening at the university, and expect to have more communication with stakeholders. In light of the past experiences of CTs together with the different ways that they participate in teacher education, it can be concluded that experience, expertise, and professional commitments are equal imperatives for becoming an effective, efficient and successful CT.

Contributions from the Mentoring Literature.

While the notion of mentoring overlaps with much that has already been reviewed about CTs, there are distinct contributions that the concept of mentoring makes to the current discussion of the practicum in teacher education. The review of literature does not demonstrate a universal definition of the term mentoring. Some authors defined mentoring as an intense interpersonal relationship between a more experienced person and with a less experienced one, while, others for example, Smith (2007) considered it as a process that brings several developmental changes to the people involved. Authors such as Kwan and Lopez (2005) perceived mentoring as both a process and a relationship, while authors such as Ambrosetti (2010, 2011 & 2012) and Lai (2005) perceived that mentoring as an event that comprises three essential elements, namely relational, developmental, and contextual. They believed that all these three elements need to interconnect with each other to create an effective mentoring setup. Regardless of the nuances contained in these definitions, mentoring is seen as a reciprocal relationship with an experienced practitioner (mentor) and a newcomer to the practice (a mentee), where they define their roles, expectations, and purposes. From a meta-analysis of literature related to mentoring (published between 1978-2012), Dominquez and Hager (2013) concluded that the concept of mentoring can be applied in many contexts, including the

practicum, with varying duration and intensity depending on the purpose and the approach chosen.

In the context of teacher education, the terms *mentoring* and *supervision* have been interchangeably used in the literature (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). The purposes of mentoring generally associate with assisting, guiding, helping etc. whereas the supervision process involves assessing and evaluating (Bray & Nettleton, 2006). During the practicum, CTs generally undertake both of these roles – supervisory and mentoring. From their review of related literature, Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010, p.52) concluded that in the context of teacher education, mentoring can be defined as "a non-hierarchical, reciprocal relationship between mentors and mentees who work towards specific professional and personal outcomes for the mentee. The relationship usually follows a developmental pattern within a specified timeframe and roles are defined, expectations are outlined and a purpose is (ideally) clearly delineated."

In this context, during practicum, the ST, the mentee, is attached with a more experienced classroom teacher, the CT, who performs the role of a mentor (Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2013). This reflects the traditional apprenticeship model where the CT (mentor) is considered as an older and more experienced person, and ST (mentee) is considered as younger and less experienced person. Mentoring in such a setting may possess more negative experiences than positive experiences. But mentoring in a more contemporary perspective does not necessarily consider the mentor as an older and more experience person. A mentor can be a peer, co-worker who is at the same age and same developmental level as that of the mentee. Recent literature suggests that irrespective of the age, status, and expertise, the mentoring process in practicum is considered as a beneficial activity to both the CT and the ST (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). Recent literature on mentoring has identified alternative models of mentoring in the context of teacher education. Notably, the peer-peer model, peer-peer-mentor model, and the group model. The following section illustrates the advantages of these models.

Models of mentoring. Recent literature on mentoring has identified alternative models of mentoring in the context of teacher education. Notably, the peer-peer model, peer-peer-mentor model, and the group model. The following section illustrates the advantages of these models.

Peer-Peer Mentoring. Peer mentoring seems to enhance collaborative learning, and most often they act as a single unit. The mentors and mentees feel more comfortable and have an equal relationship due to the absence of a hierarchical power structure. This model possesses several advantages. According to authors such as Ambrosetti (2010) and McCormack and West (2006), this approach enhances the communication and increases their confidence level. In this regard, the peer mentoring sounds more beneficial than traditional, hierarchical, top down mentoring dyad (Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2013).

Peer-Peer-Mentor Mentoring. Alternatively, it could take the form of two peers working with one experienced, expert mentor (i.e., Peer-Peer-Mentor). A study conducted by Ambrosetti (2010) found that a first year and final year STs working with a CT is beneficial in many ways (e.g., Peer-Near-Peer-Mentor). For example, the final year STs will know the expectations, apprehension, and requirements of the first year student teacher as he/she had already been in their shoes, thus they can clarify, confirm their understanding, and create collaborative learning environment. In addition, the final year STs can guide and act as mentor. Further, this might enable the CTs to give more specific, detailed feedback based on the developmental level of both first and final year STs, hence adds value to the overall mentoring process. Therefore, this model of distributed mentoring could address the issue of unavailability of sufficient CTs during the practicum placements.

Group mentoring. The third model of mentoring takes the form of a mentoring group. According to Ambrosetti, Knight, and Dekkers (2013), mentoring groups often consists of peers and experts from the similar profession, and has a facilitator who provides professional support and guidance to the members in the group. This group mentoring is sometimes referred to as 'a community of practice'. A community of practice is described as “a group of people who share common interests, goals, and practices” (Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers 2013).

From their review of literature on mentoring, Hobson, Ashby, Malderez and Tomlinson (2009) highlighted that all the approaches to mentoring are effective if they fit the purposes and the demands of the learner. These authors elaborated on this statement by explaining that it implies the mentor should respect the needs of the learner and should be aware of the objectives of the whole process. Further, the mentoring

process should proceed with setting up the goals and objectives of mentoring upon mutual agreement which could later be revisited, reviewed and revised if required.

The literature on mentoring highlighted four different essential characteristics of an effective mentor that seems to be successful across various contexts (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson 2009). First, effective mentors make the learner feel welcome and accepted by providing both emotional and psychological supports. Second, they devote sufficient time for the learners by arranging scheduled meetings and being available for informal discussions. Third, they give autonomy to the learner to implement his/her own styles. Fourth, the most important part of mentoring is observations of mentee's practice. In teacher education, lesson observation is most valued and effective if the goal of the observation is set in the pre-conference meeting. Additionally, conducting a post-observation conference that focuses on specific aspects of the teaching is equally essential to enhance and enrich STs' learning during practicum. Further, this learning experience is heightened by giving opportunities to the STs to articulate their strengths and weaknesses, and jointly think aloud the strategies to resolve the issues faced. Furthermore, the research suggests that the feedback given to mentees should be challenging and educative to bring about substantial professional development.

The following section illustrates different mentoring styles that have been documented in the literature, and that have applicability to the practicum in teacher education.

Mentoring styles. Ibrahim (2013) classified the mentors into three broad categories: executive, therapist, and liberationist (Ibrahim, 2013). The executive mentors generally adopt directive style, while, the therapists follow a collaborative style and the liberationist follow non-directive style. The growing body of literature on mentoring suggests that these three approaches of mentoring must be used in line with the developmental level of the mentee (Ibrahim, 2013). The developmental level of mentees can be mapped along a continuum of skills ranging from unskilled to highly skilled. Figure 2.4 represents the continuum of STs' developmental level and the styles of mentoring applicable and appropriate at different points along with different images of mentors.

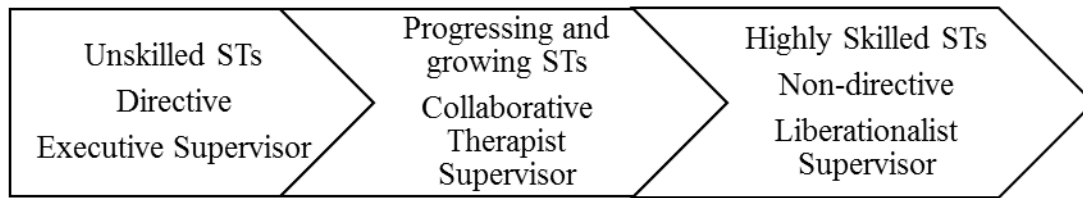


Figure 2.4. STs' Developmental Level and Corresponding Mentoring Styles.

At one end of the continuum, it is the executive supervisor who follows directive style of supervision. The directive style of supervision is considered as the most appropriate and applicable style in dealing with unskilled, newly started, mentees to the profession. The supervisor frames a very well defined, structured experience for the mentee. And the mentee is given little autonomy. On the other hand, at the middle of the continuum is the collaborative therapist supervisor. These types of supervisors believe that mutual agreement is essential in dealing with the problems. The mentee is considered as an equal partner in decision making. Research suggests that this type of supervision is effective for mentees who are progressing and growing in the field. At the other end of the continuum are highly skilled mentees. These mentees are considered as self-sufficient in dealing with matters arising in practicum. Thus, the supervisors follow non-directive approach. The philosophical underpinning of this belief is that the STs must be self-sufficient, and should be able to make sound decisions independently, in order for them to grow professionally. However, the non-directive approach is sometimes used as an excuse for mentors to absent themselves from the supervision of mentees.

Some researchers, such as Kim and Danforth (2012) believed that the supervision style adopted by the CT is very much related to their attitude and behaviours in dealing with STs. Having this contention, Kim and Danforth (2012), conducted a study to investigate how CTs cognitively frame and give meaning to their supervising role and work. Findings of the study revealed that a collaborative approach is more positive than the traditional, hierarchical approach. The traditional approach, which is similar as directive style, seems to hinder professional development of STs due to power imbalance. Similarly, a study conducted by Ibrahim (2013) to identify the supervision styles preferred by the STs and the supervisory approaches adopted by their CTs and university supervisors revealed that 83.3 per cent of STs preferred collaborative styles of supervision, and most of the CTs followed the same styles as preferred by STs. In contrast, it was found that the SLs followed a directive approach more often than other

approaches. The SLs reported that it is ineffective and inappropriate to use non-directive approach to mentoring as the STs are still in the learning process, thus they need assistance and support in many tasks that they undertake during practicum.

In addition, a synthesis of a large body of related literature, Tok (2012) sets forth four different types of mentoring styles adopted by CTs which are reminiscent of Clarke et al (2012) engagement continuum. The four styles include absent, directive, indulgent, and educative. These different types invoke different belief system on which their actions and the goals are based on. For example, the absent CT believes that the best way to learn to teach is by giving autonomy to STs to experiment and learn through their mistakes. In other words, the best approach is to follow 'sink or swim' model. These CTs tend to observe the lesson for a short period of time, and provide few comments and give a very short shallow assessment.

In contrast, the directive CTs believe that the best way to learn is by observing a role model and emulating precisely what the role models do. Their goal is to develop a new teacher who reflects their image. They remain in the class, or shadow with the ST to ensure that the ST follows what is prescribed. They interrupt classroom teachings if anything happens that wasn't planned. They provide quite detailed assessment, and evaluate ST in their own image as an experienced teacher. Unlike absent and directive CTs, the indulgent CTs believe that the best way to learn to teach is by following a closely scripted developmental approach, where the students are given increasing responsibilities based on their developmental level. They usually don't criticize much rather they praise the positive behaviours. Even if they feel that the ST needs lots of guidance to improve their teaching, they expect the SL from the university to identify and address those issues. In other words, hard criticism is left for the supervising lecturers.

On the other hand, the educative CTs believe that active participation is essential in learning to teach. STs need to think and reflect on their teaching. They believe that it is their professional responsibility to provide opportunities to STs, to gain a better understanding of teaching and learning. They conduct longer post-observation conference meetings, and challenge the STs to think about better alternative methods in teaching. Additionally, they provide an extensive evaluation of student teaching at the end of the practicum. These four styles of mentoring could be categorized under the images of the CTs that have been mentioned earlier. The indulgent and the educative

styles seem to be parallel to the therapist image, while absent style falls under the image of liberationists, and directive comes under executive.

In sum, it is evident from the review of the literature that the therapist mentoring image which encompasses collaborative, indulgent or supportive and educative styles of mentoring are prominent, effective, and beneficial in practicum settings in terms of the professional development of the STs. The directive and non-directive mentoring styles seem to be less efficacious with respect to the professional development of STs during the practicum.

School-based coordinators (SBCs). The review of extensive literature on teacher education, particularly on the practicum showed that much of the studies were focused on the triad – STs, CTs, and SLs. For example, a systematic review of literature published on between, 2000-2012, found that comparatively a few studies have been conducted about the school-based coordinators (Lawson et al., 2015). It was evident from the existing literature that generally, principals, deputy principals, or the leading teachers act as SBCs (Le Cornu, 2012, Butcher & Mutton, 2008).

Fewer studies are evident in the literature regarding the roles that SBCs play during the practicum. Le Cornu (2010), Martinez and Coomb were among the first to investigate the role of the coordinators and raised concerns regarding the significant role that they have in making the practicum a worthwhile and an educative event for the STs. Martinez and Coomb (2001) stated that the existing limited literature demonstrated that SBCs as an administrative outsider to the triad (STs, CTs and SLs) of the supervision. Similarly, Ngairé (2011) also claimed that the potentially significant role that SBCs play during the practicum is unrecognised and under-valued.

Although SBCs did not gain much attention in the literature, authors such as Le Cornu (2010), Martinez and Coomb (2010), Butcher and Mutton (2008) argued that they are essential partners of the practicum. As previously noted, traditionally their role was considered as managerial and administrative. However, Butcher and Mutton (2008) argued that a wide range of roles that they enact as coordinator fall under four main categories: managerial and administrative, pedagogical, monitoring and assessment, and pastoral. As managerial role, they generally monitor and ensure that the STs, most of the times arriving from different institutions, are exposed to the multiple aspects of school system, and where necessary engaged with school seniors to formulate related policies

and establish cohesive partnerships with the teacher education institutions. Regarding the pedagogical role, authors argued that the SBCs are responsible for arranging introductory sessions to STs to give information about school, etc. Their evaluative role involves the observation and monitoring of ST participation in wider aspects of school life, which in some cases, is considered in assessing the competence of STs. The pastoral role as described in the literature includes taking care of general well-being of the STs.

Similarly, a study conducted by Le Cornu (2012) revealed that the participants (principals and deputy principals) perceived that SBCs had three main roles: supporting ST, supporting CTs, and acting as a liaison between placement schools and universities. These three roles depict the managerial and pedagogical roles as described by Butcher and Mutton (2008). In their study of the reconceptualization of coordinators role, Butcher and Mutton found that the coordinators mainly engaged in managerial role rather than the other roles highlighted in the literature. These authors further claimed that the SBCs' have a pivotal role in the practicum, and have the potential to become significant members. But the way their roles were conceptualized and the context in which they enact them, sometimes impedes their impact. For example, it was reported in the literature that in primary level schools, normally, the head teachers are appointed as SBCs, and their role is to allocate classes and assign CTs to STs. In contrast, in secondary schools, it was argued that it needs to be a deputy or a senior teacher who has both curriculum knowledge and experience with STs. In addition, it was found that the commitment from the principal is critical. The coordinators highlighted that the teachers more willingly accept student teachers if they knew that the management, especially the principal or SBC is supportive.

A comparative study conducted by Allen (2012) revealed that to maximize the benefits of the practicum for all the stakeholders involved, a sustained open communication mechanism is essential. His study identified two important roles enacted by the coordinators: to open up communication channels within the schools and the university, and to act as a focal point for all the stakeholders. It also revealed that the practicum documents exchanged between universities clearly defined and demarcated the roles and responsibilities of the coordinators, but the findings indicated that the coordinators were not able to always act on the roles prescribed in the documentations. The participants of Le Cornu's (2012) study identified four supporting factors that helped them to enact their role effectively: namely, meetings with the university mentors,

meetings conducted for SBCs from all the schools, commitment from the principal, or the management, and the way in which the practicum is structured. Similarly, Allen (2012) highlighted the importance of creating a 'hybrid space' as advocated by Zeichner (2010), or a 'learning communities model' promoted by Le Cornu (2010) to help the stakeholders to work in concert with SBCs towards a more successful practicum. The literature suggests that creating such a space, or a platform would enable the SBCs to enact their roles more effectively (Allen, 2012; Le Cornu, 2012, 2010).

In brief, this part of the review regarding SBCs indicated that there is far less research on SBCs. The existing literature highlighted that they mainly play four roles, and the prominent among them is the managerial role. It also showed that their role is very much dependent on how it is being conceptualised, thus, their roles need to be well-defined and demarcated. It was also evident that even when the roles are well spelt out it wasn't practiced in that way, so hybrid spaces or learning communities need to be established to help them to enact their role effectively.

Supervising lecturers (SLs). The review of literature indicates that SLs are considered as key players in the practicum (McDonald, 2014). Cuenca et. al (2011) stated that the SLs are considered as the second most influential person with respect to the STs during the practicum. These authors further emphasised that the SLs are meant to assist the STs to connect the content learnt from the university and the practical knowledge that they gained from the field experience during the practicum. In other words, they play a significant role in bridging the gap between the university education and the field experience. In addition, several authors have indicated that other than supervising student teaching, SLs can play many significant roles during the practicum to make it beneficial and worthwhile learning experience for all involved (Cuenca et. al, 2011; Fayne, 2007; McDonald, 2014; Wilson, 2006).

The fundamental role of a SL, as evident from the extant literature, is to observe and evaluate student teaching, and to assist STs to resolve the challenges that they face during the practicum (Nguyen, 2009). Traditionally, university staff are assigned as SLs for the practicum. But the recent literature suggests that this has changed in the past decades (McDonald, 2014). For example, Le Cornu (2010) noted that the participation of university staff in practicum observation has notably decreased across the world. In some contexts, SLs are hired just for practicum supervision purposes only, while in other contexts they are full-members of the faculty. In some contexts, it is a combination of both temporarily hired personnel and staff of the TEIs who are SLs. In the case of fulltime

faculty members, it often means that they are pre-occupied with their research work and that their supervisory role is largely a secondary consideration, thus it becomes an add-on imposition for them. This differentiated workload leads to their ineffective, insufficient, infrequent visits to classroom teaching of student teachers (Nguyen, 2009). Similarly, Smith and Ulvik (2011) argued that due to their busy schedule, they take their supervisory role as simply to provide very general support to student teachers. However, according to Darling-Hammond (2006), participation of university staff in supervising STs is a characteristic of powerful teacher education programs.

A study conducted by McDonald (2014), to find out the SLs' perceptions of their specific role and contribution to ST learning during the practicum, showed that the SLs perceived that they had two essential roles: as a liaison and as an assessor. As a liaison, they believed that they needed to develop strong connections between the university and schools. They considered their role as assessor as crucial in the accreditation of STs' performance and viewed it as a privilege. Although some SLs viewed themselves as both a support and liaison person for student teachers in schools, some of the studies indicated that the SLs were seen to be most lacking in consistency with respect to these roles. For example, Koerner, Rust, and Baumgartner (2002) concluded from their study that the SLs missed some of the important opportunities during their supervision process. They highlighted that the SLs observe STs teaching sessions for short periods of time and were not able to provide constructive feedback immediately after their observations.

In addition, the recent research suggests that the SLs' roles and responsibility need to be revised and redefined. For example, a study conducted by Zhang, Cown, Hayes, Werry, Barnes and France (2015), revealed that the STs and CTs who participated in the study strongly argued that the SLs should not have the final judging role of the practicum. They claimed that the SLs have only a few scheduled observations, which were, in their opinion, not sufficient to make a valid judgment about the performance of the STs. The participants perceived that the most suitable and beneficial role of the SLs is to act as a supporter, a liaison person. These findings are in accordance with the claim made by Smith (2010). Smith stated that the CTs are in a better position than that of SLs, to assess STs as they know the context and could evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of STs' teaching in relation to the context.

In a study conducted by Merc (2015) to find out whether or not the STs were satisfied the way that their practicum was assessed, he used an assessment criterion that consisted of six elements: planning-preparation, observation/reflection reports, CTs, peer teachers, SLs, and general organization. The findings revealed that the STs raised concerns about the differential treatment they received from the SLs that was based upon on their personal preferences and expectations.

Therefore, in short, this review regarding SLs revealed that they are considered as the second most influential persons in the practicum. They mainly play two significant roles: as a liaison and as an assessor. Among these two roles, their role as assessor was contested and critiqued in the teacher education literature. In addition, a tension is created with the many roles that the CTs play in relation to the SL, including the role of an assessor. Moreover, the essential elements that need to be included in SLs role are also contested in the literature. Therefore, this area needs further attention by the teacher education researchers.

Issues and Challenges

As has been previously mentioned, practicum is a complex and multifaceted endeavour that involves multiple stakeholders. Analysis of the related literature indicates that these stakeholders face several challenges in their effort to implement a successful practicum for the STs. It is also evident from the literature that each of these stakeholders faces different issues pertaining to the practicum. The following accounts illustrate the major issues and challenges and how those could be addressed to make the practicum a worthwhile, enjoyable and an educative event for all the stakeholders involved.

Lack of support. Being a multifaceted complex endeavour and the first time that the STs are exposed to the realities of authentic classroom teaching, a lot of support and guidance is expected from all the stakeholders involved in the practicum. However, the review of literature demonstrates that the key actors like STs and CTs do not get adequate support from the relevant jurisdictions.

For example, a study conducted by Yunus, Hashim, Ishak and Mahamod (2010) revealed that the STs faced several challenges due to the lack of support from their CTs and SLs. It was found that, most of the times, they were pre-occupied with their routine teaching tasks and hardly get time to attend STs. Further, the reasons attributed to this lack of support include lack of training for CTs regarding their role and responsibilities

and also the weak selection criteria of CTs. It was also highlighted that sometimes the CTs were compelled rather than being volunteers to work with STs. Consequently, there was neither substantive intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation to assist STs with their practicum. These findings were in accordance with the findings of a study conducted by Hamaidi, Al-Shara, Arouri, and Awwad (2014) that found that the participants also lacked support from the principals of the placement schools, administrative staff, and allocated little time for the STs to reflect on their teaching.

In addition, it was reported in the literature that the heads of the placement schools, the principals, and the administrative staff were not often fully engaged with the complex activity of the practicum. Findings from the study conducted by Smith and Lev-Ari (2005) revealed that the placement schools did not often fully engage in the practicum. It was perceived that the practicum related tasks were meant to be only for the attached CTs. In other words, these CTs do not receive adequate support from the management of the placement schools. It was also evident from the literature that some CTs perceive that they are not competent enough to mentor STs due to the heavy workload they already have (Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006). This indicates that the placement schools did not acknowledge the extra work load that the CTs engage in when guiding STs.

Similarly, the lack of support from the TEIs was highlighted in the literature as a prominent issue that needed further attention. For example, in a study to better understand the perceptions of CTs about their engagement in the practicum, it was revealed that their professional commitment was the motivator for them to work with the STs (Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006). However, this motivation was lessened and dissatisfaction was created by mismanagement of the practicum by the university and underfunding for their role. This dissatisfaction often undermines their capacity to provide adequate support to the STs. To overcome this dissatisfaction and also to motivate the CTs, Mutlu (2015) stated that it is imperative to make the practicum a more organised, viable and worthwhile activity for the CTs. He suggested that it may be of a great help if the placement schools provide some time off for CTs by reducing their workload rather than paying for them, thereby they could focus more on assisting STs.

In addition, Bloomfield (2008) stated that it is a challenge to the TEIs to develop an appropriate mechanism to acknowledge, appreciate and value the professional work

undertaken by the CTs. He further added that it is uncertain that the placement schools could commit to provide their full support to the student teachers due to the increasing number of enrolments in TEIs together with the increased duration of the practicum. In addition, the literature demonstrates that, most of the time the CTs do not get any training on how to assist and supervise STs. For instance, a recent study conducted by Atlan and Saglame (2015) indicated that the CTs who participated in that study did not receive specific preparation on providing professional support to the STs. Another surprising finding of the study was among the CTs who participated, only one mentioned the term 'feedback', which indicates that they have not given much emphasis on the provision of feedback though it is an essential role that they have to play in guiding STs. Similarly, the literature also demonstrates that STs did not often get support in terms of materials and other equipment. For example, a study conducted by Saricoban (2010) revealed that the participants had issues in getting access to audio-visual aids, photocopying services and internet facilities.

Therefore, the review of literature suggests that there are several factors that hinder the provision of professional support for the practicum that this undermines the professional development of student teachers during this element of the teacher education program.

Lack of coordination and cooperation. It is evident from the literature that there is a lack of coordination between placement schools and the TEIs. For example, on his evaluation of opportunities in pitfalls in teacher education in U.S., Zeichner and Bier (2015) concluded that the CTs, with whom the STs were attached at the placement schools, seem to know very little about the teacher education programs at the university. And from the other end, teacher educators from the university seem to have limited knowledge on what actually going on in the classrooms at the placement schools. In other words, the placement schools and universities most often operate as two different worlds, and even in cases where they knew each other's world, they seem to lack a shared vision. These findings are consistent with the conclusion made by Ulvik and Smith (2011). They concluded from their study on investigating whether stakeholders in the same context share a common view of the practicum, that the lack of cooperation between TEIs and placement schools resulted in reduced learning opportunities for the STs.

The lack of coordination between CTs and the teacher education was also found to contribute to widen the theory into practice gap that has been documented as one of the longstanding issues for the practicum. A study conducted by Allen (2009) revealed that even if the STs valued the theories that they learned at the university, they rarely get the opportunity to translate it in their teaching as they were bound to follow the practices of their CTs. A similar finding was reported by Gan (2013). He found that the STs find it difficult to try out new innovative teaching strategies that they learnt from the university. In addition, Hastings (2010) concluded from his study on the implication of encountering unexpected challenges during the practicum, that the effectiveness of the practicum seems to be hindered, and it becomes a more negative emotional experience for the STs when there is a disconnection between the placement school and the universities.

In addition, the literature demonstrates that the TEIs continue to face the challenge of unavailability of sufficient suitable placements. Authors such as Le Cornu (2010) and Jiyoon (2008) stated that it is difficult to get quality placements, due the increased number of STs. Most recently, Le Cornu's (2016) review of 25 years of empirical research also showed that the difficulty in finding quality placement is one of the many issues that intensify tension among teacher educators who work in practicum contexts. Similarly, a study conducted by Bai and Kaur (2016) found that the universities in Fiji experience the same issue of finding sufficient placements for the STs. He attributed this difficulty to the lack of sense of a shared responsibility among placement schools and TEIs. The literature suggests that the perception is that the main responsibility for teacher education rested on universities and that this needs to be changed as it should be viewed as a shared responsibility among all the stakeholders (Le Cornu, 2016; Clarke, Collins, & Triggs, 2012).

In short, it is evident from the literature that the lack of coordination and cooperation further widens the theory practice gap, and it also exacerbates the issues associated with arranging placements.

Classroom management problem. Classroom management problems are documented in the literature as one of the prominent challenges that the STs encounter during the practicum (Gan, 2013, Goh & Mathews, 2011; Kabilan & Izzaham, 2008; Mutlu, 2015; Yunus et al., 2010). It was further explicated that the practicum is the first

time that these STs face the reality of classroom teaching and therefore it is expected that they might not be able to deal with the pupils effectively. Other predominant themes include student discipline, institutional and personal adjustment, classroom teaching and student learning. These findings were, to some extent, in accordance with the findings of the mixed-method research conducted by Ali, Othman and karim (2014) who found that a series of issues, among which classroom management and pupils discipline was the most serious issue that they faced. While the less prominent issues include inadequate training on lesson planning, having to attend to other duties (e.g., as relief teachers), lack of essential services such as printing, photocopying, internet and multi-media, and the disruption of their teaching sessions due to co-curricular activities.

In addition, in a comparative study conducted by Mitchel, Clarke and Nuttall (2007) to study the perspectives of CTs in Australia and Canada, they found that classroom management and lack of preparation were the two main issues that the CTs in both the setting reported. A similar issue was reported from a study by Gan (2013). All the participants of the study highlighted that the classroom management as one of the most challenging issues that they encountered during the practicum. They noted that it was too hard to deal with misbehaviours and also to establish new classroom rules and routines, though they had learned theories on classroom management on campus. In other words, even if they acquired theoretical knowledge of the classroom management techniques, most of the STs found it hard to apply them in real classroom situation. This inability to apply learned theories in classroom contexts contributed to the theory-practice gap.

In brief, the extant literature revealed that the classroom management problem is a predominant issue that the STs face even if they had relevant knowledge base, and it widens the theory practice gap as STs do not have adequate support or guidance in applying the learned theories in their practicum classrooms.

Other dimension of theory practice gap. As already noted, the existence of theory practice gap is a longstanding issue highlighted in the literature. For example, on his analysis of history of teacher education in first half of the nineteenth century, Vick (2006) concluded that much of the criticisms were found on the gap between theory and practice. Some of the reasons that he found attributed to this issue include having organised the practicum at the end of the program, CTs requiring the STs to follow

teaching methods that were contradictory to what they have studied at the on-campus classes and increased pressure on placement schools to accommodate STs more than their actual capacity (resulting in under-prepared or reluctant CTs).. Additionally, the staff from the teacher education being too disconnected from the placement schools consequently design their instruction without much of reflection on school context.

Similarly, Grundoff (2011) claimed that many of the teacher education programs across the globe are under scrutiny due to the presence of the perceived theory practice gap, and the increased focus on training high quality teachers. Allen (2009) also made a similar claim that one of the major challenge that the teacher education face is to maintain a balance between theory and practice. Further, a systematic meta-analysis conducted by Lawson, et. al., (2015) concluded that the theory practice gap is an issue that stands out among the 114 practicum related studies that they reviewed. Similarly, a study conducted by Roofoe and Miller (2013) showed that the STs who participated in the study raised concern about the balance between theory and practice. They noted that they did not receive adequate training on classroom management techniques and hence, felt that more practical pedagogical modules prior to the practicum were essential ingredients in order to better bridge the theory practice gap.

The review of literature suggests remedial measures to address, or to reduce the theory practice gap. One such measure that stands out in the literature is to foster a strong collaborative partnership with the placement schools (Allen, 2012). These partnerships are essential in establishing shared vision and understanding among the stakeholders so that all involved will be equipped with information and knowledge to help guide the STs during the practicum. Similarly, microteaching sessions were also considered important in providing the STs with the opportunity to put theory into practice and gain confidence in teaching before they start the practicum (Vick, 2006). Further, Yuksel (2014) concluded from his study that if we want to train teachers to survive 21st century teaching and learning, the curriculum needs to be revised and refined such that more subject specific knowledge, more rigorous modules on content pedagogy, and a well organised practicum that is fully supported by all the stakeholders is needed. Along the same lines, Ingvarson et al (2014) stated that research-based classroom management techniques are essential to help the STs develop more conducive classroom environment in dealing with the theory into practice gap.

In addition, less prominently cited issues in the literature include timing and duration of the practicum. For example, Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) analysed the practicum experiences of ten universities from different parts of the world. Their results showed that the timing and duration of the practicum were recurring themes that exacerbated the theory into practice gap. On explicating these factors, it was indicated in the literature suggests that offering the practicum towards the end of the program hinders STs' professional development. Likewise placing them in schools for a shorter period of time is also unsuccessful in developing the teaching skills (Yan, He, 2010; Quick & Sieborger, 2005). In simple terms, how the practicum is structured and implemented has a significant impact on the connection between theory and practice.

Strategies for Successful Implementation of the Practicum

The foregoing discussions indicated recurring issues cited in the literature that need to be addressed to improve the effectiveness, and success of the practicum. The following section presents the strategies that have been considered in the literature as solutions to many of the longstanding issues presented above.

Formulate systems level policies on practicum. The review of literature suggests that system level policies are essential for the successful implementation of the practicum. For example, in an effort to benchmark teacher education programs in Australia, Invarson, Reid, Buckley, Kleihenz, Masters and Rowley (2014) reviewed teacher education programs in five high achieving countries (Canada, Germany, Finland, Singapore, and Chinese Taipei) based on teaching performance. They found that that what these countries have common is that they have stable policies on teacher education. For example, in countries such as UK, the length of the practicum is governed by law and regulation (El-Kerdany, 2012). Similarly, in China, the TEIs are required to complete certain minimum number of teaching practice days for teaching certification. Further, Hoxie (2010) also concluded from his review of teacher education programs from selected countries that in many countries, TEIs have institutional level policies formulated that fit within a framework of nationally articulated targets.

Establish a third space at the placement schools. A large body of literature on practicum suggests that establishing a third space at the placement schools may resolve many of the issues that resonate within the implementation of the practicum. Moje, Ciechanowski, Ellis, Carrillo, and Collazo (2004) note that, in education, this

'third space' can be conceptualised as establishing a platform where personnel from more dominant, more experienced communities co-exist with less dominant and less experienced ones. In particular, in teacher education the concept of a 'third space' has been used to describe an environment where all the stakeholders come in contact with each other to generate more collaborative, cohesive relationships to generate new knowledge to better enhance the success of the practicum (Cuenca, et.al, 2011). It is also described as a 'hybrid space' (Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015; Zeichner, 2010).

Establishing a 'third space' is similar to the creation of 'professional learning community' described by Le Cornu (2016) and Lind (2004). According to these authors, a professional learning community is an environment where a group of professionals share their values, expectations, experiences, and work together to enhance and enrich the professional development of all involved. This concept of 'professional community' is very much similar to the concept of 'community of practice' described by Ambrosetti, Knight and Dekkers (2013) and Reese (2012). They define it as a group of people who share common interests, goals, and practices. In addition, they indicate that CTs could work as facilitators of this community of practice with SLs to support STs through sharing of experiences and expertise.

STs' success during teaching practicum is highly dependent on the cooperation they receive from the stakeholders, especially from the CTs and SLs. The practicum requires these key persons to put in concerted effort and to work collaboratively to make the practicum experience successful. Research suggests that creating a 'third space' or a professional learning community would enable these essential key players to work more collaboratively, thus leading to new partnerships that were less hierarchical (Le Cornu, 2016). In addition, Cuenca, et.al state that establishing a 'third space' reduces the STs feeling of alienation, uplifts the status of SLs and increase their influence on the overall development of STs. Findings from the study by Williams (2014) also showed that teacher educators benefit from working in the 'third space.' Among the benefits highlighted include adapting to changing perspectives of learning and teaching, and managing very finely balanced and difficult relationships. Therefore, this review regarding the creation of third space, that is similar to that of community of practice, or more commonly called professional learning community seems to be an effective means to address some of the perennial issues and challenges that the stakeholders encounter during the practicum.

Establish genuine partnerships with the placement schools. The review of literature suggests that it is highly imperative to establish a genuine, cohesive and collaborative partnership between the placement schools and the TEIs (Allen, 2011, Freeman, 2010). Establishing such partnership not only benefits the STs, but all the stakeholders involved. One prominent advantage reported in the literature is that it opens opportunities to develop professional relationships between participants (Gatti & Catalanto, 2015; White, Bloomfield, & LeCornu, 2010). In addition, it enables all involved to carry out the task of assessment effectively, which normally falls on CTs (Ferrier- Kerr, 2009).

According to Elligate, (2009), partnerships operating in the practicum comprised the triumvirate relationship between CTs, SLs and STs, and the partnerships between placement schools and TEIs. A study conducted by Allen (2011) found out that the complexity of these relationships among the stakeholders can compromise the quality of the practicum. For example, Bloomfield (2009) identified time and disconnectedness between the roles of cooperating teachers and supervising lecturers as sources of tension. This disconnectedness is due to power imbalance that exists between university and placement schools, where placement schools were rarely involved at planning and organisation of practicum which occurs in their domain resulting in disingenuous feelings between schools and universities (Knight, Tarner, & Dekkers, 2013).

Tensions generally generated within this shared work consist of those concerning the differences in practices and primacies between universities and placement schools (Bloomfield, 2009). Seven sources of such tensions have been identified in the recent literature review: time, power, different obligations, mentors mentoring efficacy, critical attitude of STs towards their mentors, and the dual mentor role (Cohen, Hoz, & Kaplan, 2013). That means, there is a greater need for clear, continued communication with faculty members and the placement schools to maximize the potential of the partnership. Therefore, to further strengthen this relationship, research suggests that strategic planning, collaborative work, and reorganizing the curriculum are essential (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Valerio, Jonson, Brophy, Bond, Gault, Marshall, & Abril, 2012). It is evident from the literature that one of the high-achieving countries, such as Singapore has established schools-university partnership that work in a highly collaborative relationship with the MoE.

Therefore, this review of literature suggests that a strong genuine partnership with the placement schools is very important. Similarly, a strong healthy, conducive relationship between STs and CTs is imperative for significant learning to take place, as the CTs are the key person in the multifaceted endeavour of practicum. The literature also provides empirical evidence on the importance of maintaining open lines of communication between partner institutions to empower student teachers to become independent, innovative, reflective professionals (Valerio, et.al. 2012).

Establish technology enhanced practicum experiences

ePortfolio system. Establishing an ePortfolio system was found to be an effective strategy to surmount many problems pertaining to geographical barriers in practicum settings, particularly where the practicum occurs in distant or remote environments (Kecik & Aydin 2011). A teaching portfolio is defined as “aggregation of the purposeful collection, selection, organization and reflections of a teacher on the artefacts and experiences during the process of teaching or learning to teach” (Sung, Chang, & Chang, 2009). In accordance with the definition of a teaching portfolio, e-portfolio comprises a compilation of STs' lesson plans, their reflections on the teaching, and the feedback received from both CT and SL. It provides a platform for the university supervisors to provide online feedback on the lesson plans prior to implementation. In addition, an e-portfolio system increases the potential interactions between all partners as there is a common basis for discussions. Further, it enables the SLs and coordinators to monitor how well and how often STs get feedback from their CTs. Recent researche, such as done by Zinger and Alicia (2014) and, Shephered and Skrabut (2011) also note that e-portfolio is an excellent tool to facilitate and enhance STs learning by aiding ST reflection and integrating thinking.

eSupervision. Moving beyond enhancement of the current practicum settings, several researchers claimed that the quality of supervision provided to the STs is one of the vital determinants of a successful practicum (Alger & Kopcha, 2009; Dymond, et. al., 2008). Realising the importance of supervision and the challenges faced in assuring quality supervision Alger and Kopcha (2009) implemented 'eSupervision' that they believed to fit to teacher education in 21st century. It is comprised of four main components used in web-based course management system (CMS). Those include discussion forums, instructional modules, an online lesson plan builder, and

downloadable templates to guide performance. This program was conducted using Moodle, one of the web-based course management system (CMS). Alger and Kopcha (2010) found from their research on effectiveness of this eSupervision program, that STs, CTs, and SLs work together in all the essential elements of teaching: namely, lesson planning, implementation, assessment and reflection. Consequently, the STs get much better guidance on all aspects of their teaching, which increases STs' teaching skills, especially, lesson planning skills. Further, it enhances the communication, and improves the performance and accountability of the SLs and CTs. eSupervision tends to be more interactive than the ePortfolio outlined above due to its multiple opportunities for interaction.

In addition, Hixon and So's (2009) review of literature on the usage of technology to improve field experience indicated three different types of technology-enhanced field experiences. Type one is described as concrete, direct experience in reality. It requires the STs to follow traditional apprenticeship model, but technology is utilised to enhance the supervision, communication, and reflection through recorded observation (e.g., electronic reporting using tablets). Type two is vicarious indirect experience with reality. In this type, the STs observe pupils and teachers in remote classrooms. Recent research suggests that the STs can do this either by video-conferencing or by watching pre-recorded video classes. The third type is abstract experience with a model of reality. This type of experience utilizes a simulated teaching environment. In other words, it provides a 'virtual practicum' grounded on simulated apprenticeship model (similar to what was noted earlier in this review).

The first two types are in consistent with what Gronn, et al. (2013) identified in their review. They claimed that the classroom observations can be used in two ways. One is that direct observation of classroom teaching, which is similar as the type one experience identified by Hixon and So (2009). This allows the supervisor to give direct face-to-face feedback on how to improve teaching. At the same time the teaching sessions can be recorded for later reference and reflection using easy-to-access technologies (e.g., iPhones). Second is observation of significant others and peers in remote classrooms, the vicarious experience. Gronn, et al. (2013) stated that this type of observation is an invaluable ingredient in the process of supervision as it creates a platform to share the experiences of multiple players. Additionally, it enables the student teachers to get exposure to a range of teaching techniques employed in multiple contexts.

Cyber supervision. Similar to eSupervision, Dymond, et. al., (2008) found from their study on the evaluation of ‘videoconferencing as a supportive technology for practicum supervision,’ that a computer application called Polycom videoconferencing – or what they have termed cyber supervision – is a potential alternative approach to the current on-site practicum supervision. It requires a computer and a camera that allows a video and audio signal to be transmitted between videoconferencing units from distant sites. From their study to ascertain whether the consistency could be attained between on-site and off-site supervisors when carrying out the supervision of STs through Polycom, they found that the agreement between on-site and off-site supervisors is quite high. Therefore, they concluded that cyber supervision is a potential option for the supervision of an ever increasing number of STs in distant sites, depending on costs and communication technology (e.g., internet access for streaming audio and video).

Cyber practicum Jiyeon (2008) proposes a cyber or electronic practicum (ePracticum) as a possible solution to surmount the challenges of insufficient placements from placement schools. This virtual practicum placement would draw on the power of the internet and associated technologies (virtual reality headsets). Cyber practicum benefits stakeholders including pupils, STs, SLs, practicum coordinators. For example, unlike in the traditional school practicum, cyber practicum has the potential to allow STs to meet a variety of STs from different regions, and assist the pupils in their learning drawing on the same cyber experience. In the same way, the supervisors also could sign up and create a space to communicate and supervise the assigned STs. Highlighting these advantages, the author asserts that the cyber practicum could be an effective method for teacher education programs. The efficacy of an ePracticum has yet to be fully examined due to the limited technology current invested in the concept.

Key Issues Underpinning the Current Study

The extensive review of extant literature resulted to the identification of major dimensions of the practicum, focusing on the model, structure, and the perception of the stakeholders. Stakeholders consider the teaching practicum as a crucial component that has significant impact on the quality of graduate teachers (Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2013; Lind, 2004; Zeichner, 2010). The review of literature attests that to improve the qualities of graduate teachers, the practicum needs to be well coordinated, carefully supervised, workload should be well measured and reasonable, and pedagogical

approaches need to be well aligned with practicum contexts (Mtika, 2011). The practicum provides potential opportunities for STs to be socialized into the profession. It assists them to attest their career choice. Their identity is constructed and reconstructed based on their practicum experience. They learn a range of teaching skills such as planning and managing classrooms, thus, boosting their self-confidence.

The review indicates that, teacher education institutions across the globe adopt various models—or and structures—for the practicum. The most consistently cited models include: apprenticeship, integrative, school-partnership, community of teachers', collaborative learning, reflective learning, clinical, and pedagogical content knowledge. Although each of these models possesses several merits, the integrated model is favoured as the most effective model over the others.

It is evident from the literature that the structure of the practicum varies across the globe, sometimes even within the same country. In some countries, it is governed by laws and regulation. In some countries, institutional level policies are aligned with national level targets. The literature attests that how the practicum is organized has a significant impact on the overall professional development of student teachers.

In addition, the way that assessment is constructed and conducted plays a crucial role in determining the quality of graduates. As the practicum serves a gate keeping function to the teaching profession, it needs to be well supervised and assessed. According to the literature, both formative and summative assessment techniques are employed to assess the practicum. However, among those two, many authors support formative assessment due to its high impact on STs' professional development. In many cases, both CTs and SLs are entitled to undertake the task of assessment. In some contexts, the final grade, or pass or fail, is determined by a panel consists of multiple players.

Apart from adopting a specific model, it is equally important to train and educate the stakeholders, especially CTs and SLs on their influential and impactful role in the practicum. This review shows that, most of the extant international research was focussed on the triad – STs, CTs and SLs. In the case of STs, an emphasis was on primary and secondary levels with little attention given to early childhood education. The reported literature confirms that the STs perceived that constructive feedback is highly imperative, where its method, nature and timing have significant impact on its effectiveness.

Additionally, the professional support they receive from stakeholders especially from CTs, placement schools and TEIs are considered as essential factors.

CTs, being one of the key players of the practicum, a substantial amount of literature is documented on their various roles and styles they adopt in guiding student teachers. Among the prominent role highlighted including providers of feedback, gate keepers of profession, modellers of practice, supporters of reflection, agents of socialization, convenors of relation, purveyors of context, gleaners of knowledge, advocates of practicals, abiders of change, and teachers of children. Although they play multiple roles, they were not adequately prepared and their work in guiding STs which is often unappreciated and unacknowledged. Consequently, it demotivates and undermines their professional commitment to the practicum.

CTs follow different styles of mentoring that showcase different images of mentoring or coaching. The most prominent styles comprise absent, direct, indulgent (collaborative), or educative. The latter two represents CTs as therapist supervisor, while absent and direct styles represent them as liberationists and executive supervisor respectively. The literature suggests that the developmental level of STs need to be matched with the styles adopted. For example, directive style appears to be more effective for unskilled STs, while indulgent style is more appropriate to progressing and developing STs, and absent style is much better matched with highly skilled STs who are considered self-sufficient in managing the practicum. Unlike CTs, SLs appear to have limited roles that were centred on assessment of the practicum. In the literature, critique of their role as assessor suggest that they have limited contact with the STs. Normally SLs were chosen from university staff, in some cases, they were hired from outside the university.

Further, this review shows that existing literature has limited research on school-based and institutional-based practicum coordinators. Authors such as Le Cornu, Martinez, Coomb, Butcher and Mutton argued that they are essential partners of the practicum. The existing literature shows that a range of roles that they enact as coordinators come under four main categories: managerial and administrative, pedagogical, monitoring and assessment, and pastoral. It also showed that their role is very much dependent on how it is being conceptualised, thus, their roles need to be well-defined and demarcated to exemplify their role. It was also evident that even when the

roles are well spelt out in the documents it wasn't practiced, so hybrid spaces or learning communities, for example, might need to be established to help them to enact their role effectively.

