

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Evaluating the effectiveness of the Internship course in the MA TEFL program

A case study

A thesis submitted in

partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

Many academic programs provide internship opportunities to their students, enhancing their teaching practice and preparing them for their future careers. No recent studies were conducted in Armenia to reveal the student-teachers' attitude towards the internship opportunity they were provided within the scope of the MA TEFL program.

This qualitative research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness and the impact of internship courses on the professional development of student-teachers in the Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (MA TEFL) program at the local university in Armenia. The internship experience is a significant aspect of every MA TEFL program as it prepares student-teachers for their future career. The study participants were four faculty members who were mentors during the internship course and twenty-one MA TEFL student-teachers who have completed their internship course. The data on the mentors' and student teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of the internship course was collected through four one-to-one online interviews with faculty members, then four one-to-one online interviews with a focus group consisting of student-teachers from the MA TEFL program. Also, an online survey was conducted with twenty-one student-teachers. Additionally, the reflections of student-teachers were collected anonymously to have more insights about their internship experiences, which they had to write after the accomplishment of their internship course. The study's findings revealed that the student-teachers generally have positive attitudes towards the internship course. However, the findings revealed that some challenges created anxiety among student teachers during their internship experiences. The results helped to understand student-teachers' dissatisfaction with the grading system, setting and time of internship course, the role of cooperating teachers, feedback system and preparation. Finally, some suggestions were offered to improve the internship course by faculty members and

student-teachers to help student teachers reduce their anxiety and provide coping strategies with stress with the program's help.

Keywords: Internship course, student-teachers, anxiety, professional development

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Practica (practical experiences such as observations, internships, apprenticeships, student teaching, or other teaching practice) have long been a part of most language teacher education programs” (Crandall, 2000, p.41). Specifically, internships have been considered a crucial part of student professional development in the teaching field because they create opportunities for student-teachers to develop their pedagogical skills and “it is the best way to acquire professional knowledge and competencies as a teacher” (Hascher, Cocard, and Moser, 2004, p. 626). Nowadays, many academic programs provide internship opportunities to their students, enhancing their teaching practice and preparing them for their future careers. The value of internship programs lies in the process of ongoing learning, which helps students-teachers to gradually, and with the help of instructors, “shift from students of teaching to teachers of students” (Cirocki, Madyarov, Baecher, 2019, p. 2). In interaction with more experienced professionals, the students can develop within their own ZPD to create the zone of proximal development, where teacher-students could feel more comfortable in the field, which allows the development of analytical, observational and reflective skills (Cirocki, Madyarov & Baecher, 2019). However, diverse institutions have different models and strategies for implementing the internship based on national, regional and local contexts (Mattsson et al., 2011). Some researchers noted that the separation of theory and practice “learn the theory and then apply it model” leads to the disintegration of learning as many programs emphasize theory rather than practice (Cirocki, Madyarov & Baecher, 2019, p. 8).

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness and the impact of internship courses on the professional development of student-teachers in the Master of Arts in Teaching English as a

Foreign Language (MA TEFL) program in Yerevan, Armenia. The internship course is regularly offered to second-year students of the MA TEFL program as a core/required course, where students are involved in independent teaching in various settings to make them more reflective in addressing their professional strengths and weaknesses.

To my knowledge, no recent studies were conducted in Armenia to reveal the student-teachers' attitude towards the internship opportunity they were provided within the scope of the MA TEFL program. Thus, this study will reveal the attitude of one cohort of MA TEFL students towards an internship in the MA TEFL program. The purpose is to discover the effectiveness of the internship course for the student teachers' professional development. Additionally, the study sets out to find out the causes of the anxiety among the student-teachers during the internship, investigate their anxiety coping strategies, and offer relevant suggestions for improvements to the internship program. This study is significant in that it aims to raise the MA TEFL faculty members' awareness of the impacts of the internship course provided by the program offered to the MA TEFL students in order to graduate. What improvements are needed in the program for students to develop their teaching skills and keep students' anxiety low?

The topic of the research is based on personal interest and experience. As a current student of the MA TEFL program at the local university in Armenia, I wanted to share my peers' experiences during the internship program. The internship program is an excellent opportunity to practice knowledge that the MA TEFL students obtain during their studies with the help of such courses as Practicum, Assessment and SLA (second language acquisition), introduction to TEFL methodology, and Teaching language skills, and other subjects. Before studying in the MA TEFL program, many current student-teachers had little knowledge about different teaching methods. Those courses helped them understand the theories and use various methods in a real classroom

with real students. The internship program helped them gain more experience and improve their teaching quality.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Influence of internship on second-year students in MA TEFL

An internship is a prevalent practice in the modern world. Young professionals get an opportunity to show their abilities and qualification during internship programs to their potential employees. Many universities offer internship programs that help students put into practice the academic knowledge necessary to ensure their success in a particular field. A supervised internship allows students to apply gained knowledge and develop critical thinking in a real-world situation. Many studies (Leshem and Bar-Hama, 2008; Freeman, 2016; Suryani, 2018) underline the importance of the internship programs in teaching foreign languages and their influence on future teachers. Some authors (Lapadan, 2014; Wilson, 2002) point out challenges such as classroom management, sense of inadequacy, controlling personality, behaviour, planning and preparing for instruction. The literature overviews similar studies done in the teaching field and highlights the internship course's benefits and effectiveness. Next, the literature review focuses on the studies investigating the causes of anxiety students encounter during their internship program and their strategies to cope. It also provides suggestions that can improve the program for future student-teachers.

1.1 Similar studies in the field of teacher education

Many educational programs offer students subject-related and pedagogical learning opportunities to prepare well-qualified teachers. “It is their first hands-on experience in their field” (Leshem and Bar-Hama, 2008, p. 257). There are two phases, theoretical and practical. The last one is focused on capturing the beneficial impact of internships on future teachers (Konig et al., 2017). The internship is an excellent opportunity to provide direct teaching experience (Suryani, 2018; Freeman, 2016; Hascher, Cocard and Moser, 2004). Most student-teachers encounter obstacles in finding a job as they do not have experience. Internships provide great opportunities

for recent graduates to obtain valuable work experience. Student-teachers apply their knowledge in a real classroom setting and have firsthand experience of job duties.

Another benefit gained from the internship experience is knowledge about your strength and weakness, as student-teachers get feedback from their mentors to help them to improve their skills. Also, internships provide a great opportunity to observe and learn from their colleagues and other professionals in the field. The research on “The effect of school-based internship for trainees before and after the course” by Ivanova (2018), carried out under the scope of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education student internship project, confirmed that the internship was an effective practice for their future career. The research goal was to evaluate and compare the practicality of internships for the student-teachers before and after the internship course. Data were collected from three main groups of participants: student-teachers’ questionnaires, mentors’ interviews and academic supervisors' observations. The study's findings showed that internship was “the most valuable experience” for student-teachers as they were teaching their own class, preparing lessons and materials, and gaining hands-on teaching experience (Ivanova, 2018). The experience during the internship made student-teachers more confident as they realized that teaching and preparing for classes is not hard. All participants confirmed that internships had a positive impact on their career choice, and they know how to cope with the challenges in the teaching profession. Participants of the internship, student-teachers increased their awareness of teaching expertise, duties and responsibility, also gained valuable knowledge of collaborating with professionals.

1.2 Benefits of internship in the teaching field

The internship experience has many benefits, but it becomes a debatable topic when it comes to the evaluation of observed lessons. Educational programs, teacher trainers and instructors try to find the best ways to measure and assure the credibility of the measurement of observed lessons.

In her studies, Lashem (2008) conducted small-scale practitioner-based research to identify the student-teachers need explicit criteria for effective teaching to reveal their strength and weakness to use them for further development. The researcher found that literature analyses different aspects of internship courses, but there are gaps in the assessment. It is considered a complex activity as it requires multiple sources of assessment. Each source of assessment provides information about various aspects of teaching. For the achievement of a comprehensive profile of the student-teacher, the usage of the different sources of assessment like observed lessons, reflection journals, self-assessment, peer-assessment, and cooperating teacher assessment is needed. Nevertheless, the final grade for the internship course is based on the grades that student teachers receive during their observation lessons by faculty instructors (Lashem, 2008).

Because of such limitations in assessment, it is difficult to measure student-teachers ' full potential, which keeps the level of anxiety high among student teachers. O' Leary (2004) claims that "traditionally, classroom observations have occupied a prominent role in terms of its use as a tool by which to judge and subsequently promote good practice" (O'Leary, 2004, p. 14). Also, he supports the holistic assessment, as many institutions provide a subjective approach because they are based on the mentor's personal teaching beliefs. O'Leary (2004) suggests developing systematic observation tools to maintain objective assessment. However, he claims that "it would be naive to discount classroom observation per se as a useful learning tool for teacher development... the existing assessment approach contains a number of inadequacies that directly conflict with the fundamental aims of genuine teacher development" (O'Leary, 2004, p.14). He is against assessing student-teachers ability by subjective criteria as a lesson is a complete entity and cannot be asses separately.

