

## INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE IN ENGLISH TEACHING FROM THE SUPERVISORS PERSPECTIVE

## LA PRÁCTICA PROFESIONAL EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS, DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA DEL SUPERVISOR.

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**Abstract:** In this paper it is described how the practicum of the Licenciatura en Educación con Énfasis en Inglés Program of Uicolombo is implemented, from the central concepts: didactic, investigative and social projection. The authors, from their experience as practicum supervisors, mention how well each of this central concepts affect the performance of the intern in the classroom and how well is generated any benefits of the social impact in the educational communities where the practicum is given.

**Key words:** internship, didactics, investigation, social projection, internship supervisors, teacher-intern

**Resumen:** En el presente artículo se describe como está implementada la práctica profesional del programa de Licenciatura en Educación con Énfasis en Inglés de la Fundación Universitaria Colombo Internacional (Uicolombo), a partir de los ejes: didáctico, investigativo y de proyección social. Los autores, desde su experiencia como supervisores de práctica, mencionan en qué medida cada uno de estos ejes inciden en el desempeño del practicante al asumir el rol de docente y en qué medida se genera algún beneficio de impacto social en las comunidades educativas donde se imparte la práctica.

**Palabras claves:** práctica profesional, didáctica, investigación, proyección social, supervisores de práctica, docente-practicante

## Introduction

Internship in English teaching in the Bachelor of Science in Education with an Emphasis in English at Colombo International University Foundation (Unicolombo), is considered a complex process mainly based on the concepts of didactic, investigative and social projection. Thereupon, it is an academic requirement for students to evidence in the classroom proficiency in the English language usage in order to play the teacher-intern role. Likewise, in the research axe the intern should evidence the concepts learned in the classroom, through identifying problematic situations in the classroom, which would turn into opportunities to developed specific projects within the area. From the social projection axe, based on knowledge of the basic principles established in the internship manual, interns forge their training as English teachers through agreements established between Unicolombo and the internship centers.

Internship is conceived in Kisnerman (2005) terms is a diverse and dynamic, social scenario, where social subjects who are part of the project are immersed. As a result, Unicolombo understands the internship experience in English teaching as a complex process where professional critical thinking and actions come together, through this process interns develop their situation understanding capacity to play the teacher's role based on reasoned judgments and ethical principles when is time to teach.

This work is presented by the practicum supervisors from their experience, as the person in charge of the intern's professional development, taking into account the media, their knowledge and experience as English teachers. Bailey (2006) it refers to the supervisor's role according to the terms below.

It mentions how well each of this central concepts affect the performance of the intern in the classroom and how well is generated any benefits of the social impact in the educational communities where the practicum is given.

People who supervise preserve teachers usually serve one of two key roles. In the first, the supervisor is connected with a training program in which those novices are enrolled. In the second, supervisory responsibility may be shared with (or held by) the classroom teacher who oversees a novice's field experience (the cooperating teacher).

¿How is the internship in the Bachelor of Science in Education with an Emphasis in English program structured in Unicolombo?

Figure 1

*Internship axes structuring in the Education program in Unicolombo*



### Didactic Axe

The specific component in the Bachelor of Science in Education with an Emphasis in English program at Unicolombo, contains subjects that include knowledge related to approaches, methods, models, second language acquisition, English teaching didactics, evaluation and material design. This subjects are the technical support of the English interns. That is to say, they use the knowledge acquired through elaborating class plans based on specific approaches, methods, and models such as the Communicative Approach, Content Based Instruction (CBI), Task Based Model, TPR, among others, compared to the curricular structure in the educational institute where they complete their internships.

The Bachelor of Science in Education with an Emphasis in English interns' performance is also influenced from the didactics component, it is related to materials design and use for class development. From this perspective the purpose is to develop the intern's creativity; likewise the ability to think critically about their teacher's duty in a way that contextualizes their praxis in the classroom. In this sense, the interns have completed tasks such as the creation of booklets for English teaching in different levels, from initial education to teaching English to adults.

Another decisive component in the English learning and teaching process is technology, the teachers form students to use ICTs and other apps to develop classes easier, such as: storytelling, picktochart, online tests, cross-word puzzles, games, etc.

In relation to this component, the internship

supervisors' team identified that the appropriation of the contents developed in each of the subjects part of the didactic component. It is evidenced in their classes, due to the knowledge previously acquired. These contents are compared, evaluated and assessed through micro classes and other exercises created by the teachers. However, in some cases, the theatrical knowledge is not joint with the interns job in the classroom, due to strict politics in the educational centers, these do not allow the interns to change their teaching structure and therefore, the intern is limited to fulfill specific functions, for example, to implement a reinforcement program for students with low English level or to work as the main teacher's assistant. Therefore, the opportunity to complete a planned class in all of its stages and to present a work that follows the policies stated by the university.

There are also interns who do not take into account the tasks they have done in the didactic subjects such as material or feedback, to use it in a real English class. They only complete a task in order to get a grade. This is why, it is advisable for teachers to maintain constant communication and interaction with the internship supervisor regarding the activities or classroom projects to evaluate.

In relation to the use of ICTs, the supervisors state that the interns know how to use electronic devices as didactic tools for audio and video projection, but there are just a few who actually have the skills and knowledge to create digital authentic material through apps online. Internship supervisors state that, among other possibilities, to strengthen the technological abilities teachers can motivate students to take free online courses offered by well-known universities, which topics are related to the proper use of electronic tools for English teaching.

The didactic axe is another element related to class management. The interns assume group control as a challenge, especially those who are in the beginning stages of the internship, they need special assistance and guide from the tutors and supervisors, because the students social behavior in the classroom is more related to practice than theory. About this, Dornye (2008) proposes that strategies do not have the same result in different contexts when he says: "motivational strategies, even those which are generally the most reliable, are not rock-solid golden rules, but rather suggestions that make work with one teacher or group better than another, and which may work better today than tomorrow" (p. 30).

Due to the above, we can conclude that there is not an exact formula to be applied in all contexts to manage a class, that is to say, it is build up in the classroom.

### **Research Axe**

Through the research component of the Bachelor of Science in Education with an Emphasis in English at Unicolombo, the students have the opportunity to learn about qualitative research applied to Social Science, research is one of the most commonly used approaches. The projects implemented through the program are directed by the Research Committee. Most proposals are related to the internship experience. There are as well research groups as a strategy to think about English learning and teaching critical from the initial semesters. In the same way, the program's research committee organizes a bilingual forum in order to allow students to have meaningful experiences where interns have the opportunity to share their experiences and present evidence of the results acquired in the process.

The research training that students form the Bachelor of Science in Education with an Emphasis in English receive is complete, as presented in the syllabus. It includes a stage for class observation and another stage where the interns have to do an intervention in the classroom in a process of English learning and teaching, directed to children, teenagers, and adults. During the internship period the student receives guidance from a questionnaire to write observations when the teacher is in charge of the class and the self-observation when he takes the teacher's role.

The interns' works are socialized, the internship tutors and supervisors provide assessment, tools, and guidance to help interns to use data-collection instruments such as: guides for peer observation reports, interviews, surveys, recordings through audiovisual aids, etc.

All of these research tools, besides encouraging interns to do research, its purpose is to have students write academic papers in English. To that effect, Richards and Lockhard (2009) refers to field journals as follows:

A journal is a teacher's or a student-teacher's written response to teaching events. Keeping a journal serves two purposes: first, events and ideas are recorded for the purpose of later reflection and second, the process of writing itself helps trigger insights about teaching. (p, 7)

Observation guides are the ones closest to achieve this goal. As a support to readings assigned by the program's supervisor, debates are scheduled and concrete situations related to the tasks are presented in a three hour internship seminar in which students also have the opportunity to talk about their experiences, and to socialize their production with their peers.

In relation to the impact of the research axe in the intern's developed inclass, the supervisors consider that, this concept is energized because even before joining an

internship institution, the student gets to know the observation guides. They also stated that, before finishing their frits internship term, the students show improvement in writing their field journals and other academic reports in both English and Spanish. Likewise, in their previous visit to the internship institution students collect essential information to create their internship work plan. When the student carries out the internship work plan, the supervisor keeps track of every project by checking, correcting, and making suggestions along the semester. This evaluation procedure has allowed the student to constantly think and inquire to improve their performance in the internship institution. The supervisors noted that Unicolombo has a library with a variety of research books and magazines about English teaching methodology and related topics in English, yet it is necessary to promote a policy to lead the students to research and use these books more frequently.

Additionally, the education program in Unicolombo has an institutional week for students to present their classroom projects, its purpose is to motivate students to present research proposals about English learning and teaching among other topics. At the same time, the internship committee of the education program has a forum “Pensar en la Universidad Bilingüe” where internship experiences are presented within a specific subject which has been studied in the internship seminar meetings.

In sum, the influence of the research axe is perceivedthrough the formative research processes which allow students to think about pedagogicalworks critically at the same time they get elements they can put into practice in their role as interns and teachers. That is the reason why students inquire about methodologies, teaching and learning methods in the institutions where English is considered a foreign or second language, accordingly, depending on the type of educational center where they work or carry out their internship. The inquiry process is obviously a mechanism to identify shortcomings in the process and improve factors that prevent the possibility of achieving a meaningful learning of the English language.

### **Social Projection Axe**

From the Centro de Desarrollo Profesional (CDE), Unicolombo takes care of everything that is related to the social projection of the programs. One of its functions is to manage the academic and administrative fields of the internship.

The internship service offered by the education program at Unicolombo is carried out in the educational business field, public, private, in concession and military in Cartagena de Indias and nearby towns. For example, in public schools the intern takes the English teacher's role

because they do not have assigned English teachers, with the support of the teacher in charge of the group to monitor the class and help with the activities assignment. In private educational centers, the intern's job is centered all together in providing a service of English tutoring and reinforcement. However, the educational centers allow at least three interventions during the semester in order for them to fulfill the guidelines specified by Unicolombo.

Unicolombo offers the educational field three types of internship according to each institutional educational project's guidelines, these are:

**Curricular internship.** In this type of internship the student is assigned to an educational center through an agreement with Unicolombo, following the norms associated with the program's syllabus. The students are not hired nor receive a salary. However, the center can willingly offer economical support for transportation and snacks. Once the internship is approved, the student gets credits recognition by the university and an experience certificate as an intern by the educational center. It is necessary that the center is subscribed to the internship agreement with Unicolombo. This type of internship, we can find the research internship, where the student carries out an applied research project guaranteed by the research and internship committee.

**Regular internship.** this type of internship, the student besides having the opportunity to complete activities within their educational area can also enhance his experience, the intern can benefit from the following considerations: The educational center can offer financial support but the intern is not hired by the center. At the end of the semester, the educational center certifies the intern with the minimum period of practice required by the educational program at Unicolombo. Additionally, the educational center and the intern determinate the type of incentive, the amount of hours the intern should be in the center and the work plan based on the interns professional profile. During the internship the student should be affiliated to general system of occupational risks, through the ARL that the center provides.

**Business Internship.** Within this type of internship, the intern is hired by a legal center to perform an activity related to the specific educational area he is in, whether the center has an agreement with Unicolombo or not. The student should meet the following requirements for its approval: 1. Evidence at least one year of experience through a certificate sent by the center where it is described the work schedule, the entry date, the time and functions of the intern (a biannual certification as an intern is valid as experience time.) 2. The student should be affiliated to the ARL the center. 3. The student must have finished the required English courses with a certification by Centro Cultural Colombo Americano.

The business internship it is not conceived as a validation for the professional experience in the workplace, it is to say, the work contract does not substitute the internship. Within this internship type, the student should present a work plan to the internship committee, applied according to the syllabus parameters established in the syllabus of the education program and to evidence a competitive performance and complete venture through the results he achieves with the product required and evaluated by Unicolombo and the educational center.

About this axe, the supervisors agreed that the social projection policies implied in the program are reflected in a positive manner in the intern's performance in the classroom. Unicolombo student learns about knowledge areas related to the acquisition of English language, the way it is structured, didactics and evaluation strategies. Nevertheless, when the student is in touch with other educational centers, the students, as interns, evidence improvement in their communicative abilities in the English language, which becomes more notable in bilingual schools. Likewise, the interns improve their abilities to manage classes, learns other class planning strategies related to the educational center they are in.

In synthesis, the internship in English Language Teaching is built in the area of social projection with great mobility, in which agreements are established between Unicolombo and the educational centers registered in the Unalde in the district of Cartagena and nearby towns so that students can join in any of the three types of internship offered.

### Conclusion

The internship for the Bachelor of Science in Education with an Emphasis in English in Unicolombo is a social scenario for personal and professional growth of the teacher where students have the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge previously acquired in the didactic, research and social projection axes in a real educational context.

The benefit of the social impact is extended to a great number of schools in all socioeconomical levels in the public and private sector. The existence of the education program, through the policies of teaching English, meets the needs of the educational internship centers focused in the improvement of the students English learning abilities.

In general terms, according to the internship reports and performance evaluations delivered by the supervisors in the last semesters, it is sustained that the didactic, research and social projection axes work uttered in the internship. This statement is evidenced in the

commitment assumed by the teachers in educating through experience as a pedagogical goal; they complete tasks and suggestions made in the internship seminars to encourage research; they exhibit ownership in the educational center and Unicolombo. The educational centers trust the human resources provided by Unicolombo in the English area and others.

Accordingly, the Bachelor of Science in Education with an Emphasis in English in Unicolombocommunity has a strengthened recognition of social service, where interns take part. In the same way, a social identity is also perceived in the research discipline taught in the program. It is a continuous concern to help the students improve the way they:

- Teach,
- present and relate contents to the group'smembers" reality,
- evaluate according to each student's needs, try to improve their English level,
- the way they express their ideas, their values and worries about their grooming, and
- make sure to be punctual and complete the internship hours

These criteria has improve throughout time and there is no doubt that the internship supervisor's team's tracking and assessment work has been a key to achieve this goal. We hope to continue with a second version of this study from the students' perspective, and a third one from the internship tutor assigned in the educational center.

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