In addition, the literature that focuses on issues and challenges encountered during the practicum shows that classroom management was one of the predominant issues that the stakeholders, especially STs faced. Other issues reported include lack of support, coordination and cooperation from the stakeholders. According to the literature relevant measures need to be taken to address these key issues. The most recurring measures reported include formulating national level or system level policies, establishing a third space at the placement schools, establishing genuine partnerships with the placement schools, and establishing technology enhanced practicum environments.

In summary, this chapter had examined the major dimensions of the practicum. This intensive extant literature shows that, during the long history of teacher education in the Maldives (40 years), there has been only one formal research study conducted in the Maldivian context pertaining to the practices of practicum in TEIs in the Maldives. In addition, it is evident that STs, CTs and SLs were the central focus of many of the studies. Only limited research is available on coordinators from both placement schools and in TEIs, and the role of school heads. Similarly, research on STs from early childhood education appeared limited compared to that of primary and secondary level. Additionally, it is apparent that qualitative design is more predominant, thus generalizability became an issue. Further, interviews, observations and reflective journals were found to be the most prominent data collection methods.

Furthermore, this review revealed that none of the studies reviewed and read covered all the stakeholders in one study, but the recent literature strongly recommended to include all the stakeholders to develop a well-rounded conceptualisation of the practicum. Therefore, this study is designed to fill in the gap in the literature, mentioned in the forgoing discussion within the Maldivian context. The deployed design and methodological approached are outlined in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research framework that guides this study and the research paradigms that underpin the study. The research instrumentation, sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation are then presented in detail, followed by a brief overview of the ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

Research Framework

The research framework, in simple terms, is the structure or the frame that supports the research. Lester (2005, p.458) defines the research framework as ‘the basic ideas that serves as the basis for a phenomenon that is to be investigated.’ According to Eisenhart (1991), there are three types of frameworks: theoretical, practical and conceptual. Theoretical frameworks are based on formal theory, where the purpose of the research is to support, modify, or expand an already established theory. In contrast, the practical framework contributes ideas based upon one’s practical knowledge and experience, whereas, the conceptual framework is the constructs or concepts and their network of subsumed relationships that serve the basic structure of the research. Among these three, the latter is considered important to this study, as the study is neither based on any formal theory, nor on overarching practical experience but is based upon the fundamental principle, ideas, and constructs of the phenomenon (the practicum) meant to be studied. This is largely an exploratory empirical study. Therefore, an explicit research framework is considered imperative as it guides the researcher to identify the important constructs to be studied and the perspectives to be taken. Eisenhart (1991) states that identifying an appropriate framework for the study is the second most important steps among the three essential steps of the research process. The first step is establishing the research problem (presented in Chapter 1), and the third conceptual step is identifying data analysis framework which will be described later in this chapter. The following section describes the conceptual structure of the study derived from a review of the extant literature.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework shows the researcher's synthesis of literature to explain a phenomenon under investigation. In other words, it represents how one utilizes existing literature to describe a phenomenon. One of the prime purposes of a conceptual framework is to identify concepts and their subsumed relationships relevant to the study.

It enables the researcher to better organize, conceptualize and conduct the research (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). Figure 3.1 is the conceptual framework that describes the important constructs and their network of relationships, demarcated from the extant literature, upon which this study is situated.

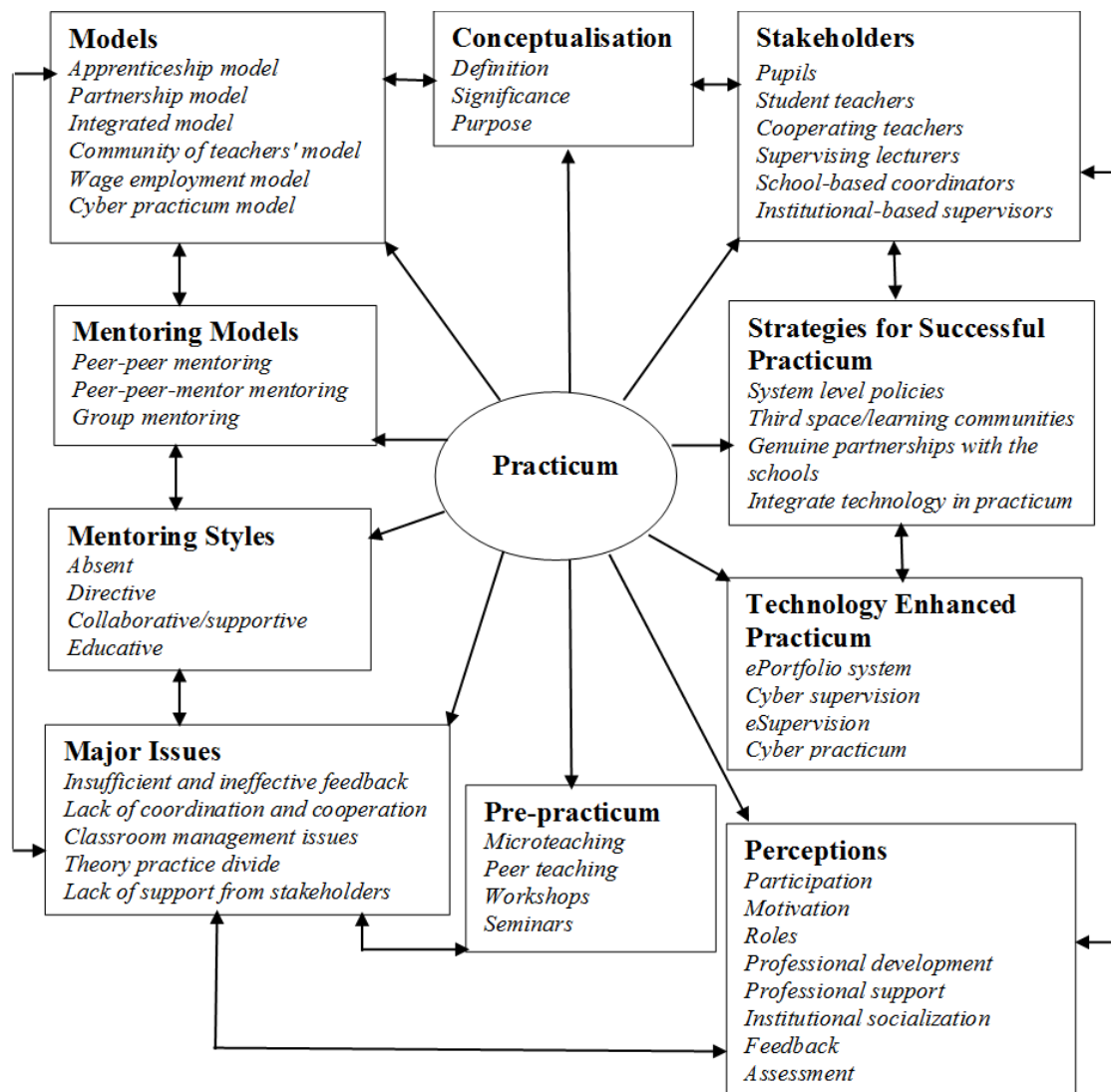


Figure 3.1. Conceptual Framework of the Study.

Figure 3.1 attempts to show the major constructs of the practicum that have been derived from the literature. These constructs serve as the basis to design this study which is aimed at exploring the current practices of practicum in teacher education in the Maldives. Figure 3.2 shows the major research activities undertaken in this study, which will be followed by a detailed discussion of which philosophical framework is most appropriate to answer the research question.

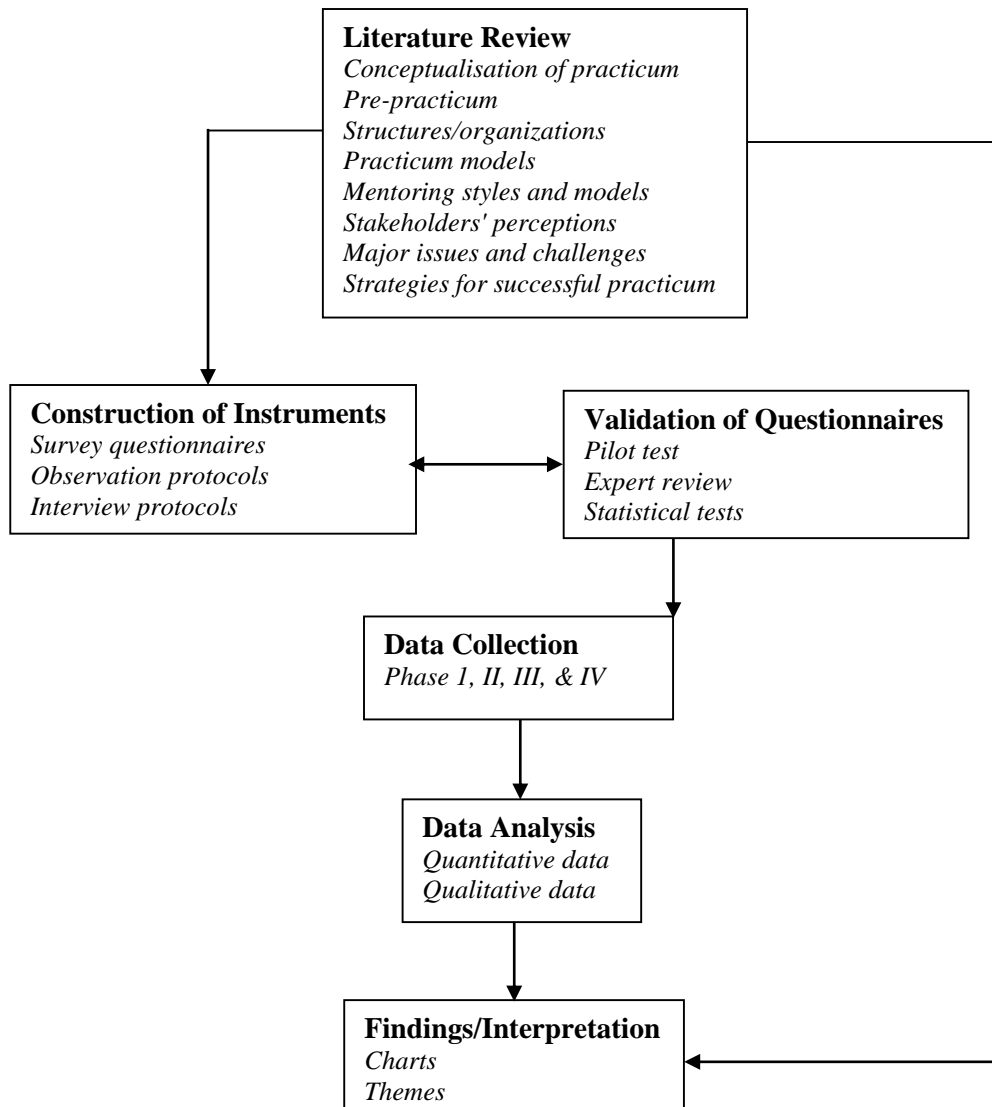


Figure 3.2. Major Research Activities Undertaken.

Philosophical Perspectives

There are four major philosophical dimensions underlying the research in the context of social sciences. They are positivism, post-positivism, pragmatism and interpretivism. Positivists hold the view that knowledge is objective and it can be measured. They cogitate that there is a real world ‘out there’ and emphasize that knowledge can be acquired through objective scientific methods. Researchers who follow this school of thought focus on formulating hypothesis based on questions such as ‘what’ and ‘how’. They believe these questions are best answered with numerical precision. Thus, they approach the research from a quantitative perspective where they test theories and hypothesis by employing quantitative methods. In this respect, although this study is not

intended to test any formal theories or hypotheses, it possesses certain features of positivist approach as it collects essential background information of the sample in the form of quantitative data to better understand the characteristics of the sample. However, in this study, there is no claim that these data allow us ‘to know the world’ exactly or with uncertainty.

On the other hand, post-positivists challenge the belief of absolute truth, but they admit that knowledge is a result of social conditioning, which is called critical realism, or critical realist stance. That means understanding social reality needs to be framed in a certain social structures that create an observable phenomenon within social world. In other words, critical realists believe that there are unobservable events which causes the observable ones. Thus, it requires a deeper understanding of the social situations, and goes beyond the observable and investigate the mechanisms behind any events. Critical realism emphasizes the important of utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to fully understand what we observe and experience. Unlike positivists and post-positivists, the pragmatists believe research philosophy as a continuum, rather than an option that stands in opposite positions. In simple terms, they believe that the objectivists and subjectivists perspectives are not mutually exclusive. They emphasize on what works best to address the research problem and prefer to utilize combination of quantitative and qualitative data as it enable to better understand the social reality.

In contrast, the interpretivist believes that the social world is different from the natural world. They hold the view that the knowledge is subjective in nature and contextually bounded. In other words, they consider that knowledge is constructed in a social context through social interactions. Unlike the positivists, they don’t attempt to test predetermined theories and hypotheses; rather they rely on an interpretation of social interactions and try to understand the phenomena as it is constructed by those involved. In simpler terms, they try to explore the perspectives and shared meanings to explore and understand the events. Generally, they answer the question ‘why’ rather than questions such as ‘what’ ‘when’ and ‘how’ that tend to be more quantitative in nature. They often use qualitative approaches that rely on methods such as narratives, interviews, observations, ethnographic inquiry, case study research, and phenomenological investigation. Additional characteristics of the interpretivist framework are that the research is often set in a natural setting and the investigation generates data in the form of words, phrases that are used to understand the situation inductively.

Interpretive research takes a naturalistic approach to understanding the world (Creswell, 2013; Barnes, 2013). This means, it occurs in the field, in the natural setting, and requires the researcher to personally observe and interact with the participants (Creswell, 2013). Interpretivist researchers collect data from multiple methods (interviews, observations, documents), in the form of field notes, texts, transcripts, and artefacts to describe the situation without using any numerical data. They often use self-prepared instruments to collect a large body of descriptive and analytical data which helps the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). They adopt inductive approaches of data analysis which enable them to form “patterns, categories, and themes from the ‘bottom up’, by organizing the data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information” (Creswell, 2013, p.45).

The epistemological underpinning of an interpretive framework is often associated with social constructivism and symbolic interactionism (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 2003; Lodico, Spauling, & Voegtler, 2006). Social constructivists hold the view that reality is socially constructed by the individuals and this social construction leads to multiple meanings (Crotty, 2003; Lodico, Spauling, & Voegtler, 2006). In other words, people develop subjective meaning based on their experiences (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the role of the researcher in this context is to inductively develop patterns of meanings from participants’ views of the situation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Similarly, symbolic interactionism acknowledges the importance of social interaction as the process through which people interpret and make meaning of events and symbols (Crotty, 2003). It assumes that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings they attribute to those things. These meanings are modified through an interpretive process that people employ when dealing with these events and symbols they encounter in everyday life (Crotty, 2003; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

Therefore, based on foregoing discussion, interpretivist framework together with critical realism and pragmatism considered as most appropriate to study the multifaceted and complicated endeavour of the practicum which involves the interaction of multiple players in multiple contexts.

Researcher Positionality, Insider or Outsider

Positionality of the researcher refers to where the researcher stands in relation to the other, which may shift depending on the circumstances throughout the research process (Greene, 2014). In simpler terms, one may need to constantly change the position depending on the time and nature of the tasks undertaken.

Simplistically, the position of the researcher can be conceptualized on a continuum rather than identifying either as an insider or outsider. According to Banks (1998), the positionality can be classified as indigenous-insider, indigenous-outsider, external-outsider depending on the community one was brought up in and the cultural, intellectual and social distance to the community. While Chavez (2008) argues that the researchers' position could be identified either as a total insider who shares multiple identities, or a partial insider who possesses a single or a few identities with a certain degree of detachment from the community. Insider research is defined as the research that “is conducted within a social group, organization or culture of which the researcher is also a member” (Green, 2014. p.1).

As a graduate teacher from one of the participating teacher education institution in this study, the researcher initially, during the proposal stage, identified herself as a true indigenous- insider. As Banks (1998) states, as a true indigenous-insider, she holds the values, beliefs, and knowledge of the teaching profession and was socialized to the profession of teaching and teacher education. As previously been stated, being a graduate from one of the premier teacher education institutions in the Maldives, the researcher had gone through the practicum conducted in multiple contexts across the country while she was doing her teaching degree that led her to build a strong foundation of knowledge base on how the practicum is being conducted in different school settings. In addition, the researcher had many ties both socially and professionally with the teacher education institution – she worked as a visiting lecturer and a SL prior to the commencement of her doctoral studies, as well as during the course of her doctoral studies with other institutions and in the institution which she belongs to. These involvements in teacher education provided additional insights that strengthened her knowledge base on teacher education, especially, how the current practicum is being conducted. With this knowledge base and also having worked as a member of the teaching force for several years, the researcher positioned herself initially as an insider or preferred an emic perspective to investigate

the current practicum practices. This body of professional knowledge and her close ties with many of the participants situated her as an intimate insider even before she began this study. Intimate insiders are researchers whose existing relationships evolve into informant relationships (Taylor, 2011).

As Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) states that in qualitative research, it is imperative to gain an emic or insider perspective to understand the situation and behaviours of the participants. However, as Chavez (2008) states, the researcher realized that the positionality is neither fixed nor static throughout the research process. It keeps changing as the research process unfolds. For example, during the process of gaining access to participating schools and administering the survey questionnaires, despite having been socialized into the teaching profession, the researcher was perceived as a partial-insider who possesses certain similarities but was considered more of an outsider from a higher institution. However, during the interviewing phase, at some moments, participants especially STs who knew her teaching background, and where she graduated from, perceived her as a member of the student community, a total insider who shares similar characteristics as that of the STs. But, dealing with SBCs and IBCs placed her as an outsider, in that she was perceived as a research student, which gave her an advantageous status to learn from their rich experiences as to how teacher education had been and what measures need to be taken to improve the current status of the teacher education, from their perspectives.

The researcher not only kept altering the positionality with the interaction of different stakeholders, but the positionality shifted with the changing contexts too. During the collection of data from placement schools in island communities, the researcher was treated as a highly regarded guest by the school community, where she could never be completely considered as an insider, rather perceived as an indigenous-outsider who has adapted to the island community. This highly respected and prestigious position created instant access to participants within the school community. On the other hand, staying with the STs on the islands made the researcher identify herself as a total insider or indigenous-insider who lived with the participants. This enabled her to observe their day-to-day activities and share their lived experiences in the natural setting. In sum, reflecting on the research processes, it is clear that the positionality of the researcher changes to some degree, but most often she played the role of an insider.

Research Paradigm

The previous section has discussed the philosophical underpinnings of this study and determined it as an interpretive research, and illustrate the researcher positionality. This section outlines the research paradigm detailing both qualitative and quantitative methods, and the rationale, justifying their suitability and appropriateness in the present study.

Rather than rigidly situating the research in one single paradigm, this study embraces features from qualitative and quantitative paradigms or approaches. Combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study is, termed as mixed-methods research (Jurs & Viersma, 2005). Mixed-methods research is particularly useful for gaining a more complete, comprehensive, and holistic picture of a multifaceted situation (Creswell, 2013; Edwards & Lopez, 2006; Lodico, Spauling, & Voegtle, 2006). Mixed-methods research possesses several advantages (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). For example, it maximizes the richness of the data by addressing both the ‘what’ (quantitative) and ‘how or why’ (qualitative) types of research questions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). In other words, a quantitative method enables the research to identify the key dimensions and the subsequent application of qualitative method helps in-depth investigations of the relationship between those dimensions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Further, it helps to compare, corroborate, and triangulate the data to see if a variety of methods (surveys, observations, interviews, documents) converge on common understandings, thus enhancing the credibility of the findings (Chitsiko & Mapfumo, 2012; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Joffrion, 2010; Lodico, Spauling, & Voegtle, 2006).

Apart from these benefits, mixed-methods research allows the researcher to transform the data in useful ways that respond to the goals of the study. For example, qualitative data can be quantified by giving frequency counts of certain responses, codes or themes in order to establish regularities or peculiarities (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Joffrion, 2010). Moreover, employing this model of gathering both qualitative and quantitative data provides a relatively comprehensive understanding of a research problem than does the use of either approach alone (Creswell, 2013; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Joffrion, 2010).

The extent or the degree of mixing qualitative and quantitative methods in a mixed-methods research depends on the purpose of the research and the phenomenon under investigation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). As has been mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study is to explore the current practices of practicum through the perspectives of its stakeholders. Thus, due to the multifaceted and complex nature of the practicum, and the time constraints, it was believed that it might not be possible to collect data within a single phase, hence, the researcher planned to collect the data (both qualitative and quantitative) through three different phases, which are explicated in the section on data collection.

Research Design

In one conceptualization of a mixed-method design, Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2006) divided mixed-method research into explanatory, exploratory, and triangulation design. Both explanatory and exploratory designs consist of two phases of data collection. They can be differentiated only from identifying the priority of the type of the data collection. For example, in an explanatory design, quantitative data is collected in the first phase, and qualitative data is collected in the second phase. Whereas, the exploratory research collects qualitative data first and subsequently collect the quantitative data. On the other hand, triangulation emphasizes collecting both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously to overcome issues associated with time lapse.

Therefore, based on the conceptualisation of mixed-method design, this study considered mixed-method triangulation design, in which both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (observations) were collected in relatively short order without a significant time lapse. Triangulation design enhances the credibility of the findings by comparing and corroborating the data obtained from all quantitative (survey) and qualitative (observations and semi-structured interviews) methods used in a study (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle 2006). In this respect, this study combined a questionnaire-based survey, field observation of the selected participants while they were in the natural setting – the placement schools – and semi-structured interviews as the final part of the data collection. The design of this study could also be considered as sequential explanatory design as the major qualitative data collection (interviews) was based on the results of the quantitative data as Creswell (2009) noted. However, because there is a very little

known about the Maldivian practicum context, this study by necessity largely exploratory in nature with the findings hopefully having some explanatory power. The surveys STQ and CTQ (see Appendix) comprised the first phase of the data collection, which then were analyzed to make-up the interview guides for SBCs, SLs, and IBCs.

Triangulation

Triangulation can be achieved through several ways. Of the many possible triangulation techniques that Shenton (2004) explained includes the use of different methods such as observation, individual interviews and focus groups, the use of a large number of participants (data triangulation) participating within and across several organisations (site triangulation); and collection of data from multiple points in time (time triangulation).

This study employed multiple methods of data collection which include a questionnaire-based survey, observations, individual interviews, and documents (method triangulation). Data were collected from multiple stakeholders (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs and IBCs) of the practicum (data triangulation). The study also covered placement schools in multiple sites – schools in Male' city, island schools (site/space triangulation). Additionally, data were collected through four separate phases at different point of time (time triangulation), although the latter used different participants and strategies which modify time triangulation to a certain degree.

Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to contribute to current understanding of the practicum in the Maldives, in order to better understand and suggest enhancements, where necessary that might benefit all concerned. As noted earlier, this study is guided by four research questions:

1. What are the main features of the practicum in the programmes of teacher education institutions in the Maldives?
2. What are the perceptions of stakeholders (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs and IBCs) about the current practices of the practicum?
3. What are the main issues faced by the stakeholders?
4. What are stakeholders' recommendations to address the key issues identified?

Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to answer these research questions. The next section illustrates the data collection methods adopted in this study.

Sources of Data

As has been stated earlier, this study employed mixed-method design. Within this design, both quantitative (questionnaire-based survey) and qualitative methods (observations, and semi-structured interviews) were used to collect data to answer the research questions. This section outlines the justification for the choice of these methods together with the strengths and limitations of these selected methods.

Questionnaire-based survey. A questionnaire-based survey was selected to collect the data from both STs and CTs. The primary purpose of choosing this method is that it would enable the researcher to collect information from a large group of participants within a short time frame. The study is aimed at obtaining information from the entire population of the key actors of the practicum (STs and CTs). As such, a questionnaire-based survey was considered most suitable. Fraeklin and Wallen (2009) stated that the primary purpose of a survey is to elicit detailed information from an entire population as defined by the study. In addition, due to the multifaceted nature of the practicum and the time constraints, it allows the researcher to collect information from multiple sites within the allotted time frame.

A questionnaire is considered to be the heart of the survey operation (Kothri, 2005). Creswell (2005) defined questionnaire as a subject-completed or self-report instrument used in the survey design, where participants complete it and return to the researcher (Creswell, 2005). It is extensively employed in a wide variety of contexts due to its merits. It's economically feasible and a convenient way to obtain data from a large group of respondents who are scattered geographically and difficult to access individually by the researcher. In addition, the respondents are free from bias that might arise from the researcher's presence and have sufficient time to give well thought out responses. Despite these benefits, self-report instruments have many limitations, for example, the researcher will not be able to assure that the respondents have answered the questions truthfully, or not, and the respondents might misinterpret the questions.

Observations. Observation is one of the key tools for collecting data in a qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Observing the participants in their natural work setting would enable the researcher to obtain a better understanding of participants'

perspectives. (Lodico, Spauling, & Voegtler, 2006). The primary goal of observing participants in the natural setting is to gather data that are accurate, naturalistic and that reflect the reality of the situation (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). In this study, the participants were observed while they were in the practicum in the placement schools. This allowed the researcher to compare multiple observations done in multiple contexts to reduce context bias (that might arise from selective observations) and lack of representativeness.

Interviews. The interview is one of the most powerful tools used in qualitative research to understand respondents' beliefs, attitudes, and viewpoints. Interviews are considered as a unique method of data collection in which the researcher obtains information through direct verbal interaction between respondents (Cohen & Manion, 1998). According to Lodico, Spauling and Voegtler (2006), an interview is basically a purposive conversation with a person or a group of people. Interviews as a research technique possess a lot of advantages due to their interactive nature (Best & Kahn, 2006). They enable the participants to discuss their perspectives and interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Additionally, it allows immediate follow-up and clarification of participants' responses (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002).

This study employed one-on-one semi-structured interviews. One-on-one interviews were chosen as they allowed the researcher to build rapport with the respondents. As the study intended to investigate the current practices of teaching practicum through the perspectives of its stakeholders, it was imperative to interact with them and listen to their voice to canvas a more complete picture of the situation. Additionally, building a good rapport helped the researcher to obtain fine detailed information from the respondents regarding the issues and challenges that they faced during the practicum; information that might not have been possible to obtain through questionnaires and observations alone. Further, these responses were then compared with the responses that had been given in the questionnaire as a form of response triangulation.

In addition, a semi-structured open-ended interview was chosen as it allows the researcher to have a pre-prepared list of questions based on specific themes or areas that need to be covered during the interview (Creswell, 2005; Lodico, Spauling, & Voegtler,

2006). However, the questions are framed such that they allow the researcher to probe beyond the interview protocol (Lodico, Spauling, & Voegtle, 2006). Semi-structured open-ended interviews consist of two categories of questions: basic questions and clarification questions. Basic questions (for example, questions that seek demographic information) are intended to build rapport with the interviewee, while the clarification questions are designed to elicit the perspectives of the respondents regarding the field of the study. Both of these types of questions were used in this study to build rapport with the participants and allow them to share their experiences.

Construction of Instruments

The researcher was unable to locate and get access to any of the suitable instruments (e.g., existing questionnaires or interview protocols) that meet the requirement of this study. Thus, the researcher was compelled to design an instrument that fit to the purpose of the study. As previously been mentioned, the study adopted mixed-method sequential exploratory design where both quantitative and qualitative data needed to be collected. Structured questionnaire (STQ and CTQ), observation and interview protocols were prepared to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Constructions of these tools are outlined below.

Questionnaires. To design the questionnaires, a thorough review of the extant literature was conducted. The review includes questionnaires from related thesis, journal articles, and the areas that reflected the main objectives of this study. These were used as the preliminary information to construct the questionnaires. In addition, the researcher met three heads from three different placement schools to get an idea of what essential areas they felt needed to be explored.

Two separate structured questionnaires (STQ and CTQ, see the appendix) were prepared to collect data from STs and CTs respectively, using the relevant preliminary information from the literature together with the insights from the informal interviews that the research had with the heads of the placement schools. “Structured questionnaires are those questionnaires in which there are definite, concrete and pre-determined questions” (Kothari, 2004, p.101). In a structured questionnaire, the participants respond to prompts from predetermined responses given as Likert scales and multiple choice responses (Harris & Brown, 2010). Likert scales were used as they allow the participants to respond in relation to their degree of agreement and also helps to accommodate neutral

and undecided feelings of the participants (LaMarca, 2013). The rationale for using structured questionnaires is to ensure that all participants reply to the same body of questions. In addition, both the questionnaires contain open-end questions to permit the participants to express their views in a non-restrictive manner.

Both the questionnaires (STQ and CTQ) were intended to elicit information regarding the current practices, issues inherent in the current practicum, and explore possible directions for future implementation of the practicum. In particular, the questionnaires sought answers to the research questions (provided again below as a reminder for the reader):

1. What are the main features of the practicum in the programmes of teacher education institutions in the Maldives?
2. What are the perceptions of stakeholders (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs and IBCs) about the current practices of the practicum?
3. What are the main issues faced by the stakeholders?
4. What are stakeholders' recommendations to address the key issues identified?

CTs' questionnaire (CTQ) consisted of four pages (see Appendix Two for the complete questionnaire). It consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. Questions 1-3 were designed to collect demographic data of the cooperating teachers. Questions 4, 6, 13, 14, and 15 required the respondents to provide responses regarding their motivation to become a cooperating teacher, opinion about the purpose of the practicum, recommendations for future implementation of practicum, and their viewpoint of remuneration for their duties as a cooperating teacher. Questions 8 and 11 consisted series of statements, obtained from the review of the literature regarding the role of cooperating, and how practicum is being implemented in placement schools. Each of these statements required the respondents to rate each statement on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

The four-page student questionnaire, STQ (see Appendix One for the complete questionnaire) was comprised of 19 questions. Questions 1-6 is to gather demographic data of the respondents, 7-13 are five point Likert Scale based on essential dimensions identified from the literature review. Those dimensions include preparation for practicum, structure of the practicum, feedback, professional support, assessment, institutional socialization, and professional development. A range of statements

formulated in light of the literature was used under these dimensions. Each of these statements required the respondents to rate each statement on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Question 14 was intended to identify the mentoring styles of the cooperating teachers, and questions 15-19 were open-ended questions formulated to elicit responses pertaining to the issues and challenges faced by the current student teachers, and recommendations for future practicum to make it more effective for future student teachers.

Pilot test. A pilot test is a procedure in which the researcher administers the instrument on a small sample of individuals and makes improvements based on the feedback received from the participants (Creswel, 2005). Both the survey questionnaires (STQ and CTQ) were piloted prior to actual data collection. The goal of the pilot testing was to assess the time required to fill in the questionnaires, test the clarity of the survey questions and check to see if any further amendments needed to be made. In simple terms, the pilot test allows a check on the validity and reliability of the questionnaires, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Ten pilot participants from each of the three categories of teacher education programs (ECE, primary and secondary) were selected on a voluntary basis, totalling to 30 STs for the STQ. The researcher met these STs in person to explain the objectives of this study and the specific research questions that the study sought to answer. Following that, the STs were requested to complete the questionnaire and provide in writing the necessary changes that they thought might make the questionnaire better to answer in relation to the research questions. The researcher noted the time those STs took to complete the questionnaire.

Similarly, CTQ was piloted in two schools in Male' City. A total of 20 teachers from one school that comprised 10 primary teachers and 10 secondary teachers completed. Similarly, 20 pre-school teachers from a pre-school that comprised 10 lower kindergarten teachers and 10 upper kindergarten teachers were selected for the pilot test. Similar steps of administering the questionnaire as that of STQ were used to pilot the CTQ.

The researcher then went through all the questionnaires and noted the changes that the participants had requested. These recommended changes were then made in

consultation with the supervisors. Following that, the questionnaires were sent to three overseas experts in the field, for validation.

Observation protocols. Observation protocols were made to record the required information. An observational protocol is a predesigned form used to record information during an observation (Creswell, 2013). It helps the researcher to take notes during field observation in a systematic and focussed manner (Creswell, 2013; Lodico, Spauling, & Voegtle, 2006). To control for observer bias, the protocol is designed to record both descriptive notes and reflective notes. Recording descriptive notes enables the researcher to note the events in a chronological fashion as the activities unfold during observation, while recording of reflective notes enables the researcher to record their own feelings and perceptions regarding the activities being observed (Lodico, Spauling, & Voegtle, 2006). The latter helps the researcher to be aware of how the personal feelings influence the observation, thus help to control the observer bias.

Interview protocols. After a thorough review of the responses given to the questionnaires (STQ & CTQ), and the field notes recorded during observations, interview protocols were prepared for STs and CTs. Each of these was prepared in English and in native language, Dhivehi. The purpose of making them in both the languages is that there might be circumstances where CTs language other than the native language, Dhivehi, might be selected as interviewee (see the Appendix for detailed interview protocol). The interview questions were framed such that they addressed the main areas covered in the survey questionnaires, which facilitated triangulation of data obtained from the survey. Although the questions were intended to facilitate triangulation, they also sought to provide further insights to better understand the phenomenon under study.

These interview protocols were then piloted by conducting interviews with a ST and a teacher from a secondary school not otherwise participating in the study. The purpose of this pilot test was to check whether the time taken was appropriate and the language usage in the translation is correct. In addition, special consideration was given to ensure that the interview questions sought the answers to the research questions presented earlier in this chapter. More importantly, this pilot test ensured the appropriateness and completeness, and whether the questions provided the answers to what was intended, thus establishing both content and construct validity, and to some extent reliability of the interview protocols.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Validity and reliability are the key indicators of the quality of an instrument. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009, p. 147), validity refers to "the appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of the inferences a researcher makes. Reliability refers to the consistency of scores, or answers from one administration of an instrument to another, and from one set of items to another." Among the three types of validity –content, criterion, and construct–both the content and construct validity applicable to STQ and CTQ were established.

Content validity of the questionnaires was established through a review by six supervisors: three local supervisors who were familiar with the practicum, and three overseas experts from the field of teacher education, who critically examined the content of the questionnaires. Their suggestions to improve the language and the content were incorporated accordingly. Following that, as has been mentioned earlier, the questionnaires were piloted. Piloting the questionnaires was intended to ensure the appropriateness of the questions and their comprehension, thus establishes the construct validity of the questionnaires. The participants raised some concerns about the length of the questionnaire, but there were no major changes recommended regarding the structure and content. The lengthy questionnaires were considered essential due to the nature of the study. However, during the analysis, some of the items that were not very important to the research questions were discarded. On the second review of the questionnaires, the reviewers have agreed that the statements were expressed clearly, and they confirmed the relevance of the questions and statements categorised for the various dimensions of the practicum.

Reliability, in simple terms, is defined as the consistency with which the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. The three most common methods to obtain a reliability coefficient are the test-retest method, the equivalent-forms method; and the internal-consistency methods. Among the three, the study considered the latter one. There are two methods of determining internal consistency: split-half and Cronbach's alpha. The latter was calculated for STQ and CTQ. The Cronbach's alpha value for STQ for the pilot sample of 30 STs was found to be 0.860. After the trial, no major changes were made to the items. Similarly, the Cronbach's alpha value for CTQ for the pilot sample of 40 teachers was found to be 0.702.

Recruitment of Participants

Key informant contact. Access to the heads of the placement schools was initially sought through the MoE. To get the consent from the placement schools, the research approval form from MoE, together with the information sheets and consent forms were sent to the heads of the placement schools requesting permission to participate in the research. Once the consent was obtained, the researcher then established liaison contacts at each participating placement schools through repeated phone calls and series of meetings with the heads of the placement schools. A total of 21 liaison contacts (16 from Male' schools and five schools in island community) were established. The purpose of establishing liaison contact was to assist in the data collection process as the study aimed at selecting the entire population of the STs and CTs who were placed in 21 different placement schools in islands that were geographically scattered. Additionally, it was envisaged that it would not be practical for the researcher to personally administer the questionnaires within the time frame of the practicum. The various practicums covered approximately four-month period during the 15-month period that it took to complete the data collection.

Sampling. This study is largely a school-based research that employed a mixed-method triangulation design. The study employed multistage sampling technique. Multistage sampling comprises two or more stages of sampling based on the hierarchical structures of natural clusters within the population. In the multistage sampling technique, the first stage is similar to that of the cluster sampling, where the clusters are formed out of the population, but further, these clusters are sub-divided into smaller targeting groups, and then the subjects from each sub-clusters are chosen randomly.

In this study, the sample was obtained following three successive stages. The first stage involved selecting four geographical zones: Male' city, North Central, South Central and Southern. In the second stage, 21 placement schools were selected from the selected zones, which include 16 schools from Male' city, two schools from South Central (F. Atoll Education Centre and Gan, Hamad Bin Khaleefa Al Saanee school), two schools from Southern (Sn, Sharafudheen and Hithadho school) and one schools from North Central (R. Atoll Education Centre). All the placement schools in Male' city were targeted to obtain a large number of participants from different TEIs as most of the TEIs prefer to send their STs to Male schools due the cost of travelling to other

geographically dispersed zones. The purpose of selecting schools from widely dispersed geographical zones was not intended to make generalization to the population, but to gain a broader understanding of the experiences of STs in various school contexts across the country. In the third stage participants from each placement schools were selected on voluntary basis. This resulted to obtain 317 STs, 205 CTs, two SLs, ten SBCs and three IBCs who played the dual role of both IBCs and SLs.

For the qualitative in-depth portion of the study, the researcher met the STs to obtain their consent for being observed by the researcher while they were in the school settings. The researcher then prepared a list of STs who volunteered to be observed and interviewed as part of the data collection process. This list was then sorted to identify the number of STs who volunteered from each of the three levels of teacher education programs (ECE, primary and secondary). In those cases, where sufficient STs volunteered at a particular level, the study employed simple random sampling to select those STs (and their respective CTs, etc.) to participate in the in-depth portion of the study. In the case of ECE, where the STs numbers were particularly low, a purposive selection was used to ensure that STs from all the institutions were included in the in-depth portion of the study. Table 3.1 indicates the number of STs selected for the observation and the selection technique used.

Table 3.1 *Number of STs Selected for the Observation and the Selection Techniques*

Level	Number	Selection techniques
ECE	07	PS
Primary	09	RS
Secondary	12	RS

Note. RS=random selection; PS=purposive selection.

Similarly, CTs, SBCs, and the school heads were invited to participate in in-depth interviews of the study. Of those who agreed, purposive selection was used to ensure that participants from all the levels (ECE, primary and secondary) and most of the schools, among the 21 selected were included in the interviews. Table 3.2 indicates the number of participants who participated in the study.

Table 3.2 *Number of Participants Selected for Interviews at Different Levels*

Level	ST	CT	SBC	Total
ECE	3	2	2	7
Primary	3	2	2	7
Secondary	6	7	6	19
Total	12	11	10	33

Note: ST= student teacher; CT= cooperating teacher; SBC= school-based practicum coordinator.

Among the SBCs selected, three of them were heads of the placement schools respectively. These participants were interviewed on the dual roles they played during the practicum.

For the selection of SLs for the interviews, initially, they were identified through STs and CTs. The identified SLs were then requested to participate in the study. All the volunteered SLs (five) were selected for the interviews. Among these five SLs, three of them were IBCs from three different TEIs who have dual roles (act as both SLs and IBCs). Among the remaining two, one had been the IBCs for many years, but at the time of the data collection, was working as a SLs from a public TEI. Their interviews were to investigate their dual roles as SLs and IBCs. Table 3.3 shows the diversity of the groups and methods of data collection used in this study.

Table 3.3 *Diversity of the Groups and Methods of Data Collection*

Course level	Student teachers	Cooperating teachers	School-based practicum coordinators	Supervising lecturers	Institutional-based coordinators
ECE	S, O, SSI	S, O, SSI	SSI	SSI	SSI
Primary	S, O, SSI	S, O, SSI	SSI	SSI	SSI
Secondary	S, O, SSI	S, O, SSI	SSI	SSI	SSI

Note: S = survey; O = observation; SSI = semi-structured interview

Timelines and Data Collection Processes

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in three phases within 15 months' period, with the first occurring on 2014. During the first phase, both quantitative and qualitative data were concurrently collected from the 16 participating schools in Male' city and three schools (Gan, Hamad Bin Khaleefa Al Saanee school, Sharafudheen and

Hithadho school) in island community. The first phase of data collection revealed that there was one TEI that had not had practicum in 2014, and it was found that they had planned to have the practicum on January, 2015.

Since the study is aimed to explore the current practicum practices in all the TEIs, the second phase of data collection was planned. The second phase of data collection that was focused on collecting data from STs from one public TEI who had not been covered during the first phase of data collection took place on January, 2015. The third phase of data collection took place on September, 2015, where it was targeted to study two schools in island communities. The final phase of data collection included the interviews. A total of 38 semi-structured interviews (face-to-face and telephone interviews) were conducted within a period of 13 weeks, with the first occurring on 23rd August, 2015; the final interview conducted on the 1st December, 2015. Table 3.4 indicates the types of interviews conducted in each level.

Table 3.4 *Types of Interviews Conducted in Different Levels.*

Course level	Student teachers	Cooperating teachers	School-based practicum coordinators	Supervising lecturers	Institutional-based coordinators
ECE	FFI, TI	FFI	FFI, TI	FFI	FFI
Primary	TI	FFI	FFI, TI	FFI	FFI
Secondary	FFI, TI	FFI, TI	FFI, TI	FFI	FFI

Note: FFI=face-to-face interview; TI=telephone interview

The following section outlines the details of the data collection phases.

Phase I: Field data round one. Field data round one consisted of administering the questionnaire-based survey and conducting field observations. The processes of collecting these two sources of data are outlined below.

Participant contact. A scheduled meeting at each placement schools was conducted in collaboration with the liaison contacts to meet the STs who were on their teaching practice in 2014. All the STs were informed of the aims and purpose of the study, and invited to participate in the study. There was a total of 500 STs on the practicum at the time of data collection.

Questionnaire-based survey. The survey questionnaires were sent to STs and CTs along with the consent forms through the focal point mentioned earlier in this chapter. The exact total number of the STs and CTs were sought out from the data obtained from the initial meeting conducted for STs during the first week of their practicum. The researcher then sent two packs of questionnaires separately labelled in two envelopes to each of the participating schools to be filled out by the participants. The school liaison was requested to help the researcher distributing the questionnaires as the researcher was concurrently engaged with the observations of STs in island schools that took a considerable amount of time in travelling. The questionnaires were distributed during the last week of the practicum. The last week of the practicum was preferred as the questionnaire was designed to seek information of the current practices of the practicum, thus preferring to fill in it towards the end of the practicum would give richer information regarding the issues and challenges faced throughout the practicum. CTs questionnaires (CTQ) were also distributed with consent forms (through liaison contact) towards the completion of practicum. During the last day of the practicum, STs and CTs returned the questionnaires to the liaison contact, and at the end of the practicum, the researcher collected all the questionnaires from the liaison contacts.

Observations. The study intended to observe the participants selected from various placement schools. Repeated phone calls were made to the selected 28 STs to fix a convenient time for them to be observed while they were teaching in the classroom, and to observe the post-lesson conference between the ST and CT. The classroom teaching hours were strictly followed for two reasons. One is that to ensure that the CT was physically present in the class while the STs were teaching the lesson. Secondly, to observe how the feedback to those lessons was given by the CTs.

Each of the selected ST was observed for one school session. The length of school session for ECE was three hours and for primary and secondary, it was approximately six hours. The purpose of observing one whole session is to observe STs' daily routines, social interaction and their involvement in activities other than classroom teaching. In simple terms, it was intended to study their socialization process during the practicum. For the classroom observations, the researcher went to the classes with the STs as a non-participant observer (Non-participant observation involved sitting at the back of the classes and taking field notes without contributing to the discussions itself). All the

interactions that occurred between the ST and the CTs were observed and recorded in the observation protocols.

Phase II: Field data round two. As stated earlier in this chapter, the purpose of the field data round two was to capture the STs from one of the public teacher education institutions who had not had practicum during the first phase of the data collection, in 2014. Both quantitative data through questionnaire-based survey and qualitative and, observational data were collected through the same procedures adopted in field data round one.

Phase III: Field data round three. Field data round three was intended to observe practicum settings in placement schools in two small island communities (Raa Atoll Meedhoo and Faafu Atoll Nilandhoo school). As that of field data round one and two, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected during this phase that followed the same procedures as that of the two previous phases.

Phase IV: Field data round four. Interviews were conducted by the researcher as the last phase of the data collection. It was set for the last stage mainly for two reasons. One is that the analysis of the questionnaires and observation data enabled the researcher to identify the areas that needed further probing and exploration. Second, it helped to corroborate the data gathered from both the questionnaires and observations.

Scheduling of such a large number of interviews (38) with the participants from different parts of the country was time consuming and arduous. Several phone calls were made to arrange appropriate times to conduct the interviews. Some of the meeting times were rescheduled several times, especially for the SLs and IBCs, in an attempt to find a convenient time for them to accommodate the meeting. A total of 27 face-to-face interviews and 11 telephone interviews were conducted, which resulted a sum of 20 hours and 29 minutes of interview data, with the majority of the interviews falling between 25 and 45 minutes in length. Telephone interviews were conducted for the participants particularly from island schools, where travelling is time consuming and costly. A telephone interview recording system was set up at the Postgraduate Research Centre (PRC) at the Maldives National University. Face-to-face interviews with the STs were also set at the PRC. The remaining interviews, with the IBCs, SBCs and CTs were conducted at the participants' office (placement schools and TEIs).

