

#2795 INTEGRATING COURSEWORK, TEACHING, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE IN PRE-SERVICE ESL TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

- The Context: As Vietnam transitions from an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to an English as a Second Language (ESL) landscape, pre-service teacher education must extend beyond traditional university modules.
- The Need: Modern ESL classrooms require highly adaptable educators, so only formal academic training is no longer sufficient.
- The Aim: To explore the multifaceted professional development journey of a pre-service teacher bridging the gap between pedagogical theory and real-world practice.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

- Experiential Learning Theory: Professional growth occurs when theoretical knowledge is continuously applied, tested, and reflected upon in real-world environments.
- Holistic Development Model: True teacher agency is cultivated through a blend of three pillars: Academic Coursework, Teaching Practice, and Community Service.

3. THE THREE PILLARS OF PRE-SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Academic Coursework (Theory)

- Engaging deeply with TEFL training program modules at the university level.
- Building foundational pedagogical knowledge, classroom management strategies, and an understanding of ESL methodologies.

3.2. Practical Teaching Engagements (Practice)

- High School Practicums: Two semesters of pedagogical internships at public schools about 3.5 months.
- Part-time Instruction: Gaining diverse classroom experience as a learning buddy, tutor, teaching assistant, and English center instructor.
- Application: Making use of these environments and conditions to test innovative methods, such as group discussions and technology integration.

3.3. Community Service & Professional Activities (Identity & Agency)

- Volunteer Initiatives: Providing free English tutoring for 9th and 12th graders through programs like Learning Buddy - Education for All.
- Community Campaigns: Participating in impactful social programs like Mùa hè xanh (Green Summer) and Tiếp sức mùa thi.
- Professional Networking: Attending and presenting at international and national ELT/TESOL conferences/conventions (e.g., VietTESOL, OpenTESOL,...) to exchange knowledge and build a professional network early on.

4. OUTCOMES & IMPACT

By analyzing practicum reflections and classroom observations, this integrated approach yielded significant positive results that pre-service teachers should:

- + Enhance student engagement
- + Improve learning outcomes due to the application of innovative and technology-integrated methods.
- + Develop a robust professional identity.
- + Take greater cultural responsiveness and adaptability.
- + Build teacher agency successfully, which is the practical competence and confidence needed for the modern ESL classroom.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure sustainable professional growth and readiness for Vietnam's evolving educational landscape:

- For Teacher Education Programs: Actively encourage and integrate extensive community service and professional networking into the core curriculum, moving beyond standard practicums in public schools.
- For future aspiring Teachers: Do not wait until graduation. Proactively construct your learning pathway by combining formal academic training with part-time teaching and volunteer tutoring.

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