Criteria for effective teaching vary in each instructional situation, so a checklist (assessment tool that sets specific criteria, which mentors use to evaluate the progress of student teachers) measurement of student-teachers' skills is limited as they carry little information about teachers' behaviour and the learning process. So, the research shows that there are problems within the internship program concerning the assessment tools, as observations (assessment tools that mentors use to take notice of strengths and weaknesses during the teaching process) tend to be seen as a subjective approach, based only on the mentors' teaching approach. There should be different approaches to create systematic observation tools to overcome gaps within the internship program. Acheson and Gall (1997) state that the feeling of unawareness of the criteria by which they are graded keeps anxiety high among student-teachers.

The internship is viewed as a critical part of student-teachers' development (Leshem, 2008; Schon, 1983). The study by Alhebaishi (2019) investigates the emotional responses of EFL student teachers in various situations that affected their teaching during their internship. Seventy female EFL student teachers participated in this study. The data were collected through an emotional, reflective diary and semi-structured interviews. The findings showed that pleasant emotions were more than unpleasant ones. The most frequent emotional responses were happiness, anger, and stress in the decreasing order. Analyzing student-teacher's reflections Alhebaishi (2019) noted that the internship is a highly emotional experience, but a mentor's negative feedback may trigger stress and elicit diverse emotional responses. The mentors' responsibility is to help student-teachers understand their emotions and teach them to regulate. Underestimating the regulation of student-teachers emotional well-being may cause teaching dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion and drop out of the profession (Alhebaishi, 2019; Schutz and Zembylas, 2009). The study results showed that the internship was an emotionally positive experience. The study recommends

increasing the focus on teachers' emotional management during the internship to help them build their professional identities (Alhebaishi, 2019).

2. Causes of anxiety during teaching internship practice

Although internship practice is considered one of the most significant components of developing professional skills in the field, researchers highlight the effect of anxiety that directly impacts their performance and learning environment in the classroom (Lapadan, 2014). Teachers experience anxiety at all levels, but it is more frequent for new teachers or less experienced teachers (Oral, 2012). The pressure that student-teachers experience during internship programs negatively influences them (Wilson, 2002), especially during the first few months (Sammephet and Wanpet, 2013). Anxiety is the leading cause for teachers to stop their careers in teaching (Merc, 2004; Ingersoll and Smith, 2003). Anxiety is present in any classroom, not depending on teachers' experience.

Both new and experienced teachers reported that one of the major causes of their anxiety is classroom management. Teachers (especially novices) lack knowledge regarding classroom management and are not prepared for emotional and behavioural problems when they face students. (Oral, 2012; Goyette, Dore and Dion, 2000; Ingersoll and Smith, 2003). Another cause of anxiety reported by teachers was the sense of incompetence among non-native student-teacher speakers of English as they used English as a medium of instruction (Merc, 2004; Numrich, 1996; Horwitz, Tallon & Luo, 2009). Takahashi (2014) also observed anxiety increase among student-teachers due to insufficient English language abilities.

The research done by Lampadan (2014) revealed similar findings on the causes of student-teachers' anxiety and found the coping strategies they use during their internship program. The study involved eight teacher participants who had internships as a part of their graduation

requirement in the 2013-2014 academic year. The phenomenological approach was employed to understand student-teachers' experiences in relation to anxiety and coping strategies during their teaching internship. Data were collected through individual meetings, interviews, group forums, and observations. The study results showed three main categories of the cause of anxiety: classroom management, preparation, and relationship. The student-teachers were anxious about the preparation materials for lessons, as they were unsure of what was expected. Also, language proficiency and class management were causes of anxiety for student-teachers. Many student-teachers during their internship do not know their students very well, as they are provided classes where they have to do their internship course, so it is difficult for novice teachers to adapt to an unknown environment. Such circumstances create challenges during the teaching process and lower their confidence.

2.1 Strategies to overcome the anxiety during an internship

Fortunately, many student-teachers try to regulate anxiety after several classes when they become more confident and comfortable with their students. Sannephet and Wanpet (2013) found that student teachers use coping strategies like positive thinking, self-talking, peer support and help from mentors and gain self-confidence (Bress, 2006).

The findings in the Lampadan (2014) study identified several mechanisms that helped student-teachers overcome the anxiety: adaptation, preparation and attitude. Interruptions and disruption are the norms in a classroom in general, especially during the adaptation. Student-teachers felt that they needed to be flexible and open to changes, as they had so much to learn because the classroom setting was different from what they had prepared for. Preparation was another issue, as English language proficiency seemed to be a common source of anxiety among the student-teachers. So, planning and preparing for instructions was the best way to ensure the

successful implementation of the lesson. The student-teachers realized that they could be in any unexpected situation and that they needed to think positively, as those challenges were there to teach them and become more experienced. The findings were transferred to participant cooperating teachers and internship supervisors to picture the student-teachers experience during their internship. Similar conclusions were made by Bress (2006), and Bawcom (2005) that included controlling the personality, behaviour and attitudes of student-teachers can create a teaching-friendly environment. Also, student-teachers are trying to develop their coping strategies, but anxiety and the coping anxiety experience should not be carried only by student-teachers. It should be handled by administrators and mentors, as they are responsible for ensuring that student-teachers have a positive mindset and attitude in their teaching practice (Norris, Larke and Briers 1990; Martin and Yoder, 2000). The successful completion of the internship program depends on the mentors' behaviour. Mentors should encourage student-teachers openly share issues they face during the teaching process to give room for their opinion and creativity instead of following specific criteria.

2.2 Improvements that can lower anxiety level in teaching internship practice

Successful teaching practice during the internship depends on the mentor's-maintained climate. As Richards and Crookes (1988) claim, "this experience normally involves practice teaching in a regular classroom under the direction of a cooperating teacher and the overall supervision of the mentors of the internship course" (p. 19). However, many student-teachers find it difficult to communicate with their cooperating teachers and mentors freely, which also causes anxiety (DeMoulin, 1993). Student-teachers should be given a choice in choosing their mentor who they feel comfortable with and share a similar teaching philosophy. Providing choice to student-teachers can create coping strategies, as many mentors do not have similar perspectives

and insist on their teaching methods. It can be confusing for student-teachers as different mentors want to see their methods used by student-teachers during lessons. Sometimes such conflicting perspectives between student-teacher and mentors can be challenging when creating materials for teaching and lesson plans for student-teachers, which can also influence the quality of teaching (Montgomery, 2000).

To lower the anxiety level, mentors should provide various workshops and training before the internship course to help student-teachers to improve their teaching skills (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Farrell, 2001). Self-reflection is also seen as a type of coping strategy as it may help student-teachers to construct meaning from their management of the classroom and boost their development and confidence (Costa and Kallick, 2000; Tülüce and Çeçen, 2016). Farrell (2007) states that it is significant to provide opportunities for student-teachers to share their internship expectations before starting their course to critically reflect their expectations and real practice. In many studies, student-teachers are suggested to video record their lessons during the internship as it positively impacts their self-reflection (Harford & MacRuairc, 2008; Oprandy, 2015; Rosaen et al., 2008). The opportunity to record classes gives them insightful information about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching and reconsiders the problems that occurred during lessons. Furthermore, the video recordings can be used as a peer assessment tool to fill the gap between student-teachers' expectations and practice.

2.3 Conclusion

Internships are demanding experiences in which student-teachers face various challenges that elicit both positive and negative emotions. The common emotional expressions used by student-teacher are 'happy', 'enthusiastic', 'stressed', and 'lost', which describe their attitude toward their experience (Maladerez et al., 2007). The most common situations in which student-teachers

encounter both positive and negative emotions during their internship are applying their knowledge, handling mentors' feedback, managing the classroom, establishing a healthy relationship with students, parents, mentors, and identifying communicative competence in the classroom (Darby, 2008; Kim & Kim, 2004; Premier & Miller, 2010; Yan, Evans & Harvey, 2011).

The emotional well-being of teachers in TEFL has been underestimated for many years. First of all, the nature of emotions is a complex subject, as it is impossible to predict the feelings of different teachers in similar situations. Also, emotions have always been considered a feminine character trait, so it wasn't considered an appropriate topic to research. The expression of emotions is considered to be childish behaviour. Last but not least, there was a lack of instruments that could precisely measure emotions (Becker, Geotz, Morger, & Ranellucci, 2014; Frenzel et al., 2009; Fried, Mansfield & Dobozy, 2015; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Fortunately, teachers' emotional well-being has become a vital topic for research in the modern world, especially in the EFL field. Moreover, much research on internships focused on internship-related problems, student-teachers knowledge, motivations, attitudes, beliefs, and concerns. (Akbari, Samer, Kiany & Tahernia, 2017; Nguyen, 2014; Sutton & Wheatly, 2003; Zembylas, 2003).

