

Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología

28-9015 Professional Practice

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Teaching Practice
Dossier

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Contents

Introductory Section	3
Course Description	4
Institution	4
Student population.....	4
Classroom settings.....	5
Observation sheets.....	6
Approach to teaching	7
Description of method/approach to be used.....	7
Contents to be covered “Table of Contents”	8
Goals and objectives.....	10
Core Section	11
Summary and description of the activities applied during practicum	12
Analysis of students’ improvement.....	12
Evaluation of teaching.....	12
Table of contents covered.....	13
Lesson Plans and Materials	15
Evaluation sheets	16
Concluding Section	17
Reflections per class	18
Final reflection.....	23
Tracking hours sheet	25
Bibliography.....	26

Introductory Section

Course Description

Institution

Colegio Nacional Virtual Marco Tulio Salazar – Sede: Juan Flores Umaña

This is a Public Night School located in Ipís, Goicoechea. It was established five years ago, by the Ministry of Public Education (MEP). First, it was thought to be a distance or virtual program for students who work during the day. Nonetheless, the program could not be considered a virtual initiative because the majority of the students lacked of a computer or internet connection. This is the reason why, the students attend classes three days a week for three and a half hours each day. The levels I work with are 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th.

Student population

- ✓ Number of Students:
 - 8th grade: 2 groups of 15 students each one
 - 9th grade: 1 group of 25 students
 - 10th grade: 2 groups of 16 students each one
 - 11th grade: 1 group of 8 students
- ✓ General characteristics:
 - The level of the population is beginners.
 - Their ages vary from 13 to 23 years.
 - Most of the students in this school work full time during the day and study at night. They have very few, almost none, chances to practice English. Their only encounter with the language is their weekly lessons at school– three lessons a week. Even during these days, they do not speak English. All the instructions of the course are in Spanish, and just few of them can understand a few words in English.
 - Some of the students want to learn, while others have an immature behavior and think they are still in the regular High School.
 - A high percentage of the population is married and has children.
 - They come from problematic neighborhoods of San José like Purrál, Los Cuadros, Mozotal, and some nearby areas.
- ✓ Curricular adaptations: one pregnant student and one student on a wheel-chair.

Classroom settings

- ✓ The chairs and desks are arranged in the traditional form. During the day the building functions as a primary school, therefore the students have to keep the arrangement for the classes of the day.
- ✓ The building has three sections, between each one of them there are a lot of stairs.
- ✓ The place is very dark, making it difficult to read at night.
- ✓ In all of the classrooms, especially the one on the back of the building there are a lot of insects like mosquitoes that interfere with the students concentration.
- ✓ Bibliographical resources: there is not a book for the courses. The teachers look for materials that can be used during the class. Sometimes they photocopy the materials, but almost always the students have to copy from the board.
- ✓ Equipment available: the school has a notebook and a video beam; however, they are not working.

Observation sheets

Approach to teaching

Description of method/approach to be used

- ✓ The current method:
 - Grammar translation method is the most used method in the school: the teacher explains the contents; however, the students have very little participation in class.
 - Cooperative learning is also applied: exercises to reinforce or apply the contents are mostly answered by the students in small groups (pairs is the most common grouping).
 - The lessons are taught in Spanish, just a few words in English in order to solve the exercises.
- ✓ Methods to be applied:
 - **Cooperative learning**
 - According to Saskatoon Public Schools (2009), cooperative learning is a helpful tool for the students to develop social and academic skills. This is a very interactive method. For its use, the teacher can take advantage of the five main elements that compose it, that are positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, social skills and group processing. The main reason in choosing it is because the students can help each other in the learning process and can reinforce their knowledge among them.
 - **Total Physical Response (TPR)**
 - The TPR approach consists of a language teaching method that combines speech and action. It attempts to teach language through physical activity (Ludescher, 2010). This method, developed by Dr. James Asher, states that *most of the grammatical structure of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned from the skillful use of the imperative by the instructor*. Therefore, the teacher is the one in charge of using his/her physical movements in order to exemplify the vocabulary and expressions needed to be learned by the students. While the teacher has the role of a director, like in a theatre performance, the learners play the role of listener and a performer. With this approach, I will be using less Spanish and letting the students infer the meaning of the words or expressions they do not know.
 - **Multiple Intelligences Theory (MI)**
 - Created by Dr. Howard Gardner, the Multiple Intelligences Theory changes the traditional teacher-centered classroom in a learner-centered mode of instruction (Lin, 2005). According to this method, educators should pay attention to the learners' feelings present during the learning process, such as, anxiety, nervousness, insecurity, happiness, needs, motivation, and so on. Besides that, the teacher has to pay attention to the different learning styles, the diversity of the learners, their learning potential and what are the best ways to fulfill their learning needs. With this method, the students may take part in activities such as role-plays, songs, writing poems, mimics, drawing,

