



EVALUATION OF THE TEACHING PRACTICE: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE BASIC TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SERVICE KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Anastasios I. Pekis¹ⁱ,

Kleanthi Karagiannidou²

¹Teaching Laboratory Staff,
Department of Preschool Education,
University of Crete,
Greece

²Kindergarten Teacher,
Crete, Greece

Abstract:

The teaching practice of students in Faculties of Education constitutes an integral part of their studies, as it represents their first contact with teaching and serves as the means through which they gain initial experiences related to their future profession. The purpose of this research was to explore students' views on the teaching practice, their teaching experiences and preparation, the challenges they faced, as well as the contribution of teaching practice to their overall academic development. The research sample consisted of 107 students from the Department of Preschool Education at the University of Crete, and a questionnaire was used as the main research tool. The study highlighted the importance of the teaching practice and its contribution to the acquisition of essential skills for the students' future careers as kindergarten teachers. Significant challenges were also identified, such as the heavy workload, stress related to classroom management, high costs associated with implementing teaching activities, and collaboration issues with those involved in the teaching practice. At the same time, various benefits were recognized, such as the development of pedagogical skills, interaction with children, and familiarization with authentic kindergarten situations. The research findings underscore the value of the teaching practice as a bridge between theory and practice, shaping more competent and capable future educators.

Keywords: teaching practice, evaluation, early childhood education, reflection, professional training

ⁱ Correspondence: email anastasios.pekis@uoc.gr, anastasios.pekis@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The teaching practice constitutes a fundamental component of preschool teacher education, as it bridges theory and practice and plays a decisive role in students' professional development. Through the practice, student teachers acquire their first experiences in teaching, are equipped with essential skills and competencies for their future careers, and develop an awareness of the significance and complexity of their forthcoming profession.

The evaluation of the practice holds crucial importance for the qualitative enhancement of pre-service teacher education. It serves as a valuable feedback mechanism for both students and educational institutions, providing essential data for the improvement of the curriculum and the practical training experience. Through the process of evaluation, the strengths and weaknesses of the practice are identified, students' "voices" are heard, and the effectiveness of pedagogical supervision and mentoring is reinforced.

The need for evaluation arises from the increasing complexity of the educational field and the growing demand for improved professional preparation. Indeed, evaluation, as a concept, aims at the systematic collection and analysis of valid data, which are subsequently used as tools for the improvement and development of an educational program, a process, an individual, or a phenomenon (Kassotakis, 2013). In the context of the teaching practice, it refers to students' first encounter with the realities of teaching, the integration of theoretical knowledge with classroom practice, and the formation of their initial professional experiences within their field of study (Argyropoulou, 2005).

Exploring the contribution of the practice to students' professional development is therefore of great significance, as it constitutes the foundation for their initiation into the teaching profession and the creation of their first teaching experiences within the kindergarten setting. Investigating student teachers' perceptions of their practice experience is particularly important for assessing the effectiveness of teacher education programs and the methods of supervision and mentoring employed.

The present study aimed to examine the views of undergraduate students in the Department of Preschool Education of the University of Crete concerning various aspects of their teaching practice and their overall experience. Specifically, it sought to explore their perceptions regarding its benefits, potential challenges, the process of implementation, their preparedness and competence as prospective preschool teachers, the extent to which their expectations were fulfilled, their suggestions for improvement, and the overall impact of the practice on their professional formation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teaching Practice in the Context of Pre-service Teachers' Education

The teaching practice constitutes a significant component of future teachers' education, as it essentially represents their first encounter with their prospective profession (Ampartzaki, Oikonomidis, & Chlapana, 2013). It is a process through which all students of the Faculties of Education are required to pass, as it provides them with valuable knowledge and experiences essential for their future professional trajectory (Avgitidou & Sidiropoulou, 2020). The practice in university departments of Educational Sciences is organized and implemented according to each department's curriculum, sharing, however, a common objective: to ensure students' direct engagement with their future professional role and to enable them to acquire significant knowledge and experience through everyday teaching practice (Oikonomidis, 2014).

The teaching practice is a compulsory element of undergraduate studies and occupies a considerable part of students' academic development and progress (Oikonomidis, 2014). Through their practice, student teachers gain first-hand experiences of the authentic conditions that prevail in a classroom setting (Tasios, Dimou, & Konstantinidis, 2020). Depending on the university they attend, the practice may vary in terms of structure, duration, and underlying philosophy; however, its fundamental aim remains consistent-to provide students with meaningful experiences and insights into teaching practice (Ampartzaki et al., 2013).

The practice is therefore considered highly important, as the practical knowledge acquired by student teachers proves invaluable for their professional development (Avgitidou & Sidiropoulou, 2020). One of its principal goals is for students to internalize the appropriate theoretical and pedagogical knowledge and subsequently apply it in practice through their own teaching experiences (Grollios & Liambas, 2020).

Another major objective of the practice is to offer students their initial teaching experiences while simultaneously cultivating critical thinking and reflective skills concerning their educational choices (Iliopoulou, Tsihouridis, Botsoglou, & Roussakis, 2020). For this reason, the quality and conditions under which the practice takes place are of utmost importance, as this constitutes students' first substantial contact with the teaching profession and shapes their early perceptions of it based on the context of their practical experience (Iliopoulou et al., 2020). In other words, a key purpose of the practice is to enable students to form a well-informed understanding of their field of study through direct engagement with it, given that many of them remain uncertain during their studies about whether they have chosen the right professional path (Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research, 2011).

According to the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (2011), other significant aims of the teaching practicum include:

- 1) connecting theory with practice, helping students gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge provided by the university;

- 2) acquiring experience directly related to their field of study, which contributes to their professional competence;
- 3) engaging with authentic classroom situations, which fosters the development of pedagogical skills and abilities; and
- 4) cultivating professional awareness, assisting students in their transition into the labor market.

According to the Course Outlines in the Study Guide (2018-2019) of the Department of Preschool Education at the University of Crete, the objectives of the practice are to help students become familiar with the practical aspects of their studies—namely, teaching practice—and to offer them opportunities for intensive training in applying theoretical knowledge of contemporary teaching methodologies implemented in kindergartens, within the framework of applied pedagogy. Through the practice, prospective teachers utilize the theoretical foundations acquired during their undergraduate studies and transform them into pedagogical tools to effectively implement their teaching practices (Avgitidou & Gourgiotou, 2016).

2.2 Teaching Practice in the Department of Preschool Education at the University of Crete

According to the Course Outlines (2023), the teaching practice in the Department of Preschool Education is divided into three levels, in which students participate according to their year of study. Progression from one level to the next requires the successful completion of the previous stage (Ampartzaki et al., 2013).

More specifically, Level I, which takes place during the second year of studies, involves students working in groups of four. They observe teaching sessions conducted either by kindergarten teachers or by fourth-year students. As stated in the Course Outlines (2023), the practice at this stage includes both school observations and laboratory seminars. The school observation component takes place once a week, during which students attend classroom sessions and record their observations. These notes are later discussed and analyzed during mandatory laboratory meetings with university supervisors. The main objective of Level I is to connect theoretical knowledge with teaching practice and to familiarize students with the daily routines and dynamics of the kindergarten environment.

Level II, which is implemented during the third year of studies, also involves groups of four students. Each week, pairs of students alternate in delivering a teaching session on a selected topic in one of the kindergartens of the Rethymno region. During each semester, in addition to designing and implementing their own teaching activities, students also act as observers, recording relevant data to enhance their understanding of the educational processes within the kindergarten context. The purpose of Level II is to provide students with hands-on experience in lesson planning and implementation, allowing them to gain their first direct teaching experiences.

Participation in mandatory laboratory sessions with supervisors is required at this stage. During these sessions, students collaborate with their supervisors to design and

organize their lessons, analyze and discuss the outcomes, and engage in reflection on their own teaching as well as that of their peers. Level II is completed when students have carried out all required teaching hours and submitted the corresponding lesson plans and any additional written assignments deemed necessary for assessment (Course Outlines, 2023).

At the final stage, Level III, students are required to design, organize, and implement two four-day teaching units per semester and to observe their peers' teaching sessions. The goal of this level is to enable students to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, through the design and implementation of educational programs, and to develop essential professional competencies and teaching skills. Attendance at supervised laboratory sessions is compulsory, during which students discuss and reflect upon their teaching designs with the supervisor, focusing on methodological improvement and pedagogical reasoning.

At the end of each academic semester, students must submit their lesson plans, accompanied by self-evaluations or any other written reports required for their assessment. The practice is considered successfully completed once students have implemented all required teaching activities, submitted the necessary written work, and participated in all compulsory laboratory meetings (Course Outlines, 2023).

2.3 Relevant Research on the Evaluation of the Teaching Practice

The issue of student teachers' perceptions of the practice during their undergraduate studies has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention and remains a central topic of discussion within the pedagogical research community.

In a study conducted by Ampartzaki, Oikonomidis, and Chlapana (2013) at the Department of Preschool Education, University of Crete, the researchers examined students' views regarding the structure and implementation of Level I of the teaching practice. The sample consisted of female students who participated in this first level of the practice, and data were collected through the administration of a structured questionnaire. The findings revealed that the majority of the participants reported a positive experience with the practice, while only 10% of the respondents characterized their experience as neutral. Concerning whether the practice met students' initial expectations, the results indicated that students did not perceive a high level of fulfillment. The researchers attributed this to the fact that, at this stage of the program, the practice primarily focuses on classroom observation rather than active teaching engagement (Ampartzaki et al., 2013).

However, most participants agreed that one of the most significant objectives of the practice was the connection between theory and teaching practice, even from its initial stage. Interestingly, the researchers identified this finding as somewhat problematic, noting that many students tend to overlook the university's primary mission, which is to provide substantial theoretical and pedagogical knowledge that contributes to their overall educational formation (Ampartzaki et al., 2013).

The study also highlighted several key challenges associated with the practice, including a lack of collaboration with university supervisors, high financial costs, and limited available time. According to the researchers, these issues are consistent with findings from other similar studies, in which students frequently report difficulties in communication and cooperation with university faculty members involved in practice supervision. This problem is often attributed to the limited number of available supervisors relative to the large number of participating students, which makes effective collaboration particularly challenging. Another issue identified by the students was the insufficient connection between theoretical knowledge and practical application during the practice-an, an aspect that simultaneously represents both a student concern and a core expectation of the program (Ampartzaki et al., 2013).