The literature review in teacher education concerning internship courses demonstrated a general consensus among the researchers on the importance of internships in the educational curriculum (Farrell, 2008; Richards & Crookes, 1988). Moreover, student-teachers see the internship course as an excellent opportunity to develop their professional skills (Farrell, 2008). Learning to teach is a long and complex process that "requires coherent and connected learning opportunities that link initial preparation to new teacher induction to continuing professional development" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1048).

The literature review and analysis of other research helped emphasize the effectiveness and the influence of internship on the MA TEFL students, the benefits of the internship on the professional development of student-teachers, and the cause of their anxiety and the strategy they use to cope. Unsurprisingly, the emotional well-being of student-teachers was underestimated in Armenia. To fill the gap, this study aims to investigate student teachers' attitudes to enhance positive emotions and lower negative ones. In addition, the study aims to provide recommendations to serve the needs and expectations of all the stakeholders. The research questions that the study seeks to address are the following:

- 1) What is the influence of the Internship program on the professional development of student-teachers?
- 2) What are the causes of anxiety during the internship program.
- 3) What are the ways to cope with anxiety?
- 4) What kind of improvements in the program are necessary to meet the needs and expectations of the student teachers?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Many studies were conducted to investigate various aspects of the influence of internships on EFL teachers (Crandall, 2000, Leshem and Bar-Hama, 2008; Freeman, 2016; Suryani, 2018). However, there is little evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of the internship program in the Armenian TEFL context.

Setting:

The case study is conducted in the MA TEFL program in Yerevan, Armenia, at the local university in Armenia. The two-year Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (MA TEFL) Program is a professional degree that aims to prepare teachers of English as a foreign language. Graduates of the MA TEFL program tend to find employment in language centres and schools as instructors, curriculum designers and language proficiency evaluators. One of the most important requirements of the program is the internship course that allows novice teachers to gain first-hand experience. The internship course is considered a significant part of the TEFL program as it is an opportunity for pre-service teachers to obtain the necessary skills and understand their role in the real classroom. In order to prepare students for the internship course, the MA TEFL program offers the prerequisite course Teaching Practicum, which includes topics related to practical aspects of teaching EFL classes and class observations and supervised teaching (Cirocki, Madyarov, Baecher, 2019). But it became clear that the six-eight hours of observations and teaching during the Teaching Practicum course were not sufficient. So, the Internship course was added in 2000, which offers a more independent and extended teaching opportunity to second-year student teachers (Cirocki, Madyarov, Baecher, 2019)

The MA TEFL program of 2021 required the students to participate in an internship course either in place they had been already employed, the Ministry of Economics or at EEC. The EEC

is an after-school program that provides children with the possibility to learn English through communicative teaching methods and provides MA TEFL students with the opportunity to do their internship.

The data collection process was the easiest part of the research as my peers, who are second-year students of the MA TEFL program, were eager to participate and share their experiences during the internship course in the summer and fall of 2021.

Before collecting data, the IRB certificate was obtained to ensure that appropriate steps were taken to protect the rights and welfare of human participants in the research. The consent of participants was obtained before data collection. The participants were informed that their data would be used in the current research. Moreover, the participants were also told they would be informed about the study results.

First, the researcher wrote emails to five faculty members who were mentors during the internship course. Only four faculty members agreed to participate in the study and conduct the interview. Thus, interviews were conducted with mentors during the internship program, who shared their experience and opinion about the course's influence on student-teachers, benefits, causes of anxiety and changes they would like to reconsider within the internship course. Second, the researcher asked students from the MA TEFL program if they would be interested in participating and being interviewed for the focus group. Many students agreed, but only four people found time and desire to be interviewed. The focus group interviews were conducted and recorded with the consent of the participants. Third, the online survey was sent to twenty- second-year students of the MA TEFL program, after which second-year students filled out the survey to share their concerns and areas of improvement needed in the program.

Participants:

Purposive sampling was used to select participants as it was a case study. There were twenty-one participants who were second-year students in the MA TEFL program at the local university in Armenia and four instructors of the MA TEFL who also were mentors during the internship course.

Instruments:

The data were collected from second-year MA TEFL students who did their 20-hour internship course in Summer 2021 and Fall 2021. The research is a case study. “A case study is generally accepted as an approach in which participants are set in their natural context. Also, it is an approach where the researcher has a deep interest in a particular context, group, process” (Paltridge and Phakiti, 2015, p. 100). The case study aims to enhance our understanding of a process in a particular setting, which is an internship course in the MA TEFL program, and particular participants, who are second-year MA TEFL students. The primary feature of the case study is that it uses multiple data sources to investigate particular bounded phenomena (Paltridge and Phakiti, 2015). The data for the qualitative study were collected in the Fall of 2021. The study employed triangulation of data by using multiple instruments, including:

Interviews from instructors

Interviews from focus group

Survey of twenty-one student participants

Reflections from twenty-one student participants

1.1 Interviews with mentors

To obtain detailed information about internship influence and challenges student-teachers encountered during their internship course, four semi-structured interviews with open-ended

questions were conducted with four faculty members who agreed to contribute to the research. The interviews included questions such as “How beneficial do you think an internship is? What can cause anxiety during the observations? What can be done as an observer to reduce student-teacher anxiety?”. The faculty members were also mentors during the internship. All the interviews with participants were audio-recorded

1.2 Interviews with the focus group (students)

The focus group interviews were conducted separately (recorded). The focus group consisted of four student-teachers who were interviewed individually. The students were asked to give their opinion about the internship and share their experiences. In addition, for the triangulation purpose, the interviews with the focus group participants included questions (See appendix 1) similar to those of faculty members. The sampling of the focus group participants was random and based on their readiness to contribute, as the study touches on the areas of their interests. The interviews included eight-ten semi-structured open-ended questions such as “How beneficial do you think an internship is? What would you change in the Internship course if you had the possibility? How can mentors reduce student-teachers anxiety?), which were concerning the internship program of the MA TEFL program, its benefits, difficulties and challenges student-teachers have faced. The focus group interviews aimed to reveal information about a) student teachers' experience of an internship, b) the causes of anxiety during their experience, c) how they cope with anxiety, d) necessary improvements needed in the program. The focus group interviews helped create questionnaires for all other student-teacher participants in the study.

1.3 Survey for student participants

A survey with Likert scale statements was created to reveal the MA TEFL students' attitudes concerning the internship program. The survey was completed online. The participants

were asked to take surveys anonymously and submit them to the researcher. The survey consisted of twelve questions such as “to what extent do you agree with the following statement "the experience of the internship was useful for me as a teacher"; how do you feel about observations? was the Internship experience stressful?) The survey included multiple-choice questions to investigate the student-teacher’ attitudes, experiences and preferences during the internship course and one open-ended question (When do you prefer to have the internship course?) to explain their choice. (See appendix 2)

1.4 Reflections of student participants

MA TEFL students' reflections that they have to complete at the end of the internship course were collected for more detailed information about their experience and the influence of the internship on their professional development. The google document was created and shared with teacher-students, where they could submit their reflections without names. Teacher reflections are not common in Armenian schools, even though it is considered essential for teachers to reflect on their performance. First of all, self-reflection can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher for further professional development. Second of all, it can be used as a tool to cope with anxiety.

Table 1 Sampling table

Research questions	Instruments	Participants/source of data	Sampling
RQ 1 What is the Influence of the Internship program on the professional development of student-teachers?	Interviews Focus group interviews	4 faculty members 4 students-teachers	Purposive sampling Random sampling

RQ 2 What is the cause of anxiety during the internship program, and how to cope?	Surveys Discussions	21 student-teachers	Purposive sampling
RQ 3 What are the ways to cope with anxiety?	Interviews Focus group interviews	4 faculty members 4 students-teachers	Purposive sampling Random sampling
RQ 4 What kind of Improvements in the program is needed to help to cope with anxiety?	Interviews Surveys Student reflections	4 faculty members 21 student-teachers 4 student-teachers	Purposive sampling

1.5 Procedures:

First interviews for the study were conducted and recorded with four faculty members of the MA TEFL program of the local university. After the interviews with faculty members, interviews with similar questions were conducted with the focus group consisting of four students. They were second-year students in the MA TEFL program, which helped the researcher to create a questionnaire survey for twenty-one participants. The questionnaires were conducted online and submitted by students anonymously. In addition, student participants were asked to share their reflections without providing their names in the researcher's Google document.