Participants' consent was obtained both verbally, and in written form to audio record the interviews, before commencing the actual interviews. Additionally, they were informed that they could request to discontinue the audio recording at any time if they wanted. A Uniden voice recorder with a capacity of 564 hours recording time was used to capture the audios of both face-to-face and telephone interviews. An inbuilt voice recorder of a smart phone was used as a backup recording system. A total of 19 hours and seven minutes of interview data were collected from participants across the groups.

As has been said earlier, the researcher being an insider, it could be considered that the researcher unintentionally might appear to favour a particular position. This point of possible bias was well thought out and dealt by employing the possible techniques outlined by Cohen et al. (2013). One such technique was the use of open-ended and non-leading questions. This helped the researcher to elicit in-depth information from the participants to help assist avoidance of researcher bias. The researcher also used the technique of paraphrasing during the interview to ensure the clarity and intention of participants' responses in contrast to what the researcher thought they said or meant.

Data Analysis

As has been previously mentioned in this chapter, this study collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Figure 3.3 illustrates the process of data analysis.

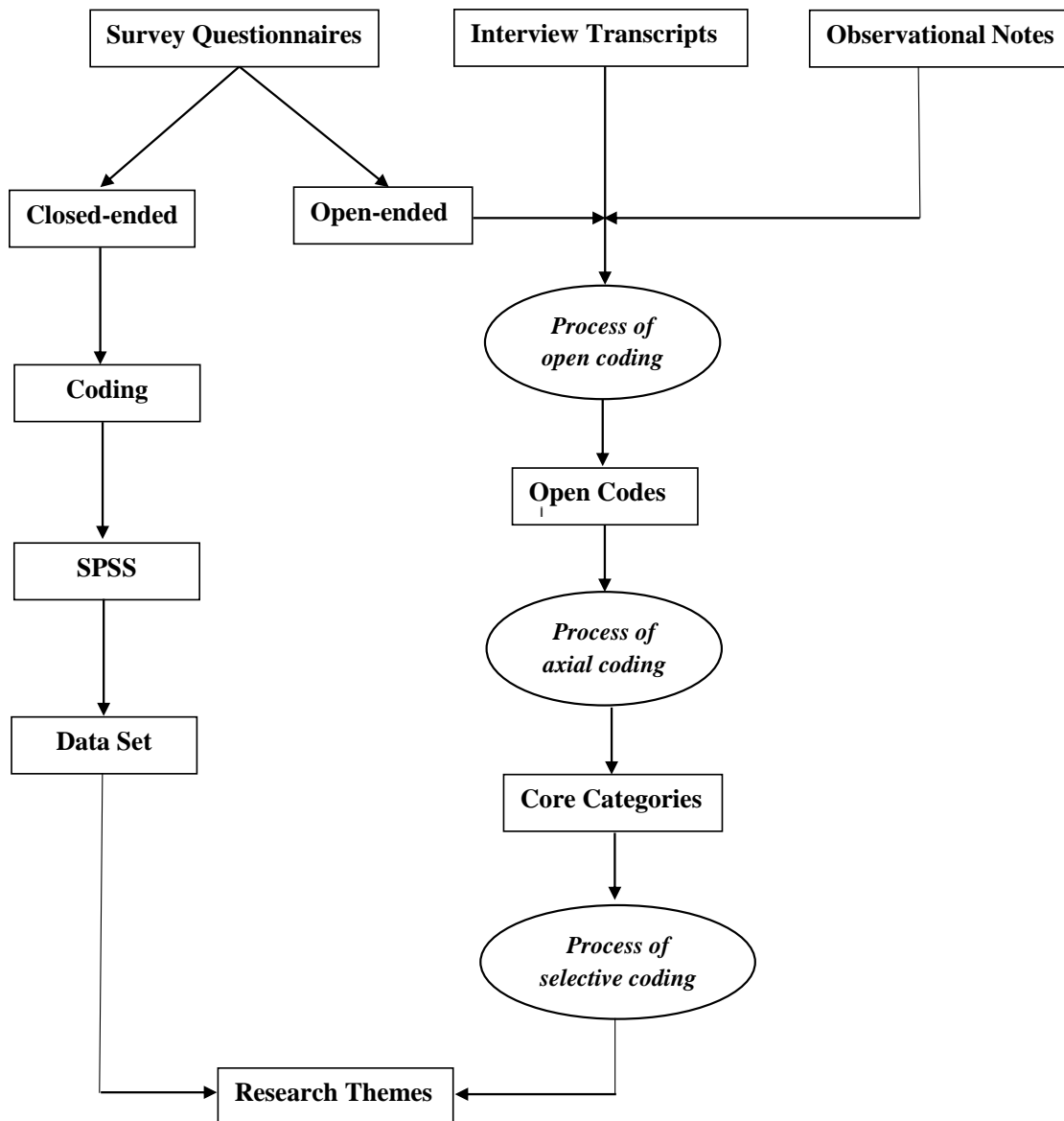


Figure 3.3. Data Analysis Framework.

Quantitative data analysis. The study collected quantitative data through a questionnaire-based survey (STQ and CTQ). As Cohen, Manion and Morison (2011) suggested, the questionnaires were checked for completeness, accuracy and uniformity, prior to coding. The process checking prior to coding is termed as editing (Cohen, Manion, & Morison, 2011). The intention of editing was to eliminate the simple typographic errors made by the respondents.

According to Cohen and Manion (2011), it is essential to maintain a code book as it is expensive and time consuming to change or modify the codes at a later stage of data analysis. Therefore, prior to the actual data analysis began, preparing a code book proved to be an important step in managing a large amount of data such as collected in

this study. A code book is a book that identifies each variable in a study, the variables' description, code name, and position in the data matrix. This code book tells how each questionnaire will be coded for data analysis. In other words, it serves as a reference to enter the data and enables the researcher to maintain consistency of the data entering process. Additionally, coding allows the researcher to reduce the huge quantity of data into a form that can be more easily handled, especially by a computer program.

Using the codebook, data matrix sheets were prepared in SPSS, V.12 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Each questionnaire represents a single row of data across the matrix. Missing data were treated by using the number nine, indicating that the data is missing. Responses to the survey questionnaire (STQ) were entered into SPSS, and sorted to identify the data that corresponds to each level of teacher education programs (ECE, primary and secondary). Simple descriptive statistics were used to analyse the frequency of responses provided by the participants. The outputs of these descriptive statistics generated by SPSS were then exported to Microsoft Excel to prepare the necessary tables and charts for the illustration of the findings of this study as presented in Chapter Four. Similarly, data obtained from CTQ were also analysed by adopting the same data analysis procedure as that of STQ. Table 3.5 gives the details of how the participant data were identified in the data set.

Table 3.5 *Participant Identification System*

LEVELS	Questionnaires		Semi-structured interviews				
	STQ	CTQ	ST	CT	SBC	SL	IBC
ECE	K1-K25	KT1-KT29	K1-K3	KT1-KT2	KC1-KC2		
Primary	P26-P106	PT30-PT83	P4-P6	PT3-PT4	PC1-PC2	SL1- SL2	TC1-TC3
Secondary	S107- S317	ST84- ST205	S7-S13	ST5-ST11	SC1-SC2		

Note. K= kindergarten; KT= kindergarten teachers; KC = kindergarten coordinators; P= primary; PT= primary teachers; PC= primary coordinators; S= secondary; ST= secondary teachers; SC= secondary coordinators; SL= supervising lecturers; TC= teacher education coordinators.

Qualitative data analysis. The qualitative data collection included interviews and observational data. These data were analysed by employing the five stage qualitative data analysis framework described by Yin (2011).

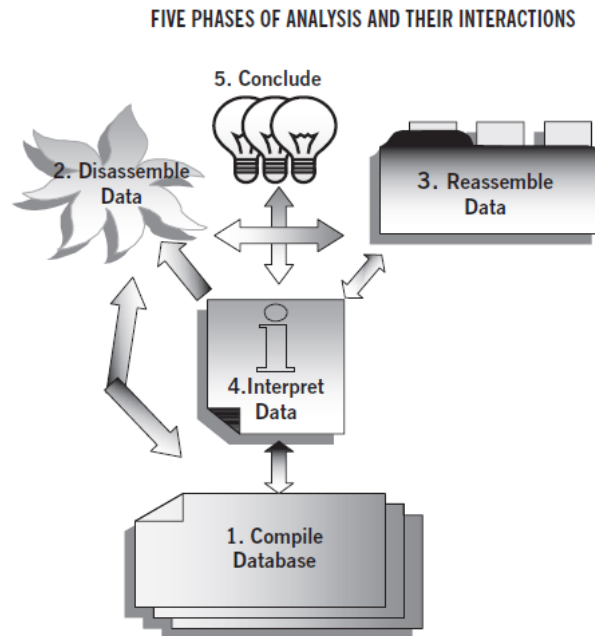


Figure 3.4. The Five Phases of Data Analysis and their Interactions.
(Yin, 2011. P. 178)

Phases of data analysis, according to the Figure 1 include data compilation, disassembly, reassembly, interpretation and conclusion where interpretation is at the heart of the process. It shows the concurrent nature of the iterative process of data analysis in qualitative research.

To begin with the qualitative data analysis, all the audio recordings of interviews were first transcribed. The Express Scribe software was used to play the audio recordings of the interviews. This software was used as it controls the speed and the playback during the transcription. All the transcripts were in Thaana Scripts which is the written form of Dhivehi, the local language. Dhivehi language was chosen to maintain the originality of the conversations without losing the nuance of the local language. All transcriptions were done by the researcher. This was to gain an in-depth understanding of the ideas being expressed by the participants, which would certainly make the following stages of data analysis easier. Microsoft OneNote software was used to manage the transcribed interview data. To move onto the next stage of the data analysis, participant identification codes were assigned and printed it out and analysed manually as described in the next section.

Interview transcripts were read and re-read to understand participants' views being expressed and the intentions of certain statements were being made. During this phase,

important text segments were highlighted and notes were made in the margin of the transcripts. During this disassembling and reassembling phase, coding was used which basically sought to reduce the data to manageable units. Coding is defined as a process of organizing data in such a way as to lead to data reduction (Jurs & Wiersma, 2005). There are three levels of coding: Namely, open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding represents the first level of coding when raw data are sorted and placed into conceptual categories. Open coding is described as the 'breaking open of the data' to identify main concepts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). The second level of coding, axial coding or theoretical coding, which is used to make connections between the categories of data identified in the open coding process. The categories were then examined for logical links and grouped into broader, more abstract categories.

From the axial coding process, propositions were developed (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). The final stage of coding was selective coding. At this stage, a core of categories or themes were identified. The core category is the central theme of the data and emerges through the processes of open and axial coding. Once the core category system has been established, visual representation of these categories was mapped on to a chart to see the relationship and connection between them.

Further, the analysis of the data was performed in a recursive, iterative manner. This iterative process, known as the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), was used to determine key themes in response to each of the research questions. CCM follows a three-step process of unitizing, categorizing, and thematizing. It involves successive data reduction by first noting key ideas (or units) and then constantly comparing and contrasting those ideas repeatedly with each other until distinct categories emerge and clear and unambiguous definitions can be assigned to each of the categories (Wang & Clarke, 2016). The categories were then subject to a further round of constant comparison leading to a higher level of abstraction which are reported in the thesis as the overarching themes.

Similarly, information obtained from field notes were subjected to the process of data reduction, data display and the establishing conclusion as outlined previously. Initially, the information recorded in observational protocols was first read and re-read to assign descriptive codes and labels to the phrases and segments of observational texts. During the second-level coding, these descriptive codes were categorised and assigned

more conceptual labels. Subsequently, the identified categories were displayed on a chart or diagram to provide a visual representation of how these categories were related to each other.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of this study was ensured by addressing the possible issues of validity and reliability of its findings. Though the study adopts mixed-method design, a large amount of data was obtained from a qualitative methods approach. And also the primary purpose of this study is to explore the current practices of the practicum through an interpretive lens. It is understood that all research is inherently interpretive in the final analysis; that is, someone, the researcher, has to make an interpretation of the data be it quantitative or qualitative, for the reader. Addressing validity and reliability in quantitative research in many cases involve ensuring faithfulness to the assumptions for establishing construct and content validity for the measures used, in this instance, descriptive statistics (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). However, the validity and reliability of qualitative research take a different department. There are four main criteria that are considered in qualitative research to enhance its trustworthiness. Those include credibility to internal validity; transferability to external validity or generalizability; dependability to reliability and confirmability to objectivity (Shenton, 2004). The following section describes how these were achieved in this study.

Credibility. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), credibility in qualitative research can be dealt with by several ways. Those include prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking. Shenton (2004) also highlighted a range of strategies that promotes the credibility of qualitative research in his article on "Strategies for ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research." Some of the strategies highlighted include adoption of appropriate research methods, development of early familiarity with the culture of the participants, probability sampling of participants, description of background qualification and experience of the researcher, peer scrutiny, thick description of the phenomena, and examination of previous research to frame findings.

This study adopted many of the strategies mentioned in the preceding discussion, to promote its credibility. For example, the study employed mixed-method triangulation design which is considered to be the most appropriate design in terms of understanding

a complex multifaceted phenomenon – such as the practicum – through the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. The multiple perspectives of these multiple stakeholders provided a rich thick description of the current practices of the practicum. Multiple sources of data were collected over a period of 15 months, beginning the first phase of data collection on September, 2014 to the conclusion of the final phase of data collection on December, 2015, which enabled lengthy engagement in the field as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggested.

In addition, before the onset of data collection, the researcher made several visits to the placement schools to meet the heads of the placement schools, which provided many valuable opportunities to become familiarized with the culture of those placement schools. Further, the researcher built a good rapport with many teachers from the placement schools during the process of constructing and piloting of the questionnaires. The study employed random sampling technique, where possible, when selecting participants for the interviews and observations. Having employed both probability sampling (for STs) and non-probability sampling enhances credibility of the findings. Further, the study also sought to enhance trustworthiness through triangulation which was discussed in detail earlier in this chapter.

Transferability. A range of measures were taken to enhance the transferability of the findings of this study. Among the most significant include, a detailed description of the context, the methods, sampling, the participants; and procedures for collecting and analysing the data. In addition, selecting placement schools from multiple sites that are geographically scattered across the country promotes participant diversity.

Dependability. To address the dependability issue, it is important to provide the details of the processes involved (Shenton, 2004). The design of the study and the data collection procedures need to be illustrated and defended, especially, what was planned and what was executed should be made clear. These important details are provided in the method chapter. The design adopted was fully illustrated and the data collection procedures and phases of data collection were clearly outlined.

Confirmability. According to Shenton (2014), certain measures must be taken to reduce the effect of researcher bias. In other words, the researcher must ensure that the participants' views and their experiences are presented accurately without the intrusion of researcher's preferences. Measures such as triangulation and documenting

methodological details are proved to promote the confirmability, or attending to the potential of researcher bias.

Consent, Access, Ethics, and Human Participation Protection

The researcher followed the ethical guidelines formulated by the Maldives National University with the participants. This study was approved by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee and Policy on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participant set by the Maldives National University (Reference: FE-RE/03-0001).

The consent form and study information pamphlet were designed such that it informed the participants about the aims, purposes, and data usage. It also ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of the data. At the outset of the study, consideration was given to the probable ethical issues that may arise in the study. Ethical issues may arise in all phases of research. For instance, prior to conducting the study, the researcher has to seek approval from the Ministry of Education to get access to the schools. Following that, consent from the heads of placement schools was sought. During the data collection phases, the participants were informed of the anticipated time duration required to fill in the questionnaires and for the interviews. Further, they were made aware of data utilization and were given written consent forms for participation, including the right to withdraw from or participate in the study at any time during the study. Moreover, confidentiality was ensured by using identification codes for each of the participants in reporting data.

Potential ethical issues that commonly arise during data analysis and reporting data include disclosing only positive results and taking sides with participants (Creswell, 2013). These issues were addressed by reporting multiple perspectives from the multiple stakeholders of the practicum, and reporting contrary findings. The importance here is to be alert to confirming and disconfirming evidence for particular results as the analysis unfolds.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are those aspects of the study over which the researcher has no control but which could impact the results. The ‘results of any research study must be considered in light of its limitations’ (Cone & Foster, 2006, p.280). According to Cone and Foster (2006), limitations generally originates from two sources: decisions made during the planning phase and problems that encountered during the implementation phase. As such,

in this study, during the planning phase, the hope was to get the list of potential participants (STs, SLs and IBC) from the TEIs to get more clear information of the population that would enable the researcher to adopt a more systematic approach of selecting a representative sample. However, since some of the TEIs did not participate fully in the study, the researcher had to alter the sampling strategy where the STs were approached through placement schools, while they were on the practicum, with the consent from the MoE and heads of the placement schools. SLs' contacts were obtained through STs. Among these contacts, only a few number of SLs agreed, thus non-probability sampling technique was employed to select the desired sample.

Apart from the two sources of limitations mentioned in the preceding discussion, there are four possible areas that a researcher must address in relation to the possible limitations: issues of internal validity, external validity, measurement and statistical issues (Cone & Foster, 2006). These elements have been discussed in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter Three). Apart from that, in this study, the participation was on a voluntary basis; therefore, there was no assurance that all points of view were elicited during the study. There may have been some STs or CTs that had very valid but different perspectives from those who participated in the study but for one reason or another felt uncomfortable being a part of a study and therefore declined to participate or perhaps they did not feel they could reveal their innermost feelings about the practicum. As a result, it was not possible to ensure all possible perspectives on the practicum within the Maldives context were included in this study.

Delimitations are those elements of the study over which the researcher has control and employs to make the study doable. To this end, the study employed non-probability sampling technique to select participants for the qualitative in-depth part of the study to make it feasible and doable. Also, a time frame was imposed on the study to allow it to be concluded in a timely fashion. As with most studies additional time might have allowed for a richer data set. Finally, the use of data collection techniques such as telephone interviews (rather than face-to-face interviews) with some participants was a deliberate decision due to the limited resources available to conducting the study.

CHAPTER 4 : FINDINGS

The main purpose of this study is to contribute to current conceptualizations of the practicum in the Maldives, in order to better understand and suggest enhancements, where necessary that might benefit all concerned. As noted earlier, this study is guided by four research questions:

1. What are the main features of the practicum in teacher education programmes in the Maldives?
2. What are the perceptions of stakeholders (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs and IBCs) about the current practices of the practicum?
3. What are the key issues identified by the stakeholders?
4. What are stakeholders' recommendations to address the key issues identified?

Both quantitative (questionnaire-based survey) and qualitative data (observation, and interview) were used to answer these research questions. Each of these research questions are dealt in separate sections below.

Main Features of the Practicum in the Maldives

This section presents the findings with respect to the first research question: What are the main features of the practicum in the teacher education programmes in the Maldives? It sought to analyze the key features of the practicum models of both public and private TEIs at the time of data collection (2014–2015). The key features of the practicum in various teacher education programs are derived from STs reported data. Table 4.1 presents the key features of various teacher education programs in the Maldives.

Table 4.1 *Key Features of the Practicum in Various Teacher Education Programs in the Maldives*

Program Type	Duration of the program in years	No of practicum rounds	Duration of the practicum in weeks	Supervision	Assessment	No of teaching session assessed
ECE Level						
Degree	3	3	4	CT+SL	CT+SL	3
Diploma	1, 2	1,2	4,8	CT+SL	CT+SL/SL	2, 3, 4
Advanced Certificate	1, 7months	1	4	CT+SL	SL	2
Primary Level						
Degree	3	3	4	CT+SL	CT+SL	2
Diploma	1,2	1,2	4, 5,12	CT+SL	CT+SL	2,3,4
Advanced Diploma	2	1,2	4,5	CT+SL	CT+SL	2,4
Advanced Certificate	2	2	4	CT+SL	CT+SL	1,4
Secondary Level						
Degree	3,4	1,3	4,5,12	CT+SL	CT+SL	2
Diploma	2	1,2	4,5	CT+SL/CT	CT+SL/CT	2,3
Advanced Diploma	2	2	4	CT+SL	CT+SL	2

Note: CT = cooperating teacher and SL= supervising lecturers.

The analysis of STs data showed that STs who participated in this study were enrolled in three different levels of teacher education programs: ECE, primary and secondary. At each of these levels, degree, diploma courses were offered. It is evident from the data that the practicum structure varies in these different programs across the level and even within the same level. For example, in ECE level, there were a two-year diploma program and a one-year diploma program. The two-year diploma has two practicum rounds each consisting of a four-week block, totalling eight weeks of practicum for the whole program. Similarly, the one-year diploma program has one practicum round but based on STs' interview data, it was reported that the duration of this practicum varied: there were STs enrolled in a four-week practicum and an eight-week practicum. Correspondingly, there were differences in practicum structures within the secondary level programs. For example, there were STs enrolled in a 12 week block practicum and a five-week practicum while there were STs who undertake a three practicum rounds each consisting of a four-week block. In addition, it is clear that the number of practicum varied across programs and the STs' experience of those programs. That is, there were three-year degree programs that had one practicum round while some STs reported that they had one practicum round in each academic year.

In terms of supervision and assessment, it is evident that in most of the programs, the practicum was supervised and assessed by the SLs and CTs. Only the diploma program at secondary level was supervised and assessed by CTs alone, while diploma and certificate programs in ECE level were assessed by only SLs. Also, the qualitative data revealed that some STs were assessed based on a marking system where a mark was awarded to each component of the practicum – two lessons assessed by CT and SL including the portfolio, resulting in a practicum report submitted to the Faculty/College. In order to receive a pass, STs had to achieve a minimum 50% from the aggregate of these two (e.g., they could receive 45% on one and 55% on the other to achieve a pass). While some STs reported that they were required to submit the practicum records, but it wasn't included in the assessment and they were assessed by only the SLs.

Stakeholder Perceptions

This section presents the findings with respect to the second research question: what are the perceptions of stakeholders (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs and IBCs) about the current practices of the practicum? Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to investigate

the perceptions of STs and CTs, but in other cases (e.g., for Coordinators and SLs) where only qualitative data were collected, which served the basis for the results. To answer the second research question, this section is structured to provide an account of the perceptions from each stakeholder group separately. First, the perceptions of STs are presented, which is then followed by the CTs perceptions.

STs' perceptions. STs' perceptions about the five main dimensions of the practicum (pre-practicum preparation, feedback, professional support, assessment, institutional socialization and professional development) were queried through STQ. The data obtained from the STQ were then corroborated through semi-structured interviews and observations. First, the STs' demographic data is presented followed by their perceptions about the five main dimensions of the practicum.

STs' demographic data. The analysis of STQ data revealed that, out of 575 STs who undertook the practicum during the second semester of 2014 and the first semester of 2015, 317 completed the survey. This represented a response rate of approximately 55% of the population. Further disaggregation of STQ data by gender shows that the sample comprises 279 (88%) females and 38 (12%) males. Table 4.2 shows the number of respondents in different age ranges.

Table 4.2 *Age Range of the Respondents*

Age range	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
18–25	271	85	85	85
26–35	34	11	11	96
36–40	5	2	2	98
above 40	7	2	2	100
Total	317	100	100	

As evident from Table 4.2, only two percent of the sample is above the age of 40, and majority (86%) of the respondents are between the age 18 and 25. Table 4.3 summarises the types of programs in which these STs are enrolled.

Table 4.3 *Number of STs Enrolled in Different Teacher Education Programs*

Program Type	Program Level			Total
	ECE	Primary	Secondary	
Degree	1	54	192	247
Diploma	10	15	8	33
Advanced Diploma	0	10	11	21
Advanced Certificate	14	2	0	16
Total	25	81	211	317

Table 4.3 shows that a large majority of STs who participated were enrolled in secondary level programs – 211 STs (of 317). Among these, the majority of STs who participated were enrolled in degree programs – 192 STs (of 211). The least number of STs were from ECE – 25 STs (of 317). Certificate level and diploma level programs were more popular among these STs. In addition, further analysis of STs reported data indicated that 81 (26%) STs had teaching experience when they enrolled in the respective teacher education program and 236 (74%) were new to the profession. Of the sample, 139 (44%) had previously undertaken teaching practicum, and the remaining 178 (56%) were on their first teaching practicum (TP1).

In sum, the study sample comprised a higher percentage of female STs (88%) than male STs (12%), and the respondents were largely between the ages of 18 to 25 years. Additionally, a large proportion (211 out of 317 STs) was enrolled in secondary level programs. In addition, the sample consisted of inexperienced recent school leavers (74%) and fewer experienced and mature aged STs (26%). More than half of the STs who responded to the survey were on their first practicum (56%) and the remainder had previous practicum experience (44%).

Perceptions about Pre-practicum Preparation at University/College

The focus of pre-practicum preparation was investigated by both the survey questionnaire and interviews. In the student questionnaire, STQ, the STs were asked to respond with “Yes” or “No” to statements regarding the four main areas of pre-practicum preparations: peer teaching, lesson planning, teaching strategies, and dealing with potential problems during the practicum. STs' responses to these area were categorised by level of teacher education program: ECE, primary and secondary. Figure 4.1 shows the results.

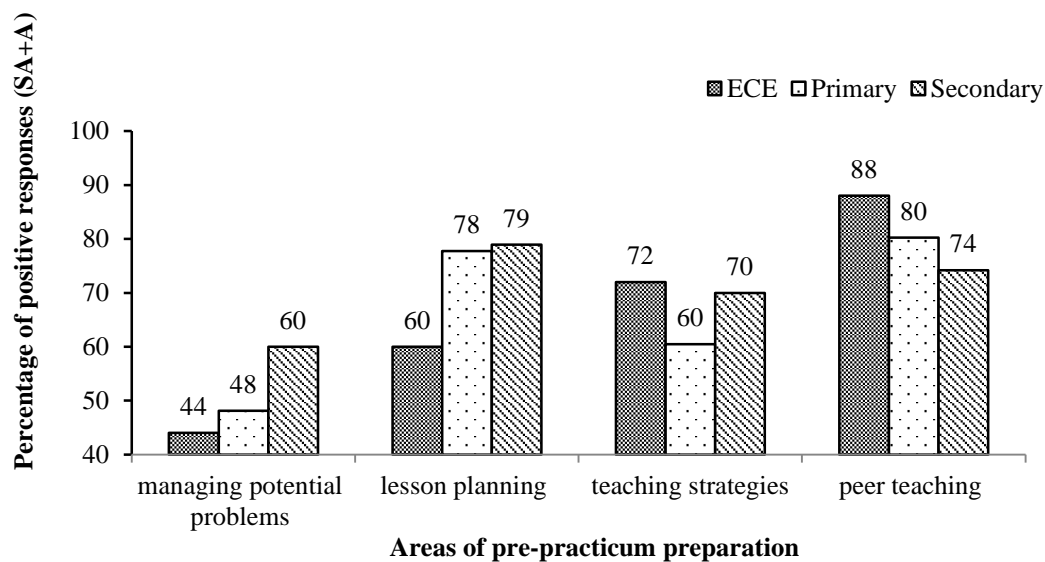


Figure 4.1. Comparison of Pre-practicum Preparation in ECE, Primary and Secondary Programs.

Among the three types of programs, the most focus is given on lesson planning, teaching strategies and peer teaching. The least focus is on managing potential problems—an area STs considered to be valuable for the practicum. Less than 50% of the STs from ECE and primary felt that they were trained or instructed to manage potential problems in the practicum. This result is confirmed by their responses to the open-ended question. Nearly, 40% of their responses fell under this theme (pre-practicum preparation). These STs felt that they could have had more preparation for the practicum before they were placed in the schools. One ST noted that "they [College] could have given clear information about TP and could have taught us how to manage classrooms" (K11, ECE). Another ST further added "they [College] could have taught us how to control pupils, how to manage time and strategies to teach a lesson" (P53, Primary).

In addition, STs' interview data indicated that all the teacher education institutions, except one, conducted only one pre-meeting, before the practicum commenced to provide information about the practicum. But no specific sessions or workshops were conducted during which the students got to practice strategies and ideas for the practicum (e.g., micro-teaching). On this point, one ST noted that "peer teaching, lesson planning, teaching methods and classroom management techniques were included in various modules of the courses, but not specifically practiced for the practicum" (P6, Primary).

In addition to the pre-practicum preparation, the five major dimensions of the practicum: feedback, professional support, institutional socialization, assessment and professional development were investigated using the questionnaire, STQ. The results from STQ were then corroborated with the interview and observation data. In STQ, a series of four statements that reflect the most significant activities in relation to each of these dimensions was presented in a Likert-scale format, which required the STs to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree to the statements provided. STs' positive responses were categorised by course type: ECE (n = 25), primary (n = 81) and secondary (n = 211). Figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 show these results.

Perceptions of feedback. STs' positive responses (strongly agree and agree) given to the four statements regarding the provision of feedback were categorized by course type: ECE, primary and secondary. These responses were then analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. The results are presented in Figure 4.2.

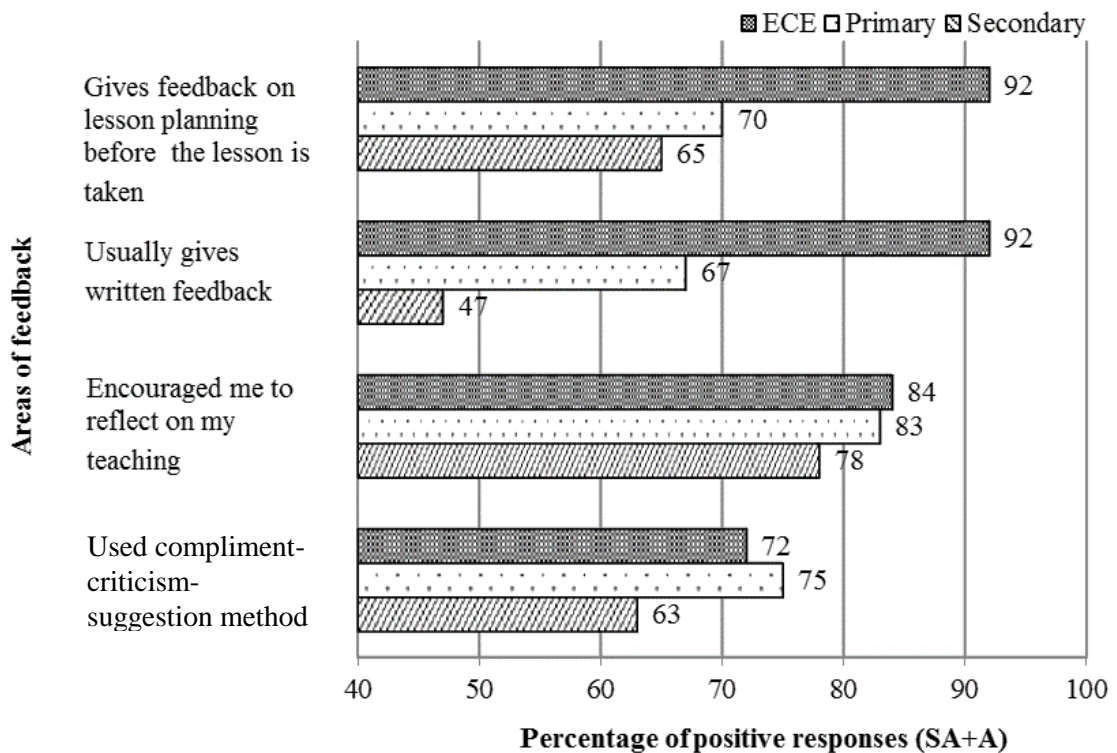


Figure 4.2. Comparison of Feedback Received by STs in ECE, Primary and Secondary.

Figure 4.2 shows that STs from ECE and primary had a higher percentage (above 70% and 60% respectively) of positive responses in all the four dimensions of the feedback, while STs from secondary program also had above 60% positive responses except one

dimension (give written feedback) of the feedback. Fewer than 50% of them received written feedback from their CTs.

The low percentage (47%) of positive responses from STs at the secondary level to the provision of written feedback, compared to the other areas of feedback could be because the STs might have received oral feedback or they might have received written feedback occasionally. In considering this possible disconfirming explanation, a further analysis of the interview data was carried out. The findings from interview data suggested that most of the STs received only 2–3 written feedback reports – a requirement of the practicum assessment – but not for all the lessons taken. This finding is also consistent with what the researcher observed during the practicum. Of the 12 teaching sessions observed at the secondary level, the researcher was able to observe only five teaching sessions with the CTs, sitting at the back of the class to observe STs' teaching. Of these lessons, only one CT gave written feedback to the ST. The STs' responses given to an open-ended question in STQ regarding their expectation from the CTs further confirmed that they expected to receive more written feedback from their CTs than that which occurred during their practicum.

Further, the analysis of responses revealed that the STs from secondary level identified four main parameters of the feedback: namely, the amount, types, timing, and methods of feedback. Thirty-six percent of the STs expected their CTs to give feedback to all the lessons regardless of the type of feedback. The two types of the feedback identified were written and oral feedback. From these two types, most of the STs preferred to get written feedback (i.e., written feedback was more frequently noted as an expectation by the ST).

Regarding the timing of the feedback, STs noted two important points on the open-ended questions. First, to give feedback on lesson plans before they are implemented, and second, to give feedback immediately after a lesson observation. Other than timing of the feedback, 34% of the STs expected their CTs to give clear and constructive feedback. Regarding the feedback, some STs highlighted that they wished to get suggestions on how to improve the lesson. One ST noted on the open-ended questions that "[CT could have given] at least some positive feedback rather than pin pointing at the few mistakes" (S115, Secondary).

In the case of ECE and primary STs, Figure 4.2 shows a very high percentage of positive responses (above 70% and 60% respectively) to all four dimensions, but these results were not always consistent with the interview data. The interview data from these ECE and primary STs indicated that they had received only oral feedback at the end of each teaching session and written feedback was given at the end of the practicum. Similarly, interview data from primary STs also confirmed that they had received oral feedback for all their lessons and received both oral and written feedback only to the assessed lessons – lessons that were evaluated and rated with the observation form given by the TEIs. These findings are consistent with the observational data. It was identified from the observations that 16 STs observed (9 STs from primary and 7 STs from ECE) had their CTs physically present in the class, until the teaching sessions ended, and were given oral but not written feedback right after the lesson observation.

Professional support. STs' positive responses (strongly agree and agree) given to the four statements regarding the provision of professional support were categorized by course type: ECE, primary and secondary. These responses were then analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. Figure 4.3 shows the results.

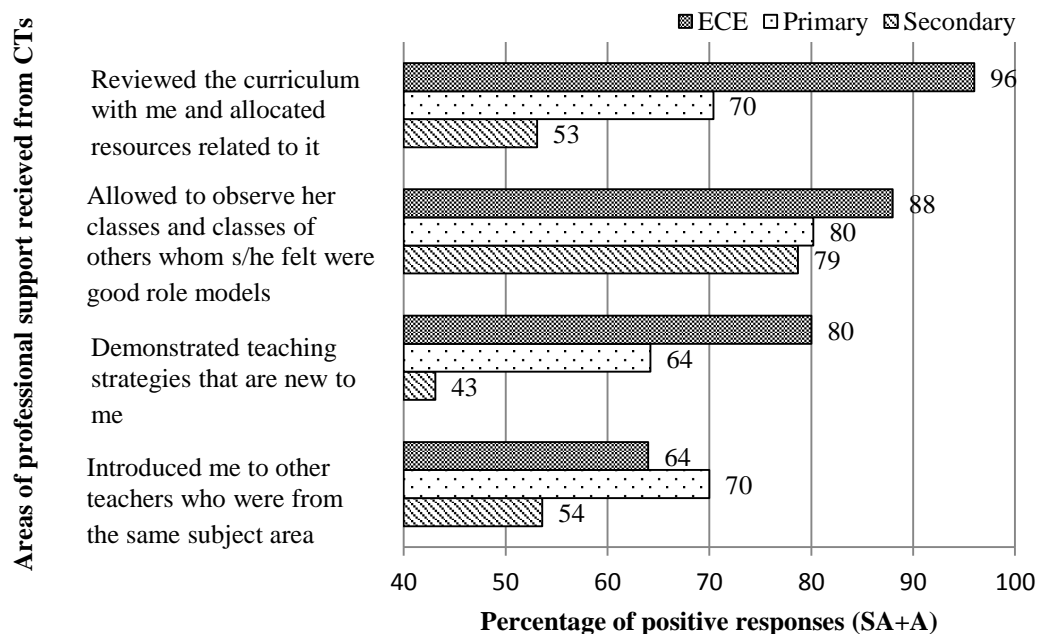


Figure 4.3. Comparison of Professional Support Received by STs in ECE, Primary and Secondary.

Figure 4.3 shows that more than 60% of STs at the ECE and primary had positive responses in all four areas of professional support. In contrast, fewer than 60% of STs at the secondary level had positive responses except for one area of professional support. Though Figure 4.3 shows a very high percentage of positive responses from STs in ECE and primary, the analysis of the open-ended questions pertaining to their expectations of the CTs indicated that they needed additional professional support from their CTs. This is one of the most prominent themes (above 60% responses) that emerging from the responses of STs in both ECE and primary. However, in a slight contrast to the ECE and primary, it appeared as one of the most prominent themes (50% responses) by the STs in secondary.

Sixty-two percent of STs from ECE and 59% of STs from primary noted that they needed more professional support from CTs, in areas such as teaching methods, preparation of teaching aids and lesson planning. In addition, they also noted that they wanted their CTs to spend more time with them, and be good role models for them. On the other hand, 45% of STs from secondary noted that they needed more support from CTs, mainly from three major areas: curriculum related support (provision of notes, worksheets, syllabus and scheme of work), provision of opportunities to translate theories into practice (freedom to choose own teaching strategies and prepare worksheets) and help to get socialized into the profession.

Further, the disaggregation of secondary STs' data by practicum round showed that 56 percent of them were enrolled in the first practicum round. Similarly, the analysis of these STs' (i.e., STs from practicum round one) interview data revealed that they had not covered lesson planning, teaching methods, and classroom management techniques in any of the course modules prior to the practicum. Supporting this finding, one ST noted that "they [Faculty/College] could have taught us teaching methods and classroom management techniques before they send us to the practicum" (S211, Secondary). This finding is also consistent with their responses to the open-ended question regarding their expectations for the practicum from the Faculty/College. Twenty percent of their responses were related to changing the current course structure recommending the need to have opportunity to teach a L & T module before the practicum.

In addition, findings from qualitative data together with the results from the quantitative data offer two possible interpretations for the low percentage of positive responses to an important area of professional support received from CTs—that is, discussion, or demonstration of new teaching strategies. First, since STs were not well equipped with various teaching strategies at the Faculty/College, they may not have been able to recognize alternative teaching strategies used by the CTs. Second, the CTs might have followed a traditional approach of teaching rather than contemporary approaches, thus did not discuss, or demonstrate new strategies to the STs on practicum. Either way, the STs felt that they were not well equipped with varieties of teaching methods.

Assessment of the practicum. STs' positive responses (strongly agree and agree) given to the four statements regarding various tasks undertaken as part of the assessment, were categorized by course type: ECE, primary and secondary. These responses were then analyzed using descriptive statistics. Figure 4.4 shows the results.

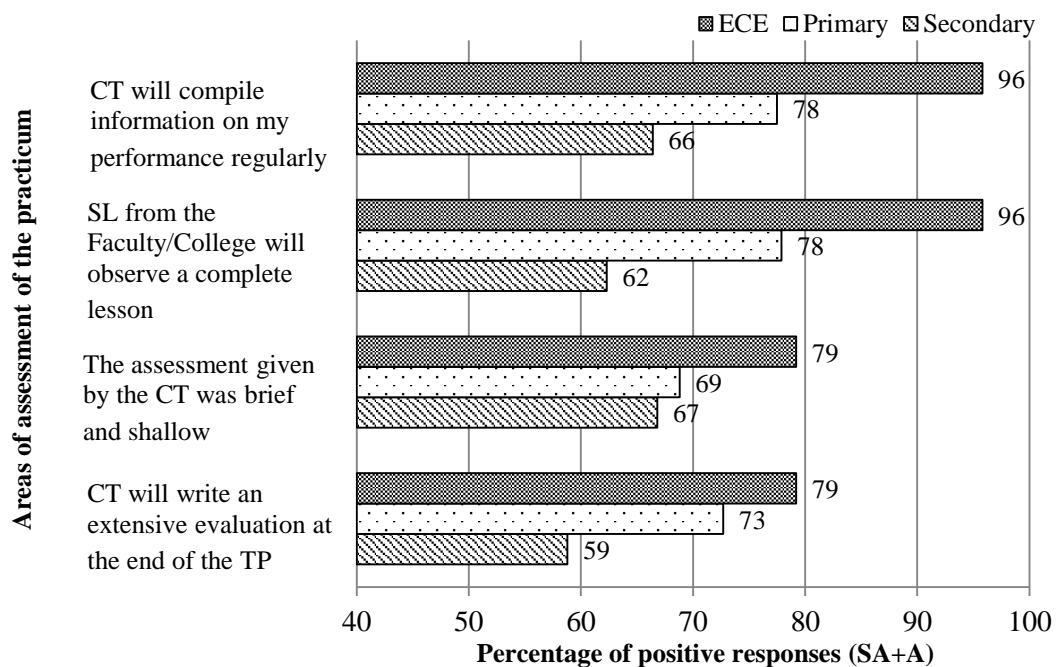


Figure 4.4. Comparison of Assessment of the Practicum in ECE, Primary and Secondary.

Figure 4.4 shows that STs from ECE and primary have a higher percentage of (above 70% and 60% respectively) positive responses in all four areas of the assessment of the practicum. STs from secondary level programs also had above 60% positive responses except from one area of assessment.

Among the three levels, ECE has the highest percentage across all four items regarding assessment. While, secondary level has the least across all the items. In the case of ECE, the high percentage of positive responses with respect to the third item (the assessment given by the CT was brief and shallow) is contradicted by the interview data. Interview data from STs in ECE indicated that their practicum was assessed only by the SL from the college. On this point, one ST noted that the "SL usually comes towards the end of the practicum to observe one lesson. If failed from the first assessed observation, another opportunity would be given to re-teach before the practicum ends. Pass or fail would be then based on the second lesson" (KI1, ECE). This inconsistency arose possibly because these STs were not aware of the practicum assessment procedures being used.

However, in the case of STs from primary, interview data indicated that their practicum was assessed by both CT and SL. One ST noted that:

CT usually sits in the class every day and never informs me on which date the assessment will be taken. So every day I had to be very well prepared for the lesson. She assessed two lessons without informing me. Like that, SL also made two uninformed observations. (PI5, Primary)

Unlike STs from ECE and primary, the interview data from secondary STs indicated that the CTs were not usually physically present in all of the lessons taught by the ST, but they did observe two lessons to conduct the assessment, as per the requirement of the respective institutions.

Institutional socialization. STs' positive responses (strongly agree and agree) given to the four statements regarding institutional socialization were categorized by course type: ECE, primary and secondary. These responses were then analysed using descriptive statistics. Figure 4.5 shows the results.

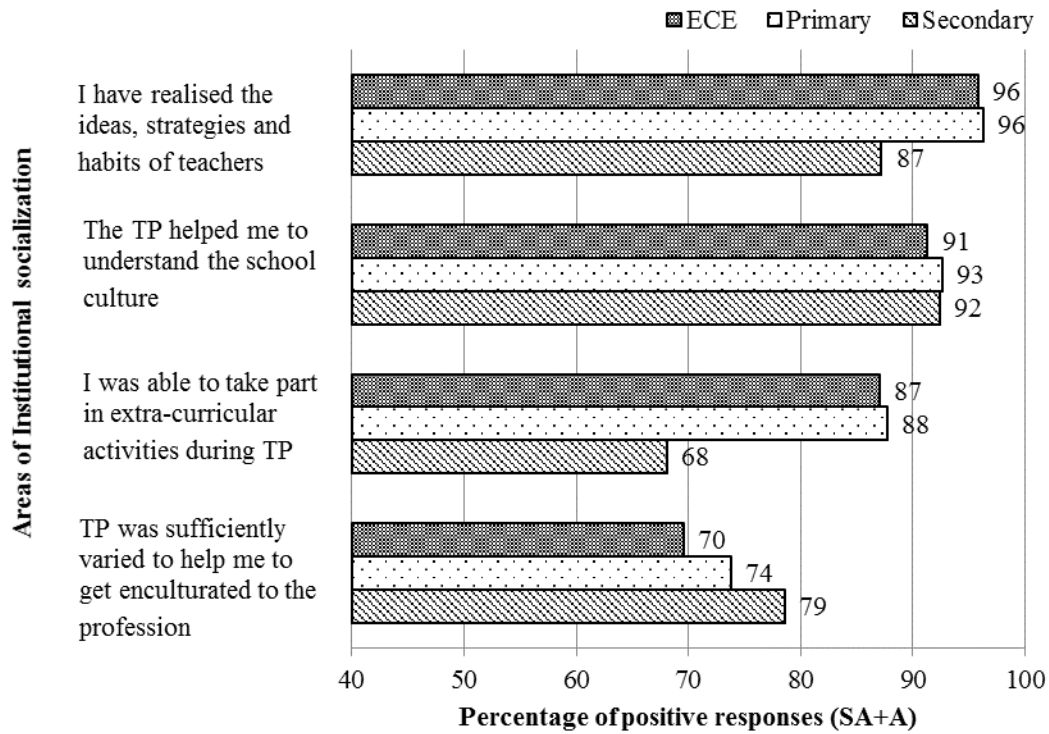


Figure 4.5. Comparison of Institutional Socialization of STs during the Practicum in ECE, Primary and Secondary.