and others. All of the activities can fit in the different learning styles of the students.

- **Direct Instruction**
 - Direct instruction is used in order to develop academic contents and step-by-step skills (Saskatoon, 2009). This method is used to effectively providing information and as a means to introduce other teaching methods or involving students in an active way in the learning process. Some possible approaches of this method are lecturing, explicit teaching, drill and practice, compare and contrast, reading, writing, and others. As the students do not manage English well, it will be the teacher's task to instruct them first, so that they can grasp the concepts, and, with the information provided, develop them.

Contents to be covered "Table of Contents"

✓ **8th grade:**

- Describing people's physical appearance.
 - Describe people (photos, classmates) using the vocabulary studied.
 - Write sentences to describe physical appearance.
 - Reading comprehension practices.
- Describing people's personality and emotions
 - Recognize emotions by pictures.
 - Write sentences to describe their friends' personalities.
 - Reading comprehension practices.
- Comparing people's features and personality traits.
 - Write sentences to compare people using images, photos or their classmates.
 - Reading comprehension practice.
 - Fill in the blanks exercises.
- Naming characteristics of means of transportation.
 - Recognize different means of transportation from pictures.
 - Reading practices to understand types and characteristics of means of transportation.
 - Reading practices to understand public means of transportation schedules.
 - Crossword puzzles.

✓ **9th grade:**

- Talking About Families
 - To describe your family
 - To ask about family members

- To compare people
 - To talk about small families and large families
- Coping with Technology
 - To suggest a brand or a model
 - To express frustration about a machine
 - To describe features of machines
 - To complain when things don't work
- Eating in Eating Out
 - To discuss what to eat
 - To make food choices
 - To order and pay for a meal
 - To discuss food and health

✓ **10th grade:**

- Exchanging information about Costa Rican typical food.
 - Talking about Costa Rican typical food, by making a list of different dishes.
 - Remind food vocabulary using visual aids.
- Comparing holidays and celebrations in Costa Rica with some celebrations in English speaking countries
 - Explain the students what's the difference between holidays and celebrations.
 - Make a list of Costa Rican Holidays and English speaking countries
- Discussing about causes and effects of natural resources misuse.
 - Identifying and use linking words in context.
 - Using linking words correctly.
- Talking about tourist attractions in Costa Rica.
 - Study vocabulary related with tourism issues.
 - Discuss about Costa Rican touristic places

✓ **11th grade:**

- Based on National Syllabus:
 - Identify concepts, general and specific facts, ideas and issues about sports, athletes' achievements, biographies and other related topics
 - Apply information from different types of written sources about art expressions (acting, painting, dance, music and others) in Costa Rica and worldwide
 - Identify details, main ideas, opinions and points of view in familiar material: Costa Rican Typical food, daily meals, cuisine in English and others

- To recognize specific and general information about food preparation: ingredients, procedures, kitchenware, appliances, and similar elements of this topic

Goals and objectives

- ✓ **The students will be able to use basic vocabulary in simple activities**
 - Students will participate in activities that take into account the Multiple Intelligence Theory, in order to learn concepts in a more permanent way.
 - Students will take part in activities, rather than just filling in the blanks, such as mimes, songs, short role-plays, application of reading techniques, drawing, cross-word puzzles, and others.
- ✓ **The students will develop the basics of oral communication in order to speak English in class**
 - Students will learn important phrases to be used in class, such as,
 - May I go to the bathroom?
 - What does _____ mean?
 - Can you repeat it?
 - Students will learn through the Total Physical Response Approach some in-class instructions, such as,
 - Raise your hand.
 - Repeat after me.
 - Silence, please.
 - Any questions?

