

# EFL Trainee Teachers' Perceptions of School-Based Teaching Practice and Their Reflections on Their Teaching Practice: Hawassa College of Teacher Education in Focus

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## Abstract

This study intends to explore EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflections on the school-based teaching practice. To achieve this objective, the study employed mixed method research design. To this end, questionnaire and interview were employed to collect data. All sixty third year regular EFL trainee teachers at Hawassa College of Teacher Education were included in this study. The questionnaire was administered to all sixty EFL trainee teachers. In addition, four EFL trainee teachers were included for the interview data. Then, the quantitative data were analysed using mean and standard deviation and Pearson product-moment correlation. To check the predictive power of perceptions on EFL trainee teachers' reflective practice simple linear regression was employed. Interview data were utilized qualitatively. The finding revealed that EFL trainee teachers had positive perceptions and reflected positively towards school-based teaching practice. In addition, there was a high statistical moderate positive correlation between EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflections on it ( $r=.626$ ). Furthermore, the finding revealed that perceptions towards school-based teaching practice significantly predicted EFL trainee teachers' reflection on school-based teaching practice. The findings from interview also supported the quantitative data result.

**Keywords:** EFL Trainee teachers, Perception, School-based teaching practice, Reflection

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## Introduction

Pre-service teacher education program offers different programs across the world. EFL teacher education program is one of these which provides teaching practice as a core part. Training prospective teachers through teaching practice is a vital part of the EFL teacher education program, because it is the first opportunity that student-teachers have to experience the real teaching practices (Blunden, 2000). According to Mutlu (2014) practicum allows EFL student-teachers to discover their abilities and creativities that help them in their future teaching processes.

Teaching practice is also regarded as the first opportunity for preparing pre-service teachers for real teaching contexts where they have the opportunity to employ knowledge, information, and theories acquired through their study (Kennedy, 2006). This implies it is the real practice of the teaching process through which students are allowed to investigate current work environment conditions, and explore internal and external factors affecting organizational structure characteristics and school planning activities. Teaching practice is further aimed at providing opportunities for student teachers to integrate theory and practice (Al-Momani, 2016). Moreover, Petrarca (2013) suggested that what makes an effective teacher is focused on teaching practices and what teachers actually do in the classroom. It is during this stage that student-teachers form their personal teaching styles and philosophies that will guide them through the multiple, varied and complex pathways of teaching.

Supporting this, Richards (2011), stated that the process of learning to teach English involves becoming socialized into a professional learning community where the goals, shared values and norms of conduct have been established. To enter the teaching profession, trainee teachers need to develop an "identity kit", the ways they manage their actions, talk, thoughts, feelings, beliefs and values that comply with the norms of the teaching community and take on a social role recognized by other teachers. This entails reflective thinking. Through reflection EFL trainee teachers analyse, synthesize, and critically evaluate the complex context of English language teaching practice (Russell, 2006). Reflection paves the way to EFL trainee teachers to explore and resolve issues related to their teaching practices. This infers teaching practice and reflection on the teaching practice play a paramount role in socializing EFL trainee teachers into a professional learning community because it requires the trainee teacher to develop collaborative and cooperative activities including team teaching, peer observation, peer coaching, support groups and development discourses to fulfil their practicum responsibilities with the school

mentor, the college supervisor and other school teaching staff.

According to Farrell (2008), teaching practice is always of the essence since it provides intense training and socialization “into all aspects of the teaching profession inside and outside the real classroom” (p.29). Moreover, the teaching practice provides EFL student-teachers with opportunities to discuss the practical teaching experiences with their fellow trainee teachers, and thus, link the theoretical aspect of these experiences with the practical one (Petarca, 2013). Besides, the teaching practice also teaches pre-service EFL trainee teachers life skills such as independence in problem solving, group work with colleague teachers, and developing positive attitudes toward the teaching profession, career values and reflection on their independent teaching practice (Tuli & File, 2009). The above points clearly indicate that teaching practice is the place where EFL trainee teachers find themselves as a real school teachers and develop sense of self responsibility as a future teacher.