Figure 4.5 shows that STs from ECE, primary and secondary program have a high percentage (above 60%) positive responses in all the four areas of the institutional socialization during the practicum. According to Figure 4.5, a vast majority (above 80%) of STs from all three levels of teacher education programs agreed that the practicum helped them to learn about the school culture, realize ideas, strategies, and habits of teachers and to become better at classroom management, thus socialized into the profession. Further, institutional socialization also emerged as one of the themes from the analysis of both ECE and primary level STs to the open-ended question regarding their expectation from the CTs. Approximately ten percent of STs responses come under this theme, in which they mainly emphasized the need for more opportunities to take part in co-curricular activities, and to become more aware of the roles of uniformed bodies like the School Band and the Scout Group.

Figure 4.5 shows that there is a relatively large difference (approximately 20%) between the responses given at the secondary level ST with that of ECE and primary level STs on one of the items of institutional socialization – participation in extra-curricular activities. But their interview data suggested that most of the STs in secondary

also had many opportunities to take part in co-curricular activities. Explicating this point, one ST from secondary noted that:

My CT invited me to an extra-activity held at that time, I participated with her. In addition, I was given the chance to take extra-classes, and since she was a class-teacher, she had given me the opportunity to take part in all the activities that she undertook as a class-teacher. (SI8, Secondary)

In addition, Figure 4.5 shows a slightly lower percentage (below 80%) to the fourth area relatively to the other three. It could be because, according to Table 4.2 and 4.4, 35% of the STs were enrolled in courses that offer only one practicum round. Therefore, those STs might have felt that they need more practicum rounds, or else, STs who had more than one practicum round in the same context might have felt that they need more practicum rounds in multiple contexts. In both cases, this speaks to the opportunities for socialization that were present in the practicum settings. Clearly, the STs felt that more practicum experiences and greater practicum diversity was an important factor in their socialization.

Professional development. STs' positive responses (strongly agree and agree) given to the four statements regarding professional development were categorized by course type: ECE, primary and secondary. These responses were then analysed using descriptive statistics. Figure 4.6 shows the results.

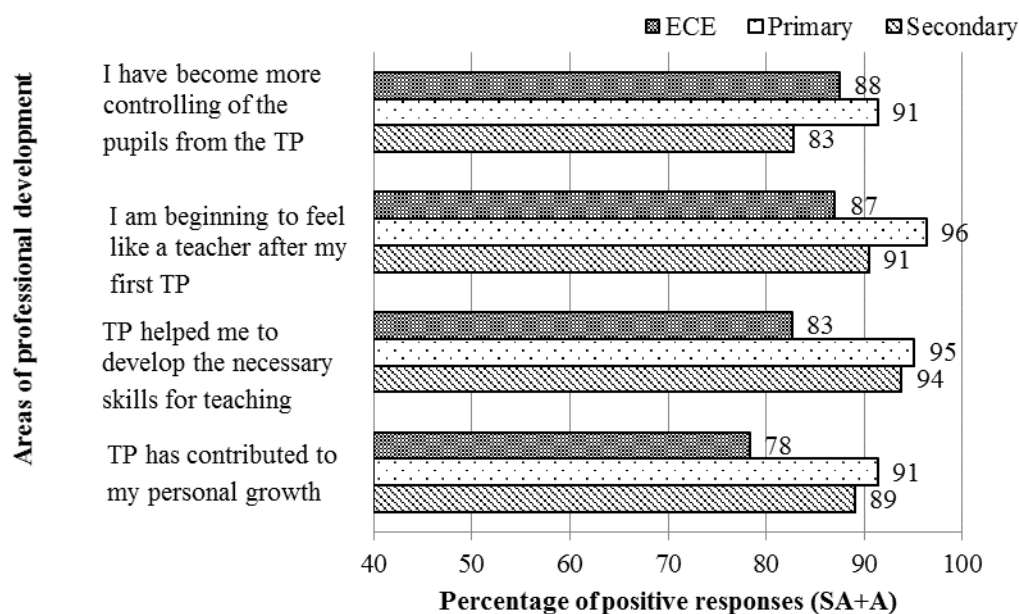


Figure 4.6. Comparison of Professional Development of the Practicum in ECE, Primary and Secondary.

Figure 4.6 shows that STs from ECE, primary and secondary have a high percentage (above 70%) of positive responses in all four areas of professional development in the practicum.

The high percentage of positive responses from ECE, primary and secondary indicated that the practicum brought positive changes to most of the STs with respect to the given four parameters of professional development. The STs' interview data also confirm these results. All the STs interviewed (12 STs from three levels) noted that the practicum contributed to their professional development in many ways. Supporting this contention, one ST noted that:

I have learned many things from the TP. I am totally new to the teaching field when I went to my first practicum. I was not much aware of how to deal with the pupils. But from the practicum I have learned how to manage pupils. In addition, I have learned to design the lessons more interesting ways and also I have learned how to work in school culture. (PI6, primary)

Another ST who was on her first practicum round (TP1) noted that "the practicum as a whole was an excitement; I have learned how to act as teacher in the school, and the practicum encouraged and motivated me to look forward to another practicum" (SI12, Secondary).

This result reinforces the importance of the practicum experience for STs as they make sense of learning about teaching. The importance of actual practice is central to this aspect of their professional program in education.

Perspectives of CTs. The perspectives of CTs regarding the current practices of the practicum conducted by both public and private teacher education institutions were initially studied through the CTQ. Face to face semi-structured interviews and observations were further used to get greater understanding of their perspectives. In the CTQ, a series of statements regarding CTs' perception about the importance of the various roles they play, and their opinions about the current practices of provision of feedback, socialization and supervision, was requested in terms of a five-point Likert-scale. Additionally, how well the CTs were informed of their roles by the respective Faculty/College and the areas they thought that they needed professional development were investigated by giving a series of statements to which they could respond with "Yes" or "No". In addition, their motivation for becoming a CT, opinions about the purpose of the practicum and recommendations to make the practicum more effective were elicited

by open-ended questions. The analysis of these data is discussed in the following sections. First, the analysis presents CTs' demographic data followed by their motivation to become CTs.

CTs' demographic data. From the population of 426 CTs, 205 CTs completed the CTQ. This represented a response rate of 48 % of the sample population. The analysis of CTQ data showed that the respondents consisted of 45 (22%) males and 160 (78%) females. Table 4.4 shows the age ranges of the CTs.

Table 4.4 *Age Range of the CTs*

Age ranges	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
18–25	35	17	17	17
26–35	94	46	46	63
36–40	31	15	15	78
above 40	45	22	22	100
Total	205	100	100	

Further, the demographic data was disaggregated by school level (ECE, primary and secondary) and by CTs educational qualification level (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 *Educational Qualification of the CTs*

Teaching qualification level	School level		
	ECE (n = 29)	Primary (n = 54)	Secondary (n = 122)
Certificate	7	17	2
Diploma	93	69	21
Degree	0	14	77

Note: all the values are represented as percentages.

Table 4.5 shows that majority of CTs from ECE and primary levels have diploma qualifications and the majority of CTs from secondary level have degree qualifications. Finally, the analysis of demographic data also revealed that more than 75% of the CTs from all the three levels had previous experience as a CT. The next section outlines their motivation to become a CT.

Motivation to become a CT. An open-ended question was given to CTs to express their motivation for becoming a CT. A total of 168 CTs responded to this question (82% response rate). Three prominent themes (contribution to the profession, reciprocal

professional development and an obligatory duty) emerged from the analysis of these responses. These themes are illustrated below starting from contribution to the profession first.

Contribution to the profession. This is one of the most prominent themes that emerged. Approximately 56% of the responses aligned with this theme. These responses indicated that CTs' primary purpose for becoming a CT was to contribute to teacher education to develop qualified teachers.

Reciprocal professional development. This is the second most prominent theme that emerged. Approximately 32% of the responses reflected this theme. These responses indicated that the practicum serves as a professional development opportunity for STs and CTs. Most of the CTs noted that they were motivated to share their experience and knowledge with STs. In addition, they highlighted that they were motivated to gain the most up-to-date innovative ideas from STs. On this note, one said:

My motivation to become a CT is to help the STs develop the necessary teaching skills and strategies. In addition, I feel it is refreshing to observe and experience ST teaching, and the innovations they bring into classroom routines enrich my own teaching. (KT12, ECE)

An obligatory duty. A small percentage (8%) of responses were related to this theme. These responses indicated that CTs were not really motivated to work with STs but rather they felt that it was something they were compelled to do by an outside authority (in many cases, the school administration). On this point a SBC noted that "normally, it is not a choice given to become a CT, the school asks and we have to accept" (PC1). Providing the reasons for this lack of motivation, this respondent noted that "it is a work to be done but this work is not valued, so I am not happy to be a CT."

Perceptions about the role and purpose of the practicum. CTs perceptions about the role of the practicum in teacher education were elicited through a five point Likert-scale type question. The analysis of the responses indicated that 92% of the respondents perceived that the practicum is an important or very important element of learning to teach. Further disaggregation of data by CTs educational qualification level did not show any significant difference in their perceptions about the importance of the practicum. The same was true for school level.

CTs' perceptions about the purposes of the practicum were elicited through an open-ended question. Most of the CTs (96%) responded to this question. Three themes emerged from the analysis of these responses: provision of context, professional development and theory into practice. These themes are discussed below with the most prominent one first.

Provision of context. This is one of the most prominent themes emerging from the responses regarding the purpose of the practicum. Approximately 44% of the responses fell under this theme. These responses indicated that the main purpose of the practicum is to contextualise STs' learning and gain first-hand experience before they entered to the profession.

Professional development. This is the second most prominent theme. Approximately 41% of the responses reflect this theme. These responses suggested that the CTs perceived that the practicum is an opportunity for first-hand professional development opportunities for STs, and in particular, the STs are exposed to the curriculum, which enables them to become more confident in dealing with pupils. Thus not only context but the opportunity to engage with and discuss curricula and pedagogical matters was important.

To put theory into practice. This is the least prominent theme among the three identified. A total of 15% of the responses fell under this theme. These responses highlighted the importance of putting theory into practice. On this note, one pointed out that "a person may have good content knowledge, but delivering it to different ability groups is a challenge, a challenge that needs to be experienced before entering to the profession" (PT35, Primary). Additionally, they pointed out that the practicum provides a platform to apply what a ST learns from the Faculty/College. Explicating this point, another CT noted that "it helps them refine their instructional and pedagogical skills" (ST82, Secondary).

Perceived mentoring styles. Mentoring styles of CTs were elicited by asking them to identify which style best describes their own from the given four descriptions of mentoring styles in Table 4.6. In addition, the fifth option was given to CTs to indicate if they didn't follow any of the styles given.

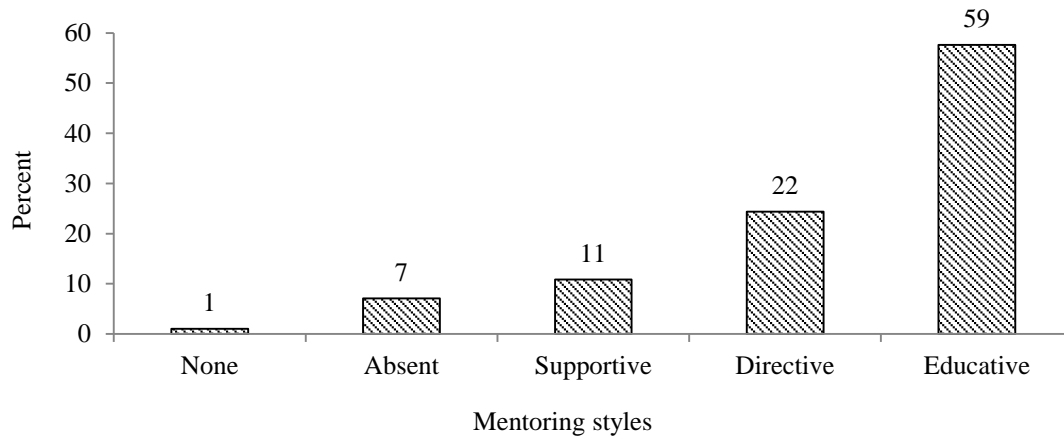
Table 4.6 *Various Mentoring Styles*

<i>Style A</i>	<i>Style B</i>	<i>Style C</i>	<i>Style D</i>
Giving full freedom to the student to do whatever s/he wants with minimal direction from cooperating teacher.	Student teachers learn best by observing a good role model and doing similarly as the role model.	The best way to learn to teach is, to gradually give the student teacher increasing responsibility to take the lessons.	The student teacher must be actively participate in learning to teach and must reflect on the lessons in light of experience and new knowledge.

Note. The styles were renamed under suitable headings for analysis: A=absent, B=supportive, C=directive, and D=educative.

Likewise, CTs were also asked to identify the mentoring style of their own CTs from the given five choices. The intent of asking the question was to find the degree of match between CTs current style of mentoring and the one used many years ago by their CTs. Such an analysis produces two useful findings: (a) changes in the prevalent mentoring styles over time, (b) the extent CTs use the style they were exposed to when they become CTs. These results are shown in Figure 4.7a and 4.7b.

(a) CTs' Perceptions about their own Mentoring Style



(b) CTs' Perceptions about their own CTs' Mentoring Style

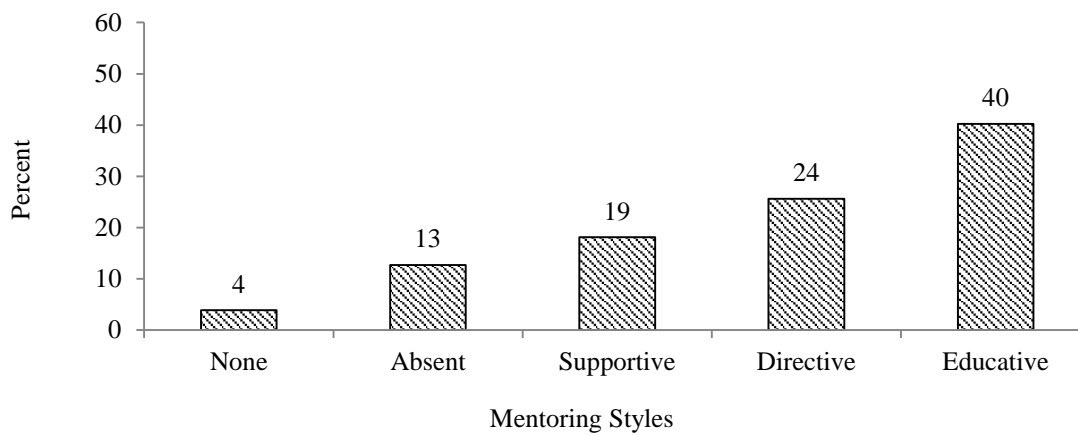


Figure 4.7. Changes in the Prevalent Mentoring Styles of CTs Over Time.

Both the figures show a similar pattern. It shows that the educative style is the most prominent one among the four styles. Additionally, the self-reported data suggests that the percentage of CTs who currently adopt an educative style has increased by 19% (59–40) compared with the mentoring styles of their own CTs.

Apart from studying the changes in the prevalent mentoring styles of CTs, an analysis was carried out to identify the number of CTs who adopted their own CT's style when they were STs. To identify these CTs, correspondence between the two responses was found for each of the CTs. The result shows that 52% of the CTs adopted their CTs' mentoring styles, while 48% did not. Further, the responses from these 52% of the CTs were disaggregated by the given four choices. The result is presented in the Figure 4.8.

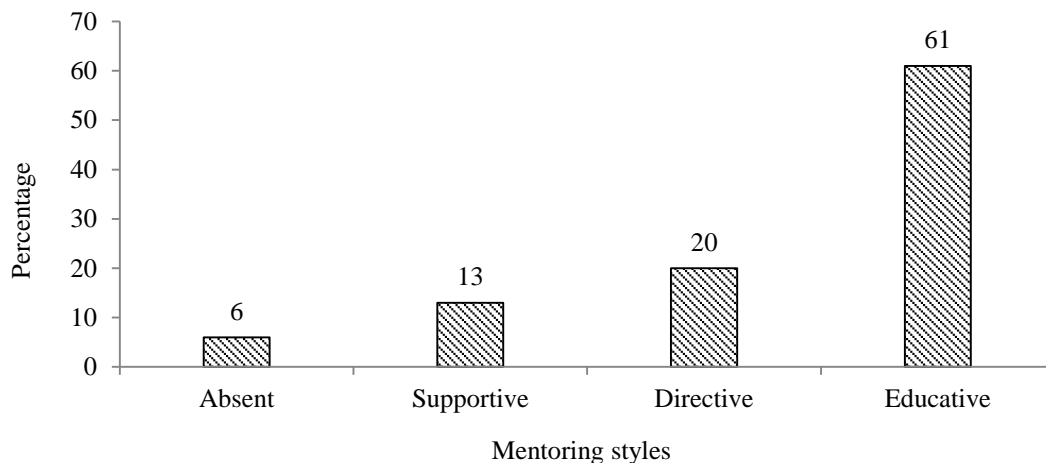


Figure 4.8. Percentage of CTs who Adopted their own CTs Mentoring Styles.

This figure shows that educative style was the style experienced by 61% of CTs (when they were STs) and is the style that they currently use with their STs. All other styles were reflected in the responses (experience and used currently) but to a far less extent (see Figure 4.9).

Similarly, in STQ, STs were also given the same descriptions of mentoring styles in Table 4.6 with an additional box ‘none’ to identify the mentoring style of their CTs. The analysis of responses is given in Figure 4.9.

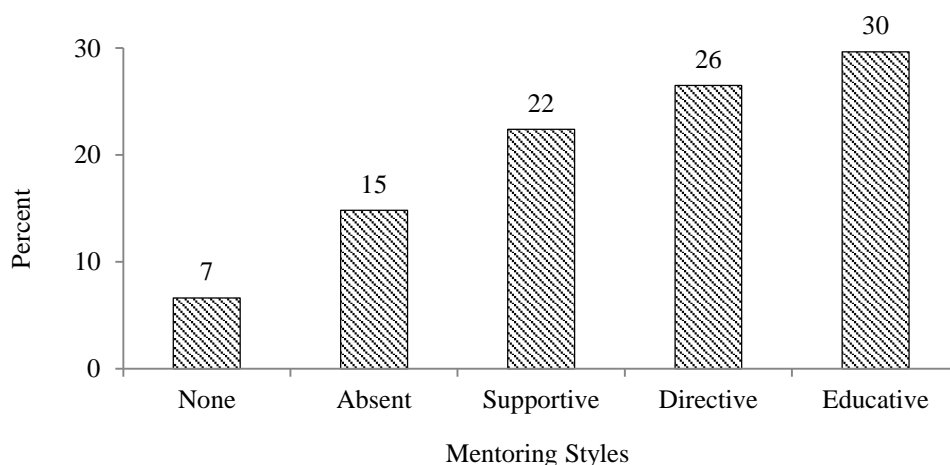


Figure 4.9. CTs' Mentoring Styles Perceived by STs.

Figure 4.9. shows that most of the CTs, from the STs’ perspective, practiced supportive, directive or educative styles with a difference of four percent between each.

CTs perceptions about their various roles. Perceptions about the importance of various roles that CTs play during the practicum was investigated by giving them a series of statements that described ten roles to which they had to respond on a five point Likert-scale in the CTQ: Very important (1) Important (2) Neither important nor unimportant (3) Unimportant (4) and Very unimportant (5). The responses were first analysed by disaggregating them to the levels (ECE, primary and secondary). The result shows that there wasn't a significant difference between the responses from these three levels. A further analysis was carried out by disaggregating the data by their educational qualification level (certificate, diploma and degree). The result of this analysis also shows that irrespective of the educational qualification, their perceptions remain same. Therefore, the result presented in Figure 4.10 is from the cohort of 205 CTs. Figure 4.10 shows CTs perceptions about various roles they played.

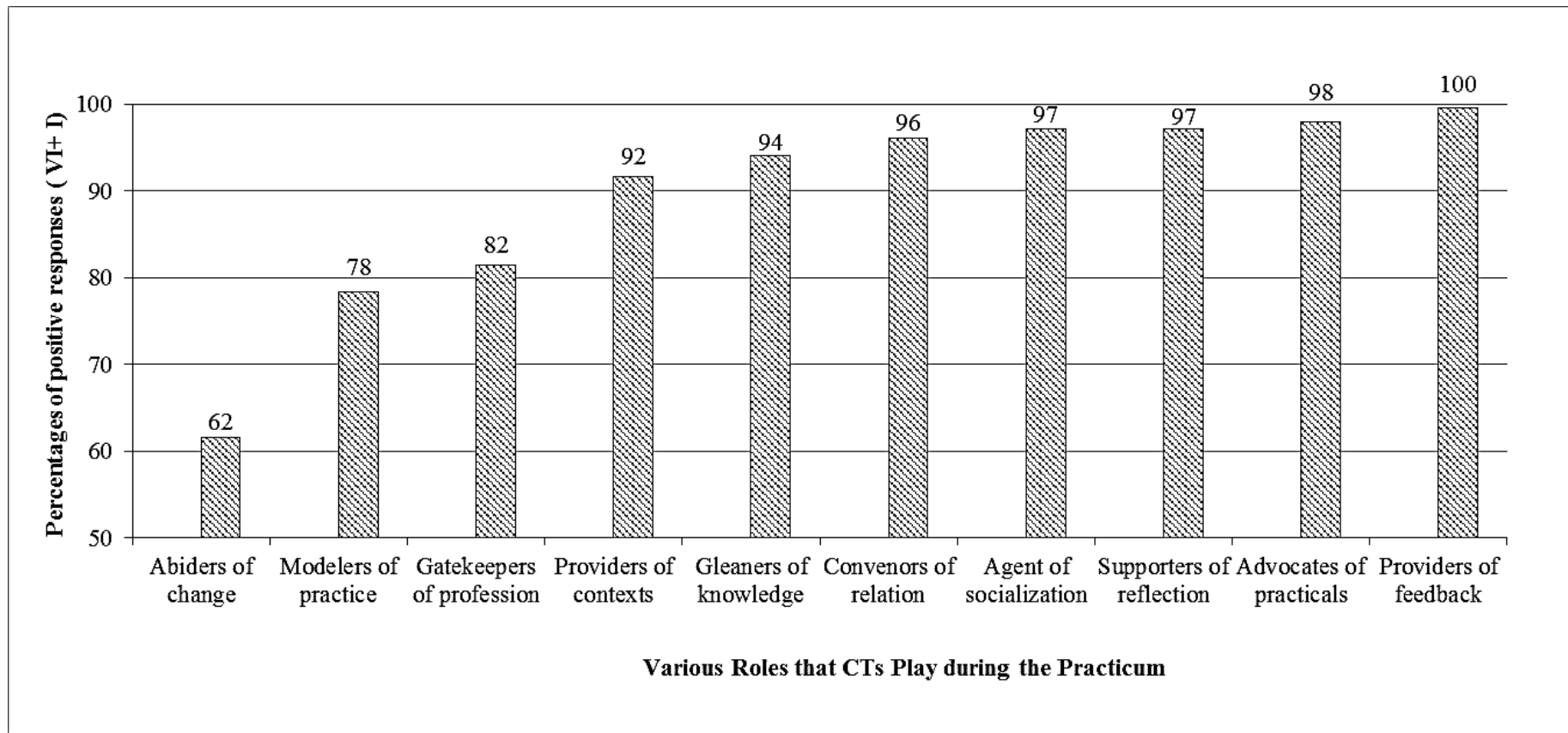


Figure 4.10. CTs' Perceptions About the Importance of Various Roles They Play in Guiding STs.

Figure 4,10 shows that, from the ten roles given, 62% of CTs identified their role as abiders of change is important, whereas, an overwhelmingly high percentage (above 70%) of CTs perceived that the remaining nine roles given are important, and all the participants agreed that their role as providers of feedback is important.

A similar question consisted of a series of 14 statements that described the way practicum is conducted at the school level was given in CTQ, to which, CTs had to respond on a five point Likert-scale: strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neither agree nor disagree (3) agree (4) and strongly agree (5). These statements were phrased such that they described the main 10 roles that CTs took part during the practicum. These 14 statements were grouped under ten roles as presented in Table 4.7. The intend of asking this question is (a) to understand the degree of CTs involvement in guiding STs, and (b) to identify the match between what they perceived as important and what was being practiced.

Table 4.7 *Various Roles of CTs and their Attribution*

CTs roles	Items provided in the CTQ1
Providers of feedback	I prefer to give oral feedback. In the feedback I provide, the emphasis is on particular and technical issues excluding theoretical and pedagogical matters. My feedback varies depending on whether the practicum is the student teacher's first practicum or second.
Advocates of practical	I advise the ST on what is practical in the classroom environment.
Supporters of reflection	I urge the ST to reflect on their own teaching by framing and reframing the teaching in light of past experience or new knowledge.
Agents of socialization	I help the ST to socialize into the culture of the school and the classroom.
Conveners of relation	I help the ST to develop professional relationship with other teachers and myself.
Gleaners of knowledge	I gain knowledge of new methods and materials of teaching from the ST. I need more knowledge to conduct the summative/final evaluation of the ST on a pass/fail basis
Providers of contexts	I advise the ST with the context of the school, and manage the context to provide a suitable practicum for the ST.
Gatekeepers of profession	I expect the SL to mentor (advise and guide) ST.
Modelers of practice	I expect my STs to emulate (copy) my style of teaching.
Abiders of change	Supervision is an add-on work to my usual workload. Supervision is an interruption to my own teaching.

Positive responses (SA+A) to these statements in each of the roles were analysed. The result was then compared with CTs' perceptions of their roles (see Figure 4.11) and presented in Figure 4.11.

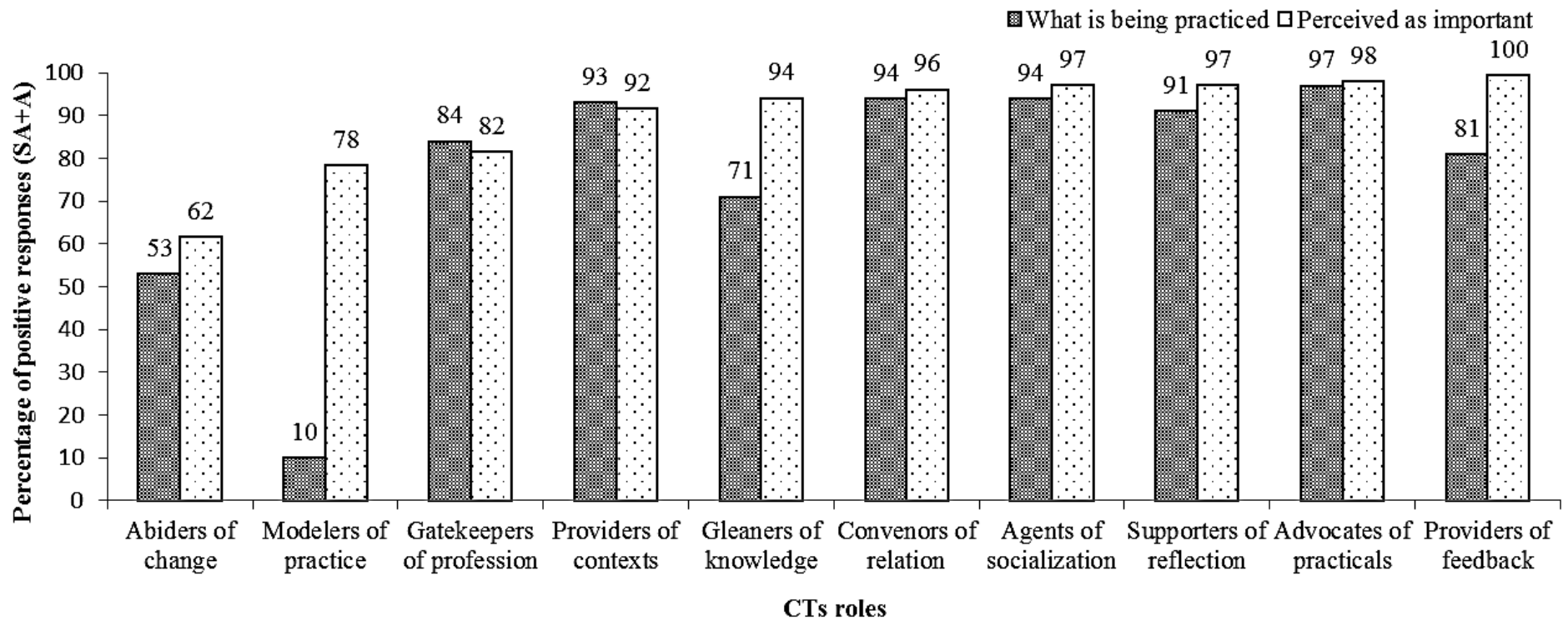


Figure 4.11. Comparison of CTs Perception about the Importance of Their Roles and What was being Practiced during the Practicum.

Figure 4.11 shows that there is not much significant difference (less than 8%) between CTs perceptions about most of the roles (six of ten) they play and the roles as they have been practiced during the practicum. The roles that showed the most difference include providers of feedback, gleaners of knowledge, modellers of practice and abiders of change. Among these four roles, the highest difference is apparent in modellers of practice (68%) and least is abiders of change (9%).

Perceptions of SBCs. Perceptions of the practicum coordinators at the schools were sought by conducting semi-structured face to face interview, with ten coordinators purposively selected from three levels: ECE (n=2), primary (n=2) and secondary (n=6). Interviews were designed to elicit information on their perceptions of major five themes: (1) their roles; (2) appointment of CTs; (3) monitoring; (4) issues; and, (5) recommendations. The latter two themes will be discussed in sections three and four, in corresponding to the research questions.

Perception of SBCs about their roles. The SBCs who agreed to participate in the study include principals, deputy principals and leading teachers. All of the practicum coordinators interviewed from ECE, primary and secondary level schools agreed that their role is mainly threefold. That is, to give confirmation to the TEI regarding the number of placements available; to select CTs and arrange pre-practicum meetings in the schools with the STs and personnel from the TEI; and to collect the feedback forms and other required documents from the CTs and send them back to the respective TEI within one week of practicum completion.

They also noted that the pre-practicum meeting – set for the STs, CTs, school-based practicum coordinators, principals and coordinators from TEIs – initiated by the TEIs is meant to fulfil three main purposes. That is: (1) to inform the CTs about their roles and responsibilities and requirement of the practicum assessment; (2) to share the expectations about the practicum to the school heads, school coordinators, CTs and STs; and, (3) to give the opportunity to the schools to inform STs about their expectations, the school rules, regulations and other relevant procedures that they are expected to follow during the practicum. One coordinator at the ECE level highlighted the importance of this meeting for the school personnel and STs, and expressed sadness saying “sadly only

public TEI follows this practice while the remaining TEIs do not give importance to initial meeting” (KC1). Owing to the importance of this meeting, the school requested that the TEIs send a liaison person with the STs on the first day of the practicum. One principal from ECE level explicated the point:

Every time we receive the letter of request from TEIs, we ask them to send somebody with the STs to meet me [principal] and to the leading teacher [school based practicum coordinators]. I usually attend to this meeting. After the meeting, the leading teacher takes STs to the classes to introduce and attach to a CT. Then they work collaboratively and the practicum goes well. (KC1)

Perceptions of arranging placements and appointment of CTs. SBCs also noted that the practicum placement is usually arranged through correspondence from TEI with the list of STs. Occasionally, some private TEIs send STs to the schools through negotiation by telephone. One coordinator who dealt with primary level STs claimed:

Most of the TEIs send STs list after the negotiation over the phone. After that there was not much monitoring. Sometimes we don't receive the STs list when they come to school. Especially, very often one of the private TEIs tends to send STs without the necessary documents. Very few TEIs conduct meetings at the schools with the STs and school personnel. (PC1)

Therefore, there seems to be quite a disparity as to how the process of arranging placements is handled by TEIs and schools. Coordinators at the ECE level indicated that they were not able to set selection criteria for CTs due to the large number of STs they needed to accommodate. In short, they noted that every year they receive more STs than the number of teachers originally available in the school. In these situations, “we had to attach two to three STs to one CT” (KC2). This claim is consistent with what the researcher observed. Out of the three classes observed from ECE, two classes had three STs in each.

However, it was noted that the attempted ST and CT ratio is one to one at primary and secondary level. In addition, coordinators at these two levels indicated that they set CT selection criteria at the school level. On explaining the CT selection criteria, they noted that the highest priority is given to selecting experienced local teachers rather than early career teachers. Additionally, the criteria identified by the school based coordinators include assigning the minimum number of STs to one class. One coordinator from a secondary school elaborated this point:

We don't send many STs to one class because, though there is no formal research on the impact of practicum on pupils' performance, we have to accept that it impacts a lot to the performance of the pupils. So, to be fair for all the pupils, we try our level best to distribute STs equally among all the classes. (SC2)

In addition, she raised the concern regarding STs' lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities. Upon elaborating the point, she said:

We need to revise the current assessment procedures to make them engage in varieties of activities other than classroom teaching. Because, very often I see that student teachers leave the school after taking the class. If their participation is counted for the final evaluation, then they will definitely participate in other activities. They must know that teaching is not only about classroom teaching. They need to learn the school system. (SC2)

Perceptions about practicum monitoring. The analysis of SBC interviews revealed that there wasn't much monitoring of STs and CTs from either TEIs or placement schools. All ten SBCs who were interviewed agreed that they didn't have formal meetings with the CTs and STs, except the initial meeting held at the schools with the coordinators from TEI. However, one noted that "we do check on them when we go for routine observation rounds, and we had asked the STs to meet us if they needed any assistance from the school" (KC1). Another coordinator from a primary level school added to this point saying that "leading teachers (LTs) will monitor the CTs and the attached STs" (PC2). However, they noted that they were unable to see any involvement of TEIs other than SLs few visits when observing their STs during the practicum. One participant expressed her views:

I would say that TEIs never monitor their STs after the practicum commenced. After the placement is arranged, it seems that they don't have any responsibilities in monitoring STs. They do send SLs for lesson observations, but those SLs are mostly resource personnel who would not have good connection with the teacher education institutions. But I believe that TEIs should monitor their STs' status, especially for STs who were placed for two to three-month longer practicum. (PC1)

The analysis of CTQ data further validated these claims made by the SBCs. It showed that 76% of CTs in ECE level agreed that they did not have formal meetings with their SBCs. However, in the case of primary and secondary CTs, 46% and 37% of CTs,

respectively, agreed that they had meetings with SBCs on daily basis. This inconsistency arose between CTQ data and coordinators interview data were further studied through CTs' interview data. CTs interview data revealed that they didn't have formal meetings with the coordinators, but they had informal meeting with the SBCs to discuss matters related to STs, thus verifying the findings from the analysis of SBCs interview data.

In addition, further analysis of CTQ data showed the extent to which CTs were informed of their role as a CT. In the CTQ, CTs were asked to respond with "Yes" or "No" to four questions regarding the access to important information. The analysis of the responses is presented in Figure 4.12.

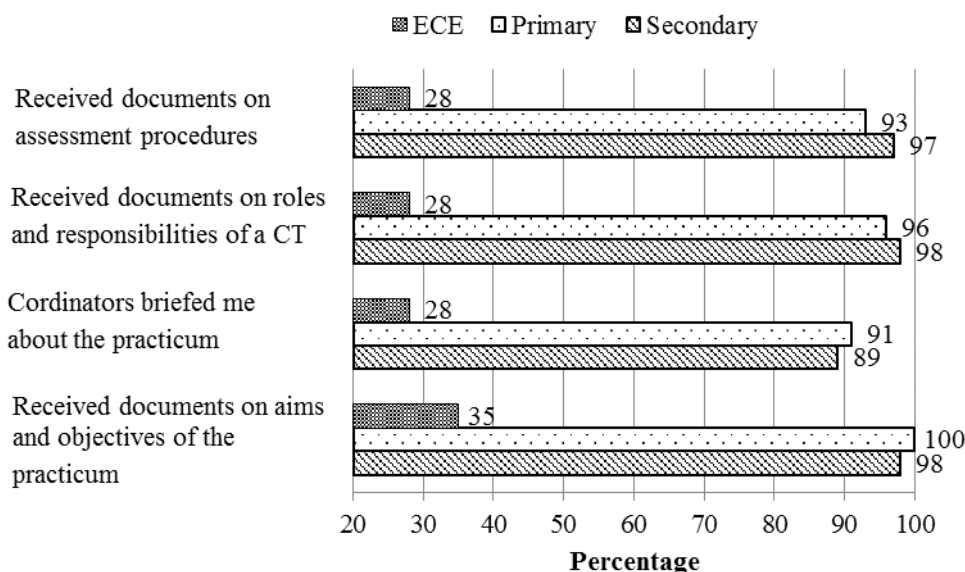


Figure 4.12. Accessibility of Essential Information.

Figure 4.12 shows that fewer than 40 % of the CTs in ECE received documents outlining the assessment procedures, CTs roles and responsibilities, aims and objectives of the practicum, and only 28% of them were briefed about the practicum by their school-based coordinator. This is consistent with what the coordinators from ECE claimed during their interviews. Coordinators at the ECE level also confirmed in their interviews that CTs were unable to attend the initial meeting held at the school with the coordinators, as they had to be in the class from the beginning of the school session to the end. So, unlike the other two levels (primary and secondary), this pre-meeting for ECE level STs was held

with school-based coordinators, the principal and the coordinator from TEIs. After this meeting, the school-based coordinator took the STs to the classes to introduce their CTs.

Perceptions of IBCs. Perceptions of the practicum coordinators at TEIs were also sought by conducting semi-structured face to face interview, with three coordinators purposively drawn from two public institutions and one private institution, as the remaining institutions refused to give consents to participate their staff. Interviews were designed to elicit information on their perceptions about major five themes: (1) their roles; (2) appointment of SLs; (3) monitoring; (4) issues; and, (5) recommendations. The latter two themes will be discussed in response to the research questions three and four respectively.

Perceptions of IBCs about their roles. The analysis of the interviews revealed that these three coordinators perceived that they have three major roles. That is, (1) to arrange placements; (2) to conduct information sessions for the STs regarding the practicum; and, (3) to conduct post-conference meetings at the respective TEIs.

Two (of three) coordinators noted that the most prominent role is to arrange placements for the STs. They noted that the placement is usually arranged via a formal letter of request to the placement schools from the TEIs stating the number of placements required at each level (ECE, primary and secondary). However, some of the coordinators noted that though a letter of request is sent at the beginning of the academic year "most of the time the placement is arranged via telephone communication which supplements the letter, as most of the ECE level school heads are very close friends of mine" (TC1).

Two (of three) coordinators noted that they conducted information sessions for the STs to give important information and to handover the practicum files and other documents required for the practicum. In addition, they indicated that they needed to arrange weekly post-conference meetings for the STs to get feedback from them regarding the practicum progress, and also to help resolve issues that STs may be facing at the placement schools. The researcher had an opportunity to observe a post-conference meeting held at one of the TEIs. It was one-hour meeting meant for the STs to discuss the progress of their practicum and issues that they faced at the placement schools and other issues they may have with their SLs. It was observed that the greater part of the

meeting was spent on clarifying Time Tabling issues, and it was concluded by a lecturer reviewing a lecture on classroom management techniques.

One (of three) coordinators noted that the job of a coordinator was "really tough and arduous. Not only arranging the placement was difficult, but finalizing STs' practicum result was rather tough as it was hard to receive the practicum files from the CTs through the schools on due date" (TC2). She further elaborated this point:

We are talking about arranging placements for more than 400 STs, maintaining their practicum records, and finalizing the results. It was really tough for a single person to handle everything. So, to manage the practicum, we had mentors assigned for all the placement schools. These mentors were required to have initial meetings at the schools with the STs and also had to check STs' progress weekly throughout the practicum. And if they had notified any irregularities, they were required to inform to the coordinator. In addition, the heads of the department (HoDs) were responsible to arrange SLs and oversee the status of STs who belong to that department. These HoDs had authority to finalise the practicum results. In cases, where they find it difficult to decide pass or fail, those cases will be taken to Academic Review Committee for further review. (TC2)

This excerpt implies that the role of this coordinator, unlike the other two IBCs, is not only arranging placements but also to coordinate with the mentors and HoDs for the successful implementation of the practicum events, a set of roles that complicates and increases the workload of this particular coordinator. Although not confirmed for the other coordinators, it can be reasonably assumed that some if not all elements mentioned by this coordinator are taken up to varying degrees by coordinators in other schools.

Perceptions about the appointment of SLs. Two (of three) coordinators from institutions A2 and B2 indicated that SL are selected within the academic staff of the faculty/college. Both of them noted that their understanding is that when TEIs select SLs, priority is given to selecting SLs who had a teaching qualification with the relevant content knowledge in the subject areas that they will be supervising. In addition, from the interviews of ECE level coordinators, it was identified that a formal meeting was not conducted for the SLs as the same group of staff has been selected every year. However, they were given documents necessary for the observations and the contact details of the STs who have been attached to them.

The interview with another IBC revealed that she had a situation where needed SLs were hired from outside the Faculty as the number of STs was too large that the existing SLs in the Faculty found it difficult to manage supervising in conjunction with their routine teaching loads. In this case, an initial formal meeting was conducted for all the SLs including those from outside the Faculty with the Dean of the Faculty and the IBC. The purpose of this meeting was to provide SLs with the contact details of the STs attached to them and to inform them about observation and assessment procedures.

Perceptions about monitoring. Analysis of the interviews showed that all the three coordinators believed that they had established mechanisms to monitor STs, but not for SLs and CTs. Two (of three) noted that they had arranged weekly meetings for the STs to get feedback and to help resolve any issues faced in the placement schools. In response to the question “How do they monitor SLs and CTs work?”, one IBC said that after the initial meeting with the SLs, she directly deals with the STs: “We normally don’t check their work, but if STs raise any issues like delaying observations by SLs, then only we attend to them” (TC2).

Perceptions of SLs. Similar to coordinators interview, SL interviews were also mainly focused to elicit information regarding their perceptions about (1) the role; (2) issues; and, (3) recommendations. The findings from the analysis of the interviews are presented below starting with their perceptions of the role, first.

Perceptions about their role. A total of three SLs remarked that they had three significant roles in supervising a ST: namely, (1) to observe the required number of lessons according to the practicum unit outline, given by the Faculty/college; (2) to provide written feedback to the STs and; (3) to handover the observation records to the IBC at the respective TEIs. SLs noted that they were required to observe three lessons per ST– one non-assessed and two assessed lessons. Further analysis of the interviews revealed that STs pass or fail on practicum depends not only on their SLs’ feedback reports but also CTs’ reports. In this regard, a SL at the secondary level pointed out that:

The final decision of pass or fail, in principle, was made by the Academic Review Committee (ARC) at the TEI based on the written feedback from SLs and CTs, but flexibility is given to

HoDs to make the decision in cases where both SLs and CTs agreed about the performance of the STs, and cases which they disagree were taken to ARC for re-evaluation. (TC2)

This excerpt implies that the final decision of STs' pass or fail, particularly in cases of disagreement, is made by the ARC.

On the same note, another SL from ECE level remarked that STs' pass or fail is decided on the aggregate marks from SLs reports and the marks obtained from the practicum portfolio, which consisted of CTs feedback reports and STs reflective journal. In yet another variation, a SL explained that STs' pass or fail is decided based on the aggregate marks from the feedback reports submitted by SL and CT and marks obtained from submitted practicum report.

A SL further highlighted that they were informed of their roles and responsibilities and given the necessary documents at the first meeting held with the Dean of the Faculty and the IBCs at the TEIs. After that meeting, there was no formal contact with the coordinators at the TEIs. Another SL noted that after being appointed, TEIs expect them to contact the STs directly to check time-table changes and to arrange other requirements for the observations. This was evident from the researcher's observations of SLs. In one instance where the researcher shadowed an SL to study the SL's supervision process, she noted that the SL did not have any contact with the schools. It was the ST who escorted the SL to the class for observations. The SL sat at the back of the class and recorded his observation. In addition, both oral and written feedback were given to conclude the observation of this particular SL. It was further noted that the SL followed a compliment-criticism-suggestions (CCS) method in giving oral feedback. However, in the observation of another SL at the secondary level, it was noted that CCS method together with the reflection was used in giving feedback. The feedback process started with giving an opportunity for the ST to reflect on articulating what went well and what could have been done differently, and then the SL continued the feedback process according to the CCS method.

Major Issues Identified by Stakeholders

This section presents the findings with respect to the third research question: what are the main issues faced by the stakeholders? The responses given by the stakeholders (STs,

CTs, SLs, IBCs and SBCs) regarding the issues faced during the practicum were analysed. A number of themes relating to major issues they faced were identified. Table 4.8 presents the major themes identified by STs, CTs and coordinators at the schools across three levels: ECE, primary and secondary. Themes from each of the groups are discussed starting with STs first.