1.6 Data analysis:

As the current study was qualitative research, the interviews (recorded) and surveys were analyzed using an inductive approach through analysis of the content by coding and categorizing the answers. Thematic analyses were used to identify patterns (Shank, 2006). Such analyses were used to examine themes within data to describe the influence of internships on student-teachers, the causes of anxiety, and coping with stress strategies. To ensure the credibility and transferability

of this study, the findings were shared with participants for their feedback. Also, peer-review helped the researcher to keep trustworthiness during the interpretation of the results. Based on feedback received from participants and peer-review, the researcher revised the data to confirm her analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness and the impact of internship courses on the professional development of student-teachers in the Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (MA TEFL) program. The chapter will provide answers for each research question based on the result obtained from the interviews with four faculty members, four student teachers and surveys taken by twenty-one students from the MA TEFL program. The interviews included eight-ten semi-structured open-ended questions concerning the internship program of the MA TEFL program, its benefits, difficulties and challenges student-teachers have faced. The focus group interviews from student-teachers aimed to reveal information about a) student teachers' experience of an internship, b) the causes of anxiety during their internship experience, c) how they cope with anxiety, d) necessary improvements needed in the program.

RQ 1 What is the influence of the Internship program on the professional development of student-teachers?

Mentors' perception of internship influence

The interviews conducted with faculty members showed that mentors unanimously agreed that internship experiences mainly contributed to the student teachers' career success. The internship is a necessary component that creates an opportunity for students to have at least twenty hours of independent teaching. Mentors think that students need more practical experience rather than just the theoretical aspects of teaching by taking the course. The student-teachers benefited from their internship course, which enabled them to start their career even while studying at the local university. Also, it gives student-teachers autonomy to handle their class and plan lessons.

Faculty members who were mentors during the internship course believe that the internship course is an invaluable experience “*no one should go to teaching without previous experience*”. It allows student-teachers to understand their strengths and weaknesses and create opportunities to practice their theoretical knowledge in real-life classrooms. As one of the observers said: “*The internship course is a puzzle that connects bits and pieces of many things that students learn during the MA TEFL program. Moreover, it firms or dilutes their decision of choosing a teaching career based on their experience during the internship*”. Also, the mentor added that the significance of internship applies to both experienced and novice teachers, as master teachers observe internship classes and guide students to help them meet their full potential. During observed classes, the outside look is necessary to reveal the strength and weaknesses of student-teachers through feedback to guide them to better teaching. As the mentor stated: “*their ultimate goal is to serve the student-teachers, so they become better teachers and can serve their students in a better way*”.

All mentors noted that student teachers have many guided classes before they take the internship course, such as mock lessons and practicum, where they can have some practical experience and understand the expectations during the internship course. But “*mock lessons and practicum are more illustrative*”, as mentors do not get much sense from these classes, so the internship should be a separate course to allow student-teachers to be flexible, to have free space to develop strategies and have a sense of real class teaching. However, mentors understand that it is not a perfect course, but “it is the best option we can offer at this point”.

Most mentors agreed that it would be better if they could prolong the internship in terms of teaching hours, but they are not sure “*how practical and doable*” in terms of the program, time and students’ attitude as it is a “*kind of start we try to build up*”. Another change that mentors would like to see is growth in the interaction between the supervising teachers and student-

teachers. One of the mentors shared her experience of an internship in the USA. When she was a student, her supervisor would spend 15 to 20 minutes every time going through her lesson plans, and things could be improved, which was very motivating for her and increased her self-confidence during teaching. Some mentors would like to see such a tendency in the Internship course in the MA TEFL program.

The student-teachers were observed four times during twenty hours of teaching during the internship course. Two mentors observed two classes each per student. After every observed class, student-teachers got feedback and were graded. But the problem revealed from conducted interviews was that the first two grades influenced the last two, which created tensions. Because during first observations, student teachers' anxiety level is higher, and they might not be able to show their teaching potential fully. After every observation, student-teachers get more experience and have a better sense of teaching, lesson planning and class management.

Student-teachers' perceptions of internship influence

Similar to the opinion expressed by the mentors, all student-teachers strongly believe that an internship is an essential practice in the MA TEFL program, especially for those who plan to become teachers. Moreover, the course provides student teachers with the opportunity to have first-hand experience and improve their teaching skills, which helps them gain confidence and avoid confusion in their teaching practice in the future. "*Constructive feedback from qualified instructors was beneficial*", as many student-teachers agreed, which helped them improve the quality of their teaching and lesson planning. Most of the student-teachers agreed that the internship experience, except for being beneficial, was engaging too, as it was their first experience teaching their own class and managing the class.

Reflections collected from twenty-one students also contributed to the main findings from the interviews. Reflections that student-teachers had to submit as part of the requirement of the internship course proved that the teaching internship experiences were productive. The course helped them obtain the necessary knowledge and improve teaching skills that they can apply later in their classrooms. In reflection papers, student-teachers mainly described the positive sides of their teaching, stating that internship helped them “*to implement several techniques and knowledge they had gained*”, “*to improve their class managing skills*”, “*gain experience in teaching online or with a group of students*”, especially for teachers who did not have prior experience in teaching.

The internship helped student-teachers get out of their comfort zone, which allowed them to gain more confidence in the teaching process and improve and develop their classes through constructive feedback from mentors. Many student-teachers reported that internship greatly influenced their teaching philosophy

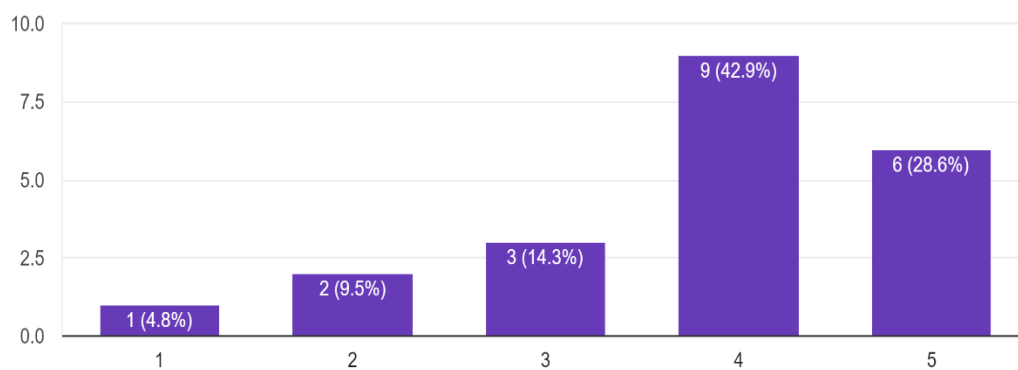
. The findings showed that internship experience for both experienced and inexperienced student-teachers helped to become more reflective and mindful about teaching. Despite positive gains, the internship course has gaps that student teachers addressed in interviews and surveys, which will be further illustrated.

Survey results validated the findings gained from focus group interviews with four student-teachers. Also, it helped to contribute to the main findings. The graph from Figures 1 and 2 confirmed the fact that the internship course was useful practice for student-teachers, as they gained a lot of knowledge about insights into a teaching career and would recommend the course as a relevant experience for the MA TEFL program.

Figure 1

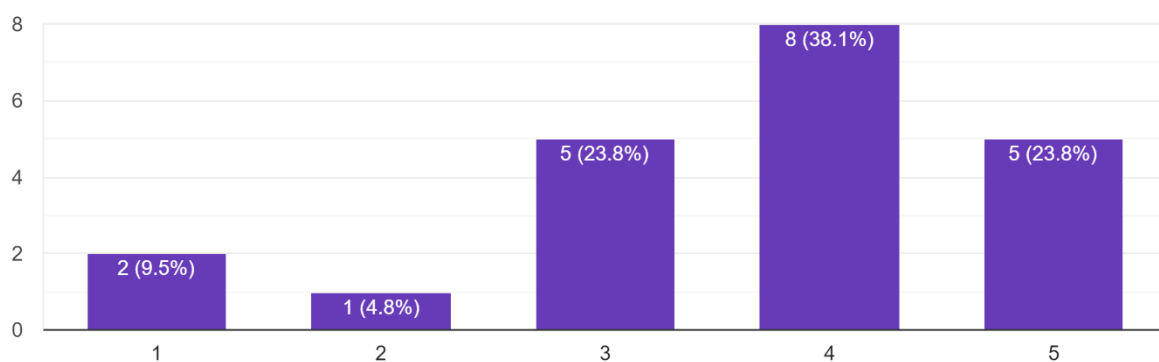
2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement "the experience of the internship was useful for me as a teacher"

21 responses

**Figure 2**

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statement "I would recommend the course to other student-teachers as relevant experience for the MA TEFL program."

21 responses



The findings showed that mentors and student-teachers agreed on the importance of the internship program on teachers' professional development and its significance in the MA TEFL program.

RQ 2 What is the cause of anxiety during the internship program?

The anxiety causes by perceptions of mentors

Opinions of mentors varied about the causes of anxiety student-teachers face during their internship. The most common causes were the grading system, the first observation of a lesson, feedback, intensive note-taking by the mentor during class, setting, time, lesson plans, preparation, and online and face-to-face teaching.