Another relevant study conducted by Kortesi-Dafermou, Sfyroera, and Tsermidou (2013) examined the development of students' reflective skills during the teaching practice. The data were derived from an analysis of students' written assignments completed during their practice and from twelve semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that most of the participants developed reflective abilities, even though these skills were not yet fully mature. Moreover, it was found that students made consistent efforts to connect theory with teaching practice, utilizing their theoretical knowledge as a framework to evaluate their own teaching performance, even if this process sometimes remained superficial.

The researchers emphasized that students' efforts to engage in reflective activities aimed at evaluating and improving their teaching practice constituted a positive outcome of the study. At the same time, they noted that providing more time and additional guidance from supervisors would significantly enhance students' ability to achieve the intended learning outcomes (Kortesi-Dafermou et al., 2013).

A subsequent study by Oikonomidis (2015) investigated the perceptions of female students at the University of Crete regarding the paid practice, offered by the Department of Preschool Education as an elective course. In this program, students were assigned to various educational institutions or organizations where they carried out their practice over the course of one academic semester.

The results of the study highlighted significant benefits gained by the participants, as well as their high level of satisfaction with the practice experience. The main reported benefits included knowledge acquisition, practical experience, and direct interaction with young children. However, several challenges were also identified: (a) the placement of students in institutions located far from their residence, (b) the large volume of administrative paperwork required for participation, (c) the heavy workload resulting from the practice combined with other academic responsibilities, (d) classroom and child management difficulties, and (e) financial strain during the practicum period.

In contrast, students did not report significant problems in their collaboration with supervisors or host institution coordinators, which the researcher considered a particularly positive aspect of the program. Regarding the knowledge application during the practice, the findings suggested that students were able to effectively transfer and

utilize their theoretical learning in real teaching contexts, adequately meeting their professional training needs. Finally, the majority of participants agreed that the overall organization and implementation of the practice program was satisfactory, and no substantial modifications were deemed necessary (Oikonomidis, 2015).

The study conducted by Grollios and Liambas (2020) at the Department of Primary Education of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki aimed to examine the teaching practices of student teachers during the implementation of their lessons, in relation to the theoretical knowledge they had acquired at the university, as well as their perceptions of the overall practice experience. Some of the most significant findings of the study indicated the need to reduce the number of observation hours in schools, to ensure that the practice is implemented in educational settings where teachers are willing to collaborate with student teachers, and to strengthen the connection between theory and practice within university coursework-allowing students first to understand theoretical principles and subsequently to apply them effectively in teaching contexts.

Almost all participants agreed on the importance of linking theory with teaching practice, emphasizing that this connection plays a crucial role in the development of professional competence. Another noteworthy finding was that most student teachers believed the practice should have a longer duration, as the time allocated was perceived as insufficient for building meaningful relationships with pupils, fully comprehending pedagogical theories, and addressing potential challenges encountered during teaching. Regarding their beliefs about the skills they developed through participation in the practice, several students reported that the experience enhanced their problem-solving abilities and helped them cultivate essential professional skills. Finally, only eight out of the twenty-one participants stated that the practice met their expectations, although, overall, they acknowledged that the experience had provided them with valuable knowledge and insights that contributed to their professional growth (Grollios & Liampas, 2020).

In the study by Iliopoulou, Tsichouridis, Botsoglou, and Roussakis (2020) at the Department of Special Education of the University of Thessaly, the students' readiness was examined during the implementation of the teaching practice and their opinions regarding it. The study utilized the evaluation forms that students completed throughout the academic year. Some of the most significant findings indicated that the majority of participants appeared to have adequately prepared their lessons, as 90.0% of the students were able to clearly identify the learning objectives of their teaching. However, a small proportion of students (36.0%) were unable to follow their prepared lesson plan exactly, either due to limited time or the level of difficulty of the lesson. Regarding the challenges faced by students, 42.0% of the sample attributed them to the children's lack of prior knowledge or to a lack of interest. Additionally, several students agreed that their teaching was enjoyable and that the learning process was satisfactory, a result the researchers attributed to the thorough preparation provided by the University.

Additionally, the study by Fterniati, Markopoulou, and Galanopoulos (2020) examined the evaluation of the teaching practice in the Department of Primary Education

at the University of Patras, in which students in their eighth semester of studies, as well as their mentors, participated. The findings indicated that the majority of both students and their mentors were quite satisfied with the organization of the practice, the collaboration between them, and the students' performance during the practice. Moreover, most participants reported that the benefit gained by students from their participation in the teaching practice was very significant. Regarding the students' collaboration with the school authorities where the practice was implemented, the majority of the sample (70.0%) responded that it was very good, while only 9.0% indicated that it did not run smoothly. Concerning the mentors, most reported being very satisfied with the training seminars they attended as well as with their overall performance in the teaching practice.

Finally, the study by Fterniati and Frounta (2020) investigated, using questionnaires, the opinions of students from the Department of Primary Education at the University of Patras regarding their level of satisfaction with aspects of the teaching practice. The results indicated that the majority of students felt highly satisfied with their collaboration with their mentor-teacher, a finding that the researchers emphasized would benefit from further exploration through qualitative methods. Regarding the facilitator available to students during the practice, 50.0% of the sample reported a positive experience in terms of collaboration. Concerning students' satisfaction with the organization of the practice, the researchers highlighted a significant gender-based difference, with female students appearing less satisfied than their male counterparts. In contrast, regarding the perceived benefit from the practice, male students reported lower satisfaction compared to female students.

Similarly, the teaching practice in the international context has been examined by several researchers, who highlighted its significance as a crucial factor for the professional development of prospective kindergarten teachers. Cretu's (2021) study explored students' experiences and perceptions regarding the practice in early childhood education, focusing on its benefits, challenges, and the strategies employed to address them. The benefits of the practice included the development of professional relationships, teaching experience, skill acquisition, and familiarization with the operational aspects of kindergartens. Regarding the challenges, these primarily involved classroom management, uncertainty about their professional role, and difficulties in the practical implementation of lessons. Strategies to overcome these challenges relied mainly on students' resilience and self-confidence, as well as on the support provided by their supervisors and peers.

In the study by Poveda García-Noblejas, Barceló-Cerdá, Rodríguez Gómez, and López-Gómez (2023), students' perceptions of the benefits of the practice, potential differences in perceptions based on academic year or gender, and the evaluation of the practice as a tool for professional development were examined. The findings indicated that the practice constitutes a valuable experience for students' professional growth. Senior students evaluated the practice more positively than students in earlier years, expressing a need for greater connection with classroom reality, better guidance, and a

more active role. Additionally, gender appeared to slightly influence perceptions, with female students tending to assess the practice more positively.

Additionally, the study by Bakija-Haraçija, Ferizi-Shala, and Walker (2024) analyzed how the teaching practice influences the professional readiness of students, highlighting the significance of experience in authentic classroom settings. The findings indicated that the practice constitutes a critical stage of preparation for prospective educators, while systematic guidance from supervisors is essential. Furthermore, the study by Plessis and Razmjooe (2025) examined students' experiences and challenges during the teaching practice. Key challenges identified included the lack of clear instructions and communication with schools, uncertainty regarding students' roles and expectations, difficulties in classroom management and lesson planning, as well as insufficient support from mentors and university supervisors.

3. Methodology

The method selected for the present study is the quantitative research method. Quantitative methodology allows for the examination of broader trends concerning a phenomenon through the use of measurable variables and statistical analyses (Tsiolis, 2011). Quantitative research is characterized by its objectivity and focuses on observable behaviours and self-reported responses (Lim, 2024; Robson & McCartan, 2023), while the researcher seeks to understand the surrounding reality in an unbiased manner, avoiding the influence of personal opinions, values, or attitudes.

3.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The aim of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of the teaching practice, their experiences related to teaching tasks and their collaboration with all stakeholders involved in the practice, the difficulties encountered, as well as the contribution of the practice to their knowledge base, academic progress, and professional development.

The research questions guiding the study were the following:

- What are students' views on the preparation they received from the University regarding the implementation of the practice?
- What is the level of student satisfaction with the practice framework?
- What are the main difficulties and challenges students face during the practice?
- What are students' views on the benefits of the practice?
- What are students' perceptions of the key aspects of the practice that require improvement?
- What are students' views on their readiness and competence as prospective preschool teachers?
- To what extent are students satisfied in relation to their initial expectations prior to undertaking the practice?

3.2 Description of the Sample

The sample of the present study consisted of 107 students from the University of Crete, all enrolled in the Department of Preschool Education during the 2024-2025 academic year. Of the 107 participants, 106 were female (99.0%). The majority of participants (93.5%) were between 20 and 25 years old.

Regarding their semester of study, 30 students (28.0%) were in the sixth semester, meaning they had completed two practice levels, while 29 students (27.0%) were in the eighth semester, having completed all three practice levels. Table 1 below presents the distribution of the study's sample.

Table 1: Demographic Data

		n	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	1	99.1%
	Female	106	0.9%
Age	20-25	100	93.5%
	26-31	3	2.8%
	32-37	2	1.9%
	38-43	1	0.9%
	44-49	1	0.9%
	≥ 50	0	0.0%
Semester of study	3	2	1.9%
	4	5	4.7%
	5	19	17.8%
	6	30	28.0%
	7	16	15.0%
	8	29	27.1%
	≥ 9	6	5.6%
Total		107	100.0%

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

An electronic questionnaire was used as the primary tool for data collection, as it was deemed appropriate for measuring and analyzing specific variables through numerical data, thereby facilitating the extraction of objective and generalizable conclusions (Creswell, 2014). The data collection process was carried out through the online application Google Forms, where participants were invited to complete the corresponding questionnaire.