Core Section

Summary and description of the activities applied during practicum

The activities applied during the practicum were planned using the Multiple Intelligences Theory, the Total Physical Response Approach, the Direct Method and Cooperative Learning. Due to the technological constraints, the activities were planned without including the use of electronic appliances, such as computer or video beam. For one of the activities, the practitioner brought a CD player in order to perform it.

The activities were interactive and were planned to reinforce and assess the concepts learned in class with the mentor teacher. Some of them were role-plays, songs, drills, drawings, matches, comparison and contrast, descriptions, mimes, crossword puzzles, and others.

Analysis of students' improvement

During the first days of observation, I was able to see that neither the teacher nor the students were willing to speak the basics of English. The students were very shy and the exercises were checked out loud by the mentor teacher, without any participation of the students. The groups were very disorderly and their behavior was disruptive most of the time. They were not able to ask for permission or to follow simple commands in English, because they were not accustomed to hearing English.

At the end of the practicum, I could observe that the students reacted a little eagerly when addressing to me in class. Some of them, who had a slight higher knowledge in English than the others were able to say simple phrases, and made an effort to express in that language.

On the other hand, as the practicum went on, their behavior was better. They were able to listen first, and then follow the instructions. They also learned to listen to the explanations of the contents first, and ask for additional information at the end. Some of them were able to apply simple sentences to ask for permission or for further information.

Their main weakness was the lack of immersion in the language. It was very difficult to them to remember the vocabulary, because they did not practice or study at home. The time they spent in class was only two lessons a week, and for the rest of the days they did not study vocabulary, unless they had an exam.

Evaluation of teaching

The most difficult task I had during the practicum was to teach English, without speaking English. I think this was not within my expectations. It was very hard to me trying to make myself clear avoiding using Spanish, and not using English because the students would not understand. What I tried to do was to mimic the meanings of the words or the phrases, so that the students could infer them.

Another difficulty was the classroom management. At the beginning, and with some groups, I had a hard time dealing with class interruptions and discipline. I had worked with younger students before, and to me, it was easier to deal with these issues. With kids you can use behavior modifiers such as stickers or small rewards; however, with adolescents and adults this cannot be done all the time.

What I did with my teenage students was to explain to them that if they were talking at the same time, they could not hear me. I told them, that I was going to explain the activities or contents first, and once I had finished they could make questions. The first lessons it did not work as I expected, but as time passed, they understood the benefits of listening first and asking later.

Another thing that I did, and I think enhanced their confidence and familiarity with me, was to monitor their work in groups. This was not done by one of the mentor teachers and I think this inhibited their grasping of the concepts. Once I had monitored them, they were more eagerly to participate in the solving of the exercises and in the checking of them. This was a useful and simple tool that also helped with the classroom management issue.

Table of contents covered

✓ **8th grade:**

- Describing people's physical appearance
- Describing people's personality and emotions
- Comparing people's features and personality traits

✓ **9th grade:**

- Talking About Families
- Coping with Technology – Present continuous
- Can (ability) and Have to (obligation)

✓ **10th grade:**

- Exchanging information about Costa Rican typical food
- Comparing holidays and celebrations in Costa Rica with some celebrations in English speaking countries
- Identifying and use linking words in context
- Using prepositions of movement

✓ **11th grade:**

- Based on National Syllabus:
 - Identify concepts, general and specific facts, ideas and issues about sports, athletes' achievements, biographies and other related topics

- Apply information from different types of written sources about art expressions (acting, painting, dance, music and others) in Costa Rica and worldwide
- Identify details, main ideas, opinions and points of view in familiar material: Costa Rican Typical food, daily meals, cuisine in English and others
- To recognize specific and general information about food preparation: ingredients, procedures, kitchenware, appliances, and similar elements of this topic
- Reading techniques: scanning, skimming, how to present a reading comprehension test, 100 most common words in English.