"The fact that you are observed already creates anxiety, even though you are confident in your class preparation," noted one of the mentors. But there were several particular causes that all observers agreed on—for example, the grading system, which significantly impacts student-teachers. As one of the mentors stated, *"any teaching performance should be non-graded numerically, as for me it is not measurable"*. But the program has certain requirements that mentors have to comply with and use a numerical grading system. Moreover, many students got low grades in their first observed class, as most of them were not confident in their lesson planning and class management skills when they taught in a new environment. If the grading system were in the form of formative assessment, it would help students to reduce anxiety. However, mentors agreed that by the time student-teachers got involved in an internship, they had enough experience to plan their classes appropriately. They were trusted classrooms with real students and programs that student-teachers had to cover.

Intensive note-taking during the observation is another cause of anxiety among student-teachers. Even though mentors may not write only about the weakness or problems but note strong points, detailed notes taken by the mentors can be destructive during the teaching process. The

setting of the internship also seemed problematic. First, EEC could only provide opportunities for all internship takers during the fall semester. So, student-teachers were allowed to teach in their own classes, others in the Ministry of Economics. Some student-teachers were involved in teaching teenagers and others adults, which created disbalance, as teaching young learners seems harder than adults. Also, student-teachers who had their own setting felt more comfortable and confident and had advantages over others that had little knowledge about their students. Mentors are trying to address this issue among themselves in the faculty and *“moving towards not letting student-teachers do their internship in their classrooms, as they were actually getting paid, which means they had to be in the classroom regardless of the internship, so it is not a real internship”*.

Student-teachers had an opportunity to take their internship course either in Summer 2021 or Fall 2021. Two mentors did not experience summer observations, so they couldn't give solid answers, but they all agreed that student-teachers prefer summer internships, as they have to focus only on one course, which gives them more time for preparation and creativity. But not all mentors agree on the point of having internships in the summer. As one of the mentors stated: *“People have plans for summer, including observers, of course, they wouldn't like to be stuck with internship course during vocation”*. *“Theoretically, the internship course should be offered only in the Fall, as summer one is kind of a favour to the students. Another problem with summer internships is that many schools are closed. Basically, the chances of finding suitable teaching settings become zero”*.

Lesson planning seems to be another problem that many student-teachers struggle with during the internship. Mentors here had different opinions about this issue. Some mentors think that students were well prepared and had enough experience during mock lessons and practicum that the MA TEFL program offers before taking the internship. So, they felt it is meaningless to

go over the lesson plans with students before the observation class. Still, others prefer to have a look and try to give feedback in advance for better performance during the observed class and improve lesson plans before the observed class, which also would reduce the cause of anxiety among student-teachers. All observers agree that overall preparation for observed classes was good.

However, students taking the internship during Fall 2021 were more stressed about the preparation, as they had many other intensive courses going on, such as Research Methods and Curriculum Design which required full engagement as it was directly connected to their upcoming capstone. Last but not least, online or face-to-face classes also seemed problematic. Some mentors noted that face-to-face observations were better as they could see the full engagement of the student-teacher and students in the process. Face-to-face teaching helped student-teachers practice their management skills and take control of the process, which was hard to do sometimes online, especially if your students are young learners. But some observers think that online learning is “*here to stay*”. Many students who did their internship during Summer 2021 had to comply with the rules of COVID time, and their internship was online. Many students were very creative and knew how to use new technologies during their class: “*student-teachers can really do wonderful things online*”. It was a new touch to the internship course, as before, all internship courses were held face-to-face.

The anxiety causes by perceptions of student-teachers

Findings from surveys and interviews revealed many causes of anxiety that student-teachers experience during their internship. The major ones were first lesson observation, observations by different mentors, conflicting teaching methods and styles of mentors, grading

system, feedback, online and face-to-face teaching, interference of mentors during the teaching process, setting, time and surprise observation.

To begin with, the organization of all students, creating time slots, and finding a suitable setting for each student was a difficult process, as many student-teachers, who did their internship in Fall 2021, were studying, working, and doing their internship. The ones who had the internship during the summer, it was the best choice for them, as they had more time for preparation and did not have to focus on many things like the student-teacher who did their internship in the fall.

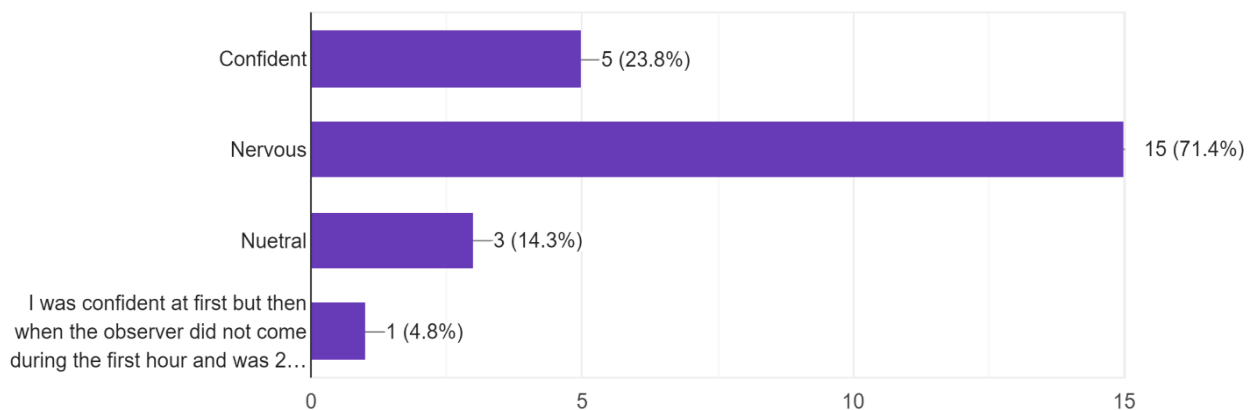
“The overall situation was confusing”, as one of the student-teachers stated, because student-teachers had little time for preparation to create lesson plans before each observation, they did not fully understand what mentors' expectations were. They did not know if the lesson plans were appropriate. Also, student-teachers' anxiety was high, as they had other demanding courses in relation to the internship course. *“Of course, being in such a stressful situation dramatically impacts our performance in the classroom”*.

Figure 3 shows the attitude of the student-teachers towards the first observation class. The majority of students, 71.4%, showed that students got nervous during their first observation. Most of them confessed that they were confident at first, but then the observers did not come for the planned part or were late *“where I had done almost half of the activities in the lesson plan, I got nervous”*.

Figure 3

8. How did you feel about the first observation?

21 responses

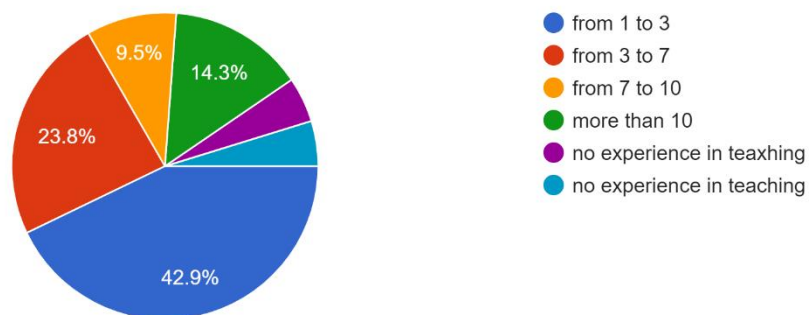


Even though most of the participants were experienced teachers (Figure 4) but as they confessed, they were anxious during the first observed lesson as they were not sure about their mentors' expectations.

Figure 4

3. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

21 responses



Some students said they were lucky enough as some mentors were willing to go over the lesson plans and give feedback on how to improve their lesson plans before the actual observation. So, it seems some students had advantages over others.

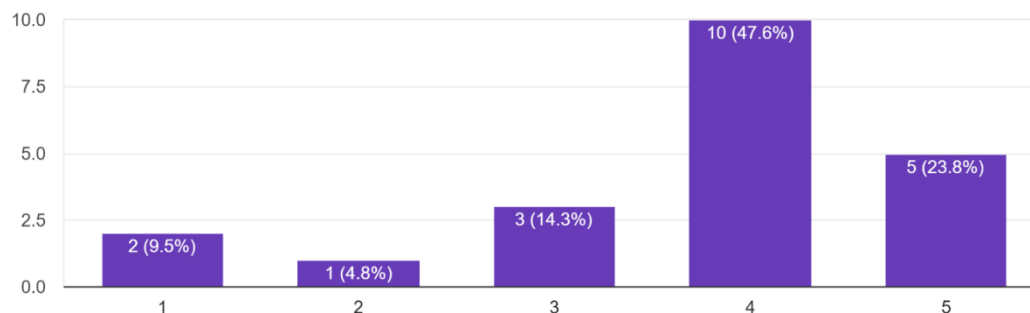
Being observed by different mentors was another issue. As many students agreed, they don't feel comfortable being observed by different mentors "*it is kind of a problem because they do not know the student-teachers teaching style, so sometimes assumptions about observing just two classes can be misleading*". It is difficult to see the full potential of the teacher based on the judgment of limited classes or particular activities that were prepared for one class. The student-teachers would feel more comfortable if they had the majority of observations with one mentor and one observation with a different mentor for the second opinion. Having more observations with one mentor would give more evidence about student-teachers progress and development during the internship experience.