The use of the internet constitutes a common and effective means of collecting research data. Numerous advantages are associated with online data collection, including the ease of accessing specific target groups with distinct characteristics, the flexibility it offers participants to complete the questionnaire at any given time, and the ability to retrieve large volumes of data more efficiently compared to printed questionnaires (Papazoglou, 2018). The time frame within which the questionnaire was completed by the study's participants, the convenience provided by computers for data analysis, and the various technical features available for constructing an online questionnaire

(Papazoglou, 2018) were among the key reasons why internet-based data collection was selected for the present study.

3.3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the present study was developed on the basis of an extensive literature review, which included previous empirical and theoretical studies related to the practice of prospective early childhood educators. This process enabled the researchers to identify and articulate the key concepts, thematic areas, and variables that have been highlighted as critical for understanding the practice experience. Consequently, the questionnaire was adapted by the researchers to meet the specific aims and research needs of the present study.

More specifically, the questionnaire consisted of four sections and a total of 26 items. In the first section, the researchers provided an introduction to the topic of the study, outlining its purpose and ethical framework. The second section contained demographic information of the participants, comprising three questions (gender, age, and semester of study). The third section included 11 questions, 10 of which were structured on a five-point Likert scale designed to assess the degree of agreement or disagreement with statements related to students' experiences. These questions focused on students' views regarding their collaboration with all individuals involved in the practice, as well as their satisfaction with the preparation they received from the university. The final question in this section was an open-ended item addressing the potential difficulties encountered by participants during the practice.

The fourth and final section comprised 11 questions. Nine of these were Likert-scale items examining students' preparation for the practice, its perceived usefulness, and the extent to which their expectations were met. Additionally, two open-ended questions explored the perceived benefits of the practice and suggestions for its improvement.

Before being distributed to the study participants, the electronic questionnaire was piloted with 10 students in order to identify necessary adjustments and assess its suitability. After incorporating the feedback received and making all required revisions, the final version of the questionnaire was distributed to participants via their academic email accounts.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were applied for the analysis of the data, using frequency counts, percentages, and mean values. These statistical indicators were chosen for their ability to clearly illustrate the distribution of responses and provide a concise overview of emerging trends (Field, 2018). The statistical processing of the data was conducted using the software SPSS 25.0, which facilitated the efficient and systematic analysis of the dataset.

3.5 Research Ethics

The present study adhered strictly to ethical research principles in order to safeguard participants' rights and ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings. Primary considerations included the protection of anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

Prior to completing the questionnaire, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study through the introductory section of the instrument, which contained a detailed explanation of the research aims and procedures. It was explicitly stated that participation was voluntary, that participants could withdraw at any time without consequence, and that no identifying information would be collected or linked to their responses. All questions were formulated in a manner that would not offend or discomfort participants.

Anonymity was guaranteed during both data collection and data analysis. No personal information that could lead to the identification of participants (e.g., full name, address, student identification number) was requested. Furthermore, the data were stored securely in a protected digital environment through the Google Forms platform.

4. Results

4.1 Students' Views on the Preparation Provided by the University for the Implementation of the Teaching Practice

Regarding the adequacy of the theoretical knowledge students received from the University in preparation for the practice, a range of views emerged. The majority of the sample (39.25%) agreed that they felt sufficiently prepared in terms of the theoretical knowledge acquired. Notably, the remaining participants were distributed between feeling *slightly prepared* (14.95%) and *extremely prepared* (14.95%). Table 2 below presents the degree of adequacy of the theoretical preparation students received prior to the practicum.

Table 2: Level of adequacy of theoretical knowledge provided by the University

Level of adequacy of the theoretical knowledge provided by the University	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	16	14.95%
Very	33	30.84%
Moderately	42	39.25%
Slightly	16	14.95%
Not at all	0	0.00%
Total	107	100.0%

In response to the question concerning how beneficial students considered the observation of their peers' teaching sessions, the majority of the sample (35.51%) indicated that they found them *quite beneficial*. A small proportion of participants (7.48%) reported that they found these observations *slightly beneficial*. These findings are presented in detail in Table 3.

Table 3: Perceived usefulness of observing peers' teaching sessions

Usefulness of observing peers' lessons	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	35	32.71%
Very	26	24.30%
Moderately	38	35.51%
Slightly	8	7.48%
Not at all	0	0.00%
Total	107	100.0%

With regard to the question examining the extent to which students felt satisfied with the guidance provided by their supervisor, the majority of the sample (45.79%) reported being *very satisfied*. Only a small proportion of participants (8.41%) indicated that they were *slightly satisfied* with their supervisor's guidance. Table 4 presents the degree of student satisfaction with supervisory support.

Table 4: Degree of satisfaction with supervisor guidance

Degree of satisfaction with supervisor guidance	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	49	45.79%
Very	28	26.17%
Moderately	20	18.69%
Slightly	9	8.41%
Not at all	1	0.93%
Total	107	100.0%

Regarding the question of whether students felt they could turn to their supervisor for any difficulties that might arise during the practice, the majority of participants (55.14%) stated that they felt they could do so *to a very great extent*. Only a small percentage of the sample (4.67%) reported that they felt they could rely on their supervisors *to a small extent*. Table 5 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of students' perceptions of supervisory support.

Table 5: Provision of support by the supervisor for any difficulties

Provision of support by the supervisor for any difficulties	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	59	55.14%
Very	24	22.43%
Moderately	17	15.89%
Slightly	5	4.67%
Not at all	2	1.87%
Total	107	100.0%

In response to the question concerning students' level of satisfaction with the educational material provided on the e-class platform, the majority of the sample (41.12%) reported being *very satisfied*, while a small proportion (5.61%) indicated that they were *slightly satisfied*. Table 6 presents the distribution of students' satisfaction levels regarding the e-class instructional material.

Table 6: Level of satisfaction with the educational material on the e-class platform

Level of satisfaction with the educational material on the e-class platform	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	44	41.12%
Very	42	39.25%
Moderately	13	12.15%
Slightly	6	5.61%
Not at all	2	1.87%
Total	107	100.0%

4.2 Students' Level of Satisfaction with the Teaching Practice Framework

Regarding the question examining students' level of satisfaction with their collaboration with the kindergarten teacher at the school where they completed their practice, the majority of the sample (37.38%) reported being *extremely satisfied*. In contrast, a very small proportion of participants (6.54%) indicated that they were *not satisfied* with this collaboration. Table 7 presents the degree of student satisfaction with their cooperation with the kindergarten teacher within the context of the practice.

Table 7: Level of satisfaction with collaboration with the kindergarten teacher

Level of satisfaction with collaboration with the kindergarten teacher	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	40	37.38%
Very	26	24.30%
Moderately	19	17.76%
Slightly	15	14.02%
Not at all	7	6.54%
Total	107	100.0%

Regarding the extent to which students felt they could turn to the kindergarten teacher for support when facing difficulties during the practice, the majority of the sample (35.51%) stated that they felt *extremely able* to seek such assistance. In contrast, only a small percentage of participants (7.48%) reported that they were *not able at all* to do so. Table 8 presents the frequency and percentage related to the assistance provided to students by the kindergarten teacher within the context of the practice.

Table 8: Provision of support from the classroom/kindergarten teacher

Provision of support from the classroom/kindergarten teacher	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	38	35.51%
Very	26	24.30%
Moderately	20	18.69%
Slightly	15	14.02%
Not at all	8	7.48%
Total	107	100.0%

Regarding the question on students' level of satisfaction with their collaboration with their peers, the majority of the sample (51.40%) reported being *extremely satisfied*. Only a small percentage of the sample (2.80%) indicated that they felt *slightly satisfied* with

their collaboration. Table 9 presents the students' level of satisfaction with their collaboration with peers during the practice.

Table 9: Degree of satisfaction with collaboration with peers

Degree of satisfaction with collaboration with peers	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	55	51.40%
Very	34	31.78%
Moderately	15	14.02%
Slightly	3	2.80%
Not at all	0	0.00%
Total	107	100.0%

Concerning the question on the level of satisfaction with the manner in which the practice was conducted, the majority of the sample (42.06%) reported feeling *very satisfied*, while a small proportion of the sample (3.74%) stated that they felt *slightly satisfied*. Table 10 illustrates the students' level of satisfaction with the way the practice was implemented.

Table 10: Degree of satisfaction with the implementation of the practice

Degree of satisfaction with the implementation of the practice	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	28	26.17%
Very	45	42.06%
Moderately	30	28.04%
Slightly	4	3.74%
Not at all	0	0.00%
Total	107	100.0%

Regarding the question on students' level of satisfaction with the duration of the practice, the majority of the sample (41.12%) reported feeling *very satisfied*, while only a small percentage (4.67%) indicated that they felt *slightly satisfied* with its duration. Table 11 presents the students' level of satisfaction with the practicum's duration.

Table 11: Degree of satisfaction with the practice's duration

Degree of satisfaction with the practice's duration	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	28	26.17%
Very	44	41.12%
Moderately	30	28.04%
Slightly	5	4.67%
Not at all	0	0.00%
Total	107	100.0%

In relation to the question concerning students' level of satisfaction with the amount of preparation time available to them for their teaching sessions, the majority of the sample (45.79%) reported feeling *moderately satisfied*, while a very small percentage

(2.80%) stated that they were *not satisfied at all*. Table 12 presents the students' level of satisfaction regarding the preparation time for their teaching activities.

Table 12: Degree of satisfaction regarding the preparation time for the teaching activities

Degree of satisfaction regarding the preparation time for the teaching activities	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	8	7.48%
Very	20	18.69%
Moderately	49	45.79%
Slightly	27	25.23%
Not at all	3	2.80%
Total	107	100.0%

Regarding the question on students' level of satisfaction with the facilities of the kindergarten in which they completed their practice, the majority of the sample (47.66%) reported feeling *moderately satisfied*. Only a very small percentage of the sample (2.80%) indicated that they were *not satisfied* with the kindergarten's facilities. Table 13 presents the students' level of satisfaction with the infrastructure of the kindergarten where the practice was carried out.

