LESSON PLAN

AN INTERACTIVE DIGITAL NOTEPAD TO UPGRADE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION DURING PRACTICUM

by **María Amor Barros-del Río,** abarros@ubu.es

Beatriz Mediavilla-Martínez, bea.mediavilla95@gmail.com

Carlos López Nozal, clopezno@ubu.es

University of Burgos, Spain

Fernando Catarino, fernando.catarino@ulusofona.pt

Universidade Lusofona, Portugal

1. Introduction

Practicum is an essential and meaningful form of teacher training but due to the great diversity of educational programs worldwide, their nature and quality depend too much on each particular situation. For this reason, an Interactive Digital Notepad (hereinafter IDN) prototype, based on Kanban and powered up by Trello, is presented as a solution to the challenges related to the Practicum in foreign language teacher education programs.

1.1. Why an Interactive Digital Notepad for Practicum Management?

In 21st century, internationalisation and exceptional measures on education derived from global health problems demand rapid technological changes that challenge current practices in teacher education (Townsend, 2011). It is undeniable that teacher training has become more international in the last decades (Martínez-Rodríguez, 2004). International school placement offers teacher candidates benefits on both personal and professional levels (Lee, 2011). However, there is an evident lack of unified formats for teacher training programs at an international level. National agencies tend to work in each country separately and this embeds initial teacher education with an excessively local projection (Karatsiori, 2019). The implementation of Practicum abroad has been recommended as a meaningful and consciousness-raising opportunity, and recent research suggests that it would be particularly beneficial for foreign language student teachers (Cho and Peter, 2019). However, international networks between higher institutions and secondary schools are not common yet and when running, they require negotiations with cultural, pedagogical, and ethical challenges (Parr and Chan 2015). Under the auspices of the Erasmus+ Virteach Project, a recent survey with over

500 responses from 13 European countries has confirmed the importance of Practicum in foreign language teacher education (Barros-del Río and Mediavilla-Martínez, 2019). Practicum mentoring should provide student teachers with feedback and follow-up support, help them become autonomous teachers, and include critical reflection and research orientation (Barros-del Río, 2019). Hence, flexibility and room for innovation stand out as key factors to enhance critical reflection and emancipation among student teachers. Nevertheless, for this to happen, collaboration between school mentor, university instructor and student teacher is key during the Practicum (Borko and Mayfield, 1995; Payant and Murphy, 2012). In this regard, collaborative settings where joint reflection takes place enable mutual learning and bring greater coherence to Practicum (Mauri et al., 2019).

All these shortcomings demand new forms of mentoring in a globalised educational context. In response to the current situation, Zabalza Beraza (2011) highlights the need for further use of ICT in Practicum management among other solutions. This includes tutoring, supervision, problem solving, introduction of analysis topics, evaluation, etc. Recent research has shown interest in this direction. Regarding ICT and Practicum in online settings, Song (2019) and Song et al. (2019) have assessed the utility of peer interaction, and the use of videos respectively. However, no literature has been found on tailored digital solutions for mentoring foreign language student teachers' Practicum. This lesson plan proposes the integration of technology into the Practicum of foreign language student teachers showing the use of a robust tool for mentoring and communication between student teacher, university instructor and school mentor, which can be designed to set up common patterns for fieldwork.

1.2. Design of a *Kanban* digital board for Practicum management

Field training demands intense interaction and support among the participants. Hence, agile methodologies such as *Scrum* and *Kanban* seem appropriate in this context. They are easy to use and allow freedom for interaction among users, two key aspects in educational contexts (Kniberg and Skarin 2010). Added to that, the *Kanban* board is a collaborative tool that can be easily integrated in Virtual Learning Environments (hereinafter VLE) such as *edX* or *Moodle*.

Once an appropriate structural organisation of a Practicum model has been embedded within an educational program located in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) (López et al., 2010), a software app must be chosen for the *Kanban* board. Although most of them increase collaboration among team members, *Trello* is one of the most popular project management tools worldwide and quite appropriate to support agile learning with *Kanban* in teacher professional development (Parsons et al., 2018). *Trello* allows working in projects through

boards with lists. Each list has progressive blocks with a drag-and-drop format. Additional interesting features are integration with other applications, the use of checklists, and the ability to write comments and notes and add attachments. The students can benefit from this workflow management method as it helps visualize the work to do dividing the tasks into three main stages: "To do tasks", "In Progress tasks" and "Done tasks" as Figure 1 shows:

