

SCHOOL EXPERIENCE: NEW APPROCHES TO ITS ORGANISATION

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School experience is the most important experience in pre-service teacher training. It is a desired outcome and primary goal of higher educational institutions. Generally it is based on a country's National Education policy.

In this article we are going to focus on the new approaches to the organization of school experience within the framework of New Generation School Teachers' project, initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine and the British Council, Ukraine.

School Experience is an essential part of the ELT Methodology Curriculum which is designed for Bachelor's level students who are training as teachers of English. It is aimed at linking methodology classes to teaching at school. Thus trainee students have an opportunity to develop their teachers' competence in an actual classroom within school settings.

The suggested school experience model is well-structured and consists of three stages:

- guided observation
- teacher assistantship
- observed teaching.

Students spend one day (minimum 4 hours) in classes at school with no classes timetabled at the university. Table 1 provides the general understanding of the way school experience is organized.

Table 1

The organization of school experience

Semester	Module	School experience	
		Stage	Frequency
3	1 Understanding Learners and Learning	Guided observation	Once a fortnight
4	2 Preparing to Teach 1	Guided observation	Once a fortnight
5	3 Preparing to Teach 2	Teacher assistantship	Once a week
6	Preparing to Teach 3	Teacher assistantship	Once a week
7	Specialised Dimensions	Teacher assistantship	5 Once a week
8	Professional Development	Observed teaching	6 weeks full time

So, guided observation takes place in Semesters 3 and 4. During guided observation, students have an opportunity to observe experienced teachers at work and to make connections with their learning during the first year of the methodology course. At the beginning of semester 3 students attend the schools where their guided observation will take place. There they get acquainted with their mentors (English language teachers at these schools) and the learners. But before going to school students are supplied with the observation tasks and observation sheets on each Unit and informed about the way their guided observation is assessed.

During teacher assistantship in semesters 5 to 7, students have an opportunity to observe lessons, plan lessons together with their mentors, teach parts of a lesson and generally support English language teachers. At the beginning of each Unit students are provided with the tasks for teacher assistantship. Methodology teachers agree with their students on the time and place of their teaching, offer students help and advice in lesson planning, arrange for their students' lessons to be observed and ensure that the school-based mentor understands the importance of supportive and non-judgemental feedback. Modules in these semesters also include observation tasks aimed at linking methodology classes to school experience

Observed teaching in semester 8 puts students into the role of teacher under the supervision of school-based mentors and university tutors. Students spend six weeks full-time in schools. During the observed teaching, students have weekly meetings with tutors. Thus, the three-stage supervision cycle is kept when working with a student: the pre-observation meeting, the observation itself and the post-lesson conference. Pre-observation meeting is a part of regular routine for a teacher and a student teacher. Its purposes are to:

- allow the student to explain what s/he is going to do in the lesson
- look over the lesson plan
- discuss any possible problems
- agree on a focus for observation if necessary
- agree on anything connected with your presence in the classroom: where you want to sit, whether you will take notes etc.
- agree on the time and place for the post-lesson conference.

The key purposes of the post-lesson conference are to provide the student with an opportunity to reflect on the lesson, to evaluate her/his performance in the lesson and identify areas for improvement.

The Ministry guidelines specify a total of 17 credits for school experience, 6 of which are allocated to observed teaching. Observation tasks during Modules 1 to 5 feed into continuous assessment. Observed teaching is assessed in Semester 8 and counts towards final assessment. It is here that a student's ability to teach in a

principled and well-organised way is assessed, according to the agreed criteria that correlate with Newly-Qualified Teacher Profile. Grades are distributed between the Portfolio (40%) and observed lessons (60%). Table 2 provides the description of the portfolio components and the marks.

Table 2

Portfolio Components

Component	Mark
a profile of a class (number of learners, age, levels, learning styles, learning needs, SEN)	10%
lesson plans and supplementary materials for two different levels	20%
reflective writing (300-450 words) on a lesson (student's choice) incorporating feedback from a peer, a mentor or a supervisor	10%
Total	40%

During observed teaching students are to conduct 10 lessons. Two of these lessons are observed and assessed by the course teacher and eight by the school mentor. The lessons are assessed against the agreed criteria.

This well-designed school experience model is based on the best European practices and promotes the development of teachers' competence in an actual classroom within school settings.

REFERENCES

Core Curriculum: Curriculum Guidelines 2019, viewed 12 February 2019, <<https://ngschoolteacher.wixsite.com/ngscht/guidelines-and-supplements>>