Table 13: Degree of satisfaction with the infrastructure of the kindergarten

Degree of satisfaction with the infrastructure of the kindergarten	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	10	9.35%
Very	21	19.63%
Moderately	51	47.66%
Slightly	22	20.56%
Not at all	3	2.80%
Total	107	100.0%

With regard to the students' level of satisfaction with the provision of materials by the kindergarten for the implementation of the practice, the majority of the sample (32.71%) reported feeling *moderately satisfied*. Only a small percentage of the sample (7.48%) stated that they were *not satisfied* with the provision of materials. Table 14 presents the students' level of satisfaction with the materials supplied by the kindergarten for their teaching activities.

Table 14: Degree of satisfaction with the materials supplied by the kindergarten

Degree of satisfaction with the materials supplied by the kindergarten	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	8	7.48%
Very	23	21.50%
Moderately	35	32.71%
Slightly	33	30.84%
Not at all	8	7.48%
Total	107	100.0%

Regarding students' views on how easy or difficult it was to find the necessary materials for implementing their teaching activities, the majority of the sample (50.47%) reported that it was *slightly difficult*, while a smaller percentage (16.82%) stated that finding the required materials was *not difficult at all*. Table 15 presents the degree of ease or difficulty students experienced in locating materials for their teaching sessions.

Table 15: Degree of ease/difficulty in locating instructional materials

Degree of ease/difficulty in locating instructional materials	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	5	4.67%
Very	7	6.54%
Moderately	23	21.50%
Slightly	54	50.47%
Not at all	18	16.82%
Total	107	100.0%

4.3 Main Difficulties and Problems Faced by Students During the Implementation of the Teaching Practice

In response to the question concerning the difficulties and problems encountered by students during the practice, various findings emerged, which were organized into categories based on their answers. The majority of the sample (18.25%) agreed that their difficulties were related to collaboration with the classroom kindergarten teacher, followed by classroom management issues (14.29%) and the effective organization of preparation time for lesson planning (11.11%). Other difficulties reported included transportation expenses to distant kindergartens (9.52%), feelings of anxiety about delivering the lessons (8.73%), finding appropriate instructional materials (7.94%), and occasional lack of guidance from their university supervisor (4.76%). Table 16 presents the percentages and frequency of students' responses regarding the difficulties and problems encountered during the practice.

Table 16: Difficulties and challenges encountered during the implementation of the practicum

Category of difficulty/problem	n	Percentage (%)
Problems with the kindergarten teacher	23	18.25%
Classroom management	18	14.29%
Time management for lesson planning	14	11.11%
Transportation/distance/expenses	12	9.52%
Anxiety about teaching	11	8.73%
No difficulties	10	7.94%
Instructional materials/preparation of teaching lessons	10	7.94%
Lack of guidance from the university supervisor	6	4.76%
Presence of children with special educational needs	5	3.97%
Collaboration with fellow students	4	3.17%
Interruptions in teaching/inconsistency	4	3.17%
Inadequate facilities/space	3	2.38%
A positive experience without significant difficulties	6	4.76%
Total	126	100.0%

4.4 Students' Views on the Benefits of the Teaching Practice

Regarding the question on the benefits students gained from the practice, several findings emerged, which are presented in detail in Table 17 below.

The majority of the sample (22.22%) agreed that the most significant benefits of the practice were the opportunity to interact with preschool-aged children, the development of skills and competencies related to classroom management (19.75%), exposure to the professional environment in practice (17.90%), and the experience acquired in planning and organizing lessons in the kindergarten setting (16.05%).

Additionally, other responses referred to gaining experience in handling unexpected situations in the classroom (12.35%), developing collaboration skills with practice stakeholders (11.12%), applying theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts (10.49%), improving organizational, communication, and teamwork skills (9.32%), and enhancing their confidence and readiness as prospective kindergarten teachers (8.02%).

Table 17: Benefits of the teaching practice

Benefits of the teaching practice	n	Percentage (%)
Interaction with preschool-aged children	36	22.22%
Classroom management skills	32	19.75%
Engagement with the professional environment	29	17.90%
Gaining experience in lesson planning and organization	26	16.05%
Gaining experience in managing unpredictable situations in the classroom	20	12.35%
Collaboration skills with kindergarten teachers/parents	18	11.12%
Application of theoretical knowledge in practice	17	10.49%
Development of various skills (organization, practice, communication)	15	9.32%
Confidence/readiness for the future profession	13	8.02%
Teaching experience/application of pedagogical methods in practice	12	7.41%
Ability to organize instructional time	10	6.17%
Learning through observation and supervisor guidance	9	5.56%
Development of patience and perseverance	8	4.94%
Experience in implementing the curriculum	7	4.32%
Acquisition of knowledge related to preschool education	6	3.70%
Development of creativity and imagination	5	3.09%
Total	263	100.0%

4.5 Students' Views on the Key Aspects of the Teaching Practice that Require Improvement

In response to the question regarding which aspects of the practice require improvement, several important findings emerged. The majority of the sample (28.2%) highlighted as key suggestions the provision of more materials by the University for lesson implementation, improved collaboration among practice stakeholders (22.6%), and an increase in the time allocated for preparing lesson plans (20.2%).

Additionally, other views expressed by participants concerned the reduction of workload (9.7%), an increase in the number of lessons and interdisciplinary approaches (8.1%), and the provision of more supervision and feedback (8.1%). Table 18 presents the students' suggestions for improving the practice.

Table 18: Suggestions for improving the teaching practice

Suggestions for improving the practice	n	Percentage (%)
Provision of materials by the University	35	28.2%
Improved collaboration with kindergarten teachers and supervisors	28	22.6%
More time for preparing lesson plans	25	20.2%
Reduction of workload	12	9.7%
More teaching opportunities and interdisciplinary approaches	10	8.1%
Observation of additional lessons taught by kindergarten teachers	7	6.6%
Desire for a paid practice	4	3.2%
Increased supervision and feedback	10	8.1%
Better organization and clearer instructions	9	7.3%
Reduced deadlines for lesson planning and procedural requirements of the practice	6	4.8%
Shorter practice duration	5	4.0%
Coverage of transportation expenses	6	4.8%
Support for children with special educational needs	2	1.6%
No suggestions/everything is satisfactory/no opinion	11	8.9%
Total	170	100.0%

4.6 Students' Views on Their Readiness and Competence as Prospective Kindergarten Teachers

In response to the question regarding how prepared the students felt to implement their teaching activities, the majority of the sample (45.79%) reported feeling fairly well prepared, while a small percentage (6.54%) stated that they felt only slightly prepared. Table 19 presents the degree of students' preparedness with respect to the implementation of their teaching tasks.

Table 19: Degree of preparedness for implementing the lessons

Degree of preparedness for implementing the lessons	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	17	15.89%
Very	31	28.97%
Moderately	49	45.79%
Slightly	7	6.54%
Not at all	3	2.80%
Total	107	100.0%

With regard to the students' views on the skills and competencies they gained from the practice in relation to their professional trajectory as prospective preschool teachers, the majority of the sample (33.64%) agreed that they had acquired a great deal, while a small percentage (8.41%) reported that they had gained only a few. Table 20 illustrates the extent to which the practice provided students with resources for their future professional role as preschool teachers.

Table 20: Provision of practice-related resources that support students' professional development

Provision of practice-related resources that support students' professional development	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	36	33.64%
Very	31	28.97%
Moderately	28	26.17%
Slightly	9	8.41%
Not at all	3	2.80%
Total	107	100.0%

Regarding the question on the level of readiness and competence students felt upon completing the practice, the majority of the sample (48.60%) reported feeling fairly ready, while a smaller percentage (16.82%) felt less ready and less competent. Table 21 presents the level of students' readiness and competence at the conclusion of the practice.

Table 21: Degree of students' readiness and competence at the conclusion of the practice

Degree of students' readiness and competence at the conclusion of the practice	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	5	4.67%
Very	28	26.17%
Moderately	52	48.60%
Slightly	18	16.82%
Not at all	4	3.74%
Total	107	100.0%

In response to the question regarding the significance of the practice, the majority of the sample (73.83%) stated that they consider the practice to be extremely important. Table 22 presents the degree of importance attributed to the practice based on the students' views.

Table 22: Degree of significance of teaching practice

Degree of significance of teaching practice	n	Percentage (%)
Extremely	79	73.83%
Very	16	14.95%
Moderately	9	8.41%
Slightly	2	1.87%
Not at all	1	0.93%
Total	107	100.0%

4.7 Students' Level of Satisfaction in Relation to Their Expectations Prior to the Teaching Practice

With respect to the level of student satisfaction concerning the extent to which their expectations for the practice were met before its implementation, the majority of the sample (65.42%) indicated that their expectations were fulfilled, while a very small percentage (0.93%) stated that their expectations were not fulfilled at all. Table 23

presents the degree to which students' expectations for the practice were met prior to its implementation.

Table 23: Degree of fulfillment of expectations for the practice prior to its implementation

Degree of fulfillment of expectations for the practice prior to its implementation	n	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	13	12.15%
Agree	70	65.42%
Undecided	14	13.08%
Disagree	9	8.41%
Strongly disagree	1	0.93%
Total	107	100.0%

4.8 Analysis of Students' Satisfaction with Various Aspects of the Teaching Practice by Semester of Study

Regarding the item measuring students' satisfaction with the adequacy of their theoretical knowledge, satisfaction gradually increases from the 5th semester ($M=3.23$) to the 7th semester ($M=3.69$), highlighting students' perception that their theoretical foundation strengthens as their studies progress. Concerning the benefits of observing teaching sessions, the scores range between 3.53 and 4.03, with the highest level of satisfaction recorded in the 8th semester.

Satisfaction with supervisor guidance remains high across all semesters, while the mean satisfaction score for the e-class platform ranges from 3.97 to 4.35. Collaboration with classmates is rated very positively ($M\approx 4.3$ in all semesters), in contrast to collaboration with the kindergarten teacher, which shows greater variability ($M=3.56-3.85$). Satisfaction with infrastructure and provision of materials is lower ($M\approx 2.9-3.2$), accompanied by relatively high standard deviations.