Other major findings were about conflicting teaching methods and styles of mentors. Some student-teachers were really confused when they received feedback and tried to improve their lesson plans accordingly, and the next mentor would just say that it didn't work and should be changed completely. Such extreme opinions from different mentors created major issues within the internship course and created anxiety among student-teachers. According to Figure 5, most student-teachers agreed that the feedback they got helped them to improve their teaching, and they learned a lot of practical tricks to make students more engaged and stay focused during the classes but still, they were stressed about contradicting pieces of feedback.

Figure 5

10. To what extent do you agree with the following statement "the feedback from observers helped me to improve my teaching skills"

21 responses



Student-teachers have similar opinions to mentors about the grading system. As they think that the internship should not be graded numerically, it just can be a necessary part of the curriculum of the MA TEFL program. Assessment of the course with mentors should be based on a holistic approach. What students learn and gain during the internship is more important, but not how they write thorough lesson plans. *"They don't have to be that harsh to us and picky, as we are still learning"*.

Interference of the mentors during the teaching process was another issue. *"Having a mentor during my class already caused anxiety. Moreover, making comments and correcting me in front of my students was absolutely unacceptable"*. Some mentors intervened during the teaching process, and it applied to online classes and face-to-face classes. During the online classes, some mentors were just muted and without a camera, but others tried to make comments during the teaching process, having their cameras on. Such a situation was confusing not only for student-teachers but also for their students who were learning, which influenced the participation

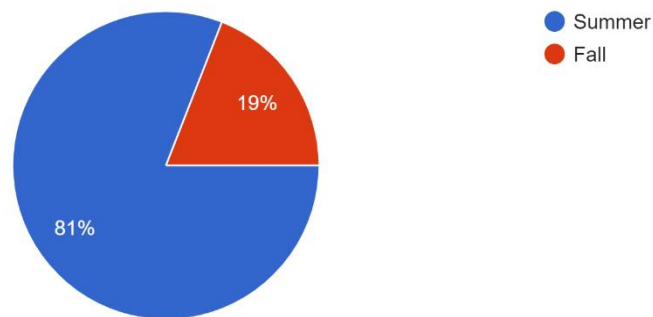
of students in discussion. They were shy to speak in the presence of a third party that they were not familiar with; the same applied to face-to-face teaching. However, many student-teachers believe that seeing a mentor in a face-to-face class is good. Student-teachers can see mentors' attitudes during the process to understand from their gestures what was good and what was bad, but with no intervention in the teaching process. During the internship, opinions about face-to-face classes and online classes were half and half. Students who did their internship during the summer had to do it online as they had to comply with the COVID-19 situation, so face-to-face teaching was not an option. Many agreed that it was easy and more comfortable for them to teach online and be observed. Still, others were totally against online teaching, even though student-teachers confessed that it was more difficult to do an internship on the fall to add other courses. Still, they could not imagine themselves being observed during online classes and teaching online, so they waited until there was an opportunity for face-to-face teaching, which was offered only in the fall.

Another cause of anxiety student-teacher encounter was the setting where they had to do their internship. Student-teachers who did the internships in their own setting, it was a smooth and relaxed experience. Still, others were stressed most of the time with organizational issues, materials and equipment needed for teaching. Some students complained that the expectations are very high concerning teaching quality, but they were not provided with basic equipment for better performance. Other minor issues were mentioned about technical problems and internet issues during online teaching. Also, the issue concerning the time of the internship, it seemed that students with summer internships were more advantageous. The results provided in Figure 6 shows the student-teachers preference for internship course to be offered in the summertime, as we can see 81% are for the summer course. Students agreed as it was a stressful experience and should be taken separately “with a more flexible and freer mind, we can make the most out of the

observations. Students who had an internship in the summer proved that it was a perfect time for them, as they were not overloaded with other courses. They had “a great experience and valuable feedback from the mentors”. Also, students noted that in the spring semester, they covered courses that would make the internship experience more meaningful if they had it in the summer.

Figure 6

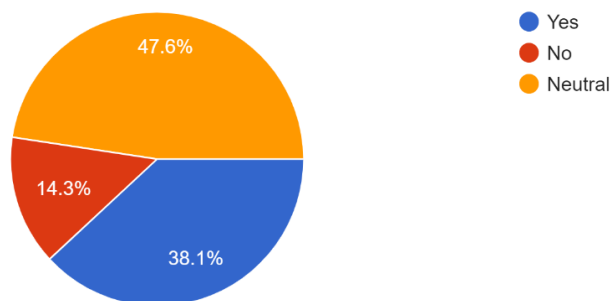
12. When do you prefer to have the internship course in summer or in fall?
21 responses



However, survey results reflected in Figure 7 show that most student-teachers had a neutral attitude towards internship practice, but 38.1% still thought it was a stressful course for them, which is a high number.

Figure 7

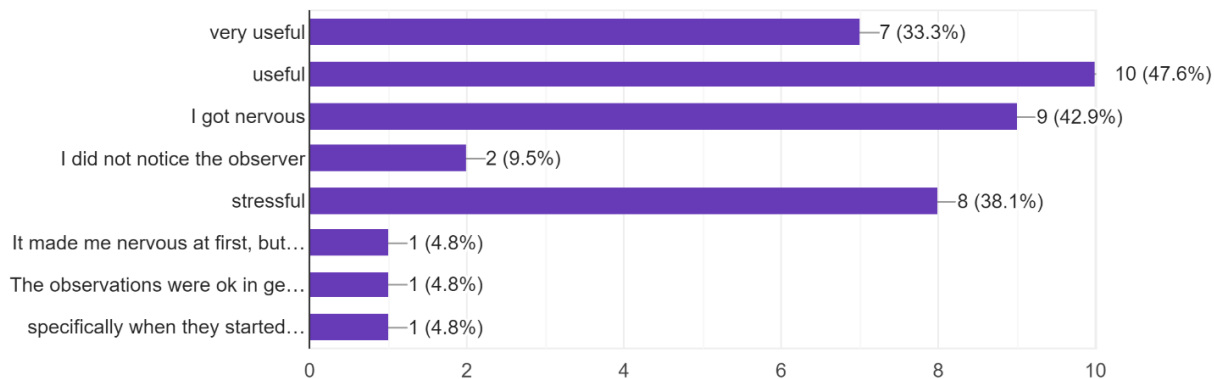
5. Was the Internship experience stressful?
21 responses



Even though 47% of students thought that it was a useful experience for them but, at the same time, stressful, which is reflected in Figure 8, some student-teachers tried not to notice the mentor, just continued with their teaching. The overlaps of findings causing anxiety were about the mentos' intensive note-taking were confirmed by findings from interviews with mentors' perceptions as well as students'. All participants agreed that *"it was stressful specifically when they started writing on their laptops, noise coming from typing was as always destructive"*.

Figure 8

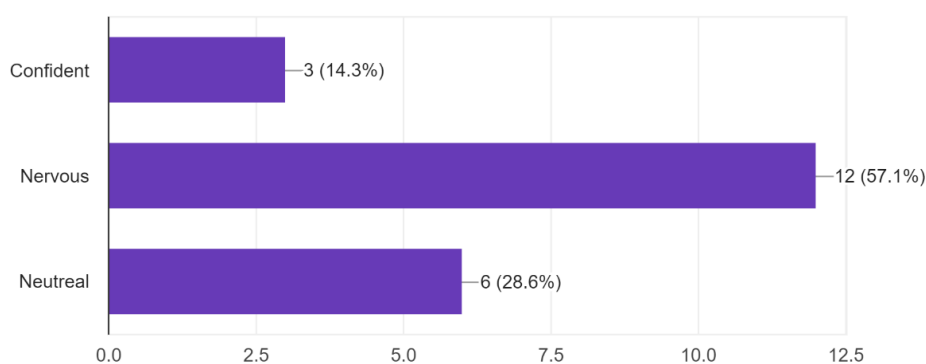
4. How did you feel about observations? (chose as many apply)
21 responses



As Figure 9 illustrates, there were problems with the surprise observations. As we see, 57.1% of students were nervous about surprise observation. Student-teachers could not concentrate and enjoy teaching their classes, as they were expecting a mentor for each class. However, the holistic overview showed that student-teachers had beneficial experiences and a positive attitude towards the internship course.