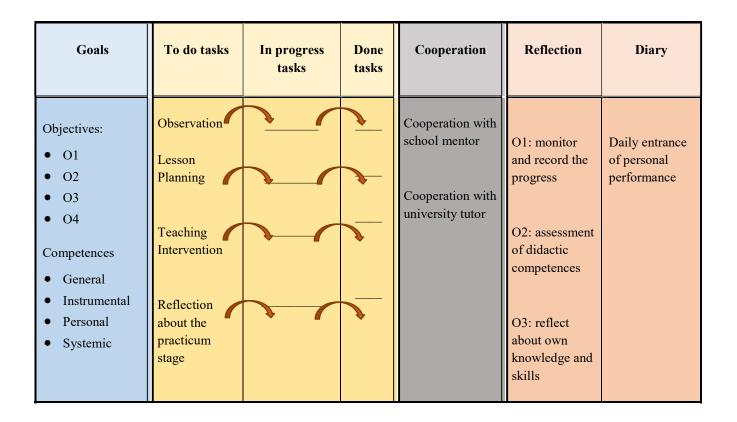| Goals	To do tasks	In progress tasks	Done tasks	Cooperation	Reflection	Diary
Objectives: • O1 • O2 • O3 • O4 Competences • General • Instrumental • Personal • Systemic	Observation Lesson Planning Teaching Intervention Reflection about the practicum stage			Cooperation with school mentor Cooperation with university tutor	O1: monitor and record the progress O2: assessment of didactic competences O3: reflect about own knowledge and skills	Daily entrance of personal performance

Figure 1: Proposed structure for IDN

This progressive sequence maximizes efficiency and agility. The dynamic nature of *Trello* allows the different items to be moved from one column to another as the activities and tasks are performed.

Although *Trello* is close-source, it offers cloud (SaaS) distribution with free use license, is supported by mobile platforms, and is based on the *Kanban* approach. Also, *Trello* is time-effective, tracks task cards well, and allows debates inside each card. Additional interesting features are integration with other apps, the use of checklists, the ability to write comments and notes, and add attachments. Under this frame, the Practicum becomes a project with its own board and lists of cards. Progress is visible as the cards are drag-and-dropped from one list to another.

2. Lesson Plan

Objectives:

1. To present an interactive digital notepad to foreign language student teachers
2. To upgrade their practicum experience
3. To create a personalised interactive digital notepad

Education level: Tertiary education

Participants: Foreign language student teachers, and university instructor

Materials: Personal laptop and internet connection

Estimated time: 55 minutes

Stage	Procedure	Time	Interaction
Warm up	Ask your student teachers to work in pairs and share their prior experiences during Practicum. If none, they can share their expectations. Then ask them to share with the whole class positive and negative aspects of Practicum.	10 minutes	Ss-Ss and T-Ss
Before	Ask your students to open their laptops and go to https://trello.com/b/QavMtgOz/foreign-language-practicum Present this *Trello* board as a unified and standardized organisational scheme for Practicum management . Encourage your students to surf with you its six-list structure, which includes "Diary", "To do tasks", "In progress tasks", "Done tasks", and "Critical reflection on advancement and cooperation", and "Evaluation", displayed on the board. Allow some time to get familiar with this structure. Answer questions and doubts.	20 minutes	Ss-T
While	Once the students are familiar with the IDN, ask them to create their own board. They go to https://trello.com/signup, follow the six-list structure and give a name to their own board. Meanwhile, the teacher moves around in the classroom, supervises progress and solves questions.	20 minutes	Ss-T
After	Homework: Ask your students to review the General objectives tab and the Competences to achieve tab (both under the "Critical reflection on advancement and cooperation" list and inspired in Crookes 2003) so that they can write an entry in the Diary list.	5 minutes	Ss-T

3. Follow-up

One session will not be enough to fine-tune a personalised IDN. That is why the teacher should encourage student teachers to play with the available design features.

To guide the students in this assignment, the teacher may suggest a simple three-stage project under the title "Designing my IDN". This assignment requires some time on the part of the students so it advisable to do it at home and give the students at least one week to complete. This assignment is meant to help the students become familiarised with the IDN, but the help of the teacher is essential. Hence, the teacher must not only be available online to answer any question but also check the students' progress regularly. A simple schedule may be useful to help the students perform their assignment. First, they are asked to create a "to do" task in relation to the desired visual aspect of their board (name of their board, background image, etc.). Second, while playing with the options available in *Trello*, they have to create an "In progress tasks" entry explaining the options found and the choices made. Third, they are to create an entry in the "Done tasks" reflecting on the problems encountered and the solutions found, as well as the role of the teacher in the process. This IDN is expected to be their working tool during Practicum and it is important that they feel comfortable with it.