Satisfaction with the process of finding teaching materials is relatively high in the 5th semester ($M=4.12$) but decreases in the 7th semester ($M=3.31$). Students also report high satisfaction with the organization ($M=3.74-4.12$) and duration ($M=3.66-4.15$) of the practice. Conversely, the time available for lesson preparation receives low ratings ($M\approx 2.7-3.0$), suggesting a possible workload issue or insufficient preparation time. Readiness and competence also fall on the lower end ($M\approx 2.9-3.3$), indicating that students do not feel fully prepared upon completing the practice. Expectations for the practice are met to a satisfactory degree ($M\approx 3.8$), while its importance is evaluated extremely highly ($M\approx 4.5-4.9$). Table 24 presents the mean scores for students' satisfaction with various aspects of the practice by semester of study.

Table 24: Average satisfaction scores of the teaching practice by semester of study

	Up to the 5th semester			6th semester			7th semester			8th semester and above		
	Mean	N	sd	Mean	N	sd	Mean	N	sd	Mean	N	sd
Adequacy of theoretical knowledge	3.23	26	0.82	3.37	30	0.93	3.69	16	0.87	3.6	35	1.01
The benefits of observing lessons	3.85	26	1.01	3.53	30	0.94	3.88	16	1.09	4.03	35	0.92
Satisfaction with supervisor guidance	3.88	26	0.82	3.63	30	1.16	4	16	0.89	4.03	35	0.79
Support provided by the supervisor	4.46	26	0.81	4.03	30	1	4.25	16	0.93	4.26	35	1.17
Satisfaction with the e-class platform	4.35	26	0.85	3.97	30	1.22	4	16	0.73	4.14	35	0.88
Satisfaction with collaboration with the kindergarten teacher	3.85	26	1.22	3.73	30	1.34	3.56	16	1.55	3.69	35	1.18
Support provided by the kindergarten teacher	3.73	26	1.19	4	30	1.29	3.37	16	1.5	3.46	35	1.27
Satisfaction with collaboration with peers	4.5	26	0.65	4.4	30	0.86	4.19	16	0.91	4.17	35	0.86
Satisfaction with the conduct of the practice	4.12	26	0.71	3.9	30	0.88	3.94	16	0.93	3.74	35	0.82
Satisfaction with the duration of the practice	4.15	26	0.73	3.93	30	0.87	3.88	16	1.02	3.66	35	0.8
Satisfaction with the time available for lesson preparation	2.85	26	1.12	3.03	30	1.13	2.56	16	0.73	2.74	35	0.95
Satisfaction with kindergarten facilities	3.23	26	0.99	2.9	30	0.76	3.13	16	1.2	3.23	35	0.91
Satisfaction with the provision of materials	2.92	26	1.02	2.87	30	0.94	3	16	1.32	2.89	35	1.11
Satisfaction with the ease of obtaining teaching materials	4.12	26	0.86	3.47	30	0.9	3.31	16	1.25	3.71	35	0.93
Satisfaction with lesson preparation	3.65	26	1.02	3.13	30	0.82	3.69	16	0.87	3.57	35	0.95
Satisfaction with the resources provided by the practice	3.77	26	1.24	3.5	30	1.14	4.38	16	0.72	3.89	35	0.96
Readiness and competence at the completion of the practice	3.23	26	0.76	2.83	30	1.09	3.37	16	0.81	3.14	35	0.73
Significance of the practice	4.58	26	0.76	4.5	30	0.82	4.88	16	0.34	4.54	35	0.95
Fulfillment of expectations from the practice	3.81	26	0.63	3.77	30	0.86	3.88	16	1.09	3.77	35	0.73

5. Discussion

5.1 Students' Views on the Preparation Provided by the University for the Implementation of the Teaching Practice

The preparation students receive from the University is a vital component of the practice, as it equips them with the necessary tools for its implementation and smooth conduct. The present study indicates that nearly half of the participating students felt very well or well prepared based on the theoretical knowledge they had acquired, a finding consistent with findings from similar studies, in which students reported using the theoretical knowledge gained as a resource during their teaching practice (Iliopoulou et al., 2020; Kortesi-Dafermou et al., 2013; Oikonomidis, 2015).

This finding also aligns with the perspectives of Darling-Hammond (2006) and Zeichner (2010), who argue that the systematic integration of theoretical training into practical experiences strengthens future teachers' sense of professional self-efficacy. The remaining students reported feeling fairly prepared, while a smaller number felt only minimally prepared. These results align with earlier research showing that some students perceive the theoretical knowledge provided by universities as insufficient and disconnected from actual classroom practice (Ampartzaki et al., 2013; Grollios & Liambas, 2020). It appears that students' responses may differ depending on the university they attend, as each department designs and implements its own curriculum. Nevertheless, the connection between theoretical knowledge and teaching practice has been consistently identified in the literature as a key expectation that students hold for the practice (Ampartzaki et al., 2013). According to the research, linking theory with practice is one of the fundamental objectives of the practice and constitutes a valuable pedagogical tool for its effective implementation (Avgitidou & Gourgiotou, 2016; Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research, 2011). It is therefore crucial that each university ensures that the theoretical components of its curriculum adequately prepare students for the practical demands they will encounter both during the practice and in their future professional careers.

With respect to the benefits associated with observing the teaching of peers or kindergarten teachers, the findings show that these are widely recognized by students. Such observations provide meaningful and constructive experiences, offering students the opportunity to see how a lesson is designed and implemented in practice, as well as to observe classroom-management strategies and approaches to interacting with children. The results of the present study confirm that lesson observation serves as an important tool for enhancing social skills, professional development, teaching competence, reflective practice, and overall instructional quality among future educators (Loughran, 2010; Yiend, Weller & Kinchin, 2012).

Regarding students' satisfaction with the guidance provided by their practice supervisors, the majority of the sample reported being very to highly satisfied. This finding is a particularly positive indicator for the practice and aligns with the results of similar studies (Fterniati et al., 2020; Fterniati & Frounta, 2020; Oikonomidis, 2015). As

Hudson (2013) highlights, effective supervision is a critical factor in the successful professional development of students. Practice supervisors play a pivotal role in guiding students, shaping the knowledge they acquire, providing feedback, and influencing their overall practice experience. Only a small number of students indicated that they felt slightly satisfied with the supervision they received. In similar studies, one of the main challenges identified in practice implementation was the lack of collaboration and support from supervisors (Ampartzaki et al., 2013; du Plessis & Maryam Razmjooe, 2025). The research community has attributed these issues to the large number of students enrolled in practice placements and the limited number of supervisors available, making coordination a demanding task (Ampartzaki et al., 2013).

An important aspect of students' practice experience concerns their ability to turn to their supervisors when facing difficulties. The presence and support of supervisors serve as a cornerstone in creating a safe and supportive learning environment during the practice. The majority of the sample reported that they were largely able to seek help or guidance from their supervisors when challenges arose. This finding suggests that many students perceive and experience supervision as a positive and supportive relationship, in which the supervisor functions not only as an evaluator but also as a mentor, guide, and potential advisor. This positive stance is consistent with the findings of related research (Ambrosetti, 2014; Ampartzaki et al., 2013), where the value of a collaborative relationship between students and supervisors is emphasized as a key factor in enhancing and promoting their professional learning and development.

Regarding students' satisfaction with the educational material available on the e-class online platform, 86 participants stated that they were very to highly satisfied with the resources provided. This finding indicates a high level of satisfaction and suggests that the platform functioned effectively as a means of facilitating access to essential information, guidelines, and teaching-support materials. The significance of these findings is further reinforced by previous studies that highlight the role of digital learning environments in improving access to knowledge and fostering learner autonomy (Leal & Queirós, 2011; Retalis, 2005).

5.2 Students' Satisfaction with the Overall Framework of the Teaching Practice

The quality of collaboration between students and kindergarten teachers is one of the key factors shaping the practice experience. In the present study, the majority of participants (61.68%) stated that they were very to highly satisfied with their cooperation with the kindergarten teacher at the school where their practice took place. These findings are consistent with previous research (Cretu, 2021; Fterniati et al., 2020; Kampeza, 2013; Oikonomidis, 2015), which highlights the positive impact of strong professional relationships between teachers and students on the smooth implementation of the practice and on the enhancement of students' pedagogical and professional development. Collaboration with kindergarten teachers provides students with multiple learning benefits, as it constitutes a form of "workplace learning," enabling the

integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience (Pampouri & Sipitanou, 2016).

However, negative experiences were also reported, as 22 students stated that they were slightly to not at all satisfied with their cooperation with the kindergarten teachers at their practice schools. These accounts reflect a real and documented issue, also noted in other studies (Grollios & Liambas, 2020), where the need for more careful selection of school units and cooperating teachers is emphasized in order to ensure a climate of collaboration and pedagogical guidance. When such cooperation is absent or limited, the educational experience of students and their sense of professional self-efficacy may be adversely affected.

The importance of this collaboration is further reinforced by international literature, according to which learning through practice requires active engagement and support from the professional who assumes the role of pedagogical mentor (Boud & Solomon, 2001). Thus, while the findings of the present study are encouraging and indicate that most students benefited from their collaboration with kindergarten teachers, they also highlight the need for more systematic preparation of school units and teachers so they can adequately and sensitively fulfil the role of pedagogical mentors with a collaborative spirit.

Regarding the level of availability and support offered by kindergarten teachers, the results of the study are in line with related research (Grollios & Liambas, 2020), with 64 out of 107 participants reporting that they could rely on the kindergarten teachers to a very large or large extent. This ability meaningfully contributes to strengthening students' sense of security and improving their overall practice experience. Also noteworthy is the particularly high level of satisfaction students expressed concerning their collaboration with their peers. This positive perception reinforces the understanding of the practice as a "community of learning" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), where social interaction facilitates the development of professional identity.

Students' satisfaction with the organization of the practice is also reported at very positive levels. Specifically, 73 out of 107 students stated that they were very to highly satisfied with the structure, organization, and overall philosophy of the practice, while an additional 30 participants indicated that they were quite satisfied. These findings reinforce the conclusions of related studies (Bakija-Haraçija, Ferizi-Shala & Walker, 2024; Fterniati et al., 2020; Fterniati & Frounta, 2020; Oikonomidis, 2015), which confirm that a well-designed practice framework can serve as a key context for the development of students' professional skills.