Figure 9

9. How did you feel about surprise observation?
21 responses



According to findings, there are some similar opinions among student-teachers and mentors about the causes of anxiety, such as grading system, face-to-face and online internships, and summer and fall internships. But the finding revealed that there are many insights and causes of anxiety that mentors were not aware such as prior meetings and discussion of lesson plans would dramatically reduce anxiety levels, intensive note-taking and interference had a negative impact on the student-teachers' confidence during their teaching process. According to mentors, even five minutes are enough for them to understand the teaching quality as they are experienced and have an "eye for it", but as the results of findings illustrated, students do not agree with such statement, as they believe two observed classes do not show the potential of particular student-teacher. The

researcher believes that the findings could help fill the gaps and improve the internship course so all stakeholders can benefit from it.

RQ 3 What are the ways to cope with anxiety?

Mentors' perception of how to help student-teachers to cope with anxiety

There were many ways that mentors tried to reduce anxiety among student-teachers. Anxiety is an inevitable part of the internship. Even experienced teachers feel stress when they teach in an unknown environment. The one approach that mentors use to reduce anxiety is never to visit any student-teacher class during the first two weeks of teaching, as mentors *“figure out student-teachers need at least a few weeks to get to know their students, settle in, even mess up a few times during the class until they become familiar with their new students”*.

Mentors tried to give constructive feedback plus recommendation on how student-teachers can improve their lessons without criticizing them. Mentors think they were understandable and supportive, tried not to interfere and let student-teachers do what they had to do, also not to correct if something was wrong just not to embarrass them in front of their students. Prior meetings of mentors with student-teachers can be another coping strategy *“just to say hello and happy that I am going to observe your class, I am going to look for wonderful things that you prepared for your class”*. Even a short meeting by zoom would help student-teacher to reduce anxiety. Besides mentioned strategies to help student-teachers reduce anxiety is to give feedback just after the observed class *“when the information and comments are fresh in mind”*. Students feel more comfortable when mentors give feedback right after the class. It is a great way how mentors can help student-teachers to cope with anxiety when they have the opportunity to discuss together strong parts of the class, weaknesses, or what could be done to improve the class for next time. If the feedback is given later, *“some information is lost, impressions are not fresh”* creates

incompetence while grading. Mentors added that good class preparation could dramatically reduce anxiety and boost the student-teachers' confidence in the teaching process.

How student-teachers cope with anxiety

Most of the student-teachers coped with anxiety by sharing their experience, ideas and also feedback they got from mentors with each other. Everyone tried to be helpful and supportive, ready to share their successes and failures. Student-teachers had the opportunity to observe each other classes and tried to give suggestions to improve or learn from each other. One of the students said that observing peers “*was important for me, as I could learn and implement things that I did not use before*”. Reflections also supported such findings. Many students stated in their reflections that peer observations had a great impact on their teaching and helped them learn new things from their peers, who were more experienced.

Getting immediate feedback from the mentors also reduced anxiety, as student-teachers feel really depressed waiting for feedback. Some students got their feedback from the first class while doing the third observation. So basically, they did not have a chance to work and improve their lesson planning, which had a deep impact on the quality of their teaching.

Another coping strategy for student-teachers was the active participation of the students. It made them feel that the learning was happening and gave student-teachers confidence in doing their job properly. Moreover, student-teachers discovered that good preparation was the key to reducing anxiety: “*I feel more confident when my lesson plan is well written and approved by a mentor*” They tried to maintain a positive attitude, understanding that unexpected situations are not avoidable, so every challenge is just another lesson to learn. “*Also, it would help if mentors smiled and encouraged students during observations, which would help them to overcome their anxiety*”.

RQ 4 What kind of improvements in the program are needed to meet the needs and expectations of the student teachers?

From the mentors' perspective

Mentors thought several points would better work during the internship course. One of them is a different grading system. They all understand that it is an inevitable part and requirement that the MA TEFL program has towards offered courses, but they think it is better to have a pass or fail system rather than a numerical one, as the teaching process is not measurable. Also, it can solve the problem of personal bias: *“our philosophies and performance affect student-teachers' scores, as we realize that we have our own bias”*. To avoid such subjectivity, mentors offer to increase the number of observations and include faculty members' observations and the look from outside.

The internship program *“should constantly include reflection practices or recordings of student-teachers own performance”* so students could later refer to their class and see their strengths and weaknesses during the teaching process. One of the mentors added that some other components could be added to the internship course, *“like action research to get a better sense of what is happening in their class. Moreover, it could be good practice for the upcoming capstone course”*. Another important recommendation was that *“prior meetings and lesson plan discussions must be mandatory”* said one of the mentors and added *“at least that's the way I do”* Some mentors noted that student-teachers should be given an opportunity to choose between online and face-to-face teaching, *“as some student-teachers are very advanced in using new technologies, so they can make the online class very interactive, others are good in teaching face-to-face classes”*. But some mentors said that *“face-to-face teaching is definitely better for teachers as the absence of real interaction impacts student-teachers performance negatively”*. Also, it would be better if mentors

could see student-teachers teaching in two different groups and with age differences of students. It would better show student-teachers' ability to teach and show their class management skills in various settings. Student-teachers should not be allowed to teach in a familiar environment, as it is not fair to other student-teachers who have to teach in a totally unfamiliar classroom.

Student-teachers' provision of improvements

Having a successful and stress-free internship experience is the main priority for any program. Several suggestions were offered for further improvements to the internship course to satisfy the needs of internship takers. Student-teachers should have equal opportunities in every step of the internship program. The program should offer students a choice about the time and place of their internship and ensure that students are provided with a fully-equipped classroom for high-quality classes. It also would be helpful if the most observations would be done by one mentor and just one by a different observer for a second opinion. Also, students' anxiety would be reduced if they were observed many times but only received feedback: “more constructive feedback would really help me *improve my teaching skills*”. It would help student-teachers to gain experience and improve their teaching. “*Immediate feedback after being observed would be more beneficial*” was noted by one of the students in the interview: “*while it is fresh in mind because some information could be forgotten if the feedback is late. It would also help me during preparation for next the observation*”. Immediate feedback would help students reduce anxiety and have enough time to further improve the quality of their teaching.

Some interesting thoughts were introduced about cooperating teachers. They could help student-teachers by dealing with such issues as introducing the teacher-student to her new class, providing materials and helping them to cope with class management issues. Many students said

that “*it would be great if they could get such help*”. Unfortunately, cooperating teachers had little role in the internship program, but it could be a great coping strategy student-teacher could use.

The grading system should be revised, and new assessment tools such as “*more feedback without grading, self-assessment, peer-assessment introduced*”. The internship course should help students learn and gain knowledge about teaching, not cause anxiety and be another stressful course.

Internships are promoted as a powerful career booster. Many studies showed that an internship is generally associated with a positive experience. The current research findings showed that internship significantly influences student teachers' careers. The present study examined four mentors and twenty-one student teachers' perceptions of the influence of internship courses, causes of anxiety, coping with anxiety strategies and the improvements that are needed within the program to satisfy the needs of the all stakeholders within the framework of the study done by Lampadan (2014). Analysis of multiple sources of qualitative data was reported on how to improve the grading system, provide a better collaborative framework between student-teachers-mentors, reconsider the role of cooperative teacher, which would help improve the program for future student-teachers, reduce the anxiety and provide better-coping strategies.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the current study was to explore and evaluate the impact of internship course on the professional development of student-teachers in the Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (MA TEFL) program from the perceptions of mentors and student-teachers. The study has aimed to investigate four faculty members' and twenty-one student-teachers' beliefs about the impact of the internship course. Analysis of multiple sources of qualitative data reported faculty members and student-teachers' perceptions about the internship impact, causes of their anxiety student-teachers face during the course, the coping strategies they use to lower anxiety levels, and improvements that are needed within the internship course in order to serve needs of all stakeholders. The main findings of the current research reflected the voices of both faculty members and student-teachers.

Some aspects of the current study were identical to the results of other studies conducted in different educational contexts by Leshem and Bar-Hama (2008), Freeman (2016), Suryani (2018), who underline the importance of internship courses in teaching foreign languages. The internship experience was most beneficial for student-teachers, as it helped them to improve their knowledge about teaching practice and connect theory to practice in a real classroom. The internship course increased student-teachers awareness of their duties and responsibilities and helped them to obtain valuable knowledge from professionals. However, many problematic areas were to be addressed, similar to those described in Lampadan (2014) and Wilson (2002) studies. They pointed out challenges student-teachers encounter during the internship course, such as classroom management, lesson planning, preparedness, and getting feedback. The current study's findings illustrated that causes of anxiety in different programs are specific to the setting, participants, and program. The study by Lampadan (2014) showed that one of the causes of anxiety

among the student-teachers during their teaching internship was the lack of English proficiency level. In contrast, the MA TEFL students did not have a problem concerning language proficiency. Another source of anxiety in Lampadan (2014) was the failure to implement classroom rules due to a lack of class management skills. Moreover, they struggled to apply the theoretical knowledge in the real classroom, whereas the MA TEFL students did not complain about such issues. Another issue described in Lampadan (2014) study was a lack of preparedness for the class, as teaching in a new environment with a new curriculum was stressful for student teachers; such results were identical to the current study.

