

SPECIAL EDUCATION PRACTICUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN: PRELIMINARY INDICATORS OF STUDENTS' SATISFACTION AND CONCERNS

Mohammad A. AL Jabery
Hatem A. AL Khamra
The University of Jordan

Due to the continuous growth of special education worldwide, highly qualified teachers are needed. The Special Education program at the University of Jordan places student teachers for their practicum in different educational settings. The purpose of this study was to report preliminary information about students' satisfaction and concerns about the practicum. A survey of two questions was distributed among 50 undergraduate students in the Spring 2010/2011 semester. Results revealed that students were not satisfied with their practicum experience. Students' concerns highlighted issues related to stakeholders' partnerships, connections between university courses and practicum requirements, supervision, mentors, and field sites. Discussion and recommendations are presented in the study.

Working in the field of special education requires teachers to gain specific knowledge and skills to meet different and emerging demands. The field requires highly qualified teachers to work with children with disabilities in different educational settings (Wilcox, Putnam, & Wigle, 2003). In this endeavor, universities are committed to provide students with good pre-service teacher preparation programs that assure good connection between theory and practice before actually entering the field (Hayes, 2002; Beck & Kosnik, 2002a; McLeskey & Waldron, 2004).

To maintain this goal, universities usually provide students with "school-based extended practicum experience" (pre-service field experience) (Ralph & Noonan, 2004, p. 1). During the practicum, students are required to enroll and work in field sites for a period of time in order to implement their knowledge and gain practical experiences (linking theory to practice) under the supervision of university professors and supervisors in addition to the field site cooperative teachers (also known as mentors) (Ralph & Noonan, 2004; Beck & Kosnik, 2002b; Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez- McHatton, & Doone, 2006).

This field experience or practicum is considered as a major part of the special education program, furthermore, it has been claimed that providing students or prospective teachers with field experience may enhance their knowledge in day-to-day classroom experiences (Hillman, Bottomley, Raisner, & Malin, 2000), teach them practical and effective instructional teaching strategies (Frey, 2008), help them observe accomplished teaching models (Sears, Cavallaro, & Hall, 2004), provide them with opportunities to bridge the theoretical and practical aspects of actual teaching practices (Wilson, Folden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001), and demonstrate the required competencies needed in the profession (Sears, Cavallaro, & Hall, 2004).

Investigating the practicum role in preparing prospective teachers has been a concern in many research studies. These studies have investigated topics such as practicum overall structure (Sears, Cavallaro, & Hall, 2004; Bouck, 2005; Gorunwater-Smith, 1996; Hayes, 2002; Cruickshank & Armaline, 1986; Prater & Sileo, 2004; Keener & Bargerhuff, 2006; Macy, Squires, & Barton, 2009; Newberger, 1982; Ralph & Noonan, 2004; Beck & Kosnik, 2002a, Murray-Harvey, 2001), practicum ability to link theory with practice (Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton, & Doone, 2006; Moore, 2003), partnerships with mentors (O'Brain, Stoner, Appel, & House, 2007; Hudson, 2005; Bullough et al., 2002; Duquette, 1994;), partnerships between universities and field sites (Fueyo & Lewis, 2002), practicum supervision (Richardson-Koehler, 1988; Beck & Kosnik, 2002b), and practicum role in teacher long term career options (Connelly & Graham, 2009).

Results of these studies highlighted the importance of providing students with strong and effective practicum experience (Hillman, Bottomley, Raisner, & Malin, 2000). In addition, results indicated that if students experienced a well-structured practicum, the benefits were major especially in their abilities to work effectively with students, manage the field challenges, and stay in the profession for a long period of time (e.g., Ralph & Noonan, 2004; Beck & Kosnik, 2002a, Murray-Harvey, 2001). Finally, results of these studies emphasized that providing students with an appropriate mentoring process (e.g., O'Brain, Stoner, Appel, & House, 2007), reducing the gap between the practicum requirements and university course work (e.g., Beck & Kosnik, 2002a), and improving the quality of identifying placements (e.g., Potthoff & Alley, 1996) considered major issues, that impacted upon students' experiences and practicum functionality.