Table 4.8 *Issues Identified by STs, CTs and School Coordinators*

ECE		
Student teachers (n=25)	Cooperating teachers (n=2)	School-based coordinators (n=2)
Classroom management (9)	Lack of commitment from STs (2)	Lack of coordination and cooperation (1)
Lack of support (7)	Lack of cooperation from CTs (1)	Lack of pre-practicum preparation (2)
Assessment issues (2)	Lack of pre-practicum preparation (1)	Issues with assessment (2) Issues with placement (2)
Primary		
Student teachers (n=81)	Cooperating teachers (n=2)	School-based coordinators (n=2)
Lack of support (40)	Lack of commitment from STs (2)	Lack of coordination and cooperation (2)
Classroom management (33)	Lack of pre-practicum preparation (1)	Lack of pre-practicum preparation (2)
Lack of coordination (6)	Content issues	Issues with placement (2)
Assessment issues (4)		Lack of monitoring Lack of relevant policy
Secondary		
Student teachers (n=211)	Cooperating teachers (n=7)	School-based coordinators (n=6)
Lack of support (136)	Lack of pre-practicum preparation (4)	Lack of coordination and cooperation (5)
Classroom management (106)	Content issues (3)	Lack of pre-practicum preparation (5)
Issues with observation (11)	Classroom management issues (5)	Classroom management issues (2)
Issues with duration of TP (8)		Issues with placement
Issues with timing of TP (8)		Lack of monitoring Content issues Assessment issues (6) Lack of relevant policy

Note 1: Themes presented in ST column are derived from the responses they provided to the question given in STQ regarding the main issues faced during the practicum. However, in the case of CTs and SBCs, themes were derived from their interviews.

Note 2: The number of participants associated with each of the theme is shown in brackets.

Issues identified by STs. According to Table 4.8, two prominent themes of classroom management problems and lack of support were identified by STs across the three levels: ECE, primary and secondary. These themes are detailed below starting with classroom management.

Classroom management problems. Classroom management is one of the overarching themes from the issues identified by STs in ECE, primary and secondary. STs from all three levels have identified two main issues with respect to this theme: (1) difficulties in controlling the class; and (2) difficulty in paying individual attention to pupils in general and to the pupils with behavioural problem in particular. One ST noted that "some of the pupils don't want to learn anything and they disturb the whole class" (S218, Secondary). Another STs from the same level – secondary – added to this point noting that "pupils deliberately misbehave in the class when SL comes for the assessed observations" (S210, Secondary). Regarding the difficulties in paying attention to individuals in the class, one ST justified it highlighting that "too many pupils in the class really made it tough to control them" (K3, ECE). Additionally, the less prominent issues identified include difficulty in managing instructional timing and difficulties in adapting to the school environment.

Lack of support. As has been said earlier, the lack of support is one of the main issues identified by the STs across all three levels. In addition, STs from each level identified different areas with which they had difficulties. STs from primary and secondary had identified issues related to CTs, school management, and TEIs, whereas, STs from pre-school level identified issues related to only school management.

Regarding the lack of support from CTs, STs from primary and secondary level had noted that they were not given opportunities to apply in the practice setting many of the theories they have had learnt in theory classes in college/university. One ST from the secondary level noted that "more emphasis was given on completing the syllabus" (S119, Secondary). Another ST from primary pointed out that she had "no freedom to practice many teaching strategies learnt from the college" (P30, Primary). Furthermore, STs from the secondary level noted that one of the major challenges faced in teaching was the lack of content knowledge. One ST elaborated on this point: "we had been away from O/L

[GCE Ordinary Level syllabus] syllabus for many years, so the content is really a challenge" (S295, Secondary). In this sense the ST had been hoping to get support from the CT in revising the appropriate content knowledge. Unfortunately, the CT in this instance, and more generally as reported by the STs, did not provide this sort of help.

STs across the three levels have identified several other issues related to the lack of support specifically about the school administration. The main issues identified were related to the lack of resources. STs noted that the most of the schools did not provide materials required for teaching, for example teaching aids. In addition, they pointed out that lack of photocopying and printing services were major issues they faced in schools during the practicum. Further, most of the STs from three levels also had identified the issue of the lack of space. This was the case that the researcher noted in her visits to the placement schools. She observed that in most of the placement schools, STs barely had a reasonable working space, which was in almost all the cases, not within the staffroom. Furthermore, STs from primary and secondary pointed out that they found it difficult to complete the required number of teaching hours due to other activities such as parent teacher meetings, unit tests and exams which they attributed to the overall school management and timetabling.

Regarding the lack of support from the TEI, STs from ECE level did not identify any issues, but STs from primary and secondary level pointed out a few issues. STs from primary level noted two main issues: lack of financial assistance and lack of preparation for the practicum. Similarly, STs from secondary also pointed out that the respective TEIs had not given enough information to them and their CTs regarding the practicum. In other words, they and their CTs were not well prepared for the practicum. In addition, they pointed out that the lack of monitoring from TEIs (i.e., guidance and support from SLs) as one of the concerns they had.

The less prominent issues identified include concerns related to the structure and organization of the practicum. A few number of STs from the secondary level pointed out that the timing of the practicum was inappropriate and the duration of the practicum was not adequate. Likewise, STs from all the three levels raised concerns regarding the assessment of the practicum.

Issues Identified by the CTs. According to Table 4.8, CTs at the ECE and primary level identified two prominent themes of lack of commitment from STs and lack of pre-practicum preparation. CTs at the secondary level identified two prominent themes of classroom management and content issues. There was some overlap between themes across all levels. These themes are expanded upon below using illustrative quotes from CTs.

Lack of commitment from STs. All of the four CTs who were interviewed from both ECE and primary made reference to the issue of lack of commitment from STs. On elaborating this point one CT from ECE pointed out that:

These STs very frequently get absent to the school. Even some STs do come late to school. I had seen some STs playing mobile phones in the class without giving much attention to the class activities. Similarly, one day they might request to arrange a teaching session for the following day, and the following day they might come and say that they would not be able to take class as they couldn't prepare for the lesson. Additionally, I had met a few STs who quitted the course, because they couldn't cope with the practicum. (KT11, ECE)

Lack of pre-practicum preparation. Six (of 11) CTs made reference to the issue of a lack of pre-practicum preparation from the respective TEIs. On this point one CT from primary level noted that:

TEIs needed to make the STs more prepared for the practicum. Some STs, especially STs from institution B1, needed lots of help to prepare a good lesson plan. They were not well equipped with various teaching strategies. They knew the content well, but lacked the teaching skills. (PTI3, Primary)

Additionally, another CT stressed the importance of preparing all the stakeholders for the practicum. She pointed out that "TEIs could have conducted training sessions for all CTs regarding how to guide STs, so that we would be better able to guide them" (STI7, Secondary).

Classroom management issues. The theme of classroom management was identified by CTs at the secondary level. Five (of six) CTs interviewed from secondary level made reference to this issue. On this point one CT noted that "I had faced a situation where the ST had failed to solve a problem created by the pupil of that class and I had to intervene and helped her to resolve it" (STI5, Secondary).

Lack of content knowledge. CTs from primary and secondary pointed out challenges associated with content issues. Three (of seven) CTs interviewed from secondary noted that the STs lacked the requisite content knowledge. One CT from primary explained that the "current STs who come for the practicum didn't seem to have good content knowledge" (STI6, Secondary). Another CT from secondary further elaborated that: "I don't know whether the STs were not prepared or they were not taught the content at the college, what I can see from their teaching is that their content knowledge is not adequate" (STI8, Secondary).

Issues identified by SBCs. All SBCs interviewed across the three levels (ECE, primary and secondary) identified three main areas of concern: lack of coordination and cooperation; lack of preparation; and, lack of quality STs. These areas are dealt with in turn.

Lack of coordination and cooperation. Eight (of 10) SBCs indicated that there exists a communication gap between the TEIs, placement schools and SLs. SBCs at the primary and secondary level noted that the communication doesn't happen through the proper channels. On this point, a SBC who dealt with primary level STs noted:

Sometimes the request comes through Ministry of Education. When it [a request] comes through that channel we cannot do anything. We are forced to arrange placements. Consequently, some teachers need to guide 3 or 4 STs throughout the year, which creates tension among teachers.
(PC1, primary)

Articulated here is the problem of arranging placements due to the lack of coordination and cooperation between the TEIs and the placement schools. This issue could be resolved if "the relevant authorities such as TEIs, MoE and placement schools sit together to work out a practicum schedule. Having such a practicum schedule would minimize the impact of school activities on the practicum" (PC2, primary and secondary).

A further communication gap between the TEI and the placement school was identified by all the participants who remarked that there was a lack of a visible presence and substantive engagement by TEIs. "With the busy schedule they [IBCs] find it difficult to meet us with the STs at the very 'first' day of the TP. They will just contact us to inform the total number of STs coming for the TP" (KC2, ECE). Four participants

(one from the primary and three from the secondary level) noted that though some public TEIs conduct initial meetings at the school, these were not effective. "They [TEI coordinators] just distribute the files to CTs during the initial meeting and expect the CTs to read the documents. No effort is put to communicate what the CTs are expected of" (PC1, primary). One Deputy Principal who coordinated the practicum noted that "there is a feeling of disconnectedness between schools and TEI, so, I suggest TEI, to arrange regular meetings with the school coordinators, so that we can give feedback to improve the shortcomings" (SC2, Secondary). On elaborating this point, another participant noted that:

Actually, I want to highlight that the universities and colleges need to expand the role of their practicum coordinators. They need to visit the schools to meet STs and monitor the TP. It is not easy to clarify anything regarding the practicum through the current setup. (SC1, Secondary)

The second highlighted challenge is between the placement schools and SLs. Three participants (of 10) emphasized the need for better connections among these stakeholders. As for the current practices, the triad (TEI, SLs, and STs) is an important relationship within the practicum contexts but no proper connection was established between the placement schools and SLs. Consequently, this lack of coordination hinders the supervision process:

Sometimes when they come for observations, there might be a school test and they can't observe the lesson and has to reschedule it, and very often they can't come on the set dates. So, the supervision process by SLs is not very effective. It seems that this area is very weak. (SC1, Secondary)

The SBCs suggested that the SLs should establish a stronger relationship with STs and CTs within the triad (SLs, CTs and coordinators) for two reasons. First, as "the CTs play a vital role in guiding STs; SLs must share the feedback to the CTs, which would enable them to help STs to improve their performance" (SC1, secondary). Second, having a good connection with the school based coordinators would help the SLs to carry out the supervision process without too much interference from other school activities.

Regarding the cooperation, eight (of 10) SBCs pointed out the unwillingness of CTs to handover the classes to STs. They identified that this unwillingness was related to two major issues: timing of the practicum and the lack trust in the STs. On this note,

one participant (Deputy Principal of a Secondary school) remarked that "nearing of school examinations made them [CTs] reluctant to handover the class to a ST, that is because we made them accountable for their pupils' performance in unit tests and exams" (SC2, Secondary). What the participant articulated herein is the fact that the timing of the practicum may significantly impact the opportunities for STs to practice teaching.

SBCs noted that the trust issue originates from CTs' past experience with STs. For example, one participant noted that "actually, what happens is when they [CTs] had experienced in re-teaching what STs had taught, due to their ineffective content delivery; then they find it difficult to trust new ST and are not willing to have a new ST" (SC1, secondary). Three (of 10) participants noted that, to gain CTs trust, the TEIs need to strengthen pre-practicum processes to make sure that STs are well prepared for the practicum, a point that is taken up in the next section.

Lack of pre-practicum preparations. Nine (of 10) SBCs identified insufficient preparation by STs and TEIs for the practicum. One saw that the poor preparation of STs for the practicum as a newly emerging issue:

When I did my teaching course, I had to take a lot of peer teaching sessions before the TP begins, but now we see that the STs are not very prepared to take a class, a lot of assistance is required from the CTs for them to get through the practicum. But most of the time CTs can't give enough time as they are overloaded with the routine work. (SC1, Secondary)

Articulated here is the changing pattern of pre-practicum preparation in TEIs during recent years and its consequences. On illuminating the lack of preparation by TEIs, one participant noted that "when they come for TP, they don't have self-confidence in teaching and we see them trembling when we ask them to get into the class" (KC2, ECE). Coordinators from the ECE level suggested that the TEIs at least make the STs aware of the ECE curriculum and various teaching strategies.

All SBCs (ECE, primary and secondary) agreed upon the point that some of the STs lacked the required lesson preparation and didn't fully appreciate the importance of this preparation for the practicum. For example, one SBC at the secondary level stated that:

Most of the current STs take the practicum as an easy task, but during our time, we prepare everything in advance. These days, I see some STs taking the lesson without approving the lesson plan from the CT, but in our case it's something that we never even think of. (PC2, primary and secondary)

Another SBC made similar comments that reflect the lack of preparedness of STs. She stated that:

In primary level classrooms, STs very often schedule teaching session in consultation with the CTs, and the following day they request to cancel it because they were not able to prepare for the lesson. This is a burden for CTs, because even they were also not prepared for the lesson, expecting that the STs would take the lesson. (PC1, Primary)

Expanding upon this point, another participant from the ECE level remarked that "we do observe STs sitting in the class playing with the mobile phone. In many such instances, we have advised them to put their maximum effort to engage and be active in the class with the CTs (KC1, ECE).

Additionally, seven (of 10) participants identified that some STs had a number of language issues. One participant noted that "some batches were very competent enough; but generally speaking, the quality of the current STs is low compared to the earlier batches, especially, low in language competencies" (PC2, Primary). On this point, another participant remarked that "some STs do blunt language mistakes, grammatical mistakes, which even pupils in the primary level class could recognize" (SC1, secondary).

SBCs noted that this language issue is much more serious among ECE level teachers. SBCs from the ECE level seemed more concerned about correct language usage. For example, one remarked that:

Sometimes we find that some STs are not competent enough, especially in English language. They make grammatical and spelling mistakes and wrong pronunciation like "gal" for "girl." This age group [3-7 years] is very critical; those small kids emulate the language usage from their teachers. So, the STs in this level [ECE] should be highly competent and must be very careful with the language usage. (KC1, ECE)

Articulated here is the importance of the correct language usage and the dire need for quality preparation prior to the practicum for STs. Regarding the quality of STs, another participant highlighted that:

Though the STs' O-level result is very good [A* in all subjects], most of them lack good communication skills, so it is important for the TEIs to consider their communication skills when selecting candidates to a field such as teaching. (PC1, Primary)

On this point, nine (of 10) SBCs hypothesized that strengthening the entry criteria by screening the candidates through an interview would definitely improve the quality of the STs. For example, one participant noted that "if they [TEIs] select competent candidates, then definitely the quality of the graduates will be high" (KC1, ECE). On explaining the impact of underperforming graduates from various TEIs, another participant remarked:

Incapable and incompetent teachers are being graduated from TEIs every year. Appointing such graduates to school system as qualified teachers has become a burden to the school system. Because, they can't manage the classes and they can't deliver the content well. But once they were being appointed in, it is very difficult for the management to remove them from the system to send them back. 'It is like tasting a bitter medicine' the system has to manage them no matter what. (SC1, secondary)

To overcome the issues of language, a principal who has worked in the sector for more than 30 years suggested that the "TEIs to include both Dhivehi and English language as a compulsory subject in all the teacher training programs." (KC1, ECE) At the current time, these languages related modules are included only in language related programs such as English language teaching and Dhivehi language teaching programs.

Other key issues identified by the coordinators include: issues with arranging placements, assessment, and classroom management. These issues are detailed below.

Issues with arranging placements. All SBCs highlighted that the TEIs arrange placements through the school coordinators. And, in instances where the schools cannot cater for the needs of the TEIs, they send the requisition through the MoE, which creates dissatisfaction among SBC. Among these, one participant noted that this dissatisfaction stems from the lack of proper communication between TEIs and the placement schools. On this point one noted that "sometimes the request comes through MoE and we can't do

anything, we are forced to provide placements" (PC1, primary). Another participant illuminated this point by noting that "it is difficult for us not to accept when the MoE forces us to provide placements to TEIs. TEIs could have at least sought clarity from us as to why we couldn't cater to them, before they go that extent (that is, contacting the MoE directly to secure school placements)" (PC2, primary and secondary). Nine (of 10) coordinators remarked that it is very difficult to provide placements mainly because of two reasons. First, "it comes in a row from all the TEIs, so we can't accommodate all of them on the same time" (PC2, primary and secondary). Second, "most of the time it coincides with school exams, so the CTs don't feel happy to have a training teacher in their class" (SC1, secondary). Nine (of ten) SBCs suggested that the TEI conduct the practicum right after the mid-term break of the second term, to resolve the issues with the timing of the practicum.

Issues with assessment. Eight (of ten) SBCs noted that the current assessment procedures set for the practicum are not sufficient to undertake a 360-degree evaluation of the STs' performance. They noted that, according to the current assessment procedure, STs' performance is assessed based on two observations by SLs and CTs. On this note, one participant remarked that "STs' real performance cannot be evaluated by observing only two lessons" (SC1, secondary).

The other prominent issue that emerged within the supervision process in relation to assessment was the strong connection established between STs and CTs. One participant noted that

Sometimes the strong relationship established between ST and CT hinders the fair assessment of STs' performance. They [CTs] tend to pass STs, even when STs require lots of improvement from many areas in teaching, and, on the other hand, some CTs are very strict. It depends on the CTs. (SC2, secondary)

Another participant at the ECE level raised a similar concern that "observing a three-hour session only for 15-25 minutes would not help the SLs to evaluate the performance of STs" (KC1, ECE).

Eight (of 10) SBCs suggested increasing the number of observation by SLs to better evaluate the STs' standard. One participant from the pre-school level hypothesized

that "increasing the duration of the observation would enable SLs to see a better picture of STs' overall performance" (KC1, ECE). On this note another participant highlighted that:

Increasing the observations to a total of four (one per week) by both SLs and CLs would not only give them the opportunity to assess teaching skills, but also could enable them to assess the content knowledge, because in secondary teachers complete a topic per week. (SC2, secondary)

Issues with classroom management. Two (of 10) SBCs from the secondary level identified the issue of classroom management. They noted that it reflects the lack of ST preparation by the TEIs. "Actually some of the STs lack the required teaching skill, they can't control the classes" (SC1, secondary). Supporting this point, a Deputy Principal noted that "some STs do come to meet me regarding behavioural cases in the class. They don't know how to deal with those cases, and I don't think they were sufficiently prepared on that aspect. I have had several instances where I had to intervene to help them solve such behavioural cases" (SC2, secondary).

Issues Identified by SLs and IBCs. Five SLs were interviewed. Among these, three SLs played both the role of SL and the role of IBC. The analysis of these five interviews revealed several essential themes. Those themes are presented in Table 4.9, and the details are provided in the subsequent section.

Table 4.9 *Issues Identified by SLs and IBCs*

Single role: only SL (n=2)	Dual role: SL & Institutional– based Coordinators (n=3)
Lack of coordination (2)	Lack of cooperation (2)
Lack of commitment from STs (1)	Lack of commitment from STs (2)
Lack of relevant policy(1)	Unavailability of qualified CTs in small islands (1)
	Existence of theory practice gap

Note: The number of participants associated with each of the theme is shown in brackets.

Issues Identified by SLs. The three major themes identified are described as follows.

Lack of coordination. Three (of five) SLs remarked that the lack of coordination from the placement schools is one of the main issues that they had to face during the observation process. They pointed out that they lacked the support that they expected from the school management. Explicating this point, one SL noted that:

I found it really difficult to give feedback to the STs right after the lesson observation, because we hardly get a convenient space from the school. Many a times the attached CTs were not in touch, neither the coordinators. TEIs instructed us to contact with STs and those STs found it hard to make arrangements at the school to meet with the SLs. (SL1)

Additionally, SLs noted that they had to allow a certain minimum number of teaching days between the two assessed observations so that they could get a balanced view of the STs' progress over time. But, very often, due to the interruption of school activities they had to delay the observations until the last week of the practicum, which created dissatisfaction among STs because feedback on progress over time is not possible when all the evaluations occur in the final week of the practicum.

Lack of commitment from STs. Lack of commitment from STs is the second most prominent theme identified by the SLs. Three (of five) SLs noted that some of the STs were careless and were absent from work very frequently. One SL who worked with ECE level STs both as a coordinator and a SL noted that very often STs are absent from school and it has become a trend among them. On explicating the lack of commitment by ST, a SL remarked that:

Very often I observe that some STs run after the CTs to approve the lesson plans which they had to do before we go for the observation. Apart from that, some STs intentionally delay in informing SLs to the observation till the last week of the practicum which actually should take place starting from the third week of the practicum. (TC2)

Lack of relevant policy. One (of five) SL interviewed noted that "many issues that we face today with the practicum originated from the lack of policy on practicum." He further explained that:

The country has been training teachers for more than 30 years without any institutional or national level policies on practicum. To this date, I don't think any of the TEIs have separate departments to organize and implement the practicum events. As per the current practices, and based on my experience, the Dean or head of the institution appoint a staff to organizing and conducting of the practicum for each round. So, each time a different staff handles it, thus the differences in practices exist. In addition, different TEIs follow different assessment procedures and practicum models. This has become a disadvantage for the STs as all the STs have to join the same teaching force. (SL1)

Issues Identified by IBCs. The analysis of TEI coordinators' interviews revealed three prominent themes: lack of cooperation, lack of commitment from STs, and existence of theory practice gap. These themes are discussed in detail below.

Lack of cooperation. Two (of three) TEI coordinators noted that the main problem they faced was lack of cooperation from the schools in arranging practicum placements. One participant explicated that:

One of the major issues we had to face was the lack of cooperation from the schools. I felt that even if the schools have slots, they didn't provide us placements. I believe that they must cooperate with teacher training faculties. We always obtain consent from MoE to conduct practicum in schools. Even MoE requests them to cooperate with TEIs in conducting the practicum. But unfortunately, they didn't cooperate much, especially, the secondary schools. It was really difficult to arrange placements. With all the written communication, we used to get one or two slots. (TC2)

She further illuminated the issue:

The school-based coordinators said that their policy is not to assign a ST to a CT who had already been a CT in one semester, because it was hard for the teachers to guide STs every semester. Since they felt it was hard, we had changed our assessment and feedback forms. The current forms required them to just put a tick. In addition, we had brought lots of changes to accommodate schools' needs. But, this time also we had to beg them to arrange placements. But if we have a close friend in those schools as a principal or a coordinator, then it would be easy to arrange placements. I don't believe it should have been that way. Every time they repeat the same excuse saying that they had given placements to STs from other institutions. (TC2)

In addition, she highlighted that she had lots of problem in receiving practicum records from the placement schools. She stated that those practicum records of STs are meant to be sent to the TEIs by the SBCs within one week after the completion of the practicum. But, she noted that she rarely receives those records on time. Consequently, many times had to delay finalising practicum results.

On the other hand, another coordinator from ECE remarked that she didn't have many problems in arranging placements because most of the principals in ECE level are her close friends and old-classmates. She explained that "to arrange placements, a letter of request is sent to the respective school at the beginning of the academic year, and later

placements were arranged via telephone communications [with me]" (TC1). She further explained that the only problem faced was unavailability of qualified CTs. She noted that "it was difficult to get qualified CTs, especially from small island schools, and sometimes we have to change our assessments to peer observations" (TC1).

Lack of commitment from STs. All three coordinators pointed out that some of the STs didn't view practicum as an important event for them. One coordinator remarked that "some of the STs were not serious as they were expected to be" (TC2). "Most of them were not punctual and very frequently get absent to schools" (TC1). Another coordinator further explicated the issue:

They were instructed in the initial information session to attain certain professional standards throughout the practicum, but they failed to do so. I have seen them in classes without proper preparation. We had recommended them to have a detailed lesson plan approved by the CT, but when we go for supervision, we have seen them running after the CTs to get the lesson plan approved. (TC2)

Existence of theory practice gap. Two (of the five) SLs noted that in some placement schools, STs didn't get the opportunity to put the on-campus theory into classroom practice. In other words, they pointed out that there existed a theory practice gap because some STs had to follow the dictates of the CTs very closely without any opportunity for independence or autonomy. On elaborating this point one SL noted that:

In some schools STs have to use the pre-prepared lesson notes, test papers and teaching aids provided by the respective departments. In addition, they have to follow the same traditional teaching techniques. These strict guidelines established in some of the schools hindered the opportunity for the STs to experiment what they have studied at the Faculty/College. (TC3)

Recommendations from the Stakeholders

All the stakeholders were asked to suggest recommendations that would make the practicum more effective for future STs. This answers the fourth research question "What changes to the current practicum approaches are necessary to better prepare future teachers?" The analysis of the responses revealed several themes. These themes were categorised by levels and presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 *Recommendations from STs, CTs and SBC*

ECE		
Student teachers (n=25)	Cooperating teachers (n=29)	School-based Coordinators (n=2)
More support (10)	More support (24)	Better coordination & cooperation (2)
Better pre-practicum preparation (9)	Better pre-practicum preparation (3)	More commitment from STs (2)
	Better practicum structure (3)	Greater monitoring from TEIs (2)
		Better assessment criteria (2)
		Better pre-practicum preparation (1)
Primary		
Student teachers (n=81)	Cooperating teachers (n=54)	School-based Coordinators (n=2)
Better pre-practicum preparation (23)	Better pre-practicum preparation (21)	Better coordination & cooperation (2)
Better practicum structure (19)	Better practicum structure (13)	Better pre-practicum preparation (2)
Provide financial assistance (19)		Greater monitoring from TEIs (1)
Greater coordination and cooperation (17)		Formulate a policy on TP (1)
Better arrangements in placement (5)		Revise selection criteria (1)
Secondary		
Student teachers (n=211)	Cooperating teachers (n=101)	School-based Coordinators (n=6)
Greater coordination and cooperation (109)	Better practicum structure (45)	Better coordination & cooperation (6)
Better pre-practicum preparation (98)	Better pre-practicum preparation (29)	Greater monitoring from TEI (5)
Better practicum structure (46)	More support (16)	Better assessment criteria (3)
Better arrangements in placement (23)		Formulate a policy on TP (1)
Provide financial assistance (23)		Better pre-practicum preparation (4)

Note: The number in the brackets represent the total number of individuals who noted that particular item in their responses to an open-ended question given in the STQ and CTQ, and responses given to the interviews.

Table 4.10 provides themes emerged from each groups of the stakeholders separately. The details of the most overarching themes (i.e., themes that were most frequently repeated) are discussed below starting from STs.

Recommendations from STs. Table 4.10 shows that an overarching theme of better pre-practicum preparation and greater cooperation and coordination are common among STs in all three levels: ECE, primary and secondary. The following discussion illustrates these themes.

Better pre-practicum preparation. The analysis of responses showed that STs from each of the three levels have identified different dimensions of pre-practicum preparation as being inadequate. Nine (of 25) STs from ECE noted that the TEIs need to prepare them in handling classroom management issues. Additionally, they noted that they wanted to learn more about various aspects of child development.

Twenty-three (of 81) STs from primary recommended that the respective faculties should conduct more peer teaching sessions and include constructive feedback as well as more workshops on lesson planning. Further, they remarked that these sessions should be held for all STs irrespective of the practicum round they belonged to. They pointed out that as per the current practices, STs on their first practicum round did not have any such preparation.

Ninety-eight (of 211) STs from secondary suggested that it is essential to conduct coordination meetings with all STs prior to the commencement of the practicum. They also noted that it is equally important to provide necessary information to CTs. In addition, STs recommended that, if they are to be sent to islands, send them a few days before the practicum commences so that they can become accustomed to the new setting.

Greater coordination and cooperation. This theme is common across all the three levels. Ten (of 25) STs from ECE noted that they required more professional support from the placement schools. They also recommended that placement schools should treat them as beginning teachers and not just ‘a student’ from a post-secondary institution.

Similarly, seventeen (of 81) STs from primary and 109 (of 211) STs from secondary levels pointed out that they also needed more support from CTs, placement schools, and the respective teacher education institutions. These STs suggested that CTs should have better arrangements to allow access to relevant resources (for example lesson

notes, worksheets, etc.). In addition, they pointed out that they need more support and guidance from CTs, especially in dealing with behavioural issues and classroom management problems. They also recommended that the CTs provide greater freedom for them to experiment with the theories that they have learnt from their on-campus courses. On this point one ST from secondary noted that “CTs need to give freedom to ST to apply their knowledge and they should not force them to follow particular method” (S109, secondary). STs further noted that it is important for them to receive written feedback in a more positive way with a variety of helpful suggestions to address potential or apparent weaknesses.

Apart from that, STs suggested that placement schools should provide necessary resources like printing, photocopying and internet facilities. Many of them also recommended that placement schools should ensure that the CTs fulfil their role according to the TEIs and schools’ expectations. Furthermore, they recommended CTs, SLs and course coordinators from the respective teacher education institutions establish a strong connection within the triad through clear communication. Likewise, they also recommended that the TEIs establish an improved and stronger connection between the placement schools and the institutions in order to make the practicum a more productive experience for the STs.

Better practicum structure. This theme is common among STs in both primary and secondary. Nineteen (of 81) STs from primary and 46 (of 211) STs recommended that it is important to revisit and revise the current practicum structure. They recommended that the TEIs make amendments to various dimensions of the practicum, including changes to the duration, timing, observation schedule and assessment practices. Many STs (n=19) who took a long practicum (more than four weeks) suggested that the TEIs split the practicum into two or three practicum rounds. They also recommended that these practicum rounds could be conducted at the beginning of the semester, or specifically at the beginning of the first semester to allow STs to see how a classroom is set up at the beginning of the year and how it was re-organized at the beginning of each semester.

Regarding the observations, STs pointed out that it was difficult to carry out observations, team teaching and independent teaching all at once, thus they noted that a change in the observation pattern is required. In addition, they recommended an increase in the number of observations by the SLs, and also suggested that SLs observe the first practicum similar to that of other practicum rounds. On this point one ST suggested that “the TEI should have given week–one to observe, week–two to teach, week–three non–assess, week–four assess and week–five if any other observations required” (S311, Secondary). Further, STs suggested that it would be good to include more assessments that may be scheduled throughout the practicum, rather than having only one or two assessments in the last week of the practicum.

Provide financial assistance. This theme is also common across the three levels. Four (of 25) STs from ECE, 9 (of 81) STs from primary and 42 (of 211) STs from secondary recommended that the TEIs either provide pocket money or provide printing services and other stationary items required to make teaching aids for classroom instruction.

Recommendations from CTs. Table 4.10 shows that the prominent themes of better pre-practicum preparation, better practicum structure and better coordination are common for all CTs across the three levels. These themes are discussed below.

Better pre-practicum preparation. Most CTs across the three levels highlighted pre-practicum preparation as one of the important areas to be revisited to improve the practicum. CTs from ECE who highlighted this theme remarked that STs should be well trained to apply a range of teaching methodologies. On this point one CT pointed out that “the practicum would be more effective for the ST if they were prepared well before they were being sent for the practicum, especially on how to teach rather than on what to teach” (KT28, ECE). Apart from that they noted that more practice should be given to STs in areas such as classroom management and subject specific content knowledge before they were placed in the placement schools.

Unlike CTs from ECE, 21 (of 54) CTs from primary and 29 (of 122) secondary noted that both STs and TEIs need to take certain measures to make the practicum more

successful. Measures include conducting more peer teaching sessions for the STs prior to the practicum; more training on how to deal with classroom management problems; and more sessions on application of a variety of teaching strategies. Explicating this point one CT noted that “TEIs need to prepare the ST for the practicum by teaching them how to deal with misbehaviours, and also train them to use different teaching activities” (PT38, Primary). Further, CTs from secondary recommended that the TEIs ensure that the STs have adequate content knowledge in their subject area speciality. On elaborating this point, CTs pointed out that it is imperative to test the content knowledge of the STs before they start the practicum. In other words, make a minimum content knowledge requirement for opted teaching subjects as a pre-requisite for the practicum. On this note one CT expressed her view: “before sending STs for the practicum, the respective authorities should conduct classes for ST on subject knowledge and those who are good at subject content knowledge should be given the chance to do the practicum” (ST88, Secondary).

Better practicum structure. As stated earlier, this theme is common among CTs across three levels. Three (of 29) CTs from ECE, 13 (of 54) CTs from primary and 45 (of 122) CTs from secondary recommended a revision of the current practicum structure. They suggested that the TEIs change the timing, length, assessment, and observation schedules of the practicum.

Regarding the timing of the practicum, some CTs recommended that the TEIs check the school academic calendar to decide an appropriate time for them to have STs. Reflecting on this point, one CT remarked that “it is better to send STs to the schools only at the beginning of the year, since it was difficult for the pupils to adjust with different teachers” (STI7, secondary). Similarly, they also recommended that the respective TEIs increase the duration of the practicum. They have pointed out that “rather than providing three small sessions of practicum, it would be more effective if those sessions were merged into one longer practicum” (ST189, secondary). Regarding the assessment of the practicum they noted that the current assessment procedures are not adequate to evaluate the performance of the STs teaching. As per the current practices, they noted that the SLs observe two lessons for the assessment, which CTs believed was insufficient in number to accurately and fairly assess the STs. Reflecting on this point,

another CT noted that the “supervising lecturers can observe more classes and give feedback, because they are more experienced” (ST 95, Secondary). They also pointed out that it is important for the TEI to arrange SLs for the STs for the practicum round one, similar to other practicum rounds. Additionally, they noted that the number of days allocated for the STs to observe their CTs teaching is not sufficient, especially since STs from the first practicum round need more time for the observation phase. Therefore, they recommended TEIs increase the observation period for all STs, regardless of the practicum round.

Greater coordination and cooperation. This theme is common among CTs from both primary and secondary. Twenty-four (of 29) CTs from primary and 16 (of 54) CTs from secondary noted that more support from TEIs and placement schools is required to make the practicum more successful for future STs. They recommended the TEIs to provide more professional support to the CTs. On this note, one CT suggested that “it would be fruitful if the coordinators from TEIs meet the selected CTs and conduct a small workshop to prepare us so that we can be more prepared and aware of the areas we should focus more on” (KT6, ECE). Further, they recommended that the TEIs establish a better monitoring mechanism to check whether the practicum went as planned. On this point, one noted that “it would have been more effective if the concerned institutions monitor STs on a regular basis. Up to third week, I have not personally seen their mentor” (ST93, Secondary)

Additionally, CTs suggested that the placement schools provide more opportunities for the STs to interact with other senior teachers and administrative staff. Especially, CTs from ECE level noted that it is important for the STs to get many more opportunities to work with experienced teachers and to become socialized to the teaching profession. Furthermore, they requested that the schools provide more resources such as materials for teaching aids, printing and photocopying. Similarly, they pointed out that greater support for the STs in planning and conducting extra-curricular activities is required.

Recommendations from SBCs. Table 4.10 shows that the prominent themes of better coordination and cooperation, greater monitoring from TEIs, better pre-practicum preparation are common among the school coordinators across all three levels.

Better coordination and cooperation. The school-based coordinators interviewed across all the three levels noted that improved connections among the stakeholders is important to make the practicum more successful for future student teachers. They have identified two essential links that need to be strengthened in order to address many of the existing issues. Those include connection between placement schools and TEIs and between TEIs and MoE/DHE.

Regarding the link between TEIs and MoE, SBCs pointed out that the existing placement issues could be resolved if all the TEIs work with MoE to formulate a practicum schedule. For example, they remarked that the existing placement issue arises mainly because of the timing of the practicum and a large number of STs from various institutions across the country having practicum at the same times of the year. So, to address such issues, they suggested that the TEIs coordinate with either MoE or DHE to set a practicum schedule convenient for the schools that allows for a spread of STs across the school year, rather than all at one time. Reflecting on this point one SBC noted that “all the TEIs may discuss and work out a practicum schedule in such a way that different levels of the programs have practicum at different timings of the year” (PC1, primary). In addition, they remarked that arranging a payment for CTs would enhance their willingness to supervise STs. Further, they noted that for the successful implementation of practicum events, the placement schools could establish a practicum department to work with TEIs in organising and managing the practicum. On this point, one SBC noted that “the schools may have separate units/departments with written policies to manage the practicum” (SC1, secondary). On illuminating this point, another school coordinator who dealt with primary level STs noted that:

Placement schools could have policy on conducting and managing practicum. Having such a policy would be beneficial to both TEIs and placement schools. For example, very recently I had to face a case where a group STs failed to complete the required number of teaching hours during the practicum due to their carelessness. After the practicum, I received a call from their TEI requesting to give an extension to those STs, which was not very easy for the school. Cases like

this could be handled well if there were policies formulated regarding practicum. In addition, if there were staff appointed at the beginning of the year to manage the practicum, the staff would get time to plan practicum activities in advance. (PC1, primary)

In addition, SBCs noted that greater cooperation and clear communication from TEIs is necessary to minimize the dissatisfaction created among placement schools regarding the provision of placements. For example, one noted that “the TEIs could have at least checked with the schools why they refused to provide placements before referring the issue to the MoE to direct the schools to accept the placements” (PC2, primary and secondary).

Further, coordinators from all three levels noted that the respective TEIs should establish a better mechanism to monitor STs’ progress during the practicum. On this point, one SBC noted that “it is very important to monitor STs while they are in the field, especially, STs who come for two to three months long practicum, they need to be monitored well” (PC1, primary). Illuminating further on this point, another coordinator explained that:

I have a feeling that the TEIs do not have much role in monitoring STs after they were being placed in the field. Instead, they, the coordinators from the schools and TEIs should have regular meetings to check the progress of the practicum. They should check whether the STs are given enough support to attain the purpose or objectives of the practicum. At the same time, they should encourage and ensure that STs not only involve classroom teaching but they take part in all co-curricular activities. (SC2, secondary)

Better pre-practicum preparation. All the school coordinators interviewed requested that TEIs do a better job of preparing STs for the practicum. Two coordinators from ECE and primary level noted that it is very important to make the STs more aware of the importance of the practicum. In relation to this point, one coordinator from ECE level noted that:

Many of the CTs used to tell me that the STs were not very serious with the practicum, and some STs were not at all prepared to take the lessons. In addition, I also have noticed that some of the STs were not very qualified. I think this may be an important point to all the TEIs. Most of the CTs complained that some STs failed to put an effort to improve even if they were instructed. These STs must know how important it is for a teacher to be well prepared, especially when

teaching small kids. So, it is important to the TEIs to select interested and potential candidates. (KC1, ECE)

In addition, SBCs noted that the TEIs must prepare all STs to deal with classroom management problems. For example, one noted that “some STs requested to change the class as they found it difficult to manage. I did help them to change the classes, but, I believe that they should be trained to survive even with the most difficult classes” (SC2, secondary). Further, coordinators from ECE and secondary noted that STs must have good content knowledge in their teaching subjects. Reflecting on this point one noted that:

It is very important for the TEIs to make the STs more aware of the curriculum, and also teach them to use a variety of teaching strategies. In addition, TEIs need to help the STs to develop their self-confidence, and also STs must be very well prepared to answer any questions raised by the pupils in the class. (KC1, ECE)

Another coordinator from the secondary level further added that:

If they are well prepared and have good content knowledge, then the CTs wouldn't be reluctant to accept them. Many times CTs have to re-teach the content that the STs taught, which created lots of tension among CTs. So, this issue will definitely be solved if the STs are well equipped with adequate content knowledge. (SC1, secondary)

Better assessment criteria. Of the all coordinators in this study, coordinators from two levels (ECE and secondary) provided suggestions to improve the current assessment criteria. The coordinators from secondary, in particular, recommended that TEIs should include a variety of learning activities other than classroom teaching in the assessment. On this point one articulated:

Current STs mainly focus on only classroom teaching as if it's the only component to be assessed. Instead, I believe that it is important to include other areas such as taking remedial classes, marking books, involvement in parent teacher meeting and participation in co-curricular activities such as activities scheduled by the various associations in the school. I believe that integrating these components in the assessment would enable them to experience the teaching profession better. (SC2, secondary)

Similarly, coordinators from the ECE level also noted that a major revision in current assessment procedures is required to improve the quality of overall supervision of STs. On that note one explicated that:

Unlike the STs in other levels, STs in ECE level spend the whole session in one classroom, and observing only an hour from a long session, towards the end of the practicum would not help the SLs to make a realistic decision of their performance. So, I recommend the TEIs to increase the duration of this observation to better understand the standard of the STs. (KC1, ECE)

Another coordinator from the secondary added:

Rather than observing only two lessons, it would be better to observe at least one lesson per week, that adds up to total four. In secondary level, usually we cover one topic in each week. Therefore, scheduling one observation per week would enable the SLs not only assess the teaching skill but also assess the content knowledge too. Likewise, it is better if CTs also observe one assessed lesson per week. (SC1, Secondary).

Recommendations from SLs and IBCs. As stated earlier, three participants from three different TEIs who played a dual role as practicum coordinators and SL were interviewed to find out their perceptions on addressing the main issues they faced in the current practices of the practicum. In addition, two SLs were also interviewed. Themes emerged from the analysis of the interview are presented in Table 4.11, and are illustrated below.

Table 4.11 *Recommendations from SLs and IBC*

Single role: only SL (n=2)	Dual role: SL & Institutional– based Coordinators (n=3)
Make stakeholders more aware of the importance of practicum (2)	TEIs need to build own schools for the practicum (2)
Formulate a national level policy on practicum (1)	Better pre-practicum preparation from STs, Schools and TEIs (2)
Establish practicum departments/units both in schools and in TEI (2)	Better assessment criteria (1)

Note: The number of participants associated with each of the theme is shown in brackets.

Recommendations from SLs. Table 4.11 shows that the prominent themes of formulating national level policy; establishing practicum departments; and conducting awareness programs are common among those SLs. The themes are discussed below.

All the supervising lecturers interviewed pointed out the necessity of formulating a national level policy on practicum. They pointed out that having a policy would resolve many of the existing issues such as the decreasing performance of the graduates which can arise from different institutions developing their own individual policies without

knowledge of a broader national agenda for teacher education. On elaborating the importance of having a policy on practicum, one SL explicated that:

The country has been training teachers for more than 30 years, but there has not yet been a national level policy or guideline on practicum. Until recently, the country had only one teacher education institution. However, with the expansion of higher education in the country, the number of teacher education institutions has increased exponentially. But I think neither NIE nor MoE had realized the importance of having a mechanism or policy on the conduct of practicum. As a result, every institution has a different practicum structure and guidelines to conduct practicum. These differences have significant impact on the quality of the graduates. Therefore, I believe that the relevant authorities from the government shall have a written guideline or policy on proper conduct of practicum. (SL1)

Further, SLs noted that it is important to establish a practicum unit or a department at the TEIs and in placement schools. They remarked that they found it difficult to complete observation requirements due to the lack of proper practicum mechanisms in the schools. For example, participating SLs pointed out that the lack of contact at the placement schools made them face several challenges such as locating the classrooms and setting a convenient place for a post-conference meeting with the STs. In addition, they noted that for the systematic conduct of the practicum, TEIs also must have well established practicum departments with clear guidelines and procedures on the conduct of practicum. These departments could also operate as the main point of liaison between schools and TEIs (as opposed to the current arrangement where these communications are TEI-department dependent).

In addition, SLs noted that it is essential to conduct awareness programs for all the stakeholders including school principals and other relevant non-academic staff regarding the importance of the practicum. They highlighted that all stakeholders and the relevant authorities must be clear on their roles and responsibilities and must work hand in hand to make the practicum a successful experience for STs, whilst acknowledging that not all STs can achieve a passing grade at the end of the practicum.

Recommendations from IBCs. Table 4.10 shows that the prominent themes common among the institutional-based coordinators are: establish placement schools for STs; ensure better pre–practicum preparation for the STs, and develop better assessment criteria for the practicum. The themes are discussed in the following section.

Two (of three) coordinators from TEIs highly recommended to begin building their own placement schools to overcome one of the main problem – sufficient placements, or lack thereof. They noted that they also understand the challenges that the placement schools face in providing placements. So, the best option for the TEIs is to build their own schools (i.e., laboratory schools). On explaining the difficulties in arranging placements, one coordinator who deals with ECE level STs noted:

Presently, there have been a growing number of pre-schools with very limited resources and spaces. These schools find it difficult to cater for the requirements of the STs. Catering to STs becomes a challenge to even the most well established pre-schools, as they have a limited number of qualified teachers. Even those few seem to be too busy adapting to the new curriculum. Therefore, the best option for us as TEIs is to build our own placement schools. (TC1)

Another coordinator who deals with over 400 STs in each practicum round added:

My first recommendation is to build our own placement school. Why can't we do that? We are a teaching Faculty. We have experts in almost all the subject areas at the national level. Both undergraduate and post-graduate students from our faculty can teach. In addition, we, the lecturers also can teach. It would be a professional development for us too. So, I believe in this is the only solution we have to address the placement issue. (TC3)

The second prominent theme identified was better pre-practicum preparation. These respondents noted that STs, placement schools and TEIs must be well prepared for the practicum. For example, IBCs have noted that the TEIs could conduct more workshops on lesson planning and classroom management. Similarly, SBCs have noted that it is important to conduct information sessions for CTs and school coordinators to inform them of their roles and responsibilities and to make them aware of their importance in teacher education. In addition, SBCs have pointed out that the STs need to be more disciplined and must follow the instructions given to them during the pre-practicum information sessions held at the TEIs. Further they pointed out that the STs must be well prepared in advance and be more committed to the practicum.