Lesson Plans and Materials

Evaluation sheets

Concluding Section

Reflections per class

Week 6 – July 23rd to 24th

- ✓ **8th grade – Comparatives – July 23rd**
 - Students did like this activity of comparing famous characters. They were had fun comparing cartoon characters. They enjoyed it making suppositions and comparing those characters because some of them were their “heroes.” They wanted to add more adjectives to the activity, so that they could say more things about them.
- ✓ **9th grade – Can and Have to – July 24th**
 - As usually, this group was very difficult to deal with. They did not pay attention to the explanations; therefore, again individual explanations and follow-up were needed. This group was apathetic most of the time and it was difficult to call their attention. The main problem was on the girls’ part.
- ✓ **11th grade – 100 most common words in English – July 24th**
 - As observed before, the students had a significant lack of vocabulary. In order to give an input, the practitioner looked for information about the 100 most common words in English. This was a way to tell the students how important it is for them to know some basic words in order to read faster. The students were willing and had a lot of questions regarding the vocabulary.

Week 5 – July 16th to 18th

- ✓ **8th grade – Comparatives – July 16th**
 - This activity was not performed because the mentor teacher brought used the class in order to review the concepts studied before the vacation period. The practitioner had the opportunity to help the students during the review.
- ✓ **9th grade – Frequency Adverbs – July 17th**
 - This was one of the most problematic groups. The problem with this group was that they had small alliances within them. This kept them from paying attention. Their span of attention was very short, and they were disruptive. I had a little trouble when applying this activity, because when I gave the explanations, they were talking. This usually happened with the group. Therefore, individual follow-up, and explanations had to be provided.
- ✓ **11th grade – Tips to take a reading comprehension test – July 17th**
 - The experiences with this group were always very nice. They continued being an orderly group, however, I think their main trouble when reading was their lack of vocabulary. They continued constantly asking for the meaning of basic words that are

needed to pass the exam. Their overall behavior was one of disposition and willingness to learn.

✓ **10th grade – Prepositions of Movement – July 18th**

- This lesson was taught to eight students of group one, in week 4. This was due to the Arts Festival development. Therefore, in week 5, the lesson had to be taught again to both groups. This was a very rewarding experience because the students were very comfortable. At the beginning they did not want to participate. However, once I told them that we all were learning and that anybody can make mistakes when learning a second language, they relaxed and participated. They showed understanding of the contents and performed the exercises in a very smooth way, better than I expected.

Week 4 – June 25th to 27th

✓ **8th grade – Emotional Traits – June 25th**

- This activity was very successful. After the vocabulary explanation from part of the mentor teacher. They had to use the words learned in order to express their feelings in hypothetical situations. This part was more successful than the other one, in which they had to match the adjectives with the characters that represented it. The fact that the students could be in first place and could analyze their own feelings was very positive. They felt free to express themselves and were happy to apply the vocabulary from a more subjective basis. They translated theory to application, and learned the vocabulary in a more meaningful way.

✓ **9th and 11th grades – Arts Festival – June 26th**

- During this activity the students' participation consisted mostly in dancing groups –Hip Hop and Regetón--, fire jugglers, drawings and portraits, photography, and DJ contest. I think this initiative is very important, because the young students were proud of their creations, and felt that they were important to someone else. These activities reinforced their self-esteem and also let them socialize with others.

✓ **10th grade – Prepositions of movement and Continuation of Arts Festival – June 27th**

- During the first block there were regular classes. The practitioner developed the whole lesson that day, only with the first group. The topic was prepositions of movement. Both, the practitioner and the students were comfortable and receptive. The students understood better the concepts of the prepositions through the drawings provided. They could easily relate the name with the drawing, this helped the visual learners. However, the whole group could easily grasp the concepts. During this lesson, the students were asked by their names to give the answers to the exercises. This really helped in the performance of the lesson, and the understanding of the topic.