Description of the program

The Special Education teacher preparation program at the University of Jordan is introduced at the undergraduate level (a 4-year program of study). The study plan at the university requests students to register for the practicum in the last year/semester before graduation. The practicum represents one full semester (offered either in the fall or spring semester) that lasts for 16 weeks and accounts for 12-credit hours. Students are enrolled in the practicum five days a week (each day for 7 hours) and participate in all teaching responsibilities presented in their assigned field sites. Students are required to fulfill all practicum requirements in order to pass and graduate. These requirements include preparing an IEP for each student they teach, develop behavior intervention plan, attend weekly meetings, provide instructions in the classrooms, participate in all academic and non-academic daily school activities, and pass two practical exams and one final written exam.

Supervising students is carried out under the guidance of one university professor and two supervisors who, cooperatively, organize and supervise students' work. Supervision is done on a daily basis and carried out fully by the supervisors and partially by the faculty member. Mentoring is implemented through cooperative field teachers assigned to students by the school. Mentors are responsible (in cooperation with supervisors) for monitoring students teaching, helping them to overcome any challenges, and provide them with feedback. In order to graduate from the program, students have to finish all practicum requirements, pass the practical and final exams, and be evaluated by their mentors and supervisors.

Significance of the study

Due to a reformation process conducted by our department, all components of the special education preparation program were scheduled for a full evaluation. The reformation process aimed to improve the current status of the program based on data collected by all faculty members who participated in the reformation panel. The data collection process took place during the academic year of 2010/2011.

Authors of this article were responsible for gathering data that aimed at examining the practicum (as a major component of the teacher preparation program) by exploring students' voices (i.e., satisfactions and concerns). For this purpose, data around the practicum were collected during the spring semester of the academic year 2010/2011. The selection of this semester was based on two reasons: (1) the need for immediate and preliminary indicators about the practicum to help in reconstructing the practicum before the beginning of the next academic year, and (2) the need for including and surveying as many students as possible in order to examine their opinions. For this particular reason, our communications with practicum supervisors as well as the practicum faculty member indicated that the majority of our students enroll in the practicum during the spring semester. This enrollment was restrained by the department eligibility requirements that required students to finish all of the course work included in their study plan before registering for the practicum.

Another reason for conducting this research was the authors' sense that the practicum was implemented for a long period of time and has not been evaluated until now. Although the data provided are limited to this particular semester and this academic year, it was the author's decision that students' voices were worth to be reported as they were similar to other research studies reported in the literature.

Overall, this paper describes the results of a survey aimed at examining students' satisfactions and concerns regarding the practicum, providing preliminary information to guide the reformation process conducted by the University, and evaluating the overall structure of the practicum.

Methods

Participants and Settings

A total of 50 undergraduate students (18 males and 32 females) were enrolled in the practicum during the spring semester of the academic year of 2010/2011 and participated in this study. All students participated in the practicum were placed in seven private-self contained special education institutions that serve children with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders as well as four private schools that serve children with Learning Disabilities via five attached resource rooms in the capital city of Jordan-Amman. Among the 50 students, 20 (40%) had their practicum in the area of Intellectual Disabilities, 14 (28%) in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorders, and 16 (32%) in the area of Learning Disabilities (Table 1).

Each practicum student was assigned to teach two students with disabilities; attend to their field site for five days in a week (from 8 am to 2 pm) during the entire period of the practicum that lasts for 16 weeks; participate in all academic and non-academic activities implemented by the field site, and fulfill all practicum requirements.

Instrumentation and Implementation

A survey form was constructed (see Appendix A) and composed of two questions. Question 1 prepared to gather information about students' satisfaction with their practicum experience on eight items using a five point Likert-type scale (ranged from (1) indicating "not very satisfied; (3) indicating "neutral; and (5) indicating "very satisfied).

Table 1: Distribution of Participants According to Gender and Category Choice of Disability for the Practicum

Variable	N (%)
<i>Gender</i>	
Males	18 (36%)
Females	32 (64%)
<i>Category choice of disability</i>	
Intellectual Disabilities	20 (40%)
Autism Spectrum Disorder	14 (28%)
Learning Disabilities	16 (32%)
<i>Distribution of field sites based on the type of disability</i>	
Intellectual Disabilities	5
Autism Spectrum Disorder	2
Learning Disabilities	4

Statements included in Question 1 addressed eight issues assumed to be essential for a good practicum experience mentioned in the literature (e.g., Macy, Squires, & Barton, 2009; Keener & Bargerhuff, 2006; Prater & Sileo, 2004; Ralph & Noonan, 2004; Beck & Kosnik, 2002a; Newberger, 1982). These issues aimed at measuring students' satisfaction with the practicum structure in general (e.g., satisfaction with practicum duration, supervision, mentors, and field sites) as well as benefits from participating in the practicum (personally and professionally).