Further, SBCs noted that the placement schools need to be more prepared to assist the TEIs in conducting an effective practicum. On this point, one noted that:

I think the placement schools need to be well prepared for the practicum. That is because they need to cater not only STs from one institution but a large number of STs from many TEIs. So, I believe that the placement schools must have a practicum schedule which indicates the dates convenient for them to accommodate STs, and they could share it with all the TEIs. Having such a schedule would resolve the existing placement issues. (TC3)

The third prominent theme identified was better assessment. Two (of three) coordinators believed that the current assessment criteria need to be changed for a better evaluation of the performance of STs. They recommended that it would be better to give a mark or percentage to various components of the practicum, which would reduce the existing bias in the assessment procedures (i.e., a reliance of one dimension to the exclusion of others in the assessment of the STs). On another point—who does the final assessment, one noted that:

As per the current assessment procedures, the final decision of pass or fail is decided by a committee at the TEIs. However, the relevant HoD are also given the authority to take the decision if the STs get passed from all the assessed observations by both CT and SL. But, if they don't get passed from all the assessed observations, the case would then be taken to the committee. It consists of coordinators, SLs and lecturers from TEIs. This lack of school representations made the decision unfair for the STs as well as the schools. Very often, the schools questioned why were they asked to fill so many forms if those were not considered in taking the final decision. For example, there were instances where STs failed from the practicum just because they didn't pass from SLs observation. Very often, the other way round also happens. So, I believe it would be better to have a marking system, or to make a collective decision by both CT and SL. (TC2)

CHAPTER 5 : DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study is to contribute to current conceptualization of the practicum in the Maldives in order to better understand and suggest enhancements, where necessary, that might benefit all concerned. To achieve this purpose, the study sought to understand the main features of the practicum in various teacher education programs in the Maldives; perceptions of stakeholders about the current practices of the practicum; key issues that the stakeholders encounter in implementing a successful practicum; and their recommendations to address the key issues identified.

The previous chapter presented the findings of this study. To help organise the discussion, this chapter returns to the four research questions that guided this study. To answer the research questions, a brief summary of the findings pertaining to each research question will be presented followed by an interpretation of the findings with reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Research Question 1: What are the Main Features of the Practicum in the Programs of Teacher Education Institutions in the Maldives?

Main features of the practicum. As recounted in the previous chapter, the key features of the practicum in various teacher education programs in the Maldives were derived from ST data. The STs data showed that there were three levels of teacher education programs, during the time of the data collection: ECE, primary and secondary. In each of these levels, different types of programs ranging from degree, diploma, advanced diploma and advanced certificate programs were offered. The latter is not offered for secondary school level teacher training programmes.

The structure of the practicum in degree programs at ECE and primary levels was the same. That is, three-year degree programs in ECE and primary have three practicum rounds, each consisting of four weeks and scheduled in the second semester of each academic year. In contrast, there were two variants of degree programs at the other levels: a three-year and a four-year program. Unlike ECE and primary level degree programs, these programs have different practicum structures. For example, there were STs enrolled in a 12-week, a five-week or a four-week practicum. This difference in practicum

structures within the same type of program at the same level was further studied through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with STs.

Analysis of interview data showed that there were STs from three different teacher education institutions who had different practicum structures. For example, based on the qualitative data it was revealed that there were STs who had a four-week practicum round each academic year, while STs from the four-year degree program had a five-week practicum round scheduled at the last semester of the program. In addition, there were variations in the supervision and assessment of the practicum in these various programs. For example, in most of the programs, the supervision and assessment was carried out by the SLs and CTs. However, at the ECE level, the diploma and certificate level programs were supervised and assessed by only SLs, while the diploma program in secondary level was supervised and assessed by the CTs only.

Overall, the analysis indicated that there was no consistency in the practicum structures of the same types of programs across various levels. Not only the structure, but the duration of the practicum in similar programs varied to some extent. From the empirical evidence of this study, together with the review of literature in the Maldivian context, it is clear that, at present, there is no regulatory body at a higher level to oversee the practicum conducted by various teacher education institutions in the country. These results also suggest that the graduates from these programs join the teaching force with a greater difference in their teaching skills. Even though they had completed the same program, they had different practicum structures, a core component of teacher education that, according to many authors, determines the quality of graduates. This is a significant finding for the relevant authorities when making decisions about establishing a regulatory body with governing policies on the organisation and conduct of the practicum in various teacher education institutions in the Maldives. Establishing such a practicum governing body would ensure the quality and consistency in the practicum in programs across different levels. For example, formulating a national level framework on practicum would ultimately set a standard for the practicum conducted by various teacher education programs. The relevant literature also attests that stable system level policies are important to implement an effective practicum. For example, top performing countries like Canada, Germany, Finland, Singapore, UK and China have

policies on teacher education (El-Kerdany, 2012; Invarson, Reid, Buckley, Kleihenz, Masters & Rowley, 2014). Most of these countries have national level policies, or laws that translates a minimum number of practicum days required for teacher licence or certification. One such example is UK, where the length of the practicum is governed by law and regulation. In the case of the Maldives, as per the current status, there is no such a law or national level practicum framework that lays out the practicum requirements for the teacher certification. Neither a teacher registration body nor a teacher licensing body was established during the past 40 years of teacher education in the Maldives. Thus, there is no consistency in practicum structures implemented by various teacher education institutions, which ultimately would have a significant impact the quality of the graduates. Apart from that, according to the current salary scale published by the Civil Service Commission of the Maldives, the salary of a teacher is based on the qualification (e.g., diploma, degree...). It doesn't account for the duration of the program or the nature of that experience. For example, there is no difference between a three-year degree, or a four-year degree, in terms of the salary. This could be a demotivating factor for the prospective STs to enrol in more demanding programs, even though these programs might be better in terms of the exposure to the content knowledge and the practicum experience.

In addition, it could be inferred from the analysis of various features of the practicum in different teacher education programs, that these programs had adopted an integrated model of teaching practicum. But the degree of integration varied within different types of teacher education programs. For example, there were three-year degree program that had one practicum round per academic year without any on-campus theory classes during the practicum. But, there was another variant of the degree program that had a 12-week block practicum during the final year of the program concurrently with on-campus theory classes.

Countries like UK, India, Malta and England have adopted an integrated model where they have incorporated one practicum round in every academic year of the program. Having an integrated model such as this possesses several advantages (El-Kerdany, 2012; Karammustafaoglu, 2009; Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013; Min, Abdulla, Mansor, & Shamsudin, 2014). Ure (2009) pointed out that practicum models that

provide multiple exposure to schools enables STs to integrate their learning from both practicum and university settings. These multiple exposures to multiple contexts facilitate the understanding of the broader professional demands of teaching. It also enables the STs to recognize the diversity of learning needs of pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds (Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013). In addition, it helps the STs to better prepare themselves for the following practicum by reflecting on the previous practicum experience.

In contrast, countries like Malaysia, China and Pakistan have one practicum round scheduled for the final year of the program (Endley, 2014). As has been noted earlier, the review of the literature revealed that the length of the practicum varies among the countries across the world. For example, in China, it is 8 to 10 weeks, in Canada, a minimum of 12 weeks is required, in Australia, a minimum is 7 to 11 weeks, whereas in Malaysia it is 16 weeks and in Pakistan it is 4 to 8 weeks. The review of literature also indicated that among the countries studied, Malaysia has the longest and Pakistan has the shortest practicum (Endley, 2014; Gujjar, Naoreen, & Bajwa, 2010; Min, Abdulla, Mansor, & Shamsudin, 2014; Mitchell, Clarke, & Nuttall, 2007).

Many authors have argued that having a lengthy practicum helps the STs to develop their teaching career in many ways. In this regard, Zeichner (2006) pointed out that having an extended experience with expert teachers during the practicum enhances STs professional development through constant revision and refinement of their teaching skills. It also provides greater opportunities for the STs to experiment and practice many theories that they have learned from on-campus theory classes and hence, helps in bridging the theory-practice divide (Wyss, Siebert, & Dowling, 2012). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005), cited in Ure (2009), noted that the length of time spent in placement schools has a significant impact on STs self-confidence and their capacity to link theory and practice. STs who had longer practicum seem to be more confident in teaching and also they build a stronger connection with theory and practice. Therefore, in this respect, it can be concluded that a 12-week long practicum is advantageous compared with a four-week practicum in many regards. However, we must also be aware of Britzman's caution that not just any 'practice makes perfect' but rather 'good practice makes perfect' (Britzman, 1991).

Additionally, STs who had practicum concurrently with ongoing on-campus theory classes have added advantages. For example, Ure (2009) noted that having practicum concurrently with theory classes enable the STs to better understand and explore the link between theory and practice and thus, assists them to become reflective practitioners. At the same time, from the findings of this study, it is evident that these STs lack multiple exposure to various contexts as they were placed in one placement school for the extended practicum. According to Ure (2009), exposure to multiple contexts has a significant impact on the overall professional development of STs. Therefore, having refrained from multiple practicum exposures, these STs may have limited understanding of the teaching profession based only on the culture and practices of their placement schools. In other words, their understanding of the profession from a broader context is minimised.

In contrast, STs who had multiple exposures to multiple contexts at different points of the timing of the program had valuable opportunities to explore and experience in various placement schools across the country – the schools in Male city and in islands communities. As Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) pointed out, having multiple exposures to various contexts, these STs have added advantages. For example, they get the chance to explore the diversity of learning needs of the pupils from various schools across the country. In addition, having one practicum round each academic year provides opportunities to experiment with the theoretical knowledge discussed in the on-campus classes and thus helps to reduce the theory-practice divide that often exists in teacher education. In contrast, STs who had only one practicum conducted in placement schools in Male' city area hinders the professional development of STs and their understanding of the school cultures and teaching practices across the country.

In brief, from the findings of this empirical research, it can be concluded that at the current time different teacher education programs in the Maldives have different practicum structures, which might be attributed to the lack of a national-level framework on practicum as well as the absence of a governing body that regulates and standardizes the teacher education programs, especially the practicum, across various teacher education institutions in the Maldives. Therefore, this study suggests that the relevant authorities should formulate a framework on practicum as an initial step, which then

need to be followed by the establishment of departments or governing bodies to oversee the practicum programs conducted by various teacher education institutions in the Maldives. In addition, it was also revealed that most of the teacher education programs offered an integrated practicum model in which STs have multiple exposures to a range of practicum settings, or conduct practicum concurrently with on-campus theory classes. At the same time, although some programs had multiple practicum exposures, the literature suggests that having a longer extended practicum is important for STs to redefine and refine their teaching and learning skills. Therefore, based on the existing literature together with the findings of this empirical research, the study suggests that programs with short practicum rounds may need to seek possibilities to extend the current duration of at least one of the practicum rounds to better prepare the STs as effective future classroom teachers.

Research Question 2: What are the Perceptions of Stakeholders (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs and IBCs) about the Current Practices of the Practicum?

Perception of STs. STs' perceptions on major six dimensions of the practicum were studied, and the findings are presented in the following section. Those dimensions include (1) pre-practicum preparation, (2) provision of feedback, (3) professional support, (4) assessment, (5) institutional socialization, and (6) professional development.

Pre-practicum preparation. As presented in Chapter Four, in order to investigate the pre-practicum preparation, study focus was given to identifying whether STs had sessions on managing potential problems, lesson planning, teaching strategies, and peer teaching. Findings of this study revealed that a large percentage of STs from ECE, primary and secondary agreed that they had sessions on lesson planning, teaching strategies, and peer teaching. But, a comparatively high percentage of STs from ECE and primary agreed that they had sessions on managing potential problems. This high percentage of positive responses indicates that the respective TEIs had given importance to preparing STs for the practicum. However, since the questions were framed to identify whether they had sessions on those four parameters, it didn't provide information on how many sessions they have had, or what other preparation that they had undertaken. This deficiency of information could raise the question of whether those

TEIs had adequately prepared STs for the practicum? Or, is having a set of sessions on these four parameters is the only way to prepare STs for the practicum? Analysis of interview data pertaining to this dimension of the practicum provided a plausible answer to the latter question but not to the former one. It revealed that although some STs had not had separate sessions, they had covered those areas in course modules. STs from ECE and primary felt that they could have had more training sessions on managing potential problems before they were placed in placement schools. That means, these STs felt that they were not adequately prepared for the practicum, thus they desired further preparation. These findings, therefore, indicate that these STs need additional assistance, either through the course modules or having separate sessions or workshops for them to be adequately prepared for the practicum.

As Elligate (2009) and Turnbull (2002) emphasized, the findings of this study regarding pre-practicum preparation also showed that, prior to the practicum placement, STs need to have opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills required for the practicum. They need to have not only content knowledge, but also pedagogical content knowledge. Hollins (2011) argued that it is important to integrate pedagogical modules in teacher training programs. On explicating the criticality of pedagogy in teacher education, Hollins stated that through pedagogical modules STs learn the practicalities of teaching. They learn to apply the content, model behaviours and engage in academic dialogue with significant others. This is also in accordance with what Roofe (2013) found from his study. Roofe's study on STs' concerns about their preparation at a teacher training institution revealed that more pedagogical modules lead to better performance during the practicum.

In addition, the related literature suggests that micro-teaching or peer teaching is a prominent technique to improve the art of teaching (Rawshon, 2013). Many studies on STs' perceptions of micro-teaching have shown that it promotes application of teaching strategies, acquisition of classroom management skills, problem solving skills, and also receive constructive feedback from peers as to improve teaching (Ghafoor, Kiani, Kayani, & Kayani, 2012; Kilic, 2010; Ogeyik, 2009; Sen, 2009). Micro-teaching not only improves teaching skills but also enhances self-confidence and reduces anxiety level (Sonmez, 2012). Due to the high impact of micro-teaching on STs' professional

development, many of the authors recommend that teacher education program have micro-teaching laboratories for the STs to practice teaching prior to the practicum (Nwanekezi, Okoli, & Mezieobi, 2011). In addition, briefings to stakeholders about the practicum and visits to the placement school prior to the practicum are highlighted in the literature as some of the essential activities that can be incorporated in the preparation of STs for the practicum (Turbull, 2002).

In brief, it could be concluded that the STs who participated in this study expected the respective TEIs to carry out additional activities for them to be well prepared for the practicum. That means that the current teacher education curriculum needs to be modified or changed to some extent to accommodate additional pre-practicum activities. Findings of this study, together with the international literature suggest that a curriculum could be formulated to require STs to complete both content and pedagogical modules prior to the practicum. In addition, information sessions and induction sessions should be held for the key players, together with field visits to placement schools.

Provision of feedback. Feedback is one of the critical components of the practicum and this study explored the perceptions of STs about the feedback they received. The findings of this study revealed that a high percentage of STs from all the three levels (ECE, primary and secondary) agreed that their CTs had given feedback on lesson planning before it was being implemented. In addition, they agreed that their CTs used compliment-criticism-suggestion method in giving feedback, and encouraged them to reflect on their teaching during the feedback session. These findings, therefore, indicate that their CTs had two important points of contact with them regarding the provision of feedback. One, it is implied that the CTs had checked lesson plans prior to teaching. Second, STs agreed that their CTs encouraged them to reflect on their teaching. Therefore, it is evident that the CTs gave feedback after the ST taught a lesson. But, it is inconclusive that these STs had received oral and/or written feedback, which is a point of dispute in some cases.

The findings from the current study's quantitative data also confirmed that a large proportion of STs, particularly from ECE and primary, had usually received written feedback. But this result is inconsistent when corroborated with qualitative (observational and interview) data. The qualitative (interview and observational) data

revealed that STs, especially from ECE level, whom oral feedback is given on a daily basis and the written feedback is only given at the end of the practicum. In the case of primary level STs, written feedback is given only for assessed lessons and not for all the lessons observed. Similarly, the findings revealed that a comparatively low percentage of secondary level STs received written feedback. The qualitative data confirmed that this written feedback was given only on the assessed lesson as was the case in primary. Therefore, these findings, with respect to the types of feedback, implied that CTs in both primary and secondary level tend to fulfil only the minimum requirement of the assessment – provide 2-3 written feedback reports as required by the respective TEIs.

In addition, provision of more constructive feedback was consistently noted as an expectation by the STs. That is, they expected to know what went well, what went wrong, and how their teaching could be further improved. STs' expectations accorded with what Hattie and Timperley (2007) argued regarding the characteristics of an effective feedback: effective feedback answers three questions: Where am I going? (Feed Up) How am I doing? (Feed Back) and Where to next? (Feed Forward.). Consistently, Agudo (2016) also found that STs' value constructive feedback they received from their mentors, and expected to receive even more constructive feedback.

Similarly, STs expect written feedback, which is contrary to the findings of many recent studies conducted regarding STs' expectations about the types of feedback (Ferguson, 2011; Hudson, 2014; White, 2007). The findings of the current study further revealed that STs expected to get feedback on all lessons immediately after the lesson was taught, which is consistent with what Scheeler, Ruhl, and McAfee (2004) concluded from their review of literature on feedback. They concluded that effective feedback articulates corrective measures and is given in a positive manner, immediately after the observation. In addition, several studies have revealed that STs prefer to receive the feedback immediately after the observation (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Parcara, 2013; Traiser, 2005).

The findings also showed that STs from ECE received oral feedback to all the lessons they taught and also received written feedback at the end of the practicum as per the assessment requirement. This is in accordance with the findings of a study conducted

by Starkey and Rawlins (2011), who asserted that due to its instant nature, oral feedback becomes a dominant method, and it also reflects the busy schedule of CTs.

Therefore, in sum, STs received feedback on both the lesson planning and lessons being taught. But it was inconclusive whether this feedback was in written or oral form. However, it was evident from the qualitative data that STs expected to receive more constructive written feedback from their CTs. Therefore, the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data imply that, although these STs received feedback, these were not up to their expectations, and hence they seek out more constructive feedback that is given right after the lesson implementation.

Professional support. With regard to the professional support received by STs, a high percentage of STs from both ECE and primary level felt they had received adequate support from their CTs in reviewing the curriculum, allocating resources, observing significant others role models, and demonstrating new teaching strategies. However, STs also expected additional professional support related to the curriculum, such as selecting appropriate teaching methods, preparation of teaching aids and lesson planning. Since, these STs seek out additional support for these three essential areas (teaching methods, preparation of teaching aids and lesson planning) it could mean that they were not adequately prepared in these three areas by the respective TEIs, or, it could mean that even when CTs reviewed the curriculum, they might not have offered necessary assistance to STs in these three areas. Either way, STs felt that they need additional support. This implies that TEIs need to further strengthen these three areas – teaching methods, designing teaching aids and lesson planning – which are directly related to pedagogical content knowledge. Further, TEIs need to ensure that CTs are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in guiding STs. In addition, STs felt the need to spend more time with the CT, who also need to be good role models. This indicates that some CTs need to take their role more seriously and need to provide the essential support that STs require during the practicum. As Altan and Saglamel (2015) concluded from their study, CTs are the immediate source of help for STs, and as such, they need to be well prepared to provide professional support to STs in all the areas in which they seek assistance.

In the case of secondary STs, findings of this study revealed that compared to that of ECE and primary, a comparatively low percentage of them had received adequate support from their CTs in the areas mentioned earlier. The analysis of qualitative data also revealed that, unlike the expectations of STs from ECE and primary, secondary STs expected more support from CTs, in different areas: curriculum related support (provision of notes, worksheets, syllabus and scheme of work); provision of opportunities to translate theories into practice (for example, freedom to choose own teaching strategies); and, socialization into the profession.

Further, the findings also revealed that a large proportion of secondary level STs were enrolled in their first practicum round. The qualitative data revealed that the majority of STs – who were in their first practicum round – had not covered course modules that consisted of lesson planning, teaching methods, and classroom management techniques. This may be the reason why these STs had a low percentage of positive responses to one of the parameters given in relation to the professional support – demonstration of new teaching strategies by CT. It is therefore predictable that these STs felt they were not adequately equipped with a variety of possible teaching strategies prior to the practicum. Further, they might not be fully aware of the strategies, methods and classroom management techniques used by their CTs. It is also possible that CTs were not well prepared to enact their role effectively. Additionally, it could also be possible that the TEIs and placement schools have considered the role of guiding STs by CTs as an extension of their routine teaching tasks. As Arnold (2006) claimed the task of supervising a STs is not an easy task, and it cannot be taken for granted. This is a point of concern raised by most of the STs who participated in the current study, and they went on further to say that they recommended the respective TEIs to teach these modules before the inception of the practicum.

In sum, STs received curriculum related and other professional support. However, they also expected more professional support related to pedagogical content knowledge. This implies that the support provided by the CTs was inadequate in this regard, or the STs were not well trained on these areas, or else the CTs were not adequately prepared to enact their role in this area. In any case, the implication is that TEIs need to pay more attention in preparing STs and CTs so that they are well trained

and equipped with sufficient information and skills necessary to address these sorts of concerns.

Assessment of the practicum. The current study showed that a high percentage of STs from all the three levels (ECE, primary and secondary) receive regular information on their performance from the CTs. However, a large majority of STs from all the three levels perceived that the on-going assessment given by their CTs was brief and shallow. Further, STs noted that their CTs gave an extensive evaluation at the end of the practicum. These polarized findings (brief at one point and detailed at another) raised the question as to whether STs received sufficient feedback.

In order to uncover and unfold the situation, further investigation through semi-structured face-to-face interviews was conducted. The findings revealed that STs from ECE were assessed only by the SL from the respective TEIs towards the end of the practicum. And also, it was confirmed that CTs involved only in small ways in assessing the practicum by providing a feedback report to the STs at the end of the practicum. This final feedback report was included in the portfolio submitted to the TEIs. The positive responses to these polarizing statements may be because STs were not well aware, or were not given enough information regarding the assessment of the practicum by their respective TEIs. It could be possible that they might have considered the daily feedback, given by the CTs, as part of the assessment. The interview data of primary STs revealed that even though the CTs observed all the teaching sessions, only two lessons were assessed and feedback given on, as it was a requirement by TEIs. However, in the case of secondary STs, it was found that the CTs normally observe only two teaching sessions for the purpose of the assessment.

These findings from STs in ECE, primary and secondary provide insights as to deciding what approaches or methods of assessments were adopted by the respective TEIs. Reflecting on the findings from ECE and primary, it could be concluded that both formative and summative assessment were used by their respective TEIs. Assessment was formative in the sense that CTs for ECE observed lessons taught and provided oral feedback to STs on a daily basis. This feedback provided many opportunities for STs to reflect on their teaching, thus enhance their professional development. These findings accord with views of many authors. For example, Kaphesi (2013) and Tillema, Smith

and Leshem (2011) asserted that formative assessment enhances STs' professional growth during the practicum which he considered as one of the main purposes of the practicum. Additionally, Kaphesi asserted that summative assessment serves a gate keeping function by determining whether STs had achieved the program requirements that they ought to achieve at the end of the practicum. However, although both the types of assessments offer potential benefits to the STs, Kaphesi argued that it is ineffective for a single person to carry out both the forms of assessments. For ECE STs, summative assessment was carried out only by the SLs, while CTs provided daily feedback and a detailed account of their performance at the end of the practicum, which the STs considered as part of the assessment. This is fully accorded with what Kaphesi argued. However, in the case of primary STs, both CTs and SLs were involved in assessment. So, this finding throws Kaphesi's thesis into doubt within the Maldivian context for some primary STs. As per the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there is no consistency across various teacher education as to who should doing the final assessment and the number of lessons need to be evaluated (see Figure 4.1).

In the case of secondary STs, both CTs and SLs observed two lessons, towards the end of the practicum, as a requirement of the assessment by the respective TEIs. This means that the assessment was summative in nature. This type of assessment, according to Tillema, Smith and Leshem (2011), has potential benefits to stakeholders. One such benefit standout in the literature is its gatekeeping function. In other words, it helps teacher educators to decide whether the STs are qualified for teaching certification. In addition, it enables teacher educators to make the concerned stakeholders accountable for their role and responsibilities. Further, having observed two lessons on which reports were written indicates that these STs may not have received written feedback or possibly observations of other lessons. Therefore, this lack of observations and feedback from CTs could impact STs' professional development during the practicum, as many authors argued that the purpose of assessment is not only giving a grade, it should also provide constructive feedback to STs as to how they could further improve their teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2005).

In sum, the findings with respect to assessment indicate that, in the case of ECE and primary STs, the sole responsibility of assessment fell to SLs, while for STs from

secondary both the CTs and SLs observed two lessons during the last week of the practicum as part of the summative assessment process. In other words, formative and summative assessment for STs from ECE and primary was common, whereas, summative assessment for STs may have been the only written report, and in some cases the only form of assessment at the secondary level. It seems however, the STs are asking for more formative feedback in all settings.

Institutional socialization. The findings of this study, with respect to institutional socialization, revealed that a large majority of STs had realized the ideas, strategies and habits of teachers during their practica, and thus agreed that the practicum helped them to understand the school culture. This suggests that their CTs facilitated their learning about the culture of the respective placement schools. In addition, STs had a range of opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities held during the practicum, even if they didn't take them up indicating that CTs go beyond merely providing experiences within the classroom for the STs. Having the chance to participate in school activities, other than classroom teaching enables STs to build professional relationships with the members of the school community and be better able to learn about social and cultural environments of schools. As Clarke, Triggs and Nielsen (2014) concluded from their review of literature, results in the current study also indicate that CTs acted as agents of socialization in providing opportunities for STs to better understand schools and their communities. In addition, the analysis of interview data indicated that the CTs had given opportunities to STs to experience and explore many of the roles and responsibilities that a formal regular teacher has to take on. For example, one ST from secondary noted: "I was given the chance to take extra-classes, and since she was a class-teacher, she had given me the opportunity to take part in all the activities that she undertook as a class-teacher." This comment clearly indicated that this particular CT intended to guide the ST to become proficient in various roles of a practicing teacher. But at the same it should be noted that this might not be the case with all the CTs, as the qualitative data showed that only 68 percent of participating STs took part in extra-curricular activities during the practicum. This means that the remaining 32 percent may not have been exposed to opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities.

In addition, this study also showed that a large majority of STs agreed that the practicum was sufficiently varied to help them to become enculturated to the profession. In other words, those STs had experienced the practicum in important professional ways. The observational data also accorded with this finding. It was observed that STs enrolled in degree programs at one of the teacher education institutions had three practicum rounds, in which the STs were placed in different placement schools in each round. That means, these STs had opportunity to learn about contextual differences that exist among placement schools. Other than exposure to the values, habits and cultures of the profession, each individual placement school seems to have their own set of norms and ethos within which its members operate. This definitely enriched and enhanced the STs' understanding of the broader community of teachers and would enable them to decide the schools to which they would join as future teachers. As Chou (2011) stated, it is during the practicum that STs undergo a transformational process of moving from a novice to a more expert teacher. Through a socialization process, during the practicum, they learn to know about and meet the demand of the wider community of teachers.

Therefore, CTs assisted STs to gain better opportunities to be socialized into the profession. In addition, the way that the practicum is structured, in some of the TEIs, valuable opportunities were provided for the STs to have multiple exposure to various contexts.

Professional development and teacher identity. The practicum contributed to STs professional development in many ways. The practicum helped STs to become better managers of pupils and developed their teaching skills. Additionally, the practicum contributed to STs personal growth. In other words, the practicum helped them acquire essential teaching skills such as classroom management and how to design interesting and effective lessons for the pupils, findings that are consistent with many of studies reported in the growing body of literature on STs' learning during the practicum (Dellicarpini, 2009; Gursoy, 2013; Wee, Weber & Park, 2014).

Additionally, most of the participating STs began to feel like a teacher after the first practicum, which suggests that those STs started to construct their teacher identity during the time of the practicum. Many authors acknowledge the importance of practicum in construction and reconstruction of STs' professional identity (see for

example, Gu, 2015; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Khalid, 2014). Hamiloglu (2013) agreed that it is not only the practicum that helped the STs to construct their professional identity but also the course work. According to Lamote and Engels (2010), professional identity formation is an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experience. During the practicum, STs come to identify themselves as members of the teaching community. Through their interaction with members of teaching community, they get to acquire deeper understanding of the multiple roles of a teacher, which Cattley (2007) asserts is an important process for the construction of a teacher identity. Thus, to maximize the many learning opportunities that take place during the practicum, STs need to be given as many chances to engage in tasks related to teaching and learning as possible. Murtiana (2013) also stated that they must constantly engage in critical reflection on their own teaching and the teaching of their CTs. Further, findings of the study also revealed that the practicum contributed to STs' personal growth. This finding fully supports the view of Genc and Buyukkarci (2013), who stated that the practicum helps to develop STs' readiness to teach and enhance their maturity level as practitioners.

In sum, during the practicum STs had opportunities to construct and reconstruct their professional identities. As the literature suggests, STs develop their identity by refining, revising, and redefining their belief that they formed during their school days as pupils, and applying the knowledge that they acquire from TEIs in the context of school setting during the practicum.

Perceptions of CTs. CTs' perceptions about various dimensions of the practicum were studied through CTQ and semi-structured interviews. Those dimensions include their perceptions on: (1) motivation to become a CT; (2) the role and purpose of practicum in teacher education; (3) mentoring styles; (4) importance of various roles of a CT; and (5) perception about their enacted role. The meta-analysis of findings with respect to these dimensions is presented below in light of the relevant literature, starting from CTs perceptions about their motivation to assist STs during the practicum.

Motivation to become a CT. There were three potential themes that emerged from the analysis of responses provided to an open-ended question. Those are contribution to the profession, reciprocal professional development, and an obligatory duty. Most of the CTs indicated that their primary purpose of becoming a CT is to

contribute to the profession, by helping the ST become qualified professionals. In addition, they perceived that their involvement in the practicum serves as a reciprocal professional development for them. Reciprocal in the sense, they gain most up-to-date innovative ideas and new knowledge from STs, while STs' benefit from CTs valuable teaching experience. Further, a minority of CTs felt that they were compelled to be CTs by the school administration. They justified their lack of motivation by stressing the lack of acknowledgement of their additional workload by the authorities.

These findings, to some extent, are consistent with the findings reported in the literature. For example, the findings of this study showed that teachers were motivated to become CTs as they perceived that working with STs is professional development for both of them, and they viewed that sharing their experience with ST is a valuable contribution to the profession. That means, these CTs were conscious about their professional responsibility, and they considered their participation in training future teachers as a significant contribution to the society. These findings are in agreement with many of the studies reported in the literature (Ambrosetti, 2012; Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Wilhem, 2007).

Although the practicum provides several benefits to the cooperating teachers, the review of related literature demonstrates that most of the time teachers are not motivated to become cooperating teachers. Several reasons are highlighted in the literature for this lack of motivation, including ineffective past experience with the student teachers and the lack of commitment from student teachers. In other words, cooperating teachers found that STs sometimes find it hard to live up to the expectation of the cooperating teachers. But, the findings of this study added a different dimension to this issue. Participating CTs indicated that some CTs were not motivated and that others felt that the authorities did not acknowledge or value the additional responsibilities in supervision alongside the duties as a normal teacher. In this regard, the literature agrees with this finding regarding the selection process of CTs. The literature also shows that a recommendation from the head of the placement school is one of the criteria for selecting teachers to work with STs (Wilhem, 2007). And, when selecting teachers on this criterion, the skills of teachers may not be the most important criterion. In other words, teachers who are good at classroom teaching and handling

pupils are considered good teachers, but, they may not necessarily be good at guiding a ST.

In brief, the finding with respect to CTs' motivation revealed that they were, most often, motivated to become one due to their desire to contribute to the profession. The second prominent factor highlighted is the reciprocal professional development benefits. Although the practicum provides these potential benefits to CTs, the findings of this study together with the international literature indicated that some teachers were not motivated due to the lack of acknowledgement and appreciation of their work by the authorities.

Role and purpose of practicum. A large majority of the cooperating teachers who participated in the current study regarded the role of the practicum in teacher education as very important. Further, participants perceived that the practicum serves three main purposes: provision of context, professional development, and opportunity to put theory into practice. As provider of a context, they perceived that the practicum is an opportunity for the STs to gain first-hand experience of teaching in a school setting. CTs considered this as professional development for STs as they are exposed to a range of curriculum related activities and as a result deal with pupils from multiple contexts. In addition, the practicum provides an opportunity to put theories into practice. Participants perceived that it is important to practice the application of many theories in a real classroom context. One noted that "a person may have good content knowledge, but delivering it to different ability groups is a challenge, a challenge that needs to be experienced before entering to the profession," which reflected the criticality of practicing the application of theory in context. Several research reports on practicum over the past decades concur with the importance of the practicum in this regard (Barmao, Ng'eno, & Wambugu, 2013; Cohen, Hoz, & Kaplan, 2013; Hamaidi, Al-Shara, Arouri, & Awwad, 2014; Jush, 2013; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009).

Further, the review of extensive literature demonstrates that the overarching purpose of the practicum is to provide an authentic teaching environment for STs to construct and reconstruct their professional identity through continuous engagement with curriculum and non-curriculum related activities in school settings (Chandler & Williamson, 2013; Hudson & Hudson, 2013; Jusoh, 2013; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005;

Papieva, 2006). During the practicum STs undertake a range of curriculum related tasks such as reviewing curriculum, preparing unit plans, constructing lesson plans, designing teaching aids, observing teaching sessions, taking the lead of the classroom, and assessing their own teaching through reflection. Apart from this curriculum related activities, STs are involved in other extra-curricular activities, through which they are exposed to the broader community of the school. It is through their engagement in these activities that they learn to refine and define their teaching skills and understand the demands, habits, routines, and culture of the profession. Thus, the practicum serves as an invaluable professional development opportunity for the student teachers during the course of the teacher education program and constitutes part of their identity development.

The third purpose of the practicum highlighted in the literature is to help bridge the theory practice gap (Trent, 2010; Jush, 2013). In other words, the purpose of the practicum is to enable STs to test the many theories that they learn on campus and link them with the classroom practices. Putting theory into practice is one of the predominant themes that emerged from the responses of the participants in this study. They believed that the practicum is the only ground that student teachers have access to get hands-on experience and test many of the learning theories they are exposed to during university education.

Most of the CTs who participated in this study perceived that the practicum is very important element in teacher education. According to them, the purpose of the practicum is to provide context, to assist professional development of STs, and to provide opportunities to reduce theory practice gap. The literature also supports these findings. One of the overarching purposes highlighted in the literature is to provide authentic teaching environments for STs to put theory into practice.

Perceived mentoring styles. Among the four mentoring styles that CTs were given to choose from (absent, directive, supportive and educative), the educative style of mentoring is the most prominent among participating CTs. The less prominent styles include directive, supportive, and absent, presented here in order of decreasing prominence. There were also a number of participating CTs who did not follow any of the styles mentioned. Similarly, STs also perceived that the educative style was the most

predominant and the least common is absent style. Unlike the perception of cooperating teachers (1%), a comparatively higher percentage (7%) of the student teachers perceived that their cooperating teachers did not follow any of the styles given – educative, directive, supportive, and absent. This difference in perception may be because the cooperating teachers might not be well aware of the styles and its significance in mentoring student teachers. As the literature demonstrates, in some cases, CTs who volunteer do not know much about mentoring (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). That means there is a need for different jurisdictions to train and make CTs more aware of the various mentoring styles and their significance to the stakeholders.

In addition, the majority of CTs tended to practice the mentoring style adopted by their own CTs during the time they had practicum. This means the styles followed by the current CTs are expected to have significant impact on the styles of their STs when they become future CTs. Therefore, it is imperative for the current CTs to be well aware of the different mentoring styles and how those styles contribute to the successful development of STs. In other words, this is an important finding for the teacher education institutions to take into consideration when preparing CTs to enact their essential roles during the practicum.

In sum, the current study found that the most predominant mentoring style used by the cooperating teachers is the educative style. This finding is further confirmed by identifying the mentoring styles that the student teachers perceived that their cooperating teachers practiced. These findings accord with recent research reported in the literature on mentoring (Ibrahim, 2013; Kim & Danforth, 2012; Tok, 2012). The literature reported that educative style is the most predominant among CTs, and also considered to be the most effective mentoring style among those highlighted in the literature. In addition, as some of the student teachers agreed that their CTs did not follow any of the styles given; it indicates that either STs or CTs, or both were not well aware of various mentoring styles. Thus, it is imperative that the TEIs to educate the stakeholders on various mentoring styles and their significance.

Importance of CTs various roles. Participants perceived that CTs' role as a provider of feedback was very important. Similarly, an overwhelmingly high percentage of the CTs perceived their role as advocates of practical, supporters of reflection, agent

of socialization, conveners of relation, gleaners of knowledge, gatekeepers of profession, and modelers of practice as very important.

These CTs were then asked to identify whether they practice the above mentioned roles in their current involvement in guiding STs, on a five-point Liker-scale. The analysis of their responses revealed that there was a significant difference between what they perceived as very important, and what they perceived that they practiced: namely, modelers of practice, gleaners of knowledge and providers of feedback. Among these three roles, the most significant difference was observed in their role as modelers of practice (68%). While the differences in gleaners of knowledge and providers of feedback were 23 percent and 19 percent respectively. This indicates that even though they perceived that these roles are very important, they were unable to practice or put emphasis on these roles when it comes to application. Therefore, this area deserves further exploration and research to understand what is limiting them from performing the roles that they considered very important.

The meta-analysis of literature on CTs identified that the role of the CTs is a common theme in teacher education literature (Clarke et al, 2014). From their review of last six or more decades of research on CTs, Clarke and his colleagues were able to cite only one study in which the CT was not a part of the practicum. That shows the significance of the CTs' role in training future teachers. In other words, it shows the criticality and centrality of their role in the preparation of student teachers. Among the many essential roles that CTs play during the practicum, the review of the literature indicated that, their role as providers of feedback is more important than any other roles. Interestingly, it should be noted that all the CTs participated in the current study affirmed that their role as a providers of feedback was very important.

At the same time an overwhelmingly large proportion of the participants perceived that a multitude of roles such as advocates of practical, supporters of reflection, agents of socialization, conveners of relation, gleaners of knowledge, gatekeepers of profession, and modellers of practice are also very important. This implies that they perceived themselves as significant contributors to the training of future teachers. However, though they perceived that they have a huge responsibility in training STs, the current study indicates that they were not able to put into practice all

that they perceived and that was expected of them. For example, as previously mentioned, the findings indicated that all the participants considered their role as providers of feedback as important, but approximately 19% of them agreed that this was not one of their strengths.

Therefore, in short, it could be concluded that the findings of the current study are not dissimilar to the reviewed literature. But, the negative responses (19%) is an alarming signal for the teacher education institution to check and ensure that the STs get the necessary support from their CTs, and also whether CTs play the roles that are expected of them.

Perceptions of SBCs. The perception of SBCs regarding their roles, appointment, or selection of CTs, and practicum monitoring were elicited through semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The findings revealed that their role as SBCs is mainly threefold. That is, SBCs confirm the placements, assign CTs and act as a liaison between TEIs to manage meetings and exchange essential documents. Findings revealed that, generally the placement is arranged via correspondence from the TEIs. But, some of the participants noted that there were times when the TEIs arrange placements via telephone communication. In such cases, it was noted that it was difficult for the placement schools to manage STs as they sometimes didn't even get details of the STs prior to the practicum. These findings therefore, infer that there isn't a formal consistent procedure to arrange placements in the Maldivian context.

In addition, in primary and secondary levels, CTs were assigned on one-to-one basis. SBCs considered selecting experienced local teachers rather than early career teachers. But, in the case of ECE, placement schools, most of the time, the number of STs exceeds the number of teachers originally available in the school. So, they have no option other than assigning a group of three or four STs to one teacher.

Additionally, both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that there was no mechanism for the monitoring of STs progress during the practicum. SBCs from primary and secondary level noted that other than the pre-meeting conducted at the placement schools by a few TEIs who met with all the stakeholders, and there was no further contact with the stakeholders after the practicum placements began. The main

objectives of these meetings, as perceived by SBCs, were: (1) to inform the CTs about their roles, responsibilities and requirements of the practicum assessment; (2) to share expectations with the heads of the placement schools, school based coordinators, CTs and STs; and (3) to give the opportunity to the schools to inform STs about their expectations, the school rules, regulations and other relevant procedures that they are expected to follow during the course of the practicum. Other than this pre-meeting, the majority of SBCs neither had any formal meetings with the CTs nor with the STs.

Further, CTs from ECE level were often unable to attend these initial pre-meetings with all stakeholders. One significant reason reported was unavailability of time due to their busy schedule. Unlike CTs from primary and secondary, they need to be in the class throughout the session and cannot leave their classes. Further, high percentage (76%) of CTs from ECE did not have any formal meetings with the SBCs. Coordinators from ECE level also pointed out that rather than fixing meetings in their busy schedule, they go for some random checks on STs and CTs during their routine observation rounds.

CTs, in general, from the three levels expressed their dissatisfaction about the lack of monitoring from teacher education institutions. For example, one coordinator from primary level commented "...after the placement is arranged, it seems that they don't have any responsibilities in monitoring STs. They do send SLs for lesson observations, but those SLs are mostly resourced personnel who would not have good connection with the TEIs. But I believe that TEIs should monitor their STs' status, especially for STs who were placed for two to three-month longer practicum." This comment clearly indicates that there is a dire need for the teacher education institutions to establish a mechanism to monitor STs when they are placed in placement schools.

Findings of this study in relation to the SBCs are congruent with the existing literature. The existing limited research on SBCs indicated that senior staff of the placement schools (principal, deputy principal and head teachers) act as SBCs (Le Cornu, 2012; Butcher & Mutton, 2008). SBCs who participated in the current study were also principals, deputy principals, and leading teachers. SBCs' perceived roles reflect both managerial and pedagogical roles as highlighted in the literature. Butcher and Mutton (2008) argued that the role of the school-based practicum coordinators

generally come under four main categories: managerial, pedagogical, evaluative, and pastoral. Among the four roles, the participants of the current study explicitly enacted managerial and pedagogical roles. They indicated that they assisted TEIs in confirming the number of placements available and also supported the schools by conducting pre-meetings to exchange essential documents and information with the stakeholders. This shows that they tend to act as a liaison between placement schools and teacher education institutions. Similarly, they supported the STs in assigning classes and CTs. To a lesser extent SBCs checked in with STs and tried to support their professional development (e.g., through things like after-school workshops). These roles reflected the managerial role as explained by Butcher and Mutton (2008). These findings are also consistent with the results of a study conducted by Le Cornu (2012), where participants perceived that they had three inter-related roles: supporting STs, supporting CTs and acting as liaison between the school and universities, which is similar as the managerial and pedagogical roles. Neither, this study nor the study conducted by Le Cornu (2012) showed that SBCs enacted the other two roles – evaluative and pastoral to a great extent.

In addition, the participants of the current study felt it import to promote a school-wide attitude among STs. One participant commented that "we need to revise the current assessment procedures to make them engage in varieties of activities other than classroom teaching. Because, very often I see that student teachers leave the school after taking the class. If their participation is counted for the final evaluation, then they will definitely participate in other activities. They must know that teaching is not only about classroom teaching. They need to learn the school system" (SC2). This comment illustrates the importance of whole school approach and the prominence of evaluating their participation in wider community of the school. The literature also supported this view in describing the evaluative role of the school-based coordinators (Butcher & Mutton, 2008).

Therefore, in sum, the findings with respect to the SBCs revealed that they had managerial and pedagogical roles. In the same vein they highlighted the importance of the evaluative role but the participants perceived that the current assessment procedures impede them to enact in any significant way in that role. In other words, the current conceptualization of their role limits their evaluative role. In addition, the findings also

revealed that the coordinators from teacher institutions had minimal contact with the SBCs. This is an alarming point for the TEIs who need to establish a mechanism to monitor and evaluate how well the stakeholders enacted their assigned roles. The recent literature suggests that to maximize benefits for all stakeholders involved, there must be strong partnerships and enhanced communication between the placement schools and teacher education institutions. This connection seems to be strengthened through SBCs. Being the liaison, they need to have open-communication between coordinators from both ends. As the literature demonstrates, and the findings of this study also revealed that the role that the coordinators played was influenced by the context and how it was being conceptualized. For example, SBCs at primary had limited roles compared to that of the roles of SBCs at the secondary level.

Therefore, these findings suggest that the TEIs need to define and demarcate SBCs roles to make the practicum worthwhile for the STs. In addition, the existing body of literature indicated that in some cases even if the roles are well explained, it wasn't enacted as expected. To delineate this issue, it is suggested that perhaps their roles need to be re-conceptualized to move to learning communities model that brings together all the stakeholders to create a more collaborative and supportive professional learning environment.

Perception of IBCs. Similar to that of the SBCs, the perception of IBCs, regarding their roles, appointment, or selection of SLs, and practicum monitoring were elicited through semi-structured face-to-face interviews.

The most prominent role played by IBCs was arranging placements and conducting information sessions for the STs. Their less prominent roles include maintaining practicum records and finalising the results of the practicum. These roles reflect a managerial role as identified by Bucher and Mutton (2008). The participants indicated that the placement was initially arranged through a formal letter of request to the placement schools, but many times the final placement was confirmed via telephone communication. Regarding the dissemination of information on practicum, coordinators from TEIs confirmed that they conducted meetings prior to the commencement of the practicum, to distribute essential documents and placement details to the STs. In

addition, these coordinators noted that they conducted weekly post-conference meetings with the STs at the respective colleges. But, the data showed that it wasn't a practice by all TEIs.

