Progressive Integration of High-Leverage Practices in English Language Teacher Education: Insights from a Chilean Practicum Program

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Abstract

This study examines the integration and progression of High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) in a Chilean English language teacher education practicum program. Using a mixed-methods approach, we analyzed documentary evidence and survey data from 283 preservice teachers and seven tutor teachers to assess HLP implementation across practicum stages. Findings revealed inconsistencies in HLP exposure, with gaps in structured progression affecting teachers' confidence and instructional adaptability. While HLPs exposure was associated with improved classroom management, misalignment in mentorship and feedback practices hindered optimal application. Some HLPs, such as lesson planning and student engagement, are well-integrated, whereas others, like real-time formative assessment and differentiated instruction, are inconsistently addressed. The study proposes a structured model for progressive HLP integration, ensuring coherence between theoretical instruction and classroom practice. Findings highlighted the need for targeted mentorship training and refined assessment frameworks to support pre-service teachers effectively. This research contributes to practice-based teacher education, emphasizing the importance of systematic HLP progression for developing confident and adaptable educators.

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Introduction

Practice-based teacher education increasingly relies on the High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) framework, which has demonstrated a strong impact on student learning (Grossman et al., 2009). Developed by the TeachingWorks initiative at the University of