Question 2 of the survey included an open-ended question asked students' to list their concerns about the practicum in specific statements. The purpose of this question was to allow students to voice their concerns. These concerns intended to represent a need for a change that might be essential and to gain more insights into students' experiences with the practicum in a wider perspective.

To establish the face validity for the survey, an initial version was given to seven faculty members from the Department of Counseling and Special Education and Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Jordan. All reviewers' comments and suggestions were taken into consideration and were incorporated in the final survey. The survey statements were also given to practicum supervisors and three cooperative mentors to assess its suitability for the research purposes. All reviewers indicated the survey's ability to measure students' satisfaction and concern with the practicum. Reliability indicators were obtained by piloting the survey on fifteen students (not included in the study sample). The value of Cronbach Alpha for Question 1 statements was .862.

The implementation process included asking students to attend an evaluation meeting in the last week of their practicum. During this meeting, the first author directly distributed the survey to students with a

cover letter that explained the purpose of the study and the response procedures. All distributed surveys were directly collected, resulting in a response rate of 100%.

Data Analysis

The data were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-16.0). Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, means, standard deviations, and percentages) were presented in the result section. In addition, one-way ANOVA and independent samples *t* test were used to test for any statistically significant differences between students' gender and their category choice of disability. A *p*-value of 0.05 was retained as the level for statistical significance in the analysis. In regard to students' concerns, statements were counted and presented alongside with their percentages.

Results

Question 1: Students' Satisfaction

The purpose of Question 1 statements was to identify students' level of satisfaction in relation to eight statements assumed to be essential for assuring good practicum experience. Results related to students' satisfaction indicated a low average of satisfaction in relation to all statements included in question number 1. This result was based on dividing students' responses into three satisfaction categories: (1) low satisfaction category with a range of (1-2.33), (2) average satisfaction with a range of (2.34-3.66), and (3) high satisfaction with a range of (3.67-5.00). The overall mean of students' satisfaction with all statements included in question number 1 was 2.33 (*SD* = .97; range from 1.86 to 2.64), reflecting the upper limit of the low average of satisfaction category.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, Percentages, and Satisfaction Category on Each Statement included in Question 1

Practicum Areas	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	% of Student Satisfaction	Satisfaction Category
Overall satisfaction with practicum experience in general	2.64	.827	66%	Average
Overall satisfaction with Practicum cooperative teachers (mentors)	2.60	.700	62%	Average
Practicum ability to facilitate personal development	2.46	.851	60%	Average
Overall practicum supervision	2.42	1.26	52%	Average
Practicum requirements as specified in the syllabus	2.40	.948	48%	Average
Practicum level of preparation for actual teaching situations	2.28	1.107	42%	Low
Overall satisfaction with field sites	1.98	.958	32%	Low
Overall satisfaction with practicum duration (16 weeks)	1.86	1.14	28%	Low

Table 2 presents students' responses on each statement ranked by its mean from highest to lowest with an indication of the satisfaction category for each one of them. Out of the eight statements included in question number 1, five statements had a mean of satisfaction within the average satisfaction category; three statements had a mean of satisfaction within the low satisfaction category; and none of the statements had a mean within the high satisfaction category.

Among the five statements listed in the average satisfaction category, students were satisfied with the overall practicum experience ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .82$; 66%); overall practicum mentors ($M = 2.60$, $SD = .700$; 62%); and practicum ability to facilitate personal and professional development ($M = 2.46$, $SD = .85$; 60%). On the other hand, the three statements that presented in the low satisfaction category included issues of practicum ability to prepare students for actual teaching ($M = 2.24$, $SD = 1.10$; 42%); overall satisfaction with field sites ($M = 1.98$, $SD = .95$; 32%); and overall satisfaction with practicum duration ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 1.14$; 28%). It is important to mention that none of the students have marked the option "neutral" as a response to any of the eight statements included in the question; since they were encouraged to provide us with their sincere level of satisfaction.

Moreover, to test for any significant differences in students' overall mean of satisfaction on all statements included according their category choice of disability, results of one-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences in students' overall satisfaction that could be attributed to this factor, $F(2, 47)$

= 1.72, $p = .189$. In addition, results of independent sample t test revealed no statistically significant differences between students' overall satisfaction and their gender $t(48) = -.126, p = .21$.

Question 2: Students' Concerns

Question 2 in the survey asked students to express their concerns in relation to their practicum experience in term of specific statements. Authors have reviewed all of students' statements to reach to common issues that might affect or hinder students from experiencing an effective practicum experience.