Though the teaching practice has many benefits for pre-service EFL trainee teachers, the teaching practice of EFL trainee teachers is governed by what they perceive and these perceptions often serve as a filter through which instructional judgments and decision are made (Shavelson & Stern 1981 as cited in Zeichner, 2015). EFL trainee teachers’ perception has become widely recognized that they play central roles in their reflection in their teaching practices. These perceptions are manifested in the teaching methods, in choosing the subjects and activities, decision-making, and evaluation (Borg, 2001). This implies how EFL trainee teachers’ perception govern the way they think, practice and reflect on their practice. There is an interplay between what EFL trainee teachers perceive about teaching practice and their reflection on the teaching practice. One basic reason that makes EFL trainee teachers’ classroom practice and their reflection on their practice different from one another might be their perceptions. Likewise, many pre-service EFL trainee teachers enter in to this independent teaching practice phase with hopes, perceptions, inflated images, and expectations that are often “shattered by exposure to certain realities of schools, classroom, and teaching” (Gabrys-Barker, 2010, p.66).

Gabrys-Barker (2010) further stated that in English language teaching, the perceptions about how language should be learned and taught are the significant factor that makes EFL trainee teachers involve different strategies, materials, media and evaluation. Most of the time, EFL trainee teachers are not aware of the existence of the perceptions inside their minds, and that perception shape the way they do their profession for example how they view the students and the materials, how they use teacher talk and code switching, how they develop their supplementary materials, which approach they employ most of the time, and how they interact with their colleagues and students and how they reflect on their teaching practice.

Supporting this, Borg (2006) indicated that teachers’ perceptions constitute a major category of teachers’ thought processes which later help them how to reflect and interact with their students during teaching. Reflection is analysing, synthesizing, critically evaluating the complex context of the English language teaching practice (Russell, 2006). Further, reflectivity in ELT teaching is defined as the teachers thinking about what happens in classroom lessons and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals and aims (Russell, 2006). This suggests through reflection, EFL trainee teachers can bridge the gap between their perceptions and classroom teaching practices leading them to act critically rather than reactively.

Accordingly, Gerges (2001) conducted a qualitative inquiry on ten Vietnamese pre-service EFL student teachers using interview on their perceptions of instructional practice during the practicum. The finding revealed that prior classroom experiences have an influence on developing pre-service EFL student teachers’ images of themselves as teachers and their perceptions of their own instructional practices. Velez-Rendon’s (2006) also conducted interpretive case study that examines four German pre-service EFL student teacher’s perceptions about teaching practice. The result indicated that pre-service EFL student teachers’ perceptions had an influence on learning to teach in EFL classroom. The finding of his study also revealed that lack of experience and their teaching expectations were other problems associated with their perceptions.

Regarding reflection, Fakazli and Gonen (2017) explored the perceptions of eight EFL in-service teachers regarding different reflective practices. Several reflective tools, including diaries, video analysis, and peer sessions, were used for reflective practice after some training. The analysis of the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and reflective writings indicates that the participants recognize the usefulness of the reflective tools to their professional development in spite of some negative perceptions regarding the time and effort required. Azizah, Nurkamto, and Drajadi (2018) examined the reflective practices of two EFL preservice teachers.

The analysis of the open-ended questionnaire, interview, and documents shows that the two pre-service teachers practice reflection in, on, and for action, i.e. while the lesson is taking place, after the lesson, and before the lesson, respectively.

Further, the study recommends reflective training of pre-service teachers to help them engage in real critical reflection. In short, both the above international studies employed small samples as participants of the study. As a result, their findings failed short of generalization. Furthermore, both the above studies employed qualitative data gathering tools such as interview, focus group discussion and open-ended questionnaire and the findings using these tools might not be generalizable for larger populations and did not show the extent of the problems unless supported with quantitative results. In addition, the culture, school contexts, nature of the program, and the setting

in other countries are different from the reality in Ethiopian context. Moreover, no local researches have been conducted regarding the EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based teaching practice, their reflections on their teaching practice and the relationship between EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflections on their teaching practice. They have not been given much attention in English language teacher education program of Ethiopia. Hence, this study sought to answer the following specific research questions.

1. What are the perceptions EFL trainee teachers hold about their school-based teaching practices?
2. To what extent do EFL trainee teachers reflect on their school-based teaching practices?
3. To what extent do EFL trainee teachers' perceptions towards school-based teaching practice predict their reflection on the school-based teaching practice?
4. Is there a significant relationship between EFL trainee teachers' perceptions and their reflections on the school-based teaching practice?

