

The Analysis of UPSI Teacher Clinical Experience In Comparative Perspective and Suggestion for New Teacher Clinical Experience Structure

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Abstract

This study was conducted to compare and discuss the teacher clinical experience structure offered by the Sultan Idris Education University (UPSI) and the chosen universities from Singapore, Hong Kong, Canada, United States of America, United Kingdom, and Australia. This comparative analysis is carried out using a qualitative approach which will focus on the purposes, duration, timing and phases or components of the teacher clinical experience offered by the UPSI and the chosen universities. This analysis has identified that the time allocation for the teacher clinical experience of the UPSI was too short; the timing for pre-service teachers to undergo teacher clinical experience was inappropriate, and the phases or components of teacher clinical experience adopted was insufficient. This paper will suggest a new teacher clinical experience structure and provide implications that can be learnt by the UPSI from other universities abroad to enhance its existing teacher clinical experience.

Keywords: Comparative analysis, teacher clinical experience, pre-service teachers, teacher education, Sultan Idris Education University (UPSI).

Introduction

In order to produce 21st century teachers who are sufficiently prepared for the challenges in their teaching profession, it is important to provide a comprehensive teacher clinical experience for pre-service teachers. It is beyond doubt that teacher clinical experience is often perceived as the most essential component of teacher education programmes by pre-service teachers and teacher educators (Lourdusamy et al.; Ramsey; Alexander & Galbraith; and Tisher, as cited in Atputhasamy, 2005; Grudnoff, 2011). Teacher clinical experience helps to develop pre-service teachers' practical competence (Cochran-Smith and Fries, 2005) and prepare pre-service teachers to experience and 'experiment' their knowledge and skills in a real teaching and learning environment (Kennedy, 1996). Not only content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, pre-service teachers are required to equip with pedagogical content knowledge as well (Shulman, 1986, as cited in Jusoh, 2012). It is the time for pre-service teachers to familiarise themselves with school environment by observing teachers in

class, understanding the functions of administration in school, socialising with staff, being aware of teaching and learning process in real context and so on, as well as to prepare for teaching in real classroom.

According to Tang (2003) (as cited in Cheng, 2013), teacher clinical experience plays an important role in the development of teaching skills and acquiring pedagogical knowledge and also internalisation theories learned in university into their own knowledge by practising the theories in a real classroom under the guidance and mentoring of their cooperating teachers. Essentially, teacher clinical experience is established to bridge the gap of theory and practice in initial teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Critical informants have been raising a number of relevant issues on teacher education of Malaysia and one of the concerns is the components of the teacher clinical experience. Ong et al. (2004) (as cited in Goh and Matthews, 2011) asserted that the pressure felt from the teacher clinical experience hampered pre-service teachers from positively engaging in theory and practice. They also stated that most pre-service teachers are overwhelmed by supervision, workload other than teaching, pedagogical and content knowledge during their teacher clinical experience. So it is necessary to keep up-to-date and study the teacher clinical experience of different universities from different countries to improve the UPSI teacher clinical experience structure.

Research Objective

The purpose of this study is to analyze the teacher clinical experience offered by the UPSI in comparing with those offered in universities of developed countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Canada, United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), and Australia. The result of this study would provide some insights and guidance for the UPSI to improve its existing teacher clinical experience structure.

Methodology

The design of this study is qualitative which employed comparative analysis methods. This approach allows the researchers to understand the phenomenon of teacher clinical experience (Karamustafaoğlu, 2009). Specifically, the methods of document analysis and literature review are used in this study. This comparative analysis analyses the teacher clinical experience offered by the UPSI as compared with that of the other countries from the aspects of purposes, duration, timing and phases or components of the teacher clinical experience. The teacher clinical experience structures are studied directly through practicum handbooks or from the university websites.

Structure of Teacher Clinical Experience in Different Countries

Teacher Clinical Experience of the National Institute of Education (NIE) Singapore

The teacher clinical experience offered by the NIE Singapore interwoven throughout the entire BA/BSc (Ed) programme and it is developmental in nature. It is composed of four school attachment periods totalled 22 weeks, namely School Experience (SE), Teaching Assistantship (TA), Teaching Practice 1 (TP1), and Teaching Practice 2 (TP2).