Table 3: Issues of Students' Concerns Related to the Practicum

Students' Concern Statements	Issues	Percentages	
Sense of disconnection between practicum requirements and university course work	Practicum Structure	67%	
Feeling of distress because of practicum requirements			43%
Complaining about the workload inline of practicum duration			
Inadequacy of supervisors total number of visits	Supervision	35%	
Questioning communication time with supervisors			35%
Insufficiency of supervisors' feedback quality and quantity			
Providing practical support from mentors	Mentors	30%	
Mentors level of expertise			25%
Mentors hesitation in giving teaching responsibilities to practicum students			
Difficulties in transportation to and from the field sites	Field Sites	76%	
Appropriateness of the field site to meet practicum goals			36%
Criticism of the relation between field sites activities and practicum requirements and goals			

Four common issues were implied in the students' responses. Table 3 lists the most common concerns cited by students alongside with their issues and their percentages. The first issue was related to practicum structure in general. This issue was expressed by (1) students' sense of disconnection between practicum requirements (e.g., assignments) and university course work (67%); (2) students' expression of being distress because of practicum requirements (43%); and (3) students' complains about practicum workload and practicum duration (38%). In relation to the disconnection between the practicum and the course work, students commented that they neither were confident nor competent enough to develop some of the practicum requirements; although they have taken courses related to these requirements. For example, students are required to take a course in managing problematic behavior. However, when it comes to developing and implementing a behavior management plan (one of practicum assignments) they did not feel confident of doing that.

Continuously, students considered practicum requirements as "*too much*", especially in taking the duration of the practicum (that lasts for 16 weeks) and students' responsibilities. In this matter, students expressed in their answers that they felt in need to finish their assignments as fast as possible (with low quality) to match the due dates assigned in the syllabus. Others mentioned that in some assignments (e.g., developing an IEP), practicum supervisors had to extend the due dates many times in order to give students the chance to finish them.

The second issue was supervision. In this issue: (1) Thirty five percent of students indicated the inadequacy of the total number of supervisors' visits (they also mentioned the shortage in supervisors' number); (2) Thirty five percent of students questioned the communication time with their supervisors provided during the practicum; and (3) Fifteen percent felt that the feedback provided by their supervisors was insufficient in term of quality and quantity.

Moreover, the third concerning issue was related to mentors. This issue was delineated by students statements in which (1) Thirty percent of them felt that their mentors did not provide them with practical support; (2) Twenty-five percent of students questioned their mentors' level of expertise; and (3) Twenty percent indicated that their mentors were hesitant to give them some teaching responsibilities. In addition, students stated that some of their mentors were freshly graduates (17%) without any teaching

experiences, others were not specialized in special education (12%), and a little (7%) carried some unenthusiastic/negative attitudes (e.g., refusing to mentor students, considering them as extra load, and fears of letting them teach their students).

The final issue was related to field sites. The majority of the students (76%) outlined difficulties in transportation to and from the field site. Students wished that the university would provide them with this service. Around 36% of the students felt that their field site were not appropriate place to have an effective practicum experience. In this specific issue, students indicated dislikes of the overall atmosphere found in their field sites (56%), missing the concept of teamwork (46%), seeing effective collaboration with families (66%), observing effective communication between the staff (70%), and questioning (33%) the overall field site structure (e.g., number of students in each classroom, student-teacher ratio, and size and safety of the building). Finally, 16% of the students criticized being engaged in other activities than the ones required by the practicum (e.g., substituting other teachers, observing students in recess time, and arranging nonacademic activities).

Despite of these concerns, students indicated positive benefits gained from their overall practicum experience. For example, Sixty six percent of them stated that the practicum had increased their awareness about the actual work difficulties; Fifty five percent mentioned that the practicum had improved their attitudes toward the field; Thirty four percent felt that this experience had enhanced their communication abilities; and Thirty percent had been encouraged to work in the field right away after graduation.

Discussion

Using field experience is generally considered influential and important in pre-service preparation programs (Sears, Cavallaro, & Hall, 2004). The purpose of engaging students in the practicum is to enhance their preparation, help them connect theory with practice, and enhance their teaching abilities (Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez- McHatton, & Doone, 2006). Assuring good and effective practicum experience is essential for making conclusion about the program appropriateness in preparing future teachers to be highly qualified teachers (NCLB, 2002).