The findings obviously showed the beneficial impact of internship experiences on the student-teachers professional development. Almost all student-teachers are involved in teaching English and consider the internship course a necessary component of any TEFL program. However, the current study's findings revealed areas that need improvements suggested by mentors and student-teachers within the particular master's program involved in this study. Consequently, based on the suggestions from mentors and student-teachers and supported by the evidence covered in the literature review in the field, this chapter will discuss the recommendation for improvements in the internship course in language teaching.

Recommendation for improvements of the Internship course

First of all, a different grading system would work better for the internship course, as all participants of the study agreed that the teaching process is not measurable. It also will help lower the anxiety level and give more space to student-teachers to plan their lessons and not worry about the bounds they have to fit. The program also might reconsider the number of observations. More observations without grading and getting only feedback from the mentors will dramatically lower the anxiety level of student-teachers and improve their teaching quality. Implementation of other

assessment tools such as self-assessment, peer assessment, research, and additional feedback would positively impact student-teachers. Studies from the literature review support the holistic assessment, which helps to escape subjective assessments based on the observer's personal beliefs (O' Leary, 2004). As stated in the literature review, O'Leary (2004) suggests developing systematic observation tools to maintain objective assessment.

The second recommendation is that student-teachers could have more opportunities to observe professional teachers before the internship course, which would help them understand the teaching process's insights and prepare them to face challenges that come with a teaching career. Additionally, to boost student-teachers' practical skills and keep anxiety low, the program might consider providing different workshops and training with hands-on activities for student-teachers to be ready to face challenges in a real classroom environment.

Also, the role of cooperating teachers should be reconsidered. The findings showed that in the MA TEFL program internship course, the cooperating teachers do not have the influence or interest to be overloaded with additional work. But the reconsideration of their role within the program could be used as a great coping -with- anxiety tool. Student-teachers confessed that it was important to rely on someone knowledgeable who could provide information about the class and help to understand the situation before they take over the class. The workshops and training mentioned above could help raise the cooperating teachers' awareness of the importance of their role and responsibilities during the internship experience. Darling-Hammond (2006) stated that the role of cooperating teachers should become more influential, so they can create a safe environment and provide student teachers with a relevant amount of support and skills that would help student teachers to be proficient in their teaching process and be able easily to overcome challenges they might face within their internship experience and be able to establish their own

way of teaching. Moreover, the close collaboration between cooperating teachers and mentors would positively impact student-teachers teaching, as they will be able to get more support and help to full fill the gaps and improve their teaching skills. As reported in the literature review, the successful internship experience depends on the close collaboration of cooperating teachers, supervisors and student-teacher (Richards and Crookes, 1988).

The third recommendation is about the setting and time. As findings illustrated, not all student-teachers had equal opportunities. Many had their internship in their own place and more advantageous time, which was summer. Relying on the results from the survey, most of the students prefer to have the internship course, if not in the summer, at least at the end of May when students have finished other classes, which would lower their anxiety level and be more concentrated on the internship course. So, the program might consider placing student teachers in various settings like public and private schools, language centres, and universities to gain more knowledge about teaching in different settings, ages and proficiency levels, which will help them easily integrate into the community (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Also, it would be much appreciated if the program could provide a course on a child's psychology as student-teachers had to work with young learners and would like to know how to deal with students with different learning styles, abilities, and even learning disorders.

Based on current research findings, we can conclude that the internship is a significant component of the TEFL program. The internship course is a demanding experience in which student-teachers face many challenges that elicit their positive and negative emotions. Learning to teach is a long and complex process that “requires coherent and connected learning opportunities that link initial preparation to new teacher induction to continuing professional development” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1048). The discovery of the causes of anxiety will help internship

mentors make better decisions and give guidance in preparing student-teachers and provide better support. The study might be beneficial for future student-teachers because it helps to raise awareness of possible challenges, they may encounter during their internship experience.

Limitations and Delimitations of the study

The study had several limitations, which were considered while interpreting the results. First, it is social desirability bias, as the participants might have provided the information that they thought the researcher expected to receive from them. Second, the Hawthorne effect can also be considered a limitation because the interview participants might not be fully sincere in their answers, knowing that they would be recorded and the information obtained during the interviews would be used for public research. The third limitation was the choice of instruments used during the study. Some instruments, such as reflections, might not fully reveal the objective situation. They were written as part of a student-teachers internship course and were graded. Also, the limited number of participants and time were considered limitations of the current study.

As for the delimitations of the current study, the results cannot be generalized as the study participants were selected only from one program and a specific university. Still, the study helped the researcher to understand the causes of anxiety among student-teachers and find out about coping strategies that could be useful for them in future.

Suggestions for further research

The current study might serve as a basis for further research to investigate the effectiveness and the influence of the internship course on student-teachers professional development. The study's methodology can be used to conduct longitudinal research and include participants from different language teaching education programs, illustrating a better picture and more insights into the influence of internship course on student-teachers professional development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview questions for TEFL instructors

1. How beneficial do you think an internship is?
2. How important is it to have so many guided lessons like mock lessons or practicum before the internship?
3. Do they guide well to an internship?
4. If you had the possibility, what would you change in the Internship course?
Tools -observation/ lesson plan/ reflection/assessment
5. Is the duration of the internship appropriate?
6. What are the differences in terms of quality of preparation during the summer course/fall course?
7. How does the place (school, language school) of internship influence the quality of management of teaching?
8. How observations are helpful for student-teachers?
9. What are the differences between online and face to face observations?
10. What can cause anxiety during the observations?
11. What can be done as an observer to reduce student-teacher anxiety?

Appendix 2

Survey

1. What is your age?

2. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
 1. No experience
 2. From 1 to 3
 3. From 3-7
 4. From 7-10
 5. More than 10

3. To what extent do you agree with the following statement "the experience of the internship was useful for me as a teacher"
 1. Strongly agree
 2. Agree
 3. Neutral
 4. Disagree
 5. Strongly disagree

4. How do you feel about observations? (chosed as many apply)
 1. Very useful
 2. Useful
 3. I got nervous
 4. Did not notice the observer
 5. Stressful

5. Was the Internship experience stressful?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Neutral

6. To what extent do you agree with the following statement "Student teachers prefer to have observations without gaps."

- 1)Strongly agree
- 2)Agree
- 3)Natural
- 4)Disagree
- 5) Strongly disagree

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement "The student teachers have enough gap between observed classes to prepare."

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Natural
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

8. How did you feel about the first observation?

- 1)Nervous
- 2) Neutral

3) Confident

9. How did you feel about the surprise observation?

1. Nervous
2. Natural
3. Confident

10. To what extent do you agree with the following statement "the feedback from observers helped me to improve my teaching skills"

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statement "I would recommend the course to other student-teachers as relevant experience for MA TEFL program."

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

12. When do you prefer to have the internship course? (Explain your choice)

1. Summer

2. Fall

13. Please explain your answer to question #12

Appendix 3

Responses to Question 12

As it was a stressful experience, I believe that it should be taken separately. Also, I think that with a more flexible or freer mind, we can make the most out of the observations.

I had my internship course in summer. I took the course with one of my EEC groups. I went for the course in summer as my workload wasn't that overwhelming during that period. It was a great experience for me to get valuable feedback from my seasoned lecturers.

We are more relaxed and there would be no need to rush. Also, we are not overloaded with lessons in the summer. By the way, my practicum observations were more terrible than internship. I hated every minute of it.

I chose to do it in the summer as I had no other courses.

I prefer to have it in summer but because I did not have a group to teach in summer, I took the course in fall but I very much liked the experience.

It is the preferred period for me.

It's hard to have 2 or more courses in fall. It's good to have internship (which is tougher than practicum) in summer.

In spring we cover courses that may make our internship experience more meaningful.

School kids enjoy having their holidays. I prefer teaching the internship course in summer. Students are motivated and open to new challenges.

Not having the opportunity to finish the internship in Summer was very inconvenient to me. Courses in general are pretty stressful and it would be nice to at least have the chance to finish a stressful course like "internship" in summer just to feel more relaxed in the second year which should be focused more on the thesis.

Didn't have a group to teach during summer.

It's much more time to prepare

I have more free time then

I took the Internship during the fall semester, because it was going to be face-to-face. I like to spend my summer without classes.

It depends on the workload of the semester, in my case I did in fall but in accordance with other courses it was too much for me and it made me more anxious.

I did the internship in summer in order not to be too overloaded with classes in fall.

It gives the student to spend more time on preparing for classes. And also in fall you will have a chance to choose other extra courses.

The workload in summer is not heavy.

Less overwhelming.

In summer for not to be overwhelmed.