Regarding the selection of SLs, IBCs indicated that SLs were generally selected among the university staff, and in cases where the number of STs exceeds the number of SLs originally available from the institutions, additional resource personnel were hired. In hiring these resource personnel as SLs, their teaching experience was considered and the subject area matched with the subject specialization of the attached STs. Coordinators conducted a meeting with these resource personnel to inform them about their roles and responsibilities. Further, the IBCs perceived that there wasn't a requirement for them to have further contact with the SLs. They perceived that if the SLs were required to communicate via coordinators, then the communication process might not be effective. For that reason, IBCs expected the SLs to directly deal with the STs regarding supervision, and were requested to contact with the coordinators regarding only the matters that they find it difficult to resolve.

Coordinators highlighted that they had mechanisms to monitor STs but not the SLs. It is evident from the comment "...to manage the practicum, we had mentors assigned for all the placement schools. These mentors were required to have initial meetings at the schools with the STs and also had to check STs' progress weekly throughout the practicum. And if they had notified any irregularities, they were required to inform to the coordinator. In addition, the heads of the departments were responsible to arrange SLs and oversee the status of STs who belong to that particular department..." (TC2) made by a coordinator who represents the majority of STs who participated in this study. This comment is indicative of many things. One is that it shows that the institution had assigned mentors to each placement school. Second, it identifies the mentors' role as managerial (liaison and overseer). Third, it indicates the department heads had responsibility to monitor STs who belong to the respective departments. Therefore, it is evident that the institution to which this particular coordinator belongs has a fairly good monitoring mechanism of the STs.

However, in comparison to what the SBCs perceived and what the IBCs articulated, even with the established monitoring mechanism, the STs were not

monitored. SBCs claimed that there wasn't any contact with the institutions except the pre-meeting conducted at the school. A SBC commented "I would say that TEIs never monitor their STs after the practicum commenced. After the placement is arranged, it seems that they don't have any responsibilities in monitoring STs..." (PC1). Therefore, what the coordinators articulated regarding the monitoring mechanism suggests that the current monitoring mechanism needs to be further strengthened for the successful implementation of the practicum.

In short, the most significant role that the IBCs played was arranging placements, while less significant roles identified are: maintaining practicum records and practicum result finalization, all of which come under the category of managerial role as stated by Bucher and Mutton (2008). Additionally, although some of IBCs believed that they have established monitoring mechanism, many of the SBCs emphasized the importance of establishing stronger monitoring mechanisms. The implication of this finding is that the TEIs need to evaluate the implementation of the practicum to ensure that, all stakeholders involved enact their roles effectively, or else if the TEIs have not yet established monitoring mechanism, it is advisable to establish them.

Perception of SLs. SLs who participated in this study had three significant roles: observations of student teaching, provision of feedback, and submission of feedback reports to the respective TEIs. Analysis of qualitative data showed that these SLs were required to observe two lessons for the purpose of assessing teaching of STs which is consistent with the findings from STQ (see Table 4.1). This means most of the TEIs had similar assessment criteria in terms of the number of lessons observed. But TEIs have differing requirement for the final assessment of the STs. For example, pass or fail was based on the aggregate marks obtained from feedback reports submitted by SLs and CTs and the practicum report or the reflective journal submitted by the STs. Thus, CTs also have a significant role in assessing STs' performance, which CTs indicated as one of their roles in the practicum – gate keeper of the profession.

However, it is conclusive from the data that in some cases, in principle, the final judging role is taken by the Academic Review Committee as one commented:

The final decision of pass or fail, in principle, was made by the Academic Review Committee (ARC) at the TEI based on the written feedback from SLs and CTs, but flexibility is given to HoDs to make the decision in cases where both SLs and CTs agreed upon the performance of the STs. And cases which they disagree were taken to ARC for re-evaluation. (TC3)

This comment indicates that the heads of the departments were also involved in the assessment component of the practicum other than overseeing or monitoring STs. It also alludes to the fact that the institution preferred to take a collective decision when the SLs and CTs have disputes over STs' performance. Further, it indicates that some institutions did not consider the reflective report or the practicum reports submitted by STs as part of the assessment. This might be a limitation or hindrance to the professional development of the STs. It is evident from STs reported data that they were required to maintain a 'practicum file' that consisted of written reports of reflection on their teaching sessions, which was an ongoing reflective practice that they had to undertake throughout their practicum. If these reflective reports were unvalued and unexamined, then STs might not give much importance to completing this component of the practicum, thus it would hinder their practice of becoming reflective practitioners, which is, according to the literature is as an essential characteristic of a successful teacher.

Recent literature related to SLs from the university demonstrates that they are key and influential players in STs' learning during the practicum (Cuenca et. al., 2011; McDonald, 2014). The two fundamental roles that they play include the roles of assessor and liaison between the university and the placement schools. SLs who participated in this study also indicated that they had three main roles: observation, provision of feedback, and submission of feedback reports to the university. These roles are essential about assessment.

Most of the SLs were university staff, but in some cases where the STs number exceeds the original supervisors available in the university, SLs were hired. In hiring external supervisors, importance was given to match STs subject specialization. In both the cases, whether they were external or internal (member of a staff), their principle role, perceived by SLs was to assess student teaching. They had a set number of school visits to observe STs and decide whether STs are competent or qualified. The SL role as

assessor is contested and critiqued in the recent literature. For example, a study conducted by Zhang, Cown, Hayes, Werry, Barnes and France (2015) found that SLs had only few scheduled observations, which the SLs claimed wasn't enough to make a judgment about STs' performance, concluding that the most suitable role for the SLs is to act as a liaison between the university and the placement schools, which to some extent contradicts the findings of the current study. Although the issue around how many sessions are needed to make an accurate assessment of a ST remains a question for all involved.

There was no indication in the current study that the SLs took on the roles of supporter or liaison. This could be an alarming signal for the TEIs to review and redefine their role as the recent literature suggests that they are potential actors to assist STs to bridge the placement school and university divide. In addition, the literature provides empirical evidence that they have the potential to develop professional relationships and strong connection with the schools and universities.

Research Question 3: What Are the Key Issues Identified by the Stakeholders?

Among the many issues identified by the stakeholders, the major issues are presented here and discussed in light of the relevant literature.

Classroom management problems. Classroom management is one of the overarching themes that emerged from STs' responses provided to the open-ended question that was asked about the major issues that they faced during the practicum. The two specific issues highlighted in relation to classroom management include, difficulties in controlling the class and being unable to pay individual attention to specific students. These two issues seem to be entangled with each other. For example, it could be possible that the lack of individual attention triggers pupils' misbehaviour making the class uncontrollable, while it could also be possible that since the class might be unruly from the very beginning, thus making it difficult to pay individual attention. Both cases might be true. But the comment "pupils deliberately misbehave in the class when SL comes for the assessed observations" suggests that misbehaviour was potentially a deliberate action to prove to the SLs that the STs were not competent or lacked the essential teaching skills. In addition, it indicates that it wasn't the case for all the teaching sessions, but since it

occurred only at a critical time, the assessment time, thus the STs considered it as a major issue.

Further, the CTs' qualitative data also showed that secondary CTs had a range of issues. The two predominant issues that they indicated were classroom management and content issues. Most of the CTs (five of six) indicated that STs find it difficult to manage behavioural problems effectively. Similarly, it was found that both primary and secondary CTs had concerns regarding the content knowledge of the STs. From a comment "I don't know whether the STs were not prepared or they were not taught the content at the college, what I can see from their teaching is that their content knowledge is not adequate", this particular CT doubted the quality and effectiveness of the course modules that STs undertake at the university. It also indicates that the content knowledge of the STs was inadequate. Additionally, in this perspective secondary STs felt they had a lack of sufficient content knowledge. It was evident from the comment "we had been away from O/L [GCE Ordinary Level syllabus] syllabus for many years, so the content is really a challenge." This comment indicates that the STs were not confident of the content knowledge of their teaching subject.

Classroom managements problem faced by the STs are documented in the extant literature as one of the challenges that STs encounter during the practicum (Ali, Othman & karim, 2014; Gan, 2013, Goh & Mathews, 2011; Kabilan & Izzaham, 2008; Mutlu, 2015; Yunus et al., 2010). It is also evident from the literature that the classroom management problem is not uncommon in other contexts. For example, a comparative study conducted by Mitchel, Clarke and Nuttall (2007) revealed that the classroom management problem was reported in both Australia and Canada as one of the main problems that STs encountered during the practicum. Therefore, the findings of the current study, especially the classroom management problem reported by most of the STs and CTs are also not an exception. This finding also accords with what Mutlu (2015) found in his study, which revealed that the biggest challenge that the STs faced was classroom management problems. He attributed this as STs being new to the classroom teaching and they did not know how to deal with the pupils effectively.

In brief, classroom management problems are common challenges that participating STs encountered during the practicum, which, according to the literature, is not uncommon. In addition, CTs reported that they were unsure whether the STs were well trained on classroom management techniques and content knowledge. They attributed the lack of this essential knowledge as the root cause of the classroom management problem. However, the STs suggested that, on an occasion, the opposite: in a number of instances the pupils deliberately disturbed the STs when SLs come for observation regardless of the STs' content knowledge.

Lack of support from the stakeholders. STs from both primary and secondary schools had issues related to the CTs, placement school, and TEIs. STs expected to get assistance from CTs pertaining to the curriculum, but they felt that they had not received adequate support from the CTs regarding the curriculum related matters. In relation to placement schools, STs across the three levels (ECE, primary and secondary) had issues with accessing essential services such as printing and photocopying. Apart from these, the lack of resources for making teaching aids was also reported by many STs including access to a convenient work station. In most of the placement schools, it was observed that they were stationed elsewhere other than staffroom, due to a lack of spaces available within the staffroom. This means these STs get limited opportunities to interact with other teachers and staff, which would be a hindrance to develop professional relationship with other significant persons, possibly impeding their socialization and professional development. In relation to TEIs, findings revealed that STs from both primary and secondary level had financial issues. Most of them expected to receive financial support from TEIs for the practicum, but it did not happen. This financial issue became apparent possibly because they had to spend a lot of money on photocopying, printing and for stationary as the placement schools did not offer these services to them.

The interview data from SBCs also revealed that in some cases, CTs were not willing to accommodate or accept STs. This rejection, according to them, seems to stem from their past unpleasant experience with STs and also the timing of the practicum. Many SBCs indicated that very often CTs raise concerns that the STs lack the sufficient content knowledge and after the practicum they have to re-teach the content that STs tried to teach during the practicum. Additionally, the timing of the practicum was also

identified as a contributing factor of CTs' rejection. Most of the time the practicum coincides with school examinations. During the examination period, CTs are reluctant to handover their classes to an outsider as they are held accountable for the performance of their classes. In addition, IBCs data also revealed that STs were not only encouraged to follow the teaching styles of their CTs, but also ought to use pre-prepared teaching resources. That means it limits the opportunity to practice many theories that STs have learned from the theory class, and hence leads to a disconnect between theory and practice. Further, this emulation of CTs teaching style might hinder the nurturing of inborn skills.

In short, STs have problems with content knowledge of the teaching subject. It is also evident that this lack of content knowledge became a major factor for the CTs to reject STs. In addition, STs felt they did not receive adequate support from the CTs in curriculum related matters or putting theories into practice. Similarly, the placement schools and TEIs seem unsupportive in providing both material and financial support respectively. Therefore, these findings imply that, due to these issues the success of the practicum, more specifically, the professional development of the STs during the practicum is likely to be undermined.

The review of related literature also suggests that the lack of support by the stakeholders reduces the learning opportunities that STs get from the placement schools, thereby hindering their overall professional development (Ulvik and Smith, 2011; Zeichner & Bier, 2015). For instance, findings of a study conducted by Allen (2009) showed that most of the time STs were asked to emulate the teaching style of the attached CTs, and they rarely got the opportunity to translate on-campus theory into practice. As previously mentioned, participating STs also experienced similar problem where they were encouraged to follow CTs' practice and use the resources already prepared by the CTs. Additionally, the finding reported regarding the lack of material support from the placement schools is in consistent with findings reported by Saricoban (2010), that reported participants did not receive required material support from the placement schools.

Therefore, findings from this study together with what is documented in the relevant literature suggest that STs feel they need more support from their CTs to put on-campus theories into practice and develop their own style of teaching. In addition, the placement schools need to find ways and means to provide a convenient working environment where they could get the chance to interact with significant others and understand the culture of the schools. Additionally, all supplementary material and resources need to be provided to them either by the placement schools or through TEIs to lessen STs' apprehension and anxiety so that they can fully concentrate on teaching and learning process.

Lack of preparation. Most of the participating STs felt that they were not adequately prepared for the practicum. In addition, important information regarding the practicum was neither given to them nor to their CTs. That means these STs began the practicum with the dissatisfaction caused by mismanagement of the practicum by their respective TEIs, a situation that could intensify their tension and stress on the practicum, a situation that has already been considered as a most stressful time of their journey to become a teacher.

On the other hand, CTs reported data revealed that the most predominant issues that they encountered were lack of commitment from STs and lack of pre-practicum preparation. CTs felt that some of the STs were not very committed and were irresponsible. Surprisingly, one of the CTs from the ECE level noted that some STs tend to quit the course, because they find it hard to manage the practicum. Additionally, CTs felt that some of the TEIs did not expose the STs to sufficient teaching strategies and lesson planning, which are considered essential skills for STs. The lack of these essential skills might possibly be one of the reasons why some STs find it hard to cope with the practicum.

The lack of essential teaching skills was also identified by SBCs as the second prominent issue that they faced during the practicum. Interview data revealed that this issue is more intense in both ECE and primary levels than secondary. SBCs reported a perception that most of the STs were not very well prepared for the practicum by the TEIs. In other words, sufficient pre-practicum preparation has not taken place at the

TEIs. This was reflected in STs' commitment during the practicum. It was found that most of the STs did not fully appreciate and accept the importance of lesson preparation and were observed unprepared and less serious about the practicum.

In addition, SBCs highlighted that the STs lacked some essential teaching skills such as lesson planning, classroom management skills, effective communication skills etc. Consequently, STs seek a lot of assistance and guidance from the CTs, which demands much time that they often find difficult to devote due to busy schedules of routine teaching tasks. This means there is a greater chance that the CTs might not be able to fully support the STs during the practicum, thus impeding the professional development of the STs. Therefore, these findings indicate that most of the STs neither received nor have undergone adequate pre-practicum at the TEIs. Therefore, it could mean that the lack of support will have significant impact on STs' learning during the practicum. The consequences of this lack of pre-practicum preparation were reflected in the comment "Incapable and incompetent teachers are being graduated from TEIs every year. Appointing such graduates to school system as qualified teachers has become a burden to the school system: they can't manage the classes and they can't deliver the content well..." This comment is indicative of many more things than just what is articulated. It implies that the placement schools are under pressure to hire the graduates who lack essential teaching skills. It also shows the strong dissatisfaction created within the school system in managing these STs.

Further, both SLs and IBCs data also revealed that, absenteeism has become a trend among most of the STs, and they were found to be not very serious about the practicum. Most of the SCBs also expressed the dissatisfaction regarding the punctuality and seriousness of the STs. Similarly, it was revealed that, as previously been mentioned, the SLs need to contact the STs to arrange supervision timing and the STs tend to deliberately delay these observations until the last week of the practicum, possibly, intending that the chances of passing would be higher. It could also be possible that the anxiety of being observed by the SLs made them avoid observation. Either way, the SLs were not able to follow the supervision guidelines provided by the TEIs. Practicum handbooks of most TEIs stated that these observations should start from the second week of the practicum. In addition, it implies that SLs were not able to have

control over scheduling observations; sometimes they had to solely depend on the schedule given by the STs. Regarding this, most of the SLs articulated that extra-curricular activities were responsible for this and school exams were held during the practicum period. They reported that, many times they experienced circumstances where they had to cancel observation only after attending the placement schools due to some ongoing unit tests or other activities. This therefore, indicates the need for greater cooperation between the CTs and SLs, more broadly, and the need to establish stronger connection between the placement schools and TEIs.

In sum, STs indicated that they were not adequately prepared for the practicum by the respective TEIs. At the same time most of the stakeholders, CTs, SBCs, SLs and IBCs indicated that the STs were not dedicated and devoted to the practicum as evident from their lack of commitment, punctuality, and seriousness. Apart from that, their deliberate action of delaying observation of SLs could be interpreted as not being confident in teaching even during the last week of the practicum. In simpler terms, these findings indicate that these STs need a stronger foundation of theoretical knowledge and need to be more aware of the importance and criticality of the practicum for them to become successful future teachers. These findings are in accord with a comparative study conducted by Mitchel, Clarke and Nuttall (2007). They found that the lack of preparation was one the main issue that the CTs reported regarding STs from both their study contexts in Australia and Canada.

Lack of coordination and cooperation. There are three key problems stemming from the lack of coordination and cooperation. One such significant problem identified was the difficulties in arranging placements. As previously mentioned, placements were usually arranged through correspondences. But it was found that in some cases where the placement schools could not cater to the demands of the TEIs, they sought assistance from the MoE to arrange placements. One SBC commented "...TEIs could have at least sought clarity from us as to why we couldn't cater to them, before they go that extent." It is indicative from this comment that there was disconnection and miscommunication among these stakeholders, leading to exacerbated dissatisfaction and tension within the placement schools regarding the provision of the practicum placements. It is also evident from the comment "...when it [requests] comes through

that channel [MoE] we cannot do anything. We are forced to arrange placements. Consequently, some teachers need to guide 3 or 4 STs throughout the year, which creates tension among teachers” that the placement schools were, sometimes, forced to provide placements beyond their capacity. Consequently, it created dissatisfaction among the cooperating teachers prior to the commencement of the practicum that would ultimately impact the overall success of the student teachers’ professional development during the practicum. On the other hand, IBCs reported that they had a hard time in arranging placements. Some of them believed that the placement schools didn’t provide placements even if they were able to accommodate many more STs. It was also revealed that the availability of placements was very much dependent on the personal connection and collegiality of the heads of the placement schools with the IBC.

The second significant issue associated with the lack of coordination was related to supervision by the SLs. Most of the participating SBCs were dissatisfied due to the lack of coordination and engagement from the TEIs. SBCs highlighted the ineffective supervision by SLs, or distractions to the supervision process as evidence of the lack of coordination between TEIs and placement schools. SBCs expected a closer and more improved connection between them, and a better mechanism to facilitate supervision and monitoring of STs during the practicum.

Moreover, SLs also had many difficulties not only setting up observation schedules, but also arranging a convenient space for post-observations conference. SLs neither had contact with CTs, nor with SBCs, and thus had to contact with the STs regarding the observation, which, according to the practicum documents of some the TEIs, is not allowed. In addition, it was also revealed that in many cases they had to delay the observations to the last week of the practicum, due to the disruption of extra and co-curricular activities. That means the SLs would not get the chance to assess student teachers' progress over time. It also implied that the SLs were unable to comply with the assessment procedures set by the TEIs. For example, the practicum documents from one of the TEIs stated that the SLs were required to carry out two assessed observations where they were required to wait a certain minimum number of teaching days between the observations. But the findings revealed that, as previously been mentioned due to the lack of coordination between TEIs placement schools and the SLs had to inform STs

prior to the observation, and at the same time, due to the disruption of school activities they couldn't afford to give the required number of teaching days between the observations. This could ultimately impact the effectiveness of the practicum assessment, which may have significant impact on the quality of the graduates. Therefore, TEIs need to establish a mechanism to monitor the evaluation and assessment of the practicum.

The third issue, as indicated by the IBCs, was the extreme delay in getting the practicum records from some of the placement schools. The IBCs had a hard time in receiving records completed by the CTs, which in principle were kept with them until the end of the practicum. At the end of the practicum these records are meant to be sent to the respective TEIs, via SBCs, which they require for assessment purposes. In some of the TEIs, for example TEIs who deal with a large number of STs, they had great difficulty in receiving the records from the placement schools. Consequently, they had to delay finalizing STs' practicum results. Regarding this, interview data of two principals, who worked as SBCs, it was revealed that they always, as a principal, ensure that all the relevant records be sent to the respective TEIs within one week of the completion of the practicum. Therefore, this contrary finding suggests that a more in-depth investigation needs to be carried out to better understand this issue more fully.

In brief, SBCs, SLs and IBCs experienced a certain level of tension due to the lack of coordination and cooperation between the TEIs and the placement schools. Of the most significant issues pertaining to this issue include difficulties in arranging placements, disruption of the supervision process, and delays in finalizing practicum results. Of the three significant issues, the placement issue appears as a consistently cited issue in the literature (Le Cornu, 2010; Jiyoan, 2007). A very recent study conducted by Bai and Kaur (2016) found that the most of the universities continue to experience the pressure of finding placements for the ever increasing number of student teachers. With regard to the placement issue, the review of relevant literature demonstrates that this issue is rooted in the perception of the stakeholders that the responsibility of teacher education is exclusively the domain of the TEIs (Le Cornu, 2016; Clarke, Collins, & Triggs, 2012). Authors such as Le Cornu and Clarke et al. suggest that teacher education should be viewed as a shared endeavour where all stakeholders account for their roles and responsibilities.

Lack of relevant policy. Another significant issue identified in the current study was the lack of relevant policy. A SL, who also had worked as an IBC, remarked that the root cause of the presence of existing issues related to the practicum was the lack of relevant policy on the practicum. Both SLs and IBCs noted that there has not been a policy formulated at the national level on the practicum during the long history (40years) of teacher education in the Maldives.

Additionally, even within the TEIs, there weren't specific departments entitled to organize and implement the practicum. According to most of the participating IBCs, for each of the practicum round the head of the TEI selects a staff member to coordinate and conduct the practicum. This practice, according to them, leads them to choose different staff for each practicum round. That means there is a greater chance for inconsistencies in implementing the practicum unless the newly selected are informed of the previous practicum round and any pertinent issues. Thus it is hard to visualize coherency between the practicum rounds.

The review of related literature indicated that stable and effective policies and mechanisms are needed to ensure the quality of teacher education programs. For example, El-Kerdany (2012) reported that countries like UK and China have laws and regulations that govern the length of the practicum. According to the study by Invarson, Reid, Buckley, Kleihenz, Masters and Rowley (2014), one of the characteristics of successful teacher education programs in high achieving countries such as Canada, Germany, Finland, Singapore, and Chinese Taipei is that they have stable policies on teacher education across all levels. Invarson et al, review of 'best practice' teacher education programs in high performing countries to bench mark Australia's own teacher education programs found that a common feature of those programs is that they have stable policies and well-established mechanisms on teacher education at a national level. Similarly, in his review of teacher education programs from selected countries, Hoxie (2010) also concluded that in many countries, TEIs have their own policies formulated that fit within a framework of nationally articulated targets. Therefore, the findings of the current study together with evidence from international literature suggest the dire need of formulating a national level policy on practicum.

Pitfalls in practicum structures. The less prominent issues identified by STs are related to the structure of the practicum and how it was organized. A number of STs raised concerns regarding the timing and duration of the practicum. They felt that the time allocated for the practicum was not sufficient to develop essential teaching skills. At the same time, it was highlighted that the timing of the practicum is inappropriate as most of the placement schools have unit tests and other school's examinations that limit the classroom teaching time. In addition, it was evident from STs data and the interviews with SBCs that the TEIs hadn't had proper mechanism for monitoring STs.

Most of the participating SBCs perceived that the current assessment procedures were not sufficient to effectively evaluate STs' teaching competencies. The current assessment procedures require SLs to observe two teaching sessions, which SBCs believed did not adequately allow for an informed judgment about the performance of the STs. In addition, SBCs believed that a fair judgment by the CTs is questionable as the STs have strong connections with the CTs. In other words, the CTs may not be able to take the dual roles as assessor and guider. These issues are also reported in the literature as challenges to be overcome.

Research Question 4: What Are Stakeholders' Recommendations to Address the Key Issues Identified?

As mentioned earlier, this study involved five different stakeholder groups (STs, CTs, SLs, SBC, and IBC). Recommendations from these stakeholder groups are collated and presented here thematically.

Better pre-practicum preparation. Pre-practicum preparation was one of the most significant themes highlighted by all stakeholders (STs, CTs, SBC and IBC) except SLs. STs from all the three levels (ECE, primary, secondary) identified this theme as one of the prominent themes. Findings revealed that though these STs identified pre-practicum preparation as a significant area that requires revision, STs from different levels highlighted different perspectives or dimensions of it. For example, most of the STs from ECE recommended that the TEIs prepare them well for managing classrooms, and to strengthen their knowledge base on various aspects of child development. While, STs from primary recommended conducting more peer teaching sessions and workshops

on lesson planning for all STs regardless of the practicum round. On the other hand, STs from secondary level requested to have a better information dissemination mechanism, such as scheduled coordination meetings to exchange essential information to all the stakeholders.

Similarly, CTs, SBCs, and IBCs also highlighted that the TEIs need to put extra effort to make the STs well prepared for the practicum. The three significant areas that they indicated comprised content knowledge, teaching methodologies, and classroom management. To further strengthen these areas, they recommended TEIs conduct more peer teaching sessions, more sessions on teaching methodologies and classroom management techniques. In addition, they indicated that it is imperative to check the content knowledge of the STs prior to their enrolment to the practicum. In other words, acquisition of good content knowledge in the area of subject speciality should be made a pre-requisite of the practicum. In addition, SBCs pointed out that it is equally important to make the STs more aware of the importance of the practicum as it was evident from the behaviour of many of the current STs who were not very serious about the practicum.

Therefore, these findings indicate that all the stakeholders who participated in this study, excluding SLs, recommended that it is important to equip the STs with a strong theoretical knowledge base, especially on classroom management techniques, teaching methodologies and subject specific content knowledge. For many of the CTs, as previously been mentioned, classroom management problems are one of the biggest challenge that the STs faced. To address this key issue, as the participants of this study suggested, and the international literature also suggests, a sound knowledge base is required to be an effective teacher (Ingvarson, et.al, 2014). For example, a study conducted by Yuksel (2014) concluded that more content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge is imperative for the STs to survive in a changing world of 21st century. Similarly, as some of the STs recommended, and the literature also emphasizes, the importance of conducting microteaching sessions prior to the practicum to develop their teaching skills and self-confidence (Vick, 2006).

Greater cooperation and coordination. The findings of the study revealed that a greater cooperation and coordination from CTs, placement schools and TEIs is

imperative to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the current practicum practices. Both the CTs and STs recommended that the placement schools and TEIs work more collaboratively to enhance the professional development of the STs during the practicum. STs from ECE level recommended the placement schools treat them as beginning and professionals not just a ST from the university. This suggests their desire to be seen in transition from ST to practicing professional as the practicum unfolds.

STs from primary and secondary recommended the CTs provide better curriculum related supports such as locating relevant resources, providing greater opportunities to test and experiment many theories learnt from the university, and supporting them with more constructive feedback. In addition, greater cooperation was expected in dealing with behavioural cases and classroom management issues. Further, they recommended that the schools administration give them access to services such as printing, photocopying, and the internet. Similarly, they requested that the placement schools monitor CTs' work to ensure that they fulfil their role as requested by the TEIs. Further, they recommended providing either pocket money for the practicum, or making arrangements in placement schools to get essential services and other stationary requirements for the practicum.

Similarly, CTs recommended that the TEIs conduct more training sessions to assist them to better perform their roles and responsibilities. In addition, they strongly believed that both the placement schools and TEIs need to put a concerted effort into establishing a better mechanism to monitor the practicum. Apart from that, both CTs and SLs highlighted that a broader range of opportunities may be a necessity for STs, especially in ECE level, for socialization into the profession.

Unlike STs and CTs, both the SBCs and IBCs identified two essential links, or connections that need to be strengthened, in order to address many of the existing issues in the practicum. One such significant link identified by SBCs was the connection between TEIs and MoE/DHE. They recommended that the TEIs work in collaboration with the MoE in setting up a feasible practicum schedule that accommodates STs from all the TEIs, and at a time that would be convenient to the placement schools. They

believed that having such a schedule would help to resolve a number of the placement issue, one of the key issues, identified by most of the IBCs.

The second significant point that SBCs indicated was to establish practicum departments in the placement schools that should directly deal with the TEIs in conducting the practicum. In addition, SLs and IBC highlighted that it is highly imperative to ensure that all the stakeholders including the heads of the school and other non-academic staff are well aware of their roles and responsibilities by conducting a series of information sessions. Additionally, IBCs requested that the placement schools be more prepared to support TEIs in accommodating STs from a range of TEIs. In short, these findings indicate that a greater cooperation and coordination is needed from stakeholders to improve the current practices of the practicum.

Develop a better practicum structure. The findings revealed that STs, CTs, and SBCs felt that the existing practicum structures of some of the TEIs need to be revised to provide better opportunities for the professional development of the STs. For example, STs from both primary and secondary recommended that the TEIs to change the length, timing, observation, and assessment practices in the practicum. Those STs who had a longer practicum (12 weeks) recommended that it be split into two or three practicum rounds. Regarding the timing of the practicum, most of the STs preferred to conduct the practicum at the beginning of the year, intending to understand how the teaching related activities were organized in the placement schools at the beginning of the academic year. This indicates their eagerness to understand the culture of the placement schools.

Similarly, CTs from all the three levels highlighted three key dimensions of the practicum that they felt important to change: timing, duration, and observation of the practicum. Most of them recommended that the practicum be at the beginning of the year as they felt that it was difficult for the pupils to adjust with new set of teachers (STs) at a later point. Unlike the STs, these CTs support the longer practicum, thus they requested to combine three short practicums that some of the TEIs currently conduct in to one long practicum. As can be seen by these contrasting suggestions, there is no easy one-size-fits-all solution.

Regarding the observation that reflects the current assessment of the practicum, not only CTs but also the STs and SBCs recommended revisions to the requirements of the observation. STs and SBCs recommended an increase in the number of observations by the SLs for the assessment as they believed that the existing requirement (2 observations) is inadequate to make a well informed fair decision about the performance of the STs. On the other hand, STs recommended revisions of the timings of the observations, such that the observations for the assessment were scheduled throughout the practicum, rather than having them at the last two weeks of the practicum. In addition, SBC recommended a change to the current assessment criteria such that it covers broader perspectives of teaching and learning. In this regard they noted that it is also important to evaluate STs' participation in co-curricular activities (e.g., involvement in broader community of teachers).

As some of the participants of this study recommended, regarding the length of the practicum, the review of relevant literature shows that many authors argued for an extended duration to develop necessary teaching skills (Endley, 2014; Gujjar, Ramza & Bajwa, 2011; Karammustafaoglu, 2009; Min, Abdulla, Mansor & Shamsudin, 2014; Ure, 2009; Wyss, Siebert, & Dowling, 2012). Many authors claimed that having an extended practicum provides greater opportunities to refine their teaching skills and develop a stronger professional relationship with significant others (Wyss, Siebert, & Dowling, 2012; Zeichner, 2006). However, STs who participated in this study recommended having more and shorter practicum rounds, rather than having a single lengthy round, which is in line with the view of Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013). They stated that it is equally important to have multiple exposures to various contexts to gain better understanding of diversity of learning needs of pupils across various contexts.

STs recommended having the practicum at the beginning of the academic year intending to get better opportunities to learn the school culture. Authors such as Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) recommended that it is important to conduct the first practicum round at the beginning of the course, which will help the STs to attest their career choice, which according to the literature, is one of the purposes of the practicum. In addition, the findings revealed that the assessment adopted by the TEIs, according to the literature, is summative (assessment of learning) in nature as opposed to the formative (assessment

for learning) (Aspden, 2014; Tillema, Smith & Leshem, 2011). This type of assessment requires, as this study found out that SLs to observe more teaching sessions to make a judgment about the performance of the STs. However, the STs' recommendation to change the assessed observation throughout the practicum implies that they are, according to the literature, suggesting a change to the current assessment to have a greater emphasis on formative assessment, where feedback plays an imperative role in developing STs teaching skills (Tillema, Smith & Leshem, 2011). The relevant literature provides empirical evidence of the benefits of formative assessment, and recommends adopting more guidance oriented approach (formative) than an appraisal based approach (summative) (Jeffer, 2008; Kaphesi, 2013; Tillema, Smith & Leshem, 2011).

In brief, recommendations made by the participants, together with the review of international literature suggests the adoption of more formative assessment practices, although it is challenging, it possess several benefits to the STs. Further, as STs recommend, a more integrated model of practicum is more effective than conducting the practicum at the end of the program. In addition, the SBCs suggested that it is essential to include STs in broader community involvement as part of the assessment. It should be noted that the author was unable to come across any international literature on that recommendation.

Formulate relevant policies on the conduct of practicum. Make policy on the conduct of the practicum. These participants highlighted the lack of any such policy during the long history (43 years) of teacher education in the Maldives, and its consequences. On explaining the dire need of a policy on practicum one commented:

With the expansion of higher education in the country, the number of teacher education institution has increased exponentially. But I think neither NIE nor MoE had realized the importance of having a mechanism or policy on the conduct of practicum. As a result, every institution has a different practicum structure and guidelines to conduct practicum. These differences made significant impact on the quality of the graduates. (SL1)

Additionally, they believed that the many existing issues can be ameliorated by having a well formulated policy on practicum that would ultimately lead to the establishment of the practicum departments in placement schools and in TEIs. As pointed out by the SLs,

having a practicum department at the placement schools would enable them to carry out the supervision process more efficiently. In other words, it is imperative to establish practicum departments both in placement schools and in TEIs for the systematic and successful conduct of the practicum. In addition, the relevant literature also attests that high achieving countries with successful teacher education programs have national level policies, institutional level policies that comply with the targets of the national frameworks on teacher education (Hoxie, 2010; Invarson, Reid, Buckley, Kleihenz, Masters & Rowley, 2014).

Establish placement schools. Most of the IBCs that participated in the study felt that the only practical solution to the placement issue is building placement schools. They recommended that placement schools can be well managed by the staff of the TEIs. One coordinator from one of the leading TEIs in the Maldives commented:

My first recommendation is to build our own placement school. Why can't we do that? We are a teaching Faculty. We have experts in almost all the subject areas at the national level. Both undergraduate and post-graduate students from our faculty can teach. In addition, we, the lecturers also can teach. It would be a professional development for us too. So, I believe this is the only solution we have to address the placement issue. (TC3)

The suggestion raises the issue of the possible practicality and feasibility of the establishment of placement schools, not dissimilar to laboratory schools that John Dewey first promoted in the 1900's.

Conclusion

This chapter has returned to the four research questions, and discussed them in light of the finding of this study and the international literature. At the conclusion of each of the theme, brief summary was presented. The discussion of questions also outlines the recommendations suggested by the stakeholders to improve the current practices of practicum in TEIs in the Maldives.

The final chapter of this thesis (Chapter 6) outlines of the main findings of this study, and recommendations are made in light of both international literature and what the stakeholders recommended. It also accounts for limitation of the study and future research in this area.

Chapter 6 : CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter highlights the major findings of the study in relation to the research questions, provides recommendations, implications, and the study's contributions to literature. To situate these findings in relation to the research conducted for this dissertation, the following diagram provides an overview of the entire study from beginning to end (see Figure 6.1)

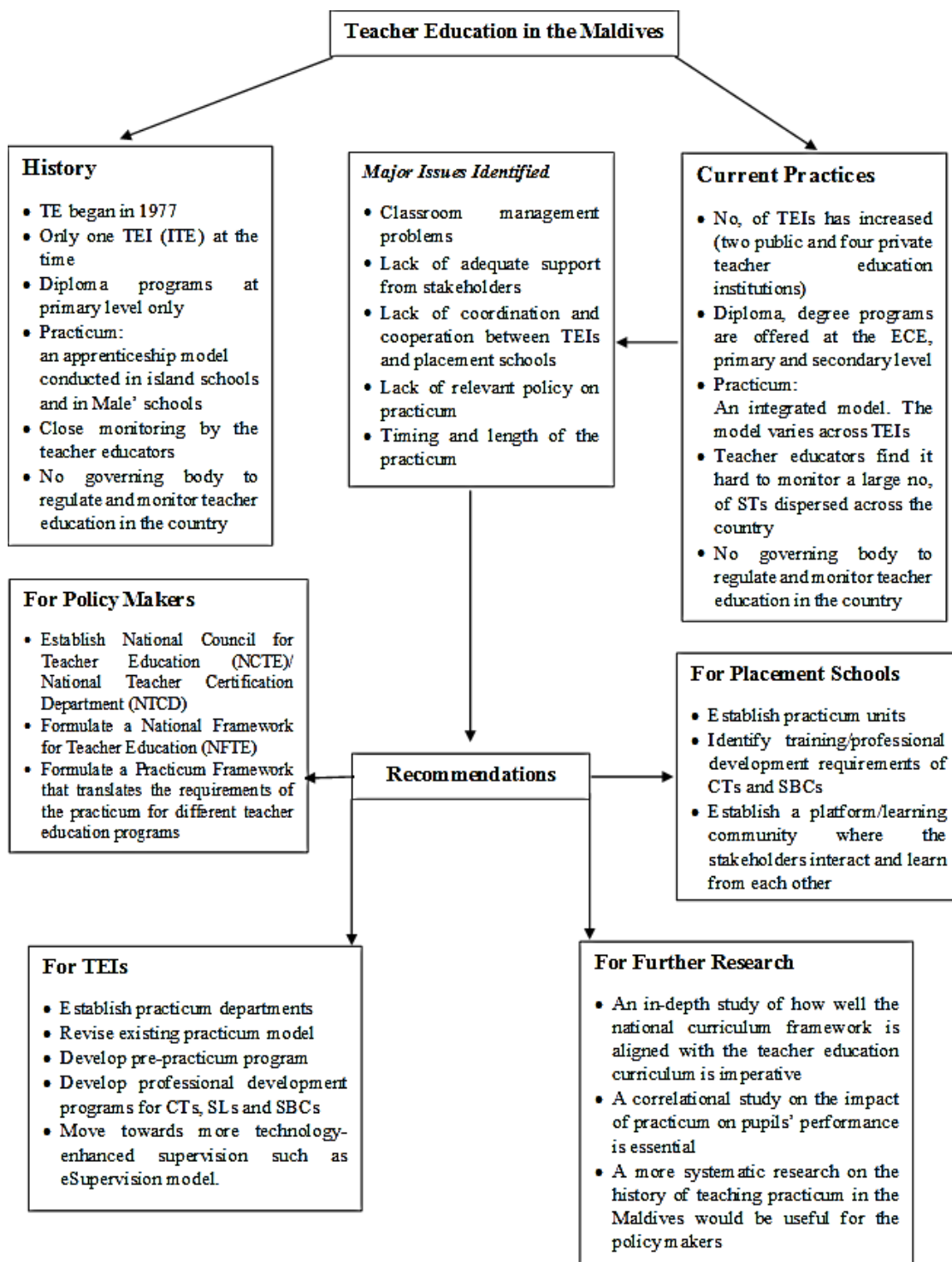


Figure 6.1. A Summary of the Study.

The Research Study

Practicum is considered as a crucial element in any teacher education programs. It is a training arena where STs need to feel safe, supported, guided and assisted in putting into practice what they have learned on-campus. It provides invaluable opportunities for the STs to consolidate their professional competencies and confirm their career choices. It is through the practicum that they begin to develop a personal philosophy, knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm for the teaching profession. The review of international literature attests that the practicum has a significant impact on the quality of graduate teachers. In recent years, there have been public criticisms on the declining quality of graduate teachers. However, there has been very limited formal research conducted during the long history (40 years) of teacher education in the Maldivian context in this regard (the author was able to locate only one piece of research), and in particular with respect to the practicum. With the intention to address these gaps, this study is designed to explore the current practices of practicum in the Maldives. It not only investigated the perceptions of the stakeholders but identified key issues, challenges, and new possibilities.

The research reported in this thesis explored the perceptions of 317 STs from six TEIs (two public and four private institutions), 205 CTs from 21 schools, 2 SLs from one public TEI, and 3 IBCs from two public and one private TEI who played the dual role of both coordinators and SLs. A detailed survey was conducted towards the end of the practicum, and observations were carried out at different times while the STs were in the natural setting in the placement schools. Interviews were conducted after the analysis of survey questionnaires. As far as possible representatives of all stakeholder groups (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs and IBCs) were included in the study to portray a broad picture of the practicum. Their perceptions were sought to investigate:

1. The main features of the practicum in the programs of teacher education institutions in the Maldives.
2. Their perception about the current practices of the practicum with respect to preparation for practicum, structure of the practicum, feedback, professional

support, assessment, institutional socialization, and professional development.

3. Key issues and challenges encountered.
4. Possible practical measures to address the key issues identified.

This concluding chapter highlights the major findings of the study in relation to the research questions, provides recommendations, implications, and the study's contributions to literature.

Main Findings of the Study

Main features of the practicum models. The STs data clearly indicate that there were three levels of teacher education programs offered by the TEIs at the time of data collection: ECE, primary and secondary. In each of these levels different programs were offered: degree, diploma, advanced diploma and advanced certificate. The duration and the number of practicum rounds varied in these programs across the levels and also within the same level. For example, in ECE, there are two variants of diploma program: a one-year and a two-year program. The latter has two practicum rounds and the former has one practicum round. Similarly, across the levels, both ECE and primary have a three-year degree program, but the secondary levels has both a three-year and a four-year degree program with differing practicum structures.

In addition, it is evident from the STs data that, except in a few instances, the practicum in most of these programs were supervised and assessed by SLs and CTs. Exceptions include secondary level diploma and ECE level diploma and advanced certificate programs. In secondary diploma, the practicum was supervised and assessed by the CTs and in ECE it was by the SLs. Similarly, it is clear from STs interview data that the criteria for pass or fail was not consistent across the program. For example, some STs reported that the reflective report or portfolio (that they were required to submit) was considered as an element of the assessment process while, for some STs, though it was a requirement, it wasn't counted as an assessment component, instead the assessment was based only on the observations by SLs. Further, in some programs, pass or fail was only based on the observations of SLs, while in some programs, it was based on aggregate

marks achieved from various components of the assessment: CTs observations, SLs observations and the reflective report, the teaching portfolio.

Perceptions of stakeholders.

Perceptions of STs. STs' perceptions pertaining to major dimensions of the practicum (preparation for practicum, structure of the practicum, feedback, professional support, assessment, institutional socialization, and professional development) were studied. Preparation for the practicum mainly focused on three areas: conducting sessions on lesson planning, teaching strategies, and peer teaching. It was clear from the data that these STs had had practice in these areas either through workshops or through course modules. However, they expected the TEIs to carry out additional activities to strengthen areas such as classroom management techniques and content knowledge. Regarding feedback, STs reported that observations and feedback were limited to the requirement of the college/faculty, but they expected their CTs to observe many more teaching sessions and give more constructive written feedback. In the case of professional support, it was revealed that although they received support regarding reviewing curriculum, allocating resources, observing other role models, etc, they still needed further support in areas such as teaching methods, preparation of teaching aids, and lesson planning. Additionally, it was found that, in particular, the secondary STs need more support in translating theory into practice. The findings with respect to assessment revealed that in ECE and primary both formative and summative approaches were used, while in secondary it was more summative in nature. In addition, STs believed that the practicum helped them to learn essential teaching skills and enabled them to construct and reconstruct their identity. Further, it enabled them to become socialized to the culture of the schools' system; especially STs from some TEIs were able to learn the culture of schools in various contexts across the country.

Perceptions of CTs. It was evident from the finding that the CTs were not only motivated due to their desire to contribute to the profession, but also due to the reciprocal professional development benefits of the practicum. Most of them perceived that the practicum is a very important element in teacher education. They believed that the purpose of the practicum is to provide context, to assist the professional development of

STs, and to provide opportunities to reduce the theory into practice gap. It was clear that these CTs followed different mentoring styles in guiding STs. Among them, the educative style was found to be most common. All of them believed in their role as providers of feedback, and an overwhelmingly large proportion of them perceived that a multitude of roles such as advocates of practical, supporters of reflection, agent of socialization, conveners of relation, gleaners of knowledge, gatekeepers of profession, and modellers of practice are also very important. However, investigation of their enacted role in current practicum setting revealed that they were unable to put into practice all of what they perceived as important.

Perceptions of SBCs. SBCs perceived that they have three main roles: to confirm the placements, assign CTs, and act as a liaison between TEIs to manage meetings and exchange essential documents. It was revealed that there wasn't any formal procedure for arranging placements. Different TEIs approached in different ways. For example, some managed it via formal correspondence, while others did it through telephone communication and through collegial relationships with the school heads. CTs were found to be assigned on a one-to-one basis, if the STs didn't exceed the number of teachers available in the schools. Further, these SBCs noted that there was not much by way of formal meetings with the stakeholders except the initial meeting held at the schools on the first day of the practicum.

Perceptions of IBCs. IBCs perceived that the most significant role that they play during the practicum was arranging placements. They considered it as the biggest challenge in conducting the practicum as there wasn't much of cooperation from placement schools. This also confirmed the findings of SBCs that there wasn't a formal mechanism to arrange placements. Some institutions arrange placements via the MoE, while others were able to arrange them via telephone communication with TEIs. Other less prominent roles revealed maintaining practicum records and finalizing the practicum results. Other than that, they conducted meetings prior to the commencement of the practicum to distribute the essential documents and necessary information to STs. It was also found that institutions A2 and B2 conducted weekly post-conference meetings while others did not. SLs were usually selected among the university staff and rarely hired from outside. In such cases, attention was given to match the subject specialization to the

practicum context. In addition, it was revealed that there were mechanisms to monitor STs during the practicum, but the SBCs disagreed with it in its current form.