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Theoretically, school-based teaching practice and reflective practice are rooted from constructivist paradigm. In light of constructivist view, knowledge is believed to be constructed by people's inter-subjective constant interpretations, comparisons and contrasting of phenomena with reference to those of other people. The constructivist paradigm regards knowledge as a "human construction," that recognizes "multiple realities," and sees the research as a process through which the "researcher and the participant co-construct understandings" (Hatch, 2002 p.42). The constructivist approach; therefore, demands the participants to be interactive.

The participants attempt to understand what the researcher wants from the exchange, and the researcher needs to understand the world from the respondents' perspective. Meanings are co-constructed between the researcher and the participants, the researcher and the context. Thus, this study was built up on the constructive theory in which EFL trainee-teachers, EFL teacher educator and stake holders construct meanings and reflect on practical works during the research process.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to explore EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflections on their teaching practice at Hawassa College of Teacher Education (HCTE) in southern, Ethiopia. To this end, descriptive case study design was employed as it enables the researcher to study a single unit intensively for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units (Creswell, 2013). Participants of this study were EFL trainee teachers at Hawassa College of Teacher Education which was found in Hawassa town South Regional State, Ethiopia. Accordingly, 60 third year EFL trainee teachers who were engaged in teaching practice were included for the survey data using available sampling technique. In addition, 4 EFL trainee teachers were included for the interview based on their willingness.

In order to collect data from EFL trainee teachers regarding their perceptions and reflections of school-based teaching practice, questionnaire was adapted from (Yehia, 2012). This questionnaire was divided into two major parts. The first part was about EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of the school-based teaching practice which consists perceptions regarding classroom teaching, cooperating teachers, challenges and perceptions regarding their satisfaction on teaching practice. The second part was about their reflections on the school-based teaching practice which consists essentiality, effectiveness, appropriateness of duration, satisfaction, responsibility, and relationship the teaching practice built with the host school. Each part had different items to be responded on a five-point scale (1-5) with the extreme alternatives of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The internal consistency reliability of each item was checked using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded 0.869 which refers to a high level of reliability.

Hence, the survey data were collected with valid and acceptable tools as it filled the international standard. Moreover, ample time was given to EFL trainee teachers to fill the questionnaire freely.

#### **Data Analysis**

The data were analysed and conducted by using SPSS 20.0. As a result, the basic descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were computed for some part of the survey data. Mean and grand mean were computed to determine the extent to which the participants agreed or disagreed with the items referring to their perception regarding school-based teaching practice and their reflection on the school-based teaching practice. Standard deviation was used to measure the homogeneity or heterogeneity of responses for each item. On other hand, inferential statistics such as Pearson's product moment correlation test was employed to analyse the relationship between EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflection on the teaching practice at ( $p < 0.05$ ) level of significance. To analyse the predictive power of EFL trainee teachers' perceptions towards school-based teaching practice, multiple linear regression was employed. Finally, the data

generated from interview were described qualitatively.

## Results

The first purpose of the study was to identify the perceptions held by EFL trainee teachers about their school-based teaching practices. The results obtained from the statistical analysis are presented in the table below.

**Table 1.** Mean scores of EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based teaching practice

Perception Components	N	Mean	SD
Classroom teaching	60	4.54	.72
Cooperating teachers	60	4.41	.72
Challenges	60	4.34	.87
Satisfaction	60	4.48	.64
Grand mean		4.44	

As it can be shown in the above table, EFL trainee teachers perceived the school-based teaching practice positively. The mean result of each dimension is above 4 points. For example, the mean score of classroom practice is 4.54. On the other hand, the mean score of cooperating teachers, challenges, satisfaction is 4.41, 4.34 and 4.48 respectively. Furthermore, the grand mean is 4.44. This indicates majority of EFL trainee teachers perceive the school-based teaching practice positively. This result was further checked through interview result. Accordingly, the first interviewed (S1) EFL trainee teacher reacted that he has positive perception towards school-based teaching practice. He presented his view as follow.