Equally encouraging are the findings concerning the duration of the practice, as 72 students expressed very high satisfaction and an additional 30 reported being quite satisfied. These results contrast with those of previous studies (Grollios & Liambas, 2020; Kortesi-Dafermou et al., 2013), which noted that the length of the practice was insufficient for students' meaningful engagement in educational work. This discrepancy may be attributed to the considerable duration of the practice at the Department of Preschool

Education of the University of Crete, which extends from the second to the fourth year of study and is structured across three progressively complex levels.

In contrast, lower satisfaction levels were recorded regarding the preparation time for teaching activities. Only 28 students stated that they were very to highly satisfied, whereas 30 reported being little to not at all satisfied. These findings align with earlier studies (Ampartzaki et al., 2013; Oikonomidis, 2015), which found that students often struggle with managing the workload required for the successful design and implementation of their teaching sessions. The limited satisfaction observed may be linked to high demands or insufficient guidance in time management. Indicatively, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) emphasize the need for a clear framework for organizing workload so that students can focus on the learning experience rather than on operational challenges.

Regarding the infrastructure of the practice kindergartens, 31 students reported being very to highly satisfied, while 51 expressed moderate satisfaction. It appears that most students found the facilities functional and suitable for the implementation of the practice. As Boud and Solomon (2001) note, the quality of the educational environment plays a decisive role in work-based learning, influencing both the effectiveness of teaching and the broader experience of students within an authentic setting (Simon, 2019).

Access to teaching materials also constitutes an important factor in the effective implementation of teaching activities during the practice. In this study, 31 students stated that they were very to highly satisfied with the provision of materials, while another 35 described their experience as moderately satisfactory. These findings are encouraging and suggest that, in a significant number of schools, kindergarten teachers provided students with access to essential instructional materials, facilitating the teaching process. However, the fact that 41 students reported being little to not at all satisfied is significant and warrants further interpretation. According to previous research (Ampartzaki et al., 2013; Oikonomidis, 2015), this reflects a recurring issue: in many cases, students must purchase their own materials without financial support from the cooperating schools or the University. This financial burden adds an additional stressor and may negatively affect students' creativity. As highlighted by Smith and Lev-Ari (2005), the adequacy of resources directly influences the perceived quality of the practice.

On the other hand, the findings regarding the level of difficulty in locating the necessary teaching materials are particularly positive. Only 12 out of 107 students reported that sourcing materials was very or quite difficult, while the majority encountered little to no difficulty. This result may be attributed to several factors, including effective preparation through theoretical coursework and supervisors' suggestions of realistic solutions or alternative approaches to selecting and using materials. Good organization and supportive guidance appear to play a crucial role in the management of the practice, suggesting that even when material resources are limited, pedagogical flexibility and mentoring can enhance the overall effectiveness of the learning experience (Boud & Solomon, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

5.3 The Main Difficulties and Problems Encountered by Students During the Implementation of Their Teaching Practice

The majority of students attributed the difficulties and problems experienced during the practice to a variety of factors, such as the moderate level of collaboration with the kindergarten teacher of the class and the lack of support provided by them. They characteristically reported that teachers were sometimes interventionist during their lessons, displayed negative attitudes towards them, rejected the activities they had planned to implement, or appeared indifferent to them on certain occasions. Similar findings have emerged in previous studies, where participants reported kindergarten teachers' reluctance to collaborate with them (Grollios & Liambas, 2020).

Additional difficulties and problems that surfaced included challenges in managing the classroom and children's behaviours, difficulties in dealing with noise and unpredictable behaviours, inability to maintain order without raising their voice, the presence of children with special educational needs without parallel support, as well as the fact that children did not perceive the students as future educators. Comparable results are reported in other studies as well (Cretu, 2021; du Plessis & Razmjoe, 2025; Iliopoulou et al., 2020; Kampeza, 2013; Oikonomidis, 2015), where students struggled with classroom management - an expected outcome given that the practice represents their first encounter with teaching.

Further difficulties concerned meeting deadlines for submitting lesson plans to supervisors. More specifically, students reported challenges related to preparing teaching materials and activities, insufficient time for planning and submitting their lesson design, difficulty identifying appropriate activities, a heavy workload - particularly in the later years of study - and feelings of stress or pressure to complete all required tasks in a timely manner. Similar findings have been identified in previous research, which showed that students require more time to design their lessons (Kortesi-Dafermou et al., 2013) and that they experience a significant workload alongside other university courses (Oikonomidis, 2015).

Additional significant concerns were raised regarding the expenses and transportation of students to and from the practice kindergarten settings. More specifically, students reported the high cost of instructional and visual materials, the absence of any financial support from the University, and the fact that transportation expenses and the difficulty of accessing distant kindergartens posed substantial challenges. Similar studies confirm the findings of the present research concerning students' financial difficulties (Ampartzaki et al., 2013; Oikonomidis, 2015).

Finally, other difficulties, also confirmed by related studies (Ampartzaki et al., 2013; du Plessis & Razmjoe, 2025), concerned the partial lack of guidance from supervisors, the anxiety experienced by students due to limited teaching experience or personal issues, and the difficulties in managing various matters related to the organization of the daily kindergarten schedule (e.g., inconsistent contact with children due to holidays or breaks, or changes in planned activities during rehearsal periods for celebrations or other social events).

5.4 Students' Views on the Benefits of the Teaching Practice

One of the main benefits of the practice was the direct contact and interaction of students with preschool-aged children. This experience helped students gain a deeper understanding of children's needs, behaviours, and psychological profiles, while simultaneously becoming familiar with the routines and daily practices of the kindergarten setting. This benefit is confirmed both in the international literature (Cretu, 2021) and in Greek-language studies, such as the research by Kampeza (2013), where student teachers successfully responded to their interaction with children, as well as in the study by Oikonomidis (2015), in which students recognized their engagement with young children as a pivotal part of their learning experience.

Another important finding concerns the development of skills related to classroom management and the handling of unpredictable behaviours. Through the practice, students were given opportunities to test and strengthen practical strategies for managing children's behaviour. The fact that these same skills were also reported as challenges indicates an internal learning process, in which students identified their "gaps" and attempted to address them through experience. This suggests both self-awareness and a dynamic potential for improvement - two critical metacognitive skills for prospective early childhood educators.

Furthermore, the practice served as students' first substantial exposure to their professional field, as they had the opportunity to observe how a kindergarten operates in practice, beyond theoretical perspectives. They even expressed positive comments about this experience, reinforcing the perception that the practice constitutes a bridge between education and professional life. This finding aligns with the study of Poveda García-Noblejas, Barceló-Cerdá, Rodríguez Gómez & López-Gómez (2023), in which students considered the practice a valuable experience for their professional development.

Another significant benefit mentioned was the development of lesson-planning skills, as students learned how to design, organize, and implement educational activities. The repeated practice of these processes within the authentic context of the kindergarten contributed to strengthening their self-confidence and professional self-concept. Similar findings are reported in the study by Cretu (2021), where students perceive the teaching experience as a dynamic process that integrates theoretical aspects of pedagogy with practical application in the classroom.

At the same time, the practice enhanced cooperation skills among all stakeholders (teachers, peers, children, parents), while also fostering personal qualities such as flexibility, adaptability, and responsibility - attributes essential for professional life and associated with professional resilience. These findings are supported by related research (Fterniati & Frounta, 2020; Grollios & Liambas, 2020; Kortesi-Dafermou, 2013; Oikonomidis, 2015). A fundamental advantage of the practice is also the integration of theory into educational practice, a primary objective of the practice as supported by relevant literature (Ampartzaki et al., 2013; Bakija-Haraçija, Ferizi-Shala & Walker, 2024;

Iliopoulou, 2020; Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research, 2011; Oikonomidis, 2015).

Finally, an important aspect that emerged was students' awareness of the complex demands of the profession, as they recognized the multifaceted nature and challenges of their future professional role. This awareness acts as a crucial factor in shaping their professional identity and preparing them for their future career path.

5.5 Students' Views on the Main Aspects of the Teaching Practice that Require Improvement

One of the primary concerns expressed by students relates to the financial burden associated with the practice, mainly due to the cost of purchasing materials for the activities they are required to implement in kindergarten. The request for the provision of materials or financial support from the University reflects the need for equal participation among students, regardless of their economic circumstances. This issue is also confirmed by previous research (Oikonomidis, 2015), which identifies financial strain as a major obstacle to the successful completion of the practice. Additionally, students suggested covering transportation costs to remote kindergartens or conducting the practice within the city, a proposal that highlights the accessibility difficulties faced by some participants.

Another important area concerns collaboration with supervisors and kindergarten teachers. Students emphasize the need for: (a) increased cooperation and guidance from kindergarten teachers, (b) supervisors' presence and support during teaching sessions, and (c) clear instructions accompanied by continuous and high-quality feedback. The absence of these elements creates uncertainty and insecurity among students. These findings align with earlier studies (Ampartzaki et al., 2013; Bakija-Haraçija, Ferizi-Shala & Walker, 2024; Boud & Solomon, 2001; Cretu, 2021; Grollios & Liambas, 2020; Kortesi-Dafermou et al., 2013), which highlight that systematic collaboration among all stakeholders is crucial for the success of the practice.

Particular emphasis is also placed on the timeframe and workload associated with the practice. Students requested more preparation time for teaching and for submitting the required documentation, increased feedback regarding errors and improvements in their lesson plans, and a reduction in the volume of deliverables or simplification of the related forms. Time pressure and the demands of the required assignments appeared to act as barriers to students' meaningful pedagogical engagement. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Oikonomidis (2015), who identifies excessive student workload as a significant issue within the practice.

Another significant suggestion for improvement concerns the increase in the number of teaching sessions. This finding is consistent with similar studies where students argued that additional teaching opportunities are needed to foster stronger connections with their pupils and to allow sufficient time for understanding and reflecting upon their mistakes and pedagogical practices (Grollios & Liambas, 2020).

A further area identified as needing enhancement relates to supervision and guidance during the practice. Specifically, students requested more laboratory-based meetings with clear and detailed instructions, as well as the provision of sample activities and comprehensive examples. These needs indicate that students seek not only technical guidance but also substantive pedagogical support in order to strengthen their confidence as prospective educators. This finding aligns with previous research, such as that of Kortesi-Dafermou et al. (2013), which underscores the necessity for enhanced supervision.