Week 3 – June 18th to 20th

✓ **8th grade – Mid-Term Exam Application – June 18th**

- During this week the Mid-Term Exams were applied. With the eighth grades it was a one of a kind experience. The mechanics of the test application is that during that week all the groups have the same exam at the same hour. The English test was on

- Monday, June 18th in the first block. This meant that the mentor teacher had to go group by group in order to clarify the questions of the students. Therefore, the practitioner stayed in the classroom with 8-1 group.
- This was a very good experience, but a stressful one. Mainly, because the students wanted to take advantage of the practitioner's lack of experience in order for them to cheat. The technique applied was to seat in the center of the classroom in the back, so that I could see all of their movements. Some of them were trying to copy from their classmates, and then I told them that I was authorized to keep their exams if they did it. This helped and they calmed down for a while. However, they had lots of questions and this was another way in which they wanted to take advantage of the practitioner. They wanted to be given the answers of the questions. In these cases, what I did was to tell them if they were wrong or right in their answers.
- ✓ **9th grade - Mid-Term Exam Application – June 19th**
 - This was easier because it was the Spanish exam, and the practitioner was with the mentor teacher. The students did not try to copy during this exam because there were two teachers in charge of them.
- ✓ **11th grade – Tips for Reading Comprehension Tests – June 19th**
 - In this, and in almost all the tips for reading tests and techniques, the first step is to go for the questions section, review it, and then start reading the whole text. This really caught the students' attention, because they tend to do the reading first, and then, answer the questions. During the practice, they tried to apply the technique learned, but it was difficult for them to do it. They were open-minded, but there was a certain amount of resilience from their part.
- ✓ **10th grade -- Mid-Term Exam Application – June 20th**
 - The application of the test went smoothly because the students were not interested in copying. It was math test. They were concentrating in answering the test, without considering any possibilities of cheating.

Week 2 – June 11th to 13th

- ✓ **8th grade – Race Physical Traits – June 11th**
 - During this activity there was a contrast with the two groups. The first group did not want to get off their seats to look for the characters. All of them stayed seated. A better idea would have been to place the cards facing the wall; so that they necessarily had to move around the class to look for the information required.
 - With the second group, the activity went really good. They did stand up and look for the characters and matched them with their descriptions. This group was more respectful with the teacher's authority. This can be due to the fact that they were older than the previous group.
- ✓ **9th grade – Present Continuous: Lemon Tree Song – June 12th**
 - Unfortunately, during this lesson the activity prepared was not applied. The contents of the unit had to be covered, including a review of the previous lesson and that did not allow enough time to perform the activity. However, this lesson was fully taught

by the practitioner because the teacher in charge was asked to do administrative work during that lesson. This gave the opportunity to create a closer rapport between the practitioner and the students. During this lesson the practitioner practiced in more detail the classroom management. The students were not satisfied with the fact that the song was not played for time restrictions.

- ✓ **11th grade – Fast Reading Techniques – June 12th**
 - This activity provided the students with techniques for fast reading. They considered it important because to them it takes a lot of time to complete the readings of the course. They were very interested in this tool. As always, the group has a very respectful attitude and is grateful for the tools provided. They keep asking for more information on reading techniques.
- ✓ **10th grade – Costa Rican National Food – June 13th**
 - The students did like this activity because it was familiar to them. They did not know all the vocabulary of the recipes, but it was very interesting to see how interested they were in deducing the ingredients they did not know with the ones they were certain of. This was an enjoyable activity because they were more confident with the typical food.

Week 1 – June 4th to 6th

- ✓ **8th grade – Monsters Body Parts – June 4th**
 - This was a very successful activity. The students were very receptive to applying the vocabulary learned in class in a more recreational way. They enjoyed the activity, and during the presentation they realized that they had the ability to describe the monster in English. They could relate the amount of body parts and name them. They were very happy when they could come to the front and, using English, describe their creation.
- ✓ **9th grade – The Simpsons’ Family Tree – June 5th**
 - This group was one of the problematic ones. The students thought that if they participated in class, they would lose leadership in the group. Some of them were very resilient to participate in the activity. They treated each other disrespectfully; therefore to expect that they voluntarily participate was very difficult.
 - In order to check the exercises, the practitioner had first to explain that an order should be kept, and that their hands should be raised before asking any questions. Also, the importance of respecting others was to be explained. These instructions helped in the performance of the activity.
- ✓ **11th grade – Reading Techniques: Scanning – June 5th**
 - The students were very grateful with these reading techniques, and showed a lot of interest. They were very interested in passing the exam; therefore, any extra help with this respect was always well received. However, during this first class the recording of the video was held. This inhibited a little bit the participation of the students, because it was their first lesson. Nonetheless, they were very attentive and interested in the topic, and asked for more information related to these techniques.