Table 1. Teacher Clinical Experience Structure of the NIE Singapore, Singapore

School Experience (SE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 weeks; before Semester 1 of Year 2 • 1 week in primary school; 1 week in secondary school • Observation
Teaching Assistantship (TA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 weeks; before the Semester 1 of Year 3 • Intensive observation and reflection
Teaching Practice 1 (TP1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 weeks; before the Semester 1 of Year 4 • Guiding pre-service teachers to develop beginning teaching competencies
Teaching Practice 2 (TP2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 weeks; Semester 2 of Year 4 • Intensive development of beginning teaching competencies to teach independently

(Adapted from NIE, 2014)

Teacher Clinical Experience of the University of Hong Kong

The teacher clinical experience of the University of Hong Kong consists of three phases, one in each year starting from the second year. Teaching Practice 1 (TP1) is offered in second year for 3 weeks; Teaching Practice 2 (TP2) is offered in third year for 8 weeks; and Teaching Practice 3 (TP3) is offered in fourth year for 8 weeks.

Table 2. Teacher Clinical Experience Structure of the University of Hong Kong

Teaching Practice 1 (TP1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 weeks; second year • Play the role of “Teacher Partner” and “Observer” • Assist cooperating teacher(s) both inside and outside the classroom • Observe a specified number of lessons in Major subject and some other lessons in a different subject(s)
Teaching Practice 2 (TP2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 weeks; third year • Conduct at least 8 lessons to a maximum of 12 lessons per a 5-day teaching week
Teaching Practice 3 (TP3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 weeks; fourth year • Similar to TP2

(Adapted from University of Hong Kong, 2014)

Teacher Clinical Experience of the Brock University, Canada

The Brock University offers 11-week teacher clinical experience during the last year of their four or five year program. The teacher clinical experience programme comprises three blocks (3weeks+4weeks+4weeks) which exceeds the legislated minimum of 40 days. Pre-service teachers will be assigned to different schools for each block to allow them to experience different school communities and different learning environments.

Table 3. Teacher Clinical Experience Structure of the Brock University, Canada

First Block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 weeks; November; last year • Exposes pre-service teachers to teaching responsibilities with a lesson the first day and additional lesson each day until they are teaching one-half time
Second Block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 weeks; January-February; last year • Increases pre-service teachers' teaching load progressively as their supervisors convinced with their competency
Third Block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 weeks; April; last year • Pre-service teachers assume full responsibility for the classroom and their supervisor's timetable

(Adapted from Wilson, 2003)

Teacher Clinical Experience of the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMass Boston), Massachusetts, USA

The UMass Boston offers the teacher clinical experience structure that requires 75 hours pre-practicum experience and one full semester of classroom practicum experience that lasts almost four months (minimum 14 weeks).

Table 4. Teacher Clinical Experience Structure of the UMass Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Pre-Practicum Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75 hours; should complete at the beginning of the programme • Observations in a classroom • Assignments are integrated into the field experience to relate the theoretical work of their courses in the practical realities of schools and children's learning
Practicum Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time (14-week minimum), full semester of classroom practicum experience; last year • Assigned into the classroom of a cooperating teacher who will provide ongoing supervision, coaching and mentoring

(Adapted from University of Massachusetts Boston, 2014)

Teacher Clinical Experience of the University of Glasgow, UK

The University of Glasgow provides a 34-week school experience programme which consists four phases; one in each year. School Experience 1 (SE1) which is conducted in Middle Primary can be divided into SE1A and SE1B. SE1A is offered in the second half of the first semester of the first year for 4 weeks while SE1B is offered in second semester of the first year for 5 weeks. School Experience 2 (SE2) is conducted in Nursery and Lower Primary schools for 9 weeks and School Experience 3 (SE3) is managed in Upper School during the second semester of the third year for 6 weeks. The 10-week School Experience 4 (SE4) is offered in lower, middle or upper level schools during the second semester of the last year.

Table 5. Teacher Clinical Experience Structure of the University of Glasgow, UK

School Experience (SE1) Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observational and practical placement • School Experience 1 A • Serial placement one day per week for at least 4 weeks; second half of Semester 1 • School Experience 1 B • Block placement of 5 weeks from May to June; Semester 2
School Experience (SE2) Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-week block in August/September prior to the start of Semester 1 • 5-week block placement in May/June • Help pre-service teachers to acquire generic classroom skills in the primary school
School Experience (SE3) Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-week block ; Semester 2 • Emphasise on developing teaching and learning skills to teach curricular of Expressive Arts, and Religious & Moral Education
School Experience (SE4) Year 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 weeks; Semester 2 • Students assuming full class responsibility for the final 6 weeks • Students will be expected to show professional competence in all subjects especially Modern Languages, Technologies, and Social

(Adapted from University of Glasgow, 2012)

Teacher Clinical Experience of the University of Queensland, Australia

The teacher clinical experience of the University of Queensland, Australia is developmental in nature and well integrated throughout the teacher education programme. Primary Professional Experience (PPE) is offered every year on the second semester except in the second year it is offered during both semesters.