Agile use of this IDN requires time. It is advisable to implement this lesson plan some time before the student teachers begin their Practicum so that they have time enough to ge familiar with their working board.

4. Conclusion

We created and fine-tuned this IDN during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Despite the challenges, it allowed us to put in motion a lively community where the student teacher, the university instructor and the school mentor interacted in a very constructive way.

It is our belief that this IDN prototype addresses the major challenges posed by Practicum and we hope it of use to the new generations of foreign language student teachers.

References

Barros-del Río, M. A. (2019). Fostering critical perspectives among future English teachers from the classroom: Foundations and recommendations. *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura, 24*(3), 1-12. doi: 10.17533/udea.ikala.v24n03a06

Barros-del Río, M. A., Mediavilla-Martínez, B. (2019). The European perception of foreign language teacher training. Findings on a survey in 13 countries. *Annals of Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University 18*(2), 67-81.

Borko, H., Mayfield, V.. (1995). The roles of cooperating teacher and university supervisor in learning to teach. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 11*(5), 501-518. doi: 10.1016/0742-051X(95)00008-8

Cho, H., & Lizette, P. (2019). Taking the TESOL practicum abroad: Opportunities for critical awareness and community-building among preservice teachers. In *Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 737-759). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Crookes, G. (2003). *A Practicum in TESOL: Professional development through teaching practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Karatsiori, M. (2014). A common curriculum for the initial training of TEFL teachers in Europe: Utopia versus reality. *European Journal of Language Policy, 6*(1), 23-112. doi: 10.3828/ejlp.2014.5

Kniberg, Henrik and Mattias Skarin. 2010. *Kanban and Scrum - Making the Most of Both*. C4Media InfoQ.

Lee, J. F. K. (2011). International field experience – What do student teachers learn? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(10), 1-22. doi: 10.14221/ajte.2011v36n10.4

López, C., Martín, D. H., Bustillo, A., & Marticorena, R. (2010). Final year project management process. In *Proceedings 2ⁿᵈ International Conference on Computer Supported Education, v*ol. 2, pp. 5-12. Valencia, Spain.

Martínez-Rodríguez, J. B. (2004). Movilidad/movilización de Profesorado y Estudiantes para la Formación. *Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado,* 51, 233-250.

Mauri, T., Onrubia, J., Colomina, R., & Clarà, M. (2019). Sharing initial teacher education between school and university: Participants' perceptions of their roles and learning. *Teachers and Teaching, 25*(4), 469-485. doi: 10.1080/13540602.2019.1601076

Parr, G., & Chan, J. (2015). Identity work in a dialogic international teaching practicum. *Teaching Education, 26*(1), 38-54. doi: 10.1080/10476210.2014.997701

Parsons, D., Thorn, R., Inkila, M., & MacCallum, K. (2018). Using Trello to support agile and lean learning with Scrum and Kanban in teacher professional development. In *2018 IEEE International Conference on Teaching, Assessment, and Learning for Engineering* (pp. 720-724). Wollongong: IEEE.

Payant, C., & Murphy, J. (2012). Cooperating teachers' roles and responsibilities in a MATESOL practicum. *TESL Canada Journal, 29*(2), 1-23. doi: 10.18806/tesl.v29i2.1097

Song, Kim H. (2019). Impact of interactive online TESOL Practicum Course on EL teachers' professional growth: Collaborative Cyclic Guided Online Coaching. *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development (IJTEPD), 2*(1), 81-98. doi: 10.4018/IJTEPD.2019010106

Song, K., Kim, S., & Zhao, Y. (2019). Manifesting multidimensional creativity in a technology-mediated online TESOL practicum course. *TESOL Journal*, *e472*, 1-17. doi: 10.1002/tesj.472

Townsend, T. (2011). Searching high and searching low, searching East and searching West: Looking for trust in teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 37*(4), 483-499. doi: 10.1080/02607476.2011.611017

Zabalza Beraza, M. A. (2011). El Practicum en la Formación Universitaria: Estado de la Cuestión (Practicum in higher education: state of the art). *Revista de Educación, 354*, 21-43.