In this study, a low satisfaction was expressed by the practicum with their overall practicum experience. Perhaps the greatest input in this study came from students' responses on Question 2. Out of all results obtained from this study, we have selected some issues we thought they would be of a great importance to be presented and discussed hereafter.

The first issue, and a central one, is the connection that should be made between university course work and the practicum. Interestingly, students mentioned this issue as a major concern. Basically, the connection between the university course work and practicum is mandatory to bridge any gaps between theory and practice (Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton, & Doone, 2006). Zeichner (2010) mentioned that "*connection between campus courses and field experiences is considered a central problem that has plagued college and university-based pre-service teacher education for many years* (p.479). Wilson, Folden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001) also mentioned that "traditional field experiences are often disconnected from coursework, focused on narrow range of teaching skills, and reinforce the status quo (p.22) .

Since our practicum is similar to traditional field experience model described by Prater and Sileo (2004) with a limited representation from faculty members (university professors); a disconnection or gap between students' practicum and students learning is reasonably accepted. This disconnection might be due to factors such as lack of first-hand exposure gained by faculty professors to their students' practicum as well as the absence of a match between practicum practices and the practices emphasized in the university courses (Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton, & Doone, 2006).

To solve the issue, teacher education preparation programs have tried different ways to bring academic knowledge gained from university courses closer to practitioner knowledge provided by expert teachers (Zeichner, 2010). In this endeavor, colleges and universities tried bringing teachers and their knowledge into campus courses, incorporating representations of teachers practices in campus courses, moving out some of campus courses and teaching them in schools, and establishing what is called "*hybrid teacher educators* (Zeichner, 2010). Another solution might be found in providing full involvement (or at least cooperation) between faculty members and practicum personnel (Beck & Kosnik, 2002b). In some way or another, the above mentioned solutions can effectively assure mutual benefits in our program for both

the academic level (i.e., the entire student teacher education program) and the practitioner level (i.e., cooperative schools, mentors, and supervisors).

The second issue is the practicum length of time. Only 28% of the students indicated their satisfaction with practicum duration. The low satisfaction percentage might be further explained by looking at students' concerns. 38% of our students indicated a conflict between practicum period (16 weeks) and the workload required in the practicum. In this matter, Prater and Sileo (2004) mentioned that the length of time specified for the practicum remains an unresolved issue. They also mentioned that this issue is arguable in terms of specifying the exact required time (for one or more semesters) for the practicum or for the correlation between the time length and students' performance (p. 252). In addition, the relationship between the workload required by the practicum and the practicum length of time has also been an issue. Beck and Kosnik (2002a) indicated that heavy but not excessive workload is valuable in the practicum (p. 96). It seems necessary to further study the impact of the practicum length of time on students' overall experience.

The third important issue is related to practicum supervision. More than half of the students were satisfied with practicum supervision; however, the students raised concerns in the adequacy of supervision, communication time with supervisors, and opportunities for receiving feedback about their gradual progress. The role of supervisors in the practicum is substantial (Zimpher, DeVoss, & Nott, 1980; Beck & Kosnik, 2002b). They direct student's field experience, set up practicum requirements and assessment procedures, make critical contribution to students' gradual progress, facilitate relationships among students and their mentors, and assure the application of the entire practicum process (Zimpher, DeVoss, & Nott, 1980).

In our practicum, only two supervisors are involved in monitoring students' practicum experience. Those supervisors are required to conduct the daily visits, administer the weekly meetings and the exams, provide students with feedback, grade students' assignments, and communicate with students whenever is needed. Taking into account the small number of our supervisors and the low participation of faculty members in our practicum, it might be sensible that practicum supervision will be an issue or even a challenge (Ruhl & Hall, 2002).

This challenge might also be enhanced by factors such as practicum duration, the frequent change in students' number (from semester to semester), location and number of cooperating field sites, purposes of supervision, the overall context of the practicum, university support (e.g., providing transportation), level of communication and collaboration among supervision triad (students, mentors, and supervisors), supervisors critical supervisory skills (e.g., ability to communicate, personal characteristics, and managerial and technical skills), and the low participation from university faculty in the practicum (Beck & Kosnik, 2002b; Hoover, O'Shea, & Carroll, 1988; Warger & Aldinger, 1984; Ruhl & Hall, 2002; Bullough & Draper, 2004). Perhaps the solution of such a challenge might be rooted in increasing the number of supervisors, changing supervision style from traditional triad model into multi-level monitoring style (Ruhl & Hall, 2002), and increasing level of involvement from faculty members (Beck & Kosnik, 2002b). All of these solutions are surely applicable in our program especially the multi-level of monitoring style by our graduate students.