*"I perceive school-based teaching practice positively as it helps me to put my theoretical knowledge into practice. In addition, he stated that via teaching practice I develop my professional identity. Hence, I have positive perception towards school-based teaching practice".*

The second (S2) interviewee EFL trainee teacher also perceived school-based teaching practice positively. As she stated:

*"School-based teaching practice showed me a direction on how to plan and deliver the lesson properly during my teaching practice. In addition, school-based teaching practice helped me a lot to see myself as a future teacher. Moreover, school-based teaching practice helped me to reflect on my own work. Therefore, I perceive school-based teaching practice positively".*

The third interviewed (S3) EFL trainee teacher expressed his perception as follows.

*"Being a teacher is all the result from teaching practice. To be a teacher one must pass through teaching practice. I started learning how to teach during teaching practice. All in all, I have positive outlook towards school-based teaching practice".*

In general, as it can be seen from both findings, the finding from quantitative data were highly supported and triangulated with the finding from interview.

**Table 2.** Mean scores of EFL trainee teachers' reflections on school-based teaching practice

Practicum Reflection Components	N	Mean	SD
Essentiality	60	4.53	.566
Effectiveness	60	4.48	.676
Appropriateness of duration	60	4.32	1.107
Satisfaction	60	4.05	.821
Sole responsibility of students	60	4.00	1.042
Adequate Opportunities	60	4.17	.761
Built relationship in School	60	4.55	.699
Grand mean		4.3	

As it can be seen from table two above the mean score of each component is above 4. This implies each EFL trainee teacher had positive reflection towards school-based teaching practice. The grand mean also supported this. Hence, it is possible to say EFL trainee teachers' reflections towards school-based teaching practice has paramount importance to enhance school-based teaching practice. This quantitative result further checked through qualitative result via interview.

The interview results also substantiate this result. Interview had been carried out with four EFL trainee teachers regarding their reflection on school-based teaching practice.

Subsequently, the first interviewed (S1) EFL trainee teacher reacted his reflection as follow.

*"The reflection I wrote after each teaching practice class abetted me a lot to shape my next class. I continually did this till the end of the school-based teaching practice. Doing this helped me a lot to feel as a would be teacher. To this end I need to reflect on my practice regularly".*

Another interviewed EFL trainee teacher (S2) forwarded his feeling as follow.

*"It was a school-based teaching practice which helped me to practice reflection on my own work. It made me better teacher for tomorrow. It was also a school-based teaching practice which helped me to learn from my own mistake and not to replicate it again".*

The third interviewed (S3) EFL trainee teacher presented his reflection on school-based teaching practice as follow.

*“The daily written record I had during my school-based teaching practice guided me how to manage time effectively, how to arrange class for classroom activities, and how to give feedback on students work. Hence, I felt happy on my school-based teaching practice”.*

The fourth (S4) EFL trainee teacher reflected on his school-based teaching practice as follow.

*“As I felt my written reflection on school-based teaching practice helped me a lot to learn from my own mistakes and to come up with new insights and strategies to help students during my teaching practice”. Added to this, through reflection I developed sense of self responsibility to practice teaching properly and proceed classroom instruction appropriately”.*

To conclude, as it can be seen from the above interview result, all EFL trainee teachers reflect on their school-based teaching practice positively. This implies the findings from quantitative data were supported and triangulated with the findings from qualitative result.

### The relationship between EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions of school-based teaching and their reflection on their teaching practice

This part of the study was intended to answer the research question ‘What is the relationship between EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflections on the school-based teaching practice?’ The following table summarizes the correlation coefficient (r) value of EFL trainee teachers ‘perceptions and their reflections on the school-based teaching practice.

**Table 3:** The relationship between EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions of school-based teaching and their reflections on their teaching practice

		EFL trainee teachers’ Perceptions of SBTP	EFL trainee teachers’ Reflection on SBTP
EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions of SBTP	Pearson Correlation	1	.626**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.60	.000
	N		60
EFL trainee teachers’ Reflection on SBTP	Pearson Correlation	.626**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

The above table indicates the correlation between EFL trainee teachers’ perception of school-based teaching practice and their reflection on SBTP. As indicated in the above table there is a moderate statistically significant positive correlation between EFL trainee teachers’ perception of school-based teaching practice and their reflection on it ( $r=.626$ ). In order to check the results from correlation coefficient, the assumptions of multiple linear regression were employed. After checking the assumption, analysis of the result was conducted for independent variable (EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions of SBTP) and dependent variable (EFL trainee teachers’ reflections on SBTP).