Perceptions of SLs. The findings revealed that they had three significant roles: observation of student teaching, provision of feedback, and submission of feedback reports to the respective TEIs. In other words, they acted more in the role of an assessor. However, it was found that the pass or fail was not only dependent on SLs. Most of the institutions consider the practicum reports and also the feedback from the CTs as part of the assessment, where final adjudication was sometimes done within the TEIs themselves.

Key Issues Identified by the Stakeholders

Classroom management problems. Classroom management was identified as one of the challenges that STs encountered during the practicum. CTs and SBCs associated this issue with the STs' inadequate content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. They believed that classroom management problems were rooted in the inadequate preparation of STs for the practicum.

Lack of adequate support from stakeholders. It was found that STs did not get adequate support from their CTs and from the management members at the placement school. Placement schools appeared to be unable to afford the provision of services such as printing, photocopying, resources for teaching aids, and the internet. In some schools, STs did not have a convenient space to work with CTs. In addition, it was found that STs did not get adequate support from CTs in curriculum related matters or in putting theories into practice. Additionally, STs expected to receive financial support from TEIs as they had to spend money on resources, but unfortunately this financial support was not provided.

Lack of preparation. STs perceived that they were not adequately prepared for the practicum by the respective TEIs. However, CTs also reported that some of the STs weren't dedicated and devoted to the practicum. CTs, SBCs and SLs highlighted that STs were not equipped with essential teaching skills (lesson planning, classroom management skills, effective communication skills, etc.). Further, the lack of

commitment, punctuality, and seriousness about the practicum were highlighted as evidence to support their assertions. STs' deliberate action of delaying observation by SLs also, to some extent, affirms that they need further training to develop their self-confidence in teaching.

Lack of coordination and cooperation. Greater cooperation and coordination were essential in successful organisation and implementation of the practicum. It was clear that the stakeholders experience tension due to the lack of coordination between TEIs and placement schools. One of the very significant issues that contributed to the tension was the difficulties in arranging placements. In addition, disruption of supervision process and delays in finalizing the practicum results were closely related to the lack of the coordination and cooperation.

Lack of relevant policy on practicum. Stakeholders, especially SLs, SBCs and IBCs remarked that one of the root causes of the existing issues in the practicum setting is the lack of relevant policy on practicum at the national level. It was found that there has not been a national level policy on the conduct of practicum during the past 40 years of teacher education in the Maldives. Even at the institutional level, there have not been appropriate mechanisms established to organize and conduct practicum. In other words, importance wasn't given to conduct of this crucial component of teacher education.

Structure of the practicum. A few STs raised the concern regarding the timing and duration of the practicum. They perceived that the duration of the practicum is insufficient to develop essential teaching skills, and also the timing is inappropriate as it, most of the time, coincides with the school examinations and other unit tests. In addition, SBCs perceived that the assessment of the practicum, especially the number of observations by SLs for the assessment of the practicum, as inadequate and insufficient to evaluate the performance of STs.

Suggestions by Stakeholders

Better practicum preparation. As previously been mentioned, classroom management is one of the biggest challenges that the STs reported. To address this key issue, all the stakeholders, excluding SLs, recommended the TEIs equip the STs with a

strong theoretical knowledge base, especially on classroom management techniques, teaching methodologies and subject specific content knowledge. In addition, more opportunities to put theory into practice through microteaching, peer teaching, etc., were recommended prior to the practicum to develop STs self-confidence and teaching skills.

Greater cooperation and coordination. Greater cooperation and coordination from the stakeholders were recommended to improve the current practices of the practicum. Especially, CTs, being one of the key players, were recommended to provide relevant support related to the curriculum and provide more constructive feedback. STs expected the placement schools to provide essential services, such as photocopying, printing, internet, and resources for teaching aids. In addition, TEIs were recommended to work in partnership with the MoE in setting up a practicum schedule at a national level in consultation with the placement schools, in order to ameliorate placement issues and challenges of practicum with school activities.

Develop better practicum structure. STs from both primary and secondary level recommended that the TEIs revise the length, timing, and observation practices of the practicum. It was found that the STs who had one longer block placement of 12-weeks recommended that the TEIs include multiple exposures, while STs who had multiple placements of four-week duration were expected to increase the duration in a single location. Most of the STs recommended that the TEIs conduct practicum at the beginning of the academic year as they believed it would provide potential professional development opportunities for them to learn about the culture of the classroom environment as it is developed by CTs. Regarding the assessment, CTs, STs, and SBCs recommended an increase in the number of assessed observation, and STs, in particular recommended more assessed observations throughout the practicum, rather than having only two during the last week of the practicum. In addition, SBCs recommended that the TEIs include STs' participation in broader community activities of school as part of the assessment.

Formulate relevant policies on the conduct of practicum. Stakeholders, especially, SLs, SBC, and IBC strongly recommended the relevant authorities formulate a national level policy on practicum. They attributed the declining quality of graduates

to the lack of such stable policies at the national level. Furthermore, they recommended that placement schools and TEIs establish practicum departments to facilitate and conduct the practicum in a well-coordinated and a better supported environment.

Establish placement schools. Most of the IBCs recommended that the only practical solution to the placement issue – the key challenge that they face – is building placement schools. On assuring the feasibility of establishing such schools, one IBC articulated that being the nation's premier teacher education institutions, they have teaching expertise in all the subject areas, and also assured that their post-graduate students are also qualified enough to work in such an environment. Nonetheless, there are many issues to be considered if this option was taken up in the Maldivian context.

Recommendations

This study draws several implications based on its findings. Many of these serve as practical recommendations, consolidated with the suggestions offered by the stakeholders, based on their experience, to improve the current practices of practicum in the Maldives. The recommendations are presented under three categories: for policy makers, TEIs and placement schools. Figure 6.2 depicts the summary of the recommendation.

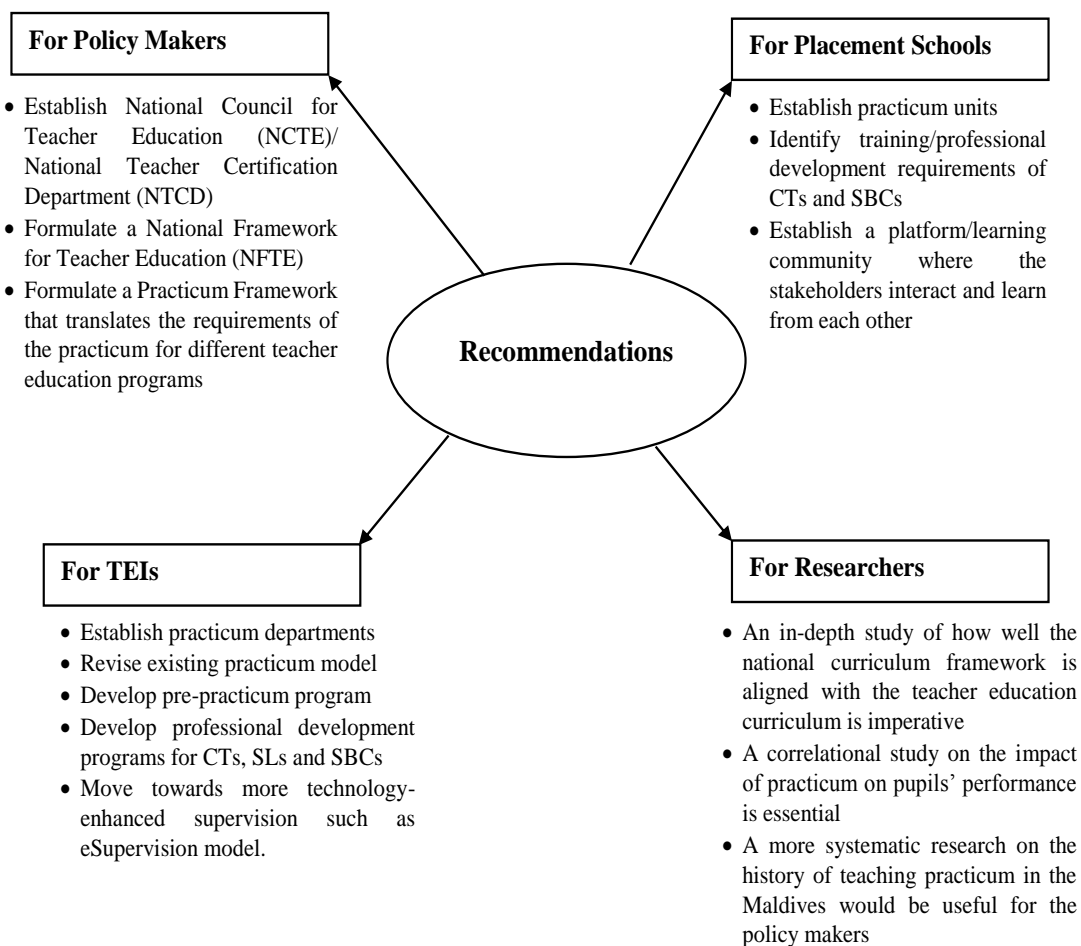


Figure 6.2. A Summary of the Recommendations

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Establish relevant governing bodies. It is evident from the history of teacher education in the Maldives that there hasn't been a governing body to regulate teacher education in the country for the past 40 years of teacher education. Based on the findings of this empirical research, the study suggests that it is imperative to establish a Teacher Education Council/Teacher Certification Department either at the MoE or at the NIE, to regulate the practices of the practicum across various TEIs in the Maldives. Similarly, it is equally important to establish practicum departments at the TEIs and in placement schools. The findings of this study revealed that, at present there is no practicum departments at the TEIs, thus each practicum round is coordinated and conducted by selected academic staff. This practice undermines effective implementation of the

practicum, especially in an institution where a large number of STs are being sent to the placement schools in various parts of the country. On the other hand, the SBCs also suggested that it is equally important to have a section/unit at the placement schools to assist the TEIs in conducting the practicum.

Formulate a national practicum framework (NPF). With the increase in the number of TEIs in the country, and the centrality of practicum in teacher education, stakeholders, especially SLs, SBCs, and IBCs felt that it is of utmost importance to formulate a national level framework on the practicum that translates the organisation and implementation of the practicum across all the TEIs in the Maldives. The findings of this empirical study revealed that, at present, there is no consistency in the practicum practices across various TEIs across the country. Therefore, it is highly desirable for the Teacher Education Council/Teacher Certification Department to formulate a practicum framework in order to maintain consistency, coherence, and quality of teacher education provided by various TEIs in the country. The framework needs to have a clear vision and mission for teacher education so that TEIs could collaboratively work towards achieving a common goal. It also needs to translate practicum requirements for different levels of teacher education programs in order to maintain coherency and consistency of practicum as conducted by the various TEIs in the country. In addition, it is also important to identify training requirements and remuneration for the stakeholders, in particular, the CTs, who take on a huge responsibility in the preparation of STs.

Create a practicum calendar. Arranging placements was found to be one of the key issues identified by both SBCs and IBCs. The findings revealed that the placement schools had a difficult time managing a large number of STs from different TEIs. It appeared to be the root causes of many other issues, for example, assigning many STs to one CT, which is impractical as the CT cannot give quality time to those assigned. Thus the STs are left unguided and unsupported and complete the practicum as a mere formal requirement. On the other hand, the findings also revealed that the STs had difficulty in completing the required number of teaching hours due to the distraction of other school-related activities, such as exams, parent teacher meetings, etc. To ameliorate these issues, the SBCs and IBCs felt that a practicum calendar that indicates practicum timings for each of the TEIs is imperative. The study suggests that the teacher certification

department (mentioned earlier) may need to take the initiative to work on this suggestion in collaboration with the practicum departments at the TEIs and in consultation with the partnership schools.

Recommendations for TEIs

Revisit and revise the existing practicum model(s). The research findings regarding the practicum inferred that the practicum model varied among TEIs. For example, some programs had an integrated model where STs get multiple exposures to multiple contexts across the country, throughout the program in conjunction with on-campus work. This model offers several potential professional development opportunities to STs, including valuable opportunities to reduce the longstanding theory-practice gap exist in the teacher education programs. On the other hand, there were STs who had only one practicum round scheduled in the final semester of the program which was entirely practice-based. This limits their exposure and as a result their experience is confined to the culture and practices of the particular placement school and CT with whom they are placed.

Therefore, it is recommended in light of international literature and the findings of this empirical research to strengthen the link between theory and practice within the context of the practicum setting (that moves beyond a strictly practice-based model) to enhance the overall professional development of STs. TEIs may need to revisit and revise their teacher education programs to incorporate a more integrated practicum model, in which STs get multiple, intensive exposures to a range of practicum settings to refine and hone their teaching craft in juxtaposition to various theories. The literature attests that an early, extended and integrated practicum is one of the core features of a high-quality practicum (Ingvarson, et.al, 2014). For example, Singapore, one of the high achieving countries, has adopted a highly integrated practicum model, in which a degree program has a total of 22 weeks of practicum comprised of four phases: two-week observation during the first year, five weeks as assistant teacher in the second year, five weeks as practicing teacher in the third year and 10 weeks of full time teaching practice in the final year.

In unfolding the history of teacher education in the Maldives, it is evident that the formal teacher education in the country began in 1977 with an apprenticeship model that consisted of a 19-week practicum that comprised of two phases: ‘school experience program’ (two blocks of seven-weeks as a teaching assistant) and ‘teaching practice program’ (five-weeks as a fulltime teacher). Although, this model possesses several advantages, it has been revised on several occasion based on STs feedback, but none of those revisions were necessarily supported with research based evidence, especially from the Maldives itself.

Therefore, in light of the literature and illuminating the practices of high achieving countries together with the concerns raised by the STs and CTs regarding the length of the practicum, this study suggests that there is a need to revise the current practicum practices to a more integrated model such that it provides extensive exposure to school contexts and theoretical knowledge throughout the teacher education program.

Develop a pre-practicum program. Based on the findings, in particular, from the perceptions of stakeholders, it is recommended that the TEIs put greater effort in preparing STs for the practicum. As most of the stakeholders felt that a large number of the STs were not adequately prepared, it is recommended that TEIs strengthen STs' theoretical knowledge base, and provide more simulated experiences (such as microteaching and peer teaching sessions) to enhance their self-confidence and teaching skills prior to the practicum. Issues and concerns with the content knowledge and classroom management problems were consistently cited as major issues, thus STs need to be well equipped with the essential content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge aspects of ‘learning-to-teach.’

In addition, based on the empirical evidence from this study, together with the international literature, it is inferred that the stakeholders, especially, CTs, SLs, and SBCs, need to be well trained to enact their highly influential role in practicum settings. Many of the potential problems seem to originate from the lack of role clarification in this regard. Based on the findings, it is evident that there is disparity between the perceptions of SBCs and SLs regarding their roles. For example, SBCs perceived that SLs have a monitoring role, but SLs believed that they have the assessment role.

Similarly, it is equally important to make all the stakeholders aware of the purpose and the importance of practicum in teacher education to enhance their contribution to the development of future teachers.

Create genuine partnerships with placement schools. Creating genuine partnerships with schools appear to be one of the solutions to minimise many of the existing issues in organising and conducting the practicum. As an initial step, TEIs might need to explore the viability of this partnership with volunteering or selected schools, which could act as an impetus for broader involvement of schools in all three levels (ECE, primary, secondary). The literature attests that when these partnerships are in place, they facilitate the development of a ‘third space,’ ‘hybrid space’, or a ‘learning community’ which the Zeichner and LeCornu have long been advocated as an important platform upon which all stakeholders can share their values, expectations, experiences and work collaboratively to enhance professional development of all involved. Researchers suggest that establishing such a platform would help the key players to develop new partnerships that were less hierarchical and more collegial. In addition, this approach was found to elevate the status of SLs and their impact on professional development of STs.

Conduct professional development programs. The findings showed that STs had a strong desire for more professional support from their CTs and placement schools. On the other hand, CTs and SBCs expected to have much more improved connection and communication with the TEIs, while SLs urged the need to establish a mechanism to coordinate with the SBCs to facilitate supervision processes. Therefore, all these suggestions imply that, to ensure coordination and cooperation among stakeholders, TEIs need to define and demarcate their role quite clearly with respect to the practicum, and provide training for CTs to effectively enact their role in that context. In simpler terms, CTs need professional development support from TEIs, thus it is imperative for the TEIs to find possibilities to engage them in professional development activities and programs.

Develop an eSupervision mechanism. Based on the findings of this empirical study, it is strongly recommended that the TEIs try to establish an effective supervision mechanism to monitor STs while they are on the practicum in various placement schools across the country. The literature attests that a quality of supervision is one of the vital

determinants of an effective practicum. Therefore, establishing such a mechanism is imperative especially for STs who are placed in remote islands where they have limited/no access to SLs and IBCs. In this regard, based on the existing literature, the study recommends that TEIs explore possibilities presented by technology-based eSupervision approaches. It is evident from the literature that an 'eSupervision' model developed through Moodle (through a web-based course management system, CMS) could serve as one possible approach to the supervision of STs (Alger & Kopcha, 2009, 2010). eSupervision could be built on Moodle, where the triad (SL, CT and SL) could be assigned differentiated roles and responsibilities. For example, STs could upload the lesson plans and their reflection on lessons. On the other hand, CTs could upload excerpts of video recording of STs classroom teaching with the feedback report. The role of the SLs would be to view the video recordings and provide feedback both synchronously (through online discussion/chat) and asynchronously (by uploading feedback to the Moodle). This process ultimately, would create an ePortfolio of ST teaching practice that could serve as a potential learning tool for future STs, mindful of the necessary permissions required for the development of such a resource.

In addition, such a supervision mechanism could address the existing issue of finding the required number of SLs from island communities. And also the SLs based at the TEIs could have access to student teachings in remote islands. Adopting this model of supervision frees SLs from direct observation of classroom teaching, thus they get more time to work online with STs. Apart from this advantage, IBCs could monitor the progress of the practicum, through an eSupervision model.

Recommendations for Placement Schools

Establish practicum units. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that it is imperative to establish practicum units, or departments at the placement schools to ameliorate many existing issues identified in relation to the placement schools. For example, the findings revealed that the SLs have little contact with SBCs and school management, thus they have a hard time in arranging observations and post-conference meetings with STs. In addition, it is evident from the data that the placement schools did not have any guidelines on arranging placements and assigning CTs to STs. Therefore,

it is strongly believed that establishing a practicum department would be an effective means to strengthen coordination between stakeholders, especially with SLs, SBC and IBC, and hence enhance supervision and monitoring of STs. In addition, it would help the placement schools to have clear guidelines for arranging placements and selecting potential teachers to work as CTs.

In addition, these practicum departments at the placement schools can play many vital roles in the effective implementation of the practicum. One such role could be identifying professional requirements of the CTs and SBCs. Based on the requirements, the departments could coordinate with TEIs to organise and conduct professional development programs for CTs as required. Similarly, the SBCs may need to work towards forming a community of practice, a platform at the school level, described earlier, that would benefit all the stakeholders involved.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study open several avenues for future research. For example, the lack of adequate content knowledge was an area of concern among all the stakeholders. However, the findings did not illuminate the underpinning reasons for this critical issue. Therefore, it is an area that requires further research. Particularly, an in-depth investigation of how well the national curriculum framework is aligned with the teacher education curriculum needs to be undertaken as an important first step to improve the quality of teacher education in the Maldives.

In addition, as previously mentioned pupils are considered as essential actors in the practicum and could contribute to a better understanding of the impact of the practicum on their learning. Therefore, it is equally important to conduct correlational study on the impact of practicum on pupils' performance at the three levels: ECE, primary and secondary. Further, with the proliferation of TEIs in the country, the number of private TEIs has increased rapidly in the recent years. Thus, it is important to conduct exploratory research on the practicum practices in these institutions in order to document deeper understanding of teacher education in the Maldives. Further, a comparative study on the practicum in public and private TEIs would be helpful for them to learn from each other and to enhance the overall quality of teacher education provided in the Maldives.

Unfolding the history of teacher education in the Maldives revealed that the practicum has been subjected to several changes on many occasions; however, none of them appear to have been supported by research-based evidence in the Maldives. The author was able to come across only one such paper on the practicum that was carried out back in 1998. Therefore, a more systematic research-based approach is needed to document the history of teacher education, in particular, the evolution and changes in practicum experience in the Maldives. Carrying out such a research would enable the stakeholders to understand the underlying reasons for the changes that have been made and their consequences. Additionally, it would certainly assist the stakeholders to plan and conduct an approach to the practicum that is worthwhile for all involved.

Contribution to the Theoretical Literature

The review of literature shows that none of the past studies were designed to include all the stakeholders involved in the practicum. For example, a systematic review of literature pertaining to the practicum, over more than a decade showed that 62% of the studies were focused only on STs (Lawson et al., 2015). School-based mentors, teacher educators, university-based mentors seem to be included only in limited studies. Similarly, only a few studies included pupils who are considered as essential actors in the practicum and who could contribute to a better understanding the impact of the practicum on their learning. In addition, as previously mentioned, during the past 40 years of teacher education in the Maldives, there has been only one formal research study published in the Maldivian context pertaining to the practices of practicum in TEIs in the Maldives. The present study begins to fill in these gaps by exploring the current practices of the practicum in the Maldives, through the perspectives of five different stakeholder groups (STs, CTs, SLs, SBCs, and IBCs) thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the current practicum practices in the Maldives.

The literature also attests that a qualitative approach to research has been employed more predominantly over other approaches. While a range of data collection tools such as interviews, lesson plans, reflection, mentor reports, observation etc. have been used, very few studies use a mixed methods approach. To this end, this study, by having employed mixed methods, contributes to the methodological literature on the

practicum research in the Maldives and elsewhere. Similarly, the extant literature shows that most of the studies recruited a relatively small sample of participants, thus generalizability or transferability became a significant issue. In this respect, this study through the survey component targeted the whole population and STs and CTs, in order to get a broad representation of the issues and practices from the stakeholders' perspectives, thus, the applicability of ideas, as outlined in the recommendations, is possible across the Maldives.

Further, this study portrays a comprehensive picture of the practicum practices in the Maldives, an ocean-state country, which could add value to the teacher education literature in general and also to similar ocean-states. In addition, it was evident, in the literature, that most of the research pertaining to practicum was conducted at the elementary and secondary levels. In other words, there is a dearth of research on ECE level. To this end, the current study comprised participants from all the three levels (ECE, primary and secondary). As the study involved almost all the stakeholders, including STs from all the levels, it portrays a well-rounded and comprehensive understanding of the current practicum practices in Maldivian context.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: STQ

Exploring current practices in practicum in the Maldives | STQ

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. Your ideas and opinions are important to address the current issues in practicum and organize a better experience for future student teachers.

1. Gender and age range (Please put a tick in the appropriate boxes)

Gender	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Age group	18–25	<input type="checkbox"/>	36–40	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>		26–35	<input type="checkbox"/>	41+	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Which college or university you are studying at

.....

3. Which course or programme you are enrolled in (Please put a tick in the appropriate boxes)

<i>Course Level</i>	<i>Course type</i>
Advanced Certificate <input type="checkbox"/>	Early Childhood <input type="checkbox"/>
Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	Primary <input type="checkbox"/>
Advanced Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary <input type="checkbox"/>
Degree <input type="checkbox"/>	

4. Have you ever been a teacher previously? If so, please fill in the following.

	<i>Subjects taught</i>	<i>Grade level</i>	<i>Period of experience</i>
1
2

5. Have you been enrolled in a teaching practicum prior to this? If yes, please provide details in the following spaces.

<i>Practicum</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Subjects taught</i>	<i>Grade level</i>
TP 1
TP 2
TP 3
TP 4

6. Please provide details of your current practicum (*Fill in the spaces with your responses*)

<i>Duration</i>	<i>Subjects taught</i>	<i>Grade level</i>
.....

7. Preparation for practicum (*Please tick the response that best describes the preparation*)

- | | | |
|------------|--|--|
| <i>(a)</i> | University/College conducted peer teaching sessions (i.e., teaching in a class with you own classmates as students) before being placed in the school. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <i>(b)</i> | University/College conducted classes/workshops on lesson planning. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <i>(c)</i> | University/College conducted classes/workshops on teaching strategies related to various aspects of school curriculum. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <i>(d)</i> | University/College conducted sessions to manage potential problems in practicum and how to deal with them. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

8. Structure of the practicum (*Please fill in your responses or tick (☑) as appropriate*)

- | | |
|------------|---|
| <i>(a)</i> | How many practicum rounds do you have in your enrolled teaching course?
..... |
| <i>(b)</i> | How often do you have practicum?
<input type="checkbox"/> Every semester <input type="checkbox"/> Once in a year <input type="checkbox"/> At the end of the program <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <i>(c)</i> | How many weeks do you spend in school in one practicum?
Please specify..... |
| <i>(d)</i> | My practicum was supervised by:
<input type="checkbox"/> Only Cooperating Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Only Supervising Lecturer <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>(e)</i> | My practicum was assessed by:
<input type="checkbox"/> Only Cooperating Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Only Supervising Lecturer <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>(f)</i> | How many classroom teaching sessions (classes) were assessed?
..... |
| <i>(g)</i> | Do you have the practicum and on-campus theory sessions concurrently (the same time)?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <i>(h)</i> | What do you think of the length of the practicum?
<input type="checkbox"/> just right <input type="checkbox"/> too short <input type="checkbox"/> too long |

The following questions are about your opinion of some aspects of the practicum. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the given statements.

9. Feedback

	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (N)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)
(a) My cooperating teacher gives feedback on lesson planning <i>before</i> the lesson is taken.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) My cooperating teacher <i>usually sits back</i> when I take my classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) My cooperating teacher usually gives <i>written</i> feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) I am satisfied with the <i>amount</i> of feedback given to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) My cooperating teacher encouraged me to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of my teaching when giving feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) My cooperating teacher encourages me to follow his or her own style of teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) My cooperating teacher used compliments-criticism-suggestions method when giving feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Professional Support during practicum

	SA	A	N	D	SD
(a) My cooperating teacher introduced me to other teachers who were from my subject area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) My cooperating teacher reviewed the curriculum with me and allocated resources related to it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) My cooperating teacher allowed me to observe her classes and classes of other teachers whom s/he felt were good role models.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) My cooperating teacher demonstrated teaching strategies that are new to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) My cooperating teacher asks me to do work unrelated to teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Assessment		SA	A	N	D	SD
(a)	The assessment I was given by the cooperating teacher was brief and shallow.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b)	My cooperating teacher will write an extensive evaluation at the end of the teaching experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c)	My cooperating teacher will compile information on my performance regularly and guides me to improve my performance whenever required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d)	Supervising lecturers from the Faculty/College will observe a complete lesson for the assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Institutional Socialization		SA	A	N	D	SD
(a)	I have realised the ideas, strategies and habits of teachers from the practicum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b)	The influence on my teaching of the cooperating teacher is more than the influence of college/university lecturer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c)	I have become more controlling of the students from the practicum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d)	My style of teaching is very different from the teaching of the cooperating teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e)	I was able to take part in extra-curricular activities during my time in the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f)	The practicum helped me to understand the school culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Professional Development		SA	A	N	D	SD
(a)	The cooperating teacher has learnt some new things from me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b)	The practicum was sufficiently varied to help me to get enculturated to the profession.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c)	The teaching practice has contributed to my personal growth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d)	The practicum helped me to develop the necessary skills for teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e)	I am beginning to feel like a teacher after my first teaching practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f)	If I could go back, I would have chosen another profession.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Which **one** of the following mentoring styles best describes your cooperating teacher?

- Style A* *Style B* *Style C* *Style D* None of the below

<i>Style A</i>	<i>Style B</i>	<i>Style C</i>	<i>Style D</i>
Giving full freedom to the student to do whatever s/he wants with minimal direction from cooperating teacher.	Student teachers learn best by observing a good role model and doing similarly as the role model.	The best way to learn to teach is to gradually give the student teacher increasing responsibility to take the lessons.	The student teacher must be actively participate in learning to teach and must reflect on the lessons in light of experience and new knowledge.

15. Name three things you wish your University/College had done for you?

16. Name three things you wish your placement school could have done for you to make your practicum more beneficial.

17. Name three things you wish your cooperating teacher could have done for you to make your practicum more effective.

18. What were the most common problems you had to confront during the field experience?

- 19.** Suggest three practical recommendations which will make the practicum more effective for future student teachers.

Thank you for taking your time to answer this questionnaire. Your answers will help to make the practicum better for future student teachers.

Appendix 2: CTQ

Cooperating teachers’ perspectives on the current practices of practicum in the Maldives

CTQ

Thank you for your time to fill in this questionnaire. The purpose of this study is to explore the current practices and issues in order to improve practicum experience for student teachers.

1. Gender and age range (Please put a tick in the appropriate boxes)

Gender	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Age group	18–25	<input type="checkbox"/>	36–40	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>		26–35	<input type="checkbox"/>	41+	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. What is the highest teaching qualification you have?

<i>Course Level</i>		<i>Course type</i>	<i>If other, specify</i>
Advanced Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Early Childhood	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>	Primary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advanced Diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	

3. Have you ever been a cooperating teacher? If so, please fill in the following.

<i>No. of student teachers mentored</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Grade level</i>	<i>Subjects taught</i>
.....
.....

4. What is your motivation for becoming a cooperating teacher?

.....

.....

.....

5. How do you regard the role of practicum in teacher education?

very important important neither important nor unimportant unimportant very unimportant

6. In your opinion what are the purposes of the practicum in teacher education?

.....

7. The following statements describe four different styles of mentoring.

- i. Giving full freedom to the student to do whatever s/he wants with minimal direction from cooperating teacher.
 ii. Student teachers learn best by observing a good role model and doing similarly as the role model.
 iii. The best way to learn to teach is to gradually give the student teacher increasing responsibility to take the lessons.
 iv. The student teacher must be actively participate in learning to teach and must reflect on the lessons in light of experience and new knowledge.

(a) Which one of the above best describes your own mentoring style?

i ii iii iv None of the above

(b) If you had undergone teaching practice while you were in a teacher education course, which one of the above best describes the mentoring style of your own cooperating teacher?

i ii iii iv None of the above

8. Here are 10 roles of cooperating teachers. What is your opinion about their importance in the practicum? Tick the box that is true in your opinion

<i>Item</i>	Very important	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant
(a) Providing feedback to the student teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Gate-keeping the entry of student teachers into the profession of teaching by passing or failing them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Providing models of teaching so that student teachers can emulate (copy) them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Supporting reflection by telling students teachers stories, providing advice and insight and praising good practice and preparation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(e)	Introducing student teacher into the contexts of teaching in classrooms including cultural and political climate of school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f)	Developing a relationship with the student teacher and with other teachers so that the student can be helped to develop her teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g)	Introducing the student to the ideologies, habits and the values of teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h)	Introducing the student to the practicalities of teaching in the classroom: lesson planning, pacing the lessons, classroom management, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i)	Gaining knowledge from student teachers about new practices, methods and materials in teaching different topics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j)	Putting up with the interruption caused to routine teaching by having a student teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. The following questions are about the briefing for being a cooperating teacher.
Please put a tick in the appropriate boxes

<i>Item</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
(a) The practicum coordinator from the school briefed me about the practicum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) I received documents outlining the aims and objectives of the practicum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) I received the documents outlining the role of a cooperating teacher and I am aware of my roles and responsibilities as a cooperating teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) I received assessment procedures from university/college.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. If there is a practicum coordinator identified at school, how often do you meet with this person?

- Daily Weekly Monthly If other, write.....

11. The following questions are about the way practicum is conducted at school level.
Please indicate your agreement to the statements.

<i>Item</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(a) I prefer to give oral feedback to the student teacher (ST).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) In the feedback I provide, the emphasis is on particular and technical issues excluding theoretical and pedagogical matters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) My feedback varies depending on whether the practicum is the student teacher's first practicum or second.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) I need more knowledge to conduct the summative/final evaluation of the ST on a pass/fail basis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) I expect my student teachers to emulate (copy) my own style of teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) I expect the university supervisor to mentor (advise and guide) ST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) I urge the ST to reflect on their own teaching by framing and reframing the teaching in light of past experience or new knowledge.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) I advise the ST with the context of the school, and manage the context to provide a suitable practicum for the student.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) I help the ST to develop a professional relationship with other teachers and myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j) I help the ST to socialize into the culture of the school and the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(k) I advise the ST on what is practical in the classroom environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(l) I gain knowledge of new methods and materials of teaching from ST.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Item</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(m) Supervising a ST is an interruption to my own teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(n) Supervising a ST is an add-on work to my usual work load.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Here are some roles of cooperating teachers. For which of the roles, do you think you need more knowledge or professional development?

<i>Item</i>	Yes	No
(a) To provide written feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) To demonstrate good teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) To support reflection on their own teaching responsibilities as a cooperating teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) To socialize the student teachers into the school environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) To advocate practical strategies of classroom teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. If cooperating teachers are paid for supervising student teachers, how do you think it will impact the current practice?

.....

.....

14. Please suggest recommendations which will make the practicum more effective for the student teachers.

.....

.....

15. Is there anything else, not covered above, that you would like to highlight when working with student teachers?

.....

.....

Thank you for taking your time to answer this questionnaire. Your answers will help to make the practicum better for future student teachers.

Appendix 3: Research Endorsement form from MoE



ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި
 ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި

ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި

ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި ފަދަ ގޮތުގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި

ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި ފަދަ ގޮތުގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި
 ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި ފަދަ ގޮތުގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި
 ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި ފަދަ ގޮތުގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި
 ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި ފަދަ ގޮތުގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި

Research Topic: ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި

The Practicum in Teacher Education in the Maldives: Current Practices, Issues and Future Directions

Main Objectives: ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި

The study aims to explore the current practices of teaching practicum in the Maldives, by investigating stakeholder perceptions and identifying key issues and challenges, and propose a new model that would address the shortcomings identified in the current practices.

Data Needed: ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި

The study is designed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data through survey questionnaire, observations and interviews.

Interviewee/s: ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި

Student teachers, Cooperating teachers, School based practicum coordinators, School principals and supervising lecturers.

ދިވެހިސަރުކާރުގެ ގެޒެޓް ގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި ފަދަ ގޮތުގައި ބަޔާންކުރި ގޮތުގައި

2014 ޖުލައި 12



Appendix 4: Letter of Introduction



Faculty of Education
The Maldives National University
Ameenee Magu, 20-170
Male'
Republic of Maldives
Phone: (960) 3345303
Email: fe@mnu.edu.mv

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a student of The Maldives National University, pursuing Doctor of Philosophy in Education course. My research area is teaching practicum. More specifically, the title of the project is “The practicum in Teacher Education in the Maldives: Current Practices, Issues and Future Directions.”

This research aims to investigate stakeholder perceptions of teaching practicum to identify the key issues, challenges and new possibilities for making the experience more effective and positive. Since teaching practice is the most important part of a teacher education course, finding out ways to improve the experiences of student teachers and cooperating teachers will, in the end, enhance the quality of teaching profession.

Data will be collected from the cooperating teachers, student teachers and school-based practicum coordinators, using questionnaire, interview and observation protocols.

Any information collected from the participants will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the thesis or any other publications.

Upon request a summary of my research will be made available to the participants and the school.

I would be grateful if you could grant me your consent to undertake this research in your school. If you have any further questions regarding my study, please contact me on (7946333, Email: mbs_0902@hotmail.com) or my supervisor Dr. Ali Shareef (3345125).

Thank you for your attention and assistance

Yours Sincerely

Suneena Rasheed

Appendix 5: Information Sheet for Participants



Faculty of Education
The Maldives National University
Ameenee Magu, 20-170
Male'
Republic of Maldives
Phone: (960) 3345303
Email: fe@mnu.edu.mv

Information Sheet for Participants

The Practicum in Teacher Education in the Maldives: Current Practices, Issues and Future Directions.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a PhD student enrolled in Doctor of Philosophy in Education course at the Faculty of Education, The Maldives National University. I am doing this research for the purpose of my thesis on “The Practicum in Teacher Education in the Maldives: Current Practices, Issues and Future Directions.” This study aims to investigate stakeholder perceptions of teaching practicum to identify the key issues, challenges and new possibilities for making the experience more effective and positive.

Teaching practice is usually the most important part of a teacher education course. Finding out ways to improve the experiences of student teachers and cooperating teachers will, in the end, enhance the quality of teaching profession.

Data will be collected through a questionnaire, which will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. In addition, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with some participants, which will take approximately 45 minutes. Further, student teachers at the school will be observed to find out their usage of time in various activities.

This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Education, The Maldives National University. Participation in this study is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any stage without giving a reason. Confidentiality will be maintained during the study and in any report of the study. Individual participants will not be identified in any report and all the data collected in this study will be reported in the final report anonymously.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please fill in the attached informed consent forms. Your assistance and support for this research will be most appreciated. At this stage you may ask any questions regarding the study. If you have any questions regarding the study, before or after participating, please contact me on 7946333.

Thanking you,

Suneena Rasheed

Appendix 6: Consent Form for Participants



Faculty of Education
The Maldives National University
Ameenee Magu, 20-170
Male'
Republic of Maldives
Phone: (960) 3345303
Email: fe@mnu.edu.mv

CONSENT FORM

The Practicum in Teacher Education in the Maldives: Current Practices, Issues and Future Directions.

Suneena Rasheed
(7946333, mbs_0902@hotmail.com)

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the research student.
4. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.
5. I agree to be contacted to arrange a mutually convenient time to conduct interview and observation. I agree to have my interview audio recorded if I were chosen for the interview.

.....
Name of Participant

.....
Date

.....
Signature

.....
Contact phone:

Appendix 9: Interview Protocol for SLs

Interview Protocol for SLs

Time of the interview:	Interviewer:
Date:	Interviewee:
Place:	Duration of the interview:

Interview Questions

1. What are the roles you play as a supervising lecturer?
ئەڭ قىزىقارلىق روللارنىڭ قانچىسىنىڭ نامىنى كۆرسىتىڭىز؟
2. How did you know your roles and responsibilities?
ئەڭ قىزىقارلىق روللارنىڭ نامىنىڭ قانداق يول بىلەن بىلىدىغانىڭىزنى كۆرسىتىڭىز؟
3. Do you have meetings with coordinators from the respective teacher education institution? If so, how often do you have meeting with the coordinators?
ئۇلار بىلەن تەڭشەش يىغىنلىرىڭىز بارمۇ؟ ئەگەر بار، قانچىلىك ھەپتە بىر قېتىم يىغىنلىرىڭىز بار؟
4. How many student teachers are attached with one supervising lecturer?
بىر تەكشۈرۈشچى ئوقۇتقۇچى بىلەن قانچىلىك ئوقۇتقۇچىلار بار؟
5. How do you meet with the student teacher? Do you contact with the school-based coordinator to arrange observation timings?
ئۇلار بىلەن قانداق يول بىلەن تۇتاشىڭىز؟ ئۇلار بىلەن تەڭشەش يىغىنلىرىڭىز بارمۇ؟
6. How many observations do you have to complete for each student teacher?
بىر ئوقۇتقۇچى بىلەن قانچىلىك تەكشۈرۈش يىغىنلىرىڭىز بار؟
7. How do you give feedback to the student teacher?
ئۇلارغا قانداق يول بىلەن تەكشۈرۈش يىغىنلىرىڭىز بار؟
8. What are the areas do you focus in assessing student teaching and who has identified those areas?
ئۇلارنى تەكشۈرۈش يىغىنلىرىڭىزنىڭ قانداق رايونلارغا قاراپ تەكشۈرۈش يىغىنلىرىڭىز بار؟
9. Who decides that the student teacher is passed or failed?
ئۇلارنى تەكشۈرۈش يىغىنلىرىڭىزنىڭ قانداق رايونلارغا قاراپ تەكشۈرۈش يىغىنلىرىڭىز بار؟
10. When do you start the observations during the practicum?
ئۇلارنى تەكشۈرۈش يىغىنلىرىڭىزنىڭ قانداق رايونلارغا قاراپ تەكشۈرۈش يىغىنلىرىڭىز بار؟
11. Does your coordinator monitor your work? If so, how often?
ئۇلارنى تەكشۈرۈش يىغىنلىرىڭىزنىڭ قانداق رايونلارغا قاراپ تەكشۈرۈش يىغىنلىرىڭىز بار؟

9. Are student teachers assessed only based on the observations made by supervising lecturers? If so, how many observations are required? If not, how do you assess practicum?

ከሌሎች ማህተሞች ጋር ብቻ ሲሆን ለማህተም ለማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ሌሎች ማህተሞች ሲሆኑ ለማህተም ለማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ሌሎች ማህተሞች ሲሆኑ ለማህተም ለማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል?

10. What is your perception about the assessment of the practicum? What could be done to improve the current assessment practices?

ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል?

11. Do you have regular meeting with the supervising lecturers? If so, what is the purpose of those meetings?

እድገት ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል?

12. Do you meet with the school-based coordinators? If so, how often do you meet with them and what is the purpose of those meetings?

እድገት ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል?

13. How do you monitor student teachers and coordinators in the island schools? And how do you assess those student teachers?

እድገት ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል?

14. Do you have meetings with the cooperating teachers? If, so how often do you meet with them and what is the purpose of those meetings?

እድገት ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል?

15. What are the major issues that you face in organizing and conducting the practicum?

እድገት ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል?

16. What are the major challenges that you face in organizing and conducting the practicum?

እድገት ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል?

17. Based on your experience, what are your recommendations to the placement schools to improve the current practicum practices?

እድገት ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል?

18. What are your recommendations to the teacher education institutions to improve the quality of the graduate teachers?

እድገት ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል? ለማህተም ማህተም ማድረግ ስንት ጊዜ ማህተም ማድረግ ይገባል?

19. What are your recommendations to student teachers to improve current practicum practices?

جواباً على سؤالكم، أوصي الطلاب المعلمين بتحسين ممارساتهم الحالية في الممارسة العملية من خلال التركيز على تطوير مهارات التدريس، وتحسين التواصل مع الطلاب، واستخدام أساليب تدريس متنوعة، والتعاون مع المعلمين ذوي الخبرة، والتفكير النقدي، والتقييم الذاتي، والتعلم المستمر.

20. Is there anything else you would like to highlight regarding the current practicum practices?

أود أن أذكر أن الممارسة العملية هي فرصة للطلاب المعلمين لتطوير مهاراتهم العملية، والتعلم من أخطاءهم، والتفكير النقدي، والتعلم المستمر، والتعاون مع المعلمين ذوي الخبرة، والتفكير النقدي، والتعلم الذاتي، والتعلم المستمر.

Thank You

شكراً جزيلاً.

Appendix 12: Observational Protocol for STs

Observation Protocol for STs

Name of the school: _____ Date and time of observation: _____
 Name of the student teacher: _____ Length of observation: _____
 Role of the observer: _____ Place of observation: _____

Guide line	Observational notes	Reflective notes
<p><i>Description of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical environment - School culture <p><i>Observation of classroom teaching</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of the CT during the lesson implementation <p><i>Provision of feedback</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The method of giving feedback - Focus of the given feedback <p><i>Description of social interactions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Student teacher – cooperating teacher -Student teacher– other teachers -Student teacher– practicum coordinator -Student teacher – senior staff -Student teacher-other student teachers <p><i>Participation of Curricular and Co-curricular activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Activities undertaken in addition to classroom teaching 		

Appendix 13: Ethics Approval Letter



Faculty of Education,
Research Ethics Committee
Ameenee Building, Ameenee Magu, Male'
Telephone: +860 3345 303
Facsimile: +960 3313425
Email: fe@mnu.edu.mv

Our Ref: FE-RE/03-0001

05 November 2014

Dr. Ali Shareef,

Project: The practicum in Teacher Education in the Maldives: Current practices, issues and future direction.

Student: Suneena Rasheed (ID: 000004836)- Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Please be advised that ethical approval of the above project has been granted in accordance with the procedures of the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee and Policy on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participant set by the Maldives National University.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to advise the Committee of any departure from the original protocol. The Committee requires that all Supervisors report immediately any adverse or unexpected events that might affect ethical approval of the project.

Approval should be sought in writing in advance from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee if any change to the procedures or the number of participants in the original application is envisaged. Should this change require amendments to an Information Sheet or Consent Form related to the project, the amended version of the forms should be submitted for review. The application for the amendment should give the rationale behind and justification for the amendment. You are also required to inform the Committee, giving reasons, if the research project is discontinued before the expected date of completion. Correspondence should be submitted to the Course Coordinator in writing.

Please note that approval has been granted for a period of FOUR years. Initial approval is for a period of FOUR year, and, thereafter for future periods of one year at a time subject to the receipt of satisfactory reports at the time of applying for renewal. At the end of the four-year period you will be required to complete a new "Ethics Review Form A" should you wish to continue with your research. However, in special circumstances, the Head of the Committee has the authority to extend the approval period in order to complete a project.

Please quote Project No FE-RE/03-0001 on all correspondence associated with this study.

Yours sincerely

Ms. Waseema Fikuree
Head
(Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee)