

## **Cooperating Teachers' Experiences of Practicum Programs in Saudi Arabia**

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Pre-recorded presentation link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpBfSReFTZU>

This research project draws on a socio-cultural theoretical framework and a qualitative research methodology to understand the experiences of the cooperating teachers (CTs) in early childhood practicum programs in Saudi Arabia. Though conducting individual semi-structured interviews with four experienced CTs who are qualified in early childhood and collecting the relevant documents including university practicum handbooks and program handbooks, assessment checklist, and the national ECE curriculum framework such as Self-Learning Curriculum in Saudi Arabia, this research seeks to understand the complex professional experiences and unpack the multiple roles of CTs as one of the key stakeholders in the university practicum programs. The findings highlight that these CTs see their professional involvement in the university practicum programs as a community practice to enhance their reflective professional identity as teachers. Additionally, the CTs raised that there was a theory/practice gap and noted that such a gap was contributed by the ways in which the university teacher education and program pathway were planned and designed. Furthermore, the participated CTs see their multiple roles as mentors, role models, and assessor's teachers. In summary, this study identifies a range of challenges and limitations with relevance to the ways that the assessment in practicum is conducted, the absence of university supervisor's role and the weakness of the observation assessment checklist, and the less frequency of the practicum period of early childhood education. The presentation will provide some constructive recommendations for improving early childhood education practicum programs in Saudi Arabia.