The fourth and fifth issues are related to mentors and field sites. Although 62% of our students expressed their satisfaction with their mentors; only half of them indicated being satisfied with their field sites. The issue of mentoring has been well studied in the literature. It has been indicated that factors such as level of emotional and practical support from mentors (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Hudson, 2005), positive relationship based on communication and trust (O'Brian, Stoner, Appel, & House, 2007), mentors personal qualities and attitudes (Whitney et al, 2002), level of knowledge and expertise, and professional support (Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman, & Stevens, 2009) are important factors in assuring effective mentoring process for practicum students.

The above factors in addition to factors such as dependency, confusion in role in the classroom, losing individuality, lack of trust and emotional support could negatively impact the entire mentoring process (Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman, & Stevens, 2009; Hudson, 2005). Maybe the concerns highlighted by our students in this study (e.g., mentors' support, mentors' level of expertise, and hesitation in giving teaching opportunities) could be comprehended in term of the above factors. Taking these factors in mind when preparing for the practicum as well as creating more collaboration among the supervision triad and the entire school-university partnership could assure overcoming these concerns.

Consequently, field sites present the contexts where the field experiences occur (Potthoff & Alley, 1996). Perhaps, reasons of low satisfaction from our students might root in the way that these sites are arranged by practicum personnel (Prater & Sileo, 2004), the way students are placed in these sites, level of cooperation with students (Potthoff & Alley, 1996; Hudson, 2005), degree of support provided (personally, professionally, and technically), site factors (e.g., size, number of students, proximity, variety), and type of partnership between these sites and the university (Fueyo & Lewis, 2002).

To overcome the challenges presented above, Potthoff and Alley (1996) mentioned six considerations needed to assign the field sites: (1) diversity, (2) collaboration, (3) cooperating teacher preparation, (4) challenging beliefs, (5) mentor matching, and (6) clustering (p.85). They also concluded that more communication is needed among all stakeholders (universities, schools, students, and the community) engaged in the practicum in areas of shared philosophical understanding and values, emphasizing the importance of providing a good placement for experiences instead of a site to be found, and grounding a shared context of collaboration (p. 94). All of these considerations are important to assure effective outcomes. In accordance, our practicum needs to be reevaluated in light of these considerations. Unfortunately data from our study does not provide sufficient information to examine these considerations. Perhaps a recommendation for more research in this context is needed.

Conclusions

Results of this study are important in understanding the current status of our practicum overall structure and the effectiveness of the components. Although the sample of students who participated in the study is relatively small and restricted to one semester; however students' voices were important to direct the attention toward a needed reformation process for the entire practicum. Students participated in the study were less satisfied with their practicum experience as presented.

Improving students' satisfactions and concerns can be achieved if we concentrate on enhancing the entire structure of the practicum, closing the gap between the practicum requirements and university course work, increasing the level of supervision in term of quality and quantity, reconsidering students' placement process, increasing level of cooperation between the university and the field sites (i.e., university-school partnerships), and increasing faculty level of engagement to understand practicum goals. These recommendations alongside with other stated within the article represent a starting point that will guide the current and future reformation processes.

Limitations

It is important to indicate that results mentioned in the study should be taken alongside with its limitations. Therefore, results of this study are limited to its sample size and practicum educational settings included in the spring semester of the academic year of 2010/2011. This limitation in sample size and educational setting affects generalization of results. On the other hand, these results are valuable as they represent the only available results in hand. In addition, this study is only a self-reported study in which only practicum students' voices have been presented. It might be necessary if other studies can be carried out to confirm whether these voices or perceptions truly reflect what is occurring in the practicum or not. In this case, we suggest that additional research with triangulation of data that include other stakeholders (e.g., mentors, supervisors, field sites administrators, other students in other practicum semesters) with direct observations made in actual settings would strengthen the validity of the results.

Appendix A Practicum Satisfaction Evaluation Survey

Gender: Male Female
Category of Disability in the Practicum: IDD ASD LD

Satisfaction Rating Scale Indicators:

1: Not very satisfied 2: Not satisfied 3: Neutral 4: Satisfied 5: Very satisfied

Question 1: Please rate the following statements using the satisfaction rating scale mentioned above:

Practicum Area	Overall Satisfaction				
	1	2	3	4	5
Overall satisfaction with practicum experience in general					
Overall satisfaction with Practicum cooperative teachers (mentors)					

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