5.6 Students' Views on Their Readiness and Competence as Prospective Kindergarten Teachers

The question regarding students' sense of preparedness for teaching aimed to explore the extent to which they felt ready to implement instructional activities in the classroom. According to the data, 97 out of the 107 participants reported feeling very or fairly well prepared. This finding reflects the effectiveness of undergraduate training and aligns with the results of Iliopoulou et al. (2020), indicating that the theoretical and practical education provided generally meets students' needs. The 10 participants who felt insufficiently prepared may have been influenced by factors such as limited support from supervisors or kindergarten teachers, anxiety, and feelings of insecurity - reactions that are typical during one's first encounter with the classroom environment.

The question concerning the acquisition of professional tools sought to evaluate the practice as a means for developing the skills required in the teaching profession. The majority of participants responded positively, emphasizing that they gained substantial professional competencies. This demonstrates that the practice fulfils its primary purpose of bridging theory and practice (Bakija-Haraçija, Ferizi-Shala & Walker, 2024; Iliopoulou et al., 2020). However, the fact that 12 students felt they received few or no professional tools indicates that their experience was not sufficiently empowering. This may be attributed to qualitative differences across practice settings or supervisors, or to the lack of feedback and support, which are essential for consolidating knowledge.

Regarding students' overall readiness and competence after completing the practice, a more differentiated response pattern emerged: 33 students reported feeling very to extremely ready and competent, 53 adopted a neutral stance without a clear position, and 22 stated that they felt little to no readiness. These findings suggest that, despite a satisfactory sense of preparedness at the initial stage, the practice experience did not sufficiently reinforce the perceived competence of a considerable number of students. The low level of readiness reported by approximately one in five students (22/107) is a significant finding that points to potential gaps in practical training - possibly in the areas of instructional design, guidance, supervision, or communication among those involved in the practice.

Finally, students' perceptions of the importance of the practice remain overwhelmingly positive. Ninety-five out of 107 participants stated that they consider the practice very to extremely important, while only three reported viewing it as of little to

no importance. This finding is particularly meaningful, as it clearly affirms the functional necessity of the practice in kindergarten teacher education and demonstrates that the majority of students - despite the challenges encountered - recognize its value as a fundamental component of their professional development.

5.7 Students' Level of Satisfaction in Relation to Their Expectations Prior to the Teaching Practice

The question concerning students' level of satisfaction in relation to their initial expectations refers to the comparison between what students anticipated before the start of the practice and their actual experience upon its completion. The fact that 83 out of 107 students agreed that their expectations were met is a highly positive finding, indicating that the content, organization, and supervision of the practice offered by the department correspond to students' initial expectations. This result is consistent with the conclusions of related studies, such as those by Oikonomidis (2015) and Fterniati et al. (2020), suggesting a consistent success of the practice framework in this context.

On the other hand, 10 students (9.3%) reported that their expectations were not met. Although this percentage is relatively small, it remains important, as it implies that some students experienced disappointment or felt that their expectations had been unmet. This finding may indicate that those students who were dissatisfied possibly anticipated more active involvement, held excessively high or unrealistic expectations, or encountered personal difficulties regarding collaboration or guidance. A similar observation was reported in the study by Ampartzaki et al. (2013), in which the researchers attributed the students' dissatisfaction to the fact that the sample consisted of first-level practice participants - students who were limited to observing lessons without having direct involvement in teaching.

5.8 Students' Satisfaction with Various Aspects of the Teaching Practice across Semesters of Study

The present study highlights an overall positive experience of students regarding the practice, with high levels of satisfaction in areas related to collaboration, supervision, and the perceived importance of the practice. Satisfaction with guidance and collaboration demonstrates the existence of a supportive learning environment that fosters the development of prospective kindergarten teachers' professional identity.

The gradual improvement of several indicators across semesters suggests that students' experience and maturation play an important role in their positive evaluations. However, the low scores recorded in areas related to material and technical support, preparation time, and perceived competence shed light on aspects that may require reconsideration and redesign within the practice programme.

6. Conclusions

The present study sought to examine students' views regarding the teaching practice, their experiences related to teaching and the preparation provided by university supervisors, the potential challenges they encountered, as well as the contribution of the practice to their teaching knowledge and their broader academic development.

The main conclusions derived from the study are the following:

- The practicum is perceived as a dynamic institution that requires continuous evaluation in order to adapt to the needs of students and the realities of educational practice. The findings reinforce the notion that the systematic assessment of students' experiences constitutes a valuable tool for strategic redesign. At the same time, it is confirmed that theoretical training must effectively support practical application, while the curriculum should be adjusted according to the demands of the profession.
- Observing the teaching of peers or kindergarten teachers is recognized as particularly beneficial, as it contributes to reflective learning, the enhancement of personal skills, and the understanding of alternative instructional approaches within the classroom. Support from supervisors is identified as a critical factor for the success of the practice, since adequate guidance ensures a smooth and effective experience. Similarly, the use of the e-class platform is considered helpful for organizing knowledge, accessing teaching material, and preparing lessons. Furthermore, collaboration with both kindergarten teachers and peers is evaluated positively, as this interaction facilitates integration into the classroom, strengthens trust and communication, promotes joint problem-solving, and provides rich pedagogical experiences.
- Satisfaction with the organization and duration of the practice indicates effective planning by the department, enabling students to carry out more teaching sessions, become familiar with the educational process, and strengthen their self-confidence. However, limited preparation time due to workload and time pressure constitutes a significant issue. This highlights the need for more realistic timelines, support in time management, or a possible revision of the overall academic workload. Although the infrastructure of kindergartens was deemed satisfactory, students expressed considerable dissatisfaction regarding the availability of materials, emphasizing their financial burden or the lack of institutional funding. Institutional measures such as material vouchers or regular financial support are therefore recommended.
- The relative ease of finding materials for the practice is attributed to good guidance and prior preparation. On the other hand, managing unpredictable behaviours emerged as a major challenge, which is expected for students with limited teaching experience. Nonetheless, the fact that this challenge is simultaneously reported as a benefit indicates that the practice offers valuable learning experiences that strengthen students' skills. Additionally, the

geographical distribution of kindergartens results in transportation costs and increased stress. It is suggested that the practice be conducted in kindergartens located closer to the city or that financial support be provided.

- Significant benefits gained from the practice include understanding the characteristics of preschool-aged children, becoming familiar with the operational framework of schools, and developing professional and social skills. However, more feedback is deemed necessary in order to address difficulties more effectively, along with enhanced continuous guidance. The neutral stance of students regarding their sense of competence and preparedness raises concerns and warrants further qualitative investigation.
- The practice is extremely important, as it constitutes a pivotal component in the educational and professional trajectory of students. It has substantial pedagogical impact, offers multiple benefits, and must provide an equitable and sustainable practical experience for all students.

7. Limitations and Recommendations

The present study, although offering significant insights into students' perceptions of the teaching practice, presents certain limitations that should be taken into consideration. The research approach relied exclusively on quantitative methodology, using an online questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. While this method enables the gathering of a large volume of responses and provides a general overview of the sample's perceptions, it does not allow for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences. In other words, it does not sufficiently explore the "how" and "why" behind the answers, nor the emotional dimensions and individual differences that may influence students' views. The inclusion of qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews or focus groups, could enrich the findings by revealing deeper meanings and concerns.

Furthermore, the statistical analysis of the data was limited to basic descriptive measures (frequencies, percentages, means). Although descriptive statistics offer an initial picture of the distribution of responses, they are not always sufficient for drawing more profound conclusions or identifying significant correlations and differences among subgroups of the sample. The use of additional statistical techniques would provide greater analytical accuracy and could highlight potential variations or important trends, thereby strengthening the interpretation of the data.

Another limitation relates to the cross-sectional nature of the study, which captures participants' views only at the point of completing the practice. However, students' experiences and perceptions may vary significantly throughout the course of their academic development. A longitudinal study, with repeated measurements before, during, and after the practice, would enable the monitoring of changes in students' attitudes, readiness, self-confidence, and professional development over time.

Despite the valuable findings and indications that emerged, the present research leaves certain issues open for further investigation. One key limitation concerns the

restriction of the sample to students of the Department of Preschool Education at the University of Crete. Although the sample size was adequate, the results cannot be generalized to other student populations. Future studies could include students from various Departments of Education across different universities in the country. Comparing the views of students from different geographical regions or institutions could reveal possible cultural, academic, or structural differences in how the teaching practice is experienced.

Another promising avenue for future research is the examination of how students' attitudes and expectations regarding the practice evolve depending on their year of study. Academic progression and accumulated experience may shape differently the perceptions, goals, and readiness of first-year, second-year, third-year, and final-year students in relation to their participation in the practice.

Additionally, adopting qualitative approaches could uncover important dimensions that are difficult to capture through questionnaires. By employing semi-structured interviews, personal narratives, or focus groups, students could freely express their thoughts, feelings, challenges, and suggestions regarding the practice. Finally, an important research direction would be the exploration of the views and experiences of other stakeholders involved in the practice, such as kindergarten teachers who host and supervise students in the school environment, university supervisors responsible for pedagogical planning and evaluation, and academic coordinators of practice programmes. The inclusion of these groups could contribute to a more polyphonic and multidimensional understanding of the practice.

Creative Commons License Statement

This research work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>. To view the complete legal code, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode.en>. Under the terms of this license, members of the community may copy, distribute, and transmit the article, provided that proper, prominent, and unambiguous attribution is given to the authors, and the material is not used for commercial purposes or modified in any way. Reuse is only allowed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International License.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Anastasios I. Pekis is a laboratory teaching staff member in the Department of Preschool Education of the University of Crete. He graduated from the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Thessaly. He has a Master's degree in the Educational Studies Department from the Open University of Cyprus and a PhD from

the Department of Preschool Education of the University of Crete. Since 2023, he has been teaching at the Department of Preschool Education of the University of Crete, the courses "Teaching Practice-Level II, III" & "B.Ed. dissertation on topics in early childhood education". He has published research articles and studies in journals, books and conference proceedings in English and Greek. His field of specialization is "Early childhood assessment". His other current research interests concern "Teaching methodology at early childhood".