**Table 4.** Model Summary of EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflections on it

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.626 <sup>a</sup>	.392	.382	2.91020

a. Predictors: (Constant), Summary of perception

b. Dependent variable: Summary of EFL trainee teachers’ reflection

The above table 4 indicates the model summary of EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflections on school-based teaching practice. This shows how much of the variance in the dependent variable (EFL trainee teachers’ reflection) was described by the model (which includes EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions).

In this case, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was .392. This implies the four categories of EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions explained 39% percent of the variations in EFL trainee teachers’ reflections. Contrariwise, 61 % of the variation in EFL trainee teachers’ reflections cannot be described by these four independent variables of EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions. Hence, there must be other variables that are not incorporated in the model to explain EFL trainee teachers’ reflection.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore EFL trainee teachers’ perceptions of school-based teaching practice and



their reflections on teaching practice at Hawassa College of Teacher Education (HCTE) in southern, Ethiopia. The results obtained from both questionnaire and interview pointed out that almost all EFL trainee teachers had positive perceptions and reflected positively towards their school-based teaching practice. This result is consistent with other findings. With regards to perceptions, Gerges (2001) conducted a qualitative inquiry on ten Vietnamese pre-service EFL student teachers using interview on their perceptions of instructional practice during the practicum. The finding revealed that prior classroom experiences had an influence on developing pre-service EFL student teachers' self-images as teachers and they had positive perceptions towards instructional practices.

With regard to reflections, the current study revealed that EFL trainee teachers had positively reflected towards school-based teaching practice. This finding agreed with other research findings. Fakazli and Gönen (2017) explored the reflective practices of eight EFL university instructors regarding school-based teaching practices. Several reflective tools, including diaries, video analysis, and peer sessions, were used for reflective practice after training. The analysis of the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and reflective writings indicated that the participants recognized school-based teaching practice positively in spite of some negative perceptions regarding the time and effort required.

Similarly, Azizah, Nurkamto, and Drajadi (2018) examined the reflective practices of two EFL preservice teachers. The analysis of the open-ended questionnaire, interview, and documents showed that the two pre-service teachers practiced reflection in, on, and for action, i.e. while the lesson is taking place, after the lesson, and before the lesson, respectively.

The study has strongly recommended reflective practices of pre-service teachers help them engage in real critical reflection.

Finally, with regard to EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflections on their teaching practice, the current study revealed that there is a high statistically significant positive correlation between EFL trainee teachers' perception of school-based teaching practice and their reflection on it. This finding was similar with, Vibulphol (2004) finding. He investigated the relationship between EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching practice and their reflections on their teaching practice in Thailand at the University of Queensland. He employed focus group discussion and open-ended questionnaire to gather data. He also used fifteen 3<sup>rd</sup> EFL student teachers as a sample population who were engaged in teaching practice. The finding revealed that the classroom instruction of the pre-service EFL student-teachers, for example in selecting materials and activities, in using English as medium of instruction, were influenced by their perception about language learning. The finding also depicted that what EFL student-teachers perceived during teaching practice was highly manifested in their reflection on it. To conclude, both the above studies on EFL student--teachers' perceptions and reflective practices during school-based teaching practice indicated that EFL student-teachers perceive and reflect positively towards school-based teaching practice.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study aimed to investigate EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflections on their teaching practice. The findings of this study revealed that EFL trainee teachers had positive perceptions and reflected positively towards school-based teaching practice. The finding further indicated there is a high statistically significant positive correlation between EFL trainee teachers' perceptions of school-based teaching practice and their reflections on their teaching practice. Moreover, the finding of this study revealed that EFL trainee teachers' perceptions towards school-based teaching practice significantly predicted EFL trainee teachers' reflections on their school-based teaching practice. The findings from interview also supported the quantitative data result. Therefore, EFL trainee teachers should keep and engage in teaching practice and reflecting on it parallel to theoretical courses. This balances the theory practice relationship. It also helps EFL trainee teachers to develop professional identity and to have all rounded development for their future carrier.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Author professed no conflict of interest.

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