Table 6. Teacher Clinical Experience Structure of the University of Queensland, Australia

PPE1 (Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Tutorial hour, 8 Practical or Laboratory hours; Semester 2 • Introduction to school life through workshops and school visits • Develop observation and communication skills in a school context
PPE2 (Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Tutorial hours, 8 Practical or Laboratory hours; Semester 1 • Introduce pre-service teachers to school life through workshops and 10 days of school visits • Intensive development of observation and communication skills and begin the process of making lesson plans
PPE3 (Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Tutorial and Practical hours (2TP); Semester 2 • Introduce pre-service teachers to school life through workshops, school visits and a 15 day practicum • Intensive development of observation and communication skills and begin the process of mastering sequences of lessons • Introduce the professional standards of the Queensland College of Teachers

PPE4 (Year 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2TP; Semester 2 • More introduction to teaching by going to workshops and a 20-day block practicum • Emphasise on the relationship between the professional standards advocated by the Queensland College of Teachers and the work of a teacher
PPE5 (Year 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2TP; Semester 2 • 15 day block supervised practicum followed by 30 day block internship • Achieve the professional standards of Queensland College of Teachers in teaching competency • It is developmental and builds on Primary Professional Experience 1-4

(Adapted from University of Queensland, 2014)

Teacher Clinical Experience in the UPSI

From a Malaysian context, teacher education is managed by the 27 Teacher Education Institutes of Malaysia (IPGM) as well as public universities (IPTA) and private universities (IPTS). IPGM provides training to pre-service teachers to teach in primary schools while IPTA and IPTS are tasked to produce both primary and secondary schools teachers. All the IPTA in Malaysia that are involved in teacher education have Faculty of Education to offer teacher education programmes in various fields and subjects. The UPSI is the only exception as it only focused on offering rigorous, professional and accredited teacher education for pre-service teachers. This paper will use the teacher clinical experience structure of the UPSI to compare with the teacher clinical experience structure of other prestigious universities that were discussed above.

The UPSI offers only Practicum Experience (PE) in Semester 7 of its teacher education programme. Prior to the PE, pre-service teachers are given the opportunity to conduct mock lessons in Microteaching class whereby their classmates will act as students. During the PE, pre-service teachers will be sent to the schools around the university campus in a group of three for their teacher clinical experience. A university advisor and cooperating teachers will be assigned to each group of pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers are required to undergo the PE for 16 weeks. The purpose of the PE is to expose pre-service teachers to real school setting and they are expected to learn about teaching and learning, school culture, co-curriculum activities, and school socialization. This is to prepare pre-service teachers to teach in real classroom environment and to practice the knowledge that they learnt in the UPSI during their teacher clinical experience.

Discussion

Having looked at the teacher clinical experience structure of other countries, there are a number of issues identified from the UPSI teacher clinical experience structure which can be grouped into several themes. One of the themes is the time allocated for the teacher clinical experience is too short. Sixteen weeks are not sufficient to carry out the teacher clinical experience comprehensively as the NIE Singapore, the University of Hong Kong, the University of Glasgow, and the University of Queensland allocated more than 16 weeks for their teacher clinical experience. It is unquestionable that longer time period of teacher clinical experience will allow pre-service teachers to be more familiar with the school environment, school socialization, co-curriculum activities and gain a better mastery of teaching strategies through observing expert teachers conducting lesson as well as allowing them to practice actual teaching in classroom based on the prepared lesson plan.

Furthermore, the second theme that was deduced is inappropriate timing of the UPSI teacher clinical experience. Wang and Ren (2002) (as cited in Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013) indicated that the development of the pre-service teachers will be jeopardized if teacher clinical experience is placed at the end of the teacher education programme. By comparing the teacher clinical experience structure of all the universities, it is apparent that the timing of both the Brock University and the UPSI teacher clinical experiences are inappropriate as their whole teacher clinical experiences are structured only in the last year of the teaching programme. On the contrary, the NIE Singapore, the University of Hong Kong, the University of Glasgow, and the University of Queensland provide teacher pre-clinical experience in the earlier stage of the teacher education programme to strengthen the development of teaching practice among pre-service teachers. According to Ure (2009), both the duration and the timing of teacher clinical experience are keys to the success of teacher education programme.

Thirdly, the phases or components of the UPSI teacher clinical experience are identified to be insufficient. Except the UPSI and the UMass Boston which only have 1-2 phases of teacher clinical experience, all other universities offer 3-5 phases of teacher training well-interwoven throughout their teacher education programmes. It is evident that more phases of teacher pre-clinical experience are needed in our teacher education (Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013). The NIE Singapore, the University of Hong Kong, the University of Glasgow and the University of Queensland have their pre-service teachers to undergo teacher pre-clinical experience almost once a year and teacher clinical experience on the second semester of the last year. It is important to divide teacher pre-clinical experience into different phases or components as it will be more developmental in nature and more effective to build on and incorporate the knowledge learnt across the four years teacher education programmes during the teacher clinical experience. In addition, different phases of teacher pre-clinical experience allow pre-service teachers to reflect over the first phase and better prepare themselves to undergo the following phases of teacher pre-clinical experience and teacher clinical experience.