Kleanthi Karagiannidou, born in Athens, Greece, is a graduate of the University of Crete's Department of Preschool Education. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Special Education at the University of Macedonia. Her academic background has provided her with a strong foundation in early childhood development, inclusive practices, and educational methodology. She is particularly interested in supporting diverse learners and creating learning environments that promote equality, participation, and individualized growth. Through her ongoing studies, she aims to deepen her expertise in special education and contribute to the development of effective, evidence-based practices for children with special needs.

References

- Ambrosetti A. 2014. Are you ready to be a mentor? Preparing teachers for mentoring pre-service teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(6): 30-42. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2014v39n6.2>
- Ampartzaki M., Oikonomidis V., & Chlapana E. 2013. Students' views on the purpose and usefulness of teaching practice. In A. Androusou & S. Avgitidou (Eds.), *Teaching practice in initial teacher education: research approaches* (pp. 225-256). Athens: Practicum Network. [in Greek]
- Argyropoulou I. S. 2005. *Teacher education: Evaluation of the teaching practice program for students in the Department of Primary Education of Florina*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Western Macedonia. National Archive of Doctoral Dissertations. [in Greek]
- Avgitidou S., & Gourgiotou E. 2016. The teacher as a reflective practitioner. In S. Avgitidou, M. Tzekaki, & V. Tsafos (Eds.), *Student teachers observe, intervene, and reflect: Proposals for supporting their teaching practice* (pp. 13-87). Athens: Gutenberg. [in Greek]
- Avgitidou S., & Sidiropoulou Ch. 2020. Transforming the beliefs of prospective teachers in the teaching practice program: processes and outcomes. In E. Gourgiotou, D. Kakana, M. Birbili, & K. Chatzopoulou (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd Panhellenic Conference of the Practicum Network* (pp. 29-45). Volos: University of Thessaly. [in Greek]

- Bakija-Haraçija N., Ferizi-Shala R., & Walker T. L. 2024. Exploring the value of student teaching practice: insights from preschool student teachers in Kosovo. *Cogent Education*, 11(1): 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2322171>
- Boud D., & Solomon N. 2001. *Work-based learning: A new higher education?* UK: Open University Press.
- Grollios K., & Liambas A. 2020. Aspects of the teaching practice in the Department of Primary Education at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. In E. Gourgiotou, D. Kakana, M. Birbili, & K. Chatzopoulou (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd Panhellenic Conference of the Practicum Network* (pp. 87-100). Volos: University of Thessaly. [in Greek]
- Creswell J. W. 2014. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Research_Design.html?id=4uB76IC_pOQC&redir_esc=y
- Cretu D. M. 2021. Practicum in Early Childhood Education: Student Teachers' Perspective. *Revista Romaneasca Pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*, 13(1Sup1): 261-278. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/13.1Sup1/395>
- Darling-Hammond L. 2006. *Powerful teacher education: Lessons from exemplary programs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Powerful_Teacher_Education.html?id=ET_Qd-zD8RUC&redir_esc=y
- Darling-Hammond L., & Bransford J. (Eds.) 2005. *Preparing teachers for a changing world. What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Preparing_Teachers_for_a_Changing_Worl_d.html?id=H0uUGKrESDUC&redir_esc=y
- Department of Early Childhood Education 2023. *Course outlines of the Study Guide*. Rethymno: Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Crete. Accessed 2 October 2025, from https://ptpe.edc.uoc.gr/sites/default/files/pages/course_outlines.pdf
- Department of Early Childhood Education 2018–2019. *Study Guide*. Rethymno: Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Crete. Accessed 2 October 2025, from https://ptpe.edc.uoc.gr/sites/default/files/pages/under_reg_18_19.pdf
- du Plessis A., & Razmjoe M. 2025. The promise of a strong beginning and the reality of pre-service teachers' professional experience learning: understanding the lived experiences of pre-service teachers preparing for teaching. *Teachers and Teaching*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2025.2512101>
- Field A. 2018. *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Discovering_Statistics_Using_IBM_SPSS_St.html?id=JlrutAEACAAJ&redir_esc=y

- Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research 2011. Study on the possibilities of improving the effectiveness of the practicum institution in education. Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research. Accessed 2 October 2025, from <http://repository.edulll.gr/edulll/handle/10795/1534>
- Fterniati A., & Frounta M. 2020. Evaluation of the teaching practice of the Department of Primary Education at the University of Patras: The case of 8th-semester students. In E. Gourgiotou, D. Kakana, M. Birbili, & K. Chatzopoulou (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd Panhellenic Conference of the Practicum Network* (pp. 341-355). Volos: University of Thessaly. [in Greek]
- Fterniati A., Markopoulou M., & Galanopoulos G. 2020. Evaluation of the NSRF program "Teaching practice of Department of Primary Education students at the University of Patras" and sustainability of the practice. In E. Gourgiotou, D. Kakana, M. Birbili, & K. Chatzopoulou (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd Panhellenic Conference of the Practicum Network* (pp. 333-340). Volos: University of Thessaly. [in Greek]
- Iliopoulou I., Tsihouridis Ch., Botsoglou K., & Roussakis I. 2020. Teaching methods for the instruction of subject areas: Which ones do student teachers choose during their teaching practice? In E. Gourgiotou, D. Kakana, M. Birbili, & K. Chatzopoulou (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2nd Panhellenic Conference of the Practicum Network* (pp. 132-144). Volos: University of Thessaly. [in Greek]
- Hudson P. 2013. Mentoring as professional development: "Growth for both" mentor and mentee. *Professional Development in Education*, 39(5): 771-783. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2012.749415>
- Kampeza M. 2013. "We do not feel confident when...". Factors that students consider important for the evaluation of their teaching practice. In A. Androusou & S. Avgitidou (Eds.), *Practical training in initial teacher education: research approaches* (pp. 197-224). Athens: Practicum Network. [in Greek]
- Kassotakis M. 2013. The assessment of student performance: Theoretical approaches and applications. Athens: Grigoris. [in Greek]
- Kortesi-Dafermou Ch., Sfyroera M., & Tsermidou L. 2013. Perceptions, expectations, and shifts of Department of Early Childhood Education students regarding their teaching practice: Focusing on the data of one academic year. In A. Androusou & S. Avgitidou (Eds.), *Practical training in initial teacher education: Research approaches* (pp. 256-287). Athens: Practicum Network. [in Greek]
- Lave J., & Wenger E. 1991. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Leal J. P., & Queiros P. (2011). Integrating the LMS in service-oriented e-learning systems. *Journal of Knowledge Society Research*, 2(2): 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.4018/jksr.2011040101>
- Lim W. M. 2024. What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australian Marketing Journal*, 33(2): 199-229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>

- Loughran J. 2010. What expert teachers do: Enhancing professional knowledge for classroom practice. New York, NY: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203851470>
- Oikonomidis V. 2014. Activities, judgments, and suggestions of students regarding their involvement in the paid teaching practice. In M. Taroudakis (Ed.), Proceedings of the Panhellenic Conference "Student Practice in Higher Education Institutions" (pp. 33-52). Rethymno: University of Crete. [in Greek]
- Oikonomidis V. 2015. Benefits and problems in the paid teaching practice. In K. Bikos & E. Taratori (Eds.), Studies and Questions in the Science of Education (pp. 511-526). Thessaloniki: Afoi Kyriakidi. [in Greek]
- Pampouri A., & Sipitanou A. 2016. Work-based learning as a means of professional development for higher education graduates during their transition to the labor market: A review of research. In S. Gkiosi & I. Tsiafis (Eds.), Proceedings of the 6th Panhellenic Conference on Standardization, Standards, and Quality of the ENEPROT Association, on "Quality and Standards in Education, Vocational Training, and Lifelong Learning" (pp. 677-688). Athens: Association of Greek Scientists for Standardization and Certification. [in Greek]
- Papazoglou S. 2018. Response styles: comparing across paper-and-pencil vs. online survey methods of data collection. Doctoral dissertation, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. National Archive of Doctoral Dissertations. [in Greek]
- Poveda García-Noblejas B., Barceló-Cerdá M., Rodríguez Gómez I., & López-Gómez E. 2023. Exploring Student Teacher Perceptions on the Benefits of the Teaching Practicum. Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research, 12(2): 242-257.
<https://doi.org/10.7821/naer.2023.7.1384>
- Retalis S. 2005. Advanced internet technologies in the service of learning. Athens: Kastaniotis. [in Greek]
- Robson C., & McCartan K. 2023. Real-world research. Athens: Gutenberg. [in Greek]
Retrieved from <https://www.wiley.com/en-ie/Real+World+Research%2C+5th+Edition-p-9781119523604>
- Simon A. C. 2019. Work-based learning. In C. Simon & S. Ward (Eds.), A student's Guide to Education Studies (pp. 235-245). London, UK: Taylor & Francis Group.
Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345382129_Work-based_learning
- Smith K., & Lev-Ari L. 2005. The place of the practicum in pre-service teacher education: the voice of the students. Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 33(3): 289-302.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13598660500286333>
- Tasios A., Dimou P., & Konstantinidis F. 2020. Collaboration between Departments of Primary Education and the educational community through the institution of school practicum. In E. Gourgiotou, D. Kakana, M. Birbili, & K. Chatzopoulou (Eds.), Proceedings of the 2nd Panhellenic Conference of the Practicum Network (pp. 282-292). Volos: University of Thessaly. [in Greek]

- Tsiolis G. 2011. The relationship between qualitative and quantitative research in the social sciences: From the “paradigm” debate to integrative approaches. In M. Dafermos, M. Samatas, M. Koukouritakis, & S. Chiotakis (Eds.), *The Social Sciences in the 21st Century: Controversial Issues and Challenges* (pp. 56-84). Athens: Pedio. [in Greek]
- Yiend J., Weller S., & Kinchin I. 2012. Peer observation of teaching: The interaction between peer review and developmental models of practice. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 38(4): 465-484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2012.726967>
- Zeichner K. 2010. Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2): 89-99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487109347671>