✓ **10th grade – Holidays Mimes – June 6th**

- This was also a successful activity, in the first group of 10th grade. The students in this group had a very open attitude and were willing to represent their holiday through some mimic. They were comfortable and wanted to represent their holiday in an expressive way.
- The second group was not very receptive. Maybe due to the fact that in this group the personalities of the students are different. They look for each other's mistakes and make fun of them. Here, the student on a wheel-chair did not want to participate, even though the corresponding curricular adaptation was applied. The way in which the practitioner handled the situation was taking her place in the mimic. From the rest of students, only three of them did not want to come to the front, but they sent a representative for the group, who tried to mimic the holiday.
- In general, they did not want to be exposed in front of the group. They were not used to participate in activities of this type.

Final reflection

At the end of this professional practicum, and in order to better analyze my experience, I have asked myself the following questions: What things I did right?, What should I have done better?, What have I learned? I will be answering them in the following paragraphs.

What things I did right?

I think that my way of teaching was somehow different from the existing one. I noticed this because, at first, the students were not willing to answer questions, to complete the exercises, to say phrases in English. It was very nice to see that at the end, their self-esteem increased and they were more comfortable with their in-class participation.

Another important issue was that I tried, as far as I could, to monitor their progress when they were working in the exercises and activities. This was something that called my attention, the mentor teacher did not provide a follow-up during the exercises solving. From my part, I tried to be reachable and to clarify their questions on the going. I think that the mentor teacher did not do this because they always had questions, but a closer follow-up is always needed.

On the other hand, I was constantly reminding the students how important it is to learn another language and to prepare in life. Therefore, I think that I went beyond the teaching of academic concepts; I tried to motivate them to continue studying. As far as I could, I treated them as human beings, not just as unknown people sitting on a chair. This teacher-student relationship helped them to feel more comfortable in class.

What should I have done better?

The discipline issue has been very difficult to cope with, especially with the 9th graders. Even though I think I had a very good control of the classes, in general, I think this part could have been improved. Perhaps, the short time of the practicum did not allow me to feel more confident and to be acquainted with some that group. I think that, as some of them assumed I was there for a short period of time, they did not have to get involved with me. Some girls just ignored me. This does not mean that they did not participate in class, but they did it in an apathetic attitude.

I should have tried to have a better relationship with those students; however, I think I had the same assumption as them. As I was not staying very long, I did not try to get closer to them. This is something that I should have improved. With the other groups, the ones that were more open and friendly, I did not have any trouble with the relationships, nor with the discipline. Now that I think about it, a teacher has the responsibility to better know the students and to try to gain their confidence.

What have I learned?

At first, I was scared because of all the bad commentaries about the students' behavior and background. But now that I have finished my practice, I have learned to never underestimate people's knowledge, feelings or background. Sometimes, we make wrong assumptions, without knowing about the context in which people live. It is true that not all of the students came from a nice environment, and that some of them were tough, aggressive and dishonest. However, some

of them, the majority I would say, were people fighting to survive and to change their life into a better one.

I was also prejudiced about the academic bases and knowledge of the students; as well as their potential. I found out that any person can learn, if they are taught well. Teaching is an ability that not every person can perform in the ideal way. The fact that a student can learn well has to do with the student's willingness to learn, but also with the teacher's willingness to teach. That is something that I have learned with this experience.

Through the practice, I have also learned that all the concepts learned in a college classroom become applicable. Nonetheless, a teacher needs to take all those theoretical concepts and adapt them to the reality.

The experience of teaching is a process that can be improved as time goes by. The teacher is a constant learner, and as far as the teacher prepares him or herself, the students will get ready to learn.

Tracking hours sheets

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