Moreover, the UPSI places the pre-service teachers to schools around the university campus according to the zone area of the university campus instead of different school settings. However, the teacher clinical experience structure of the NIE Singapore and the Brock University take on the approach of sending their pre-service teachers to different school settings. This move is highly applauded as pre-service teachers are exposed to diverse school environments, students from different age groups or even various cultural and social backgrounds. This also provides a great opportunity for pre-service teachers to meet the needs of students having different levels of motivation and education as well as different learning styles and paces.

Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of having teacher clinical experience is similar but the implementation of teacher clinical experience varies across countries. This paper has discussed the teacher clinical experience structure of the NIE Singapore, the University of Hong Kong, the Brock University, the UMass Boston, the University of Glasgow, and the University of Queensland and compared it with the existing teacher clinical experience structure in the UPSI. This paper acknowledged that the universities which were analyzed for their teacher clinical experience structure may not be a representative of their countries.

This comparative study is conducted to provide suggestions and new approaches for the improvements of the teacher clinical experience structure for the UPSI. The UPSI can consider extending the period of the teacher clinical experience and dividing it into more phases as well as spreading them throughout the teacher education programme. This can ensure its teacher clinical experience to be more developmental and gradual in nature. In addition, it is also advisable for the UPSI to place the pre-service teachers in different school settings.

Summarily, based on the comparative analysis, this study suggests a new teacher clinical experience structure as followed. The proposed teacher clinical experience structure contains nine phases and well-integrated throughout the teacher education programme. It is our hope that this proposed teacher clinical experience structure will be able to provide a comprehensive teacher training, close the ties between theory and practice as well as improve the teaching skills and professional competencies of pre-service teachers.

Table 7. New Proposed Teacher Clinical Experience Structure

School Exposure 1 (Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 weeks; Semester 1 • Understand the functions of administration in school by observing the school culture and identifying school organisation chart • Be aware with the diversity of teaching and learning process in real context through continuous critical reflection of their field experiences • Assist cooperating teacher in lesson and administration
School Exposure 2 (Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 weeks; Semester 2 • Be aware with the diversity of teaching and learning process in real context through continuous critical reflection of their field experiences • Formulate a critical analysis of teaching decisions based on the theoretical knowledge about teaching and learning process learnt in their teacher training course • Observe cooperating teacher randomly
School Exposure 3 (Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 weeks; Semester 3 • Be aware with the diversity of teaching and learning process in real context through continuous critical reflection of their field experiences • Formulate a critical analysis of teaching decisions based on the theoretical knowledge about teaching and learning process learnt in their teacher training course • Observe cooperating teacher randomly
Apprenticeship 1 (Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 weeks; Semester 4 • Assist cooperating teacher • Observe cooperating teacher at least 4 times • Conduct 2 periods of major subject lesson per week • Be aware with the diversity of teaching and learning process in real context through continuous critical reflection of their field experiences
Apprenticeship 2 (Year 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 weeks; Semester 5 • Assist cooperating teacher • Observe cooperating teacher at least 4 times • Conduct 2 periods of minor/elective subject lesson per week • Be aware with the diversity of teaching and learning process in real context through continuous critical reflection of their field experiences
Teaching Practice 1 (Year 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 weeks; Semester 6 • Conduct 6-8 periods of major subject lesson per week • Conduct 2-4 periods of minor/elective subject lesson per week • Conduct 2-4 co-curriculum activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical reflection • Assist in school administration
Industrial Training (Year 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 weeks; Semester 7 • Demonstrate characteristics of professional subject matter experts during industrial training in any relevant institution context • Develop the knowledge of best practices in any relevant institution through constructive feedbacks from supervisors based on a common, clear vision of good practices through supervision of industrial training • Complete tasks assigned by the institution during industrial training
Teaching Practice 2 (Year 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 weeks; Semester 8 • Conduct 8-10 periods of major subject lesson per week • Conduct 2-4 periods of minor/elective subject lesson per week • Conduct 2-4 co-curriculum activities • Critical reflection • Assist in school administration
Induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 week at any suitable place after completion of Teaching Practice 2 • Student must attend all sessions and complete any module in induction programme. • Apply subject matter pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge in actual school context • Understand the range of concepts associated with declarative and procedural knowledge and how they are applied in practice through critical reflection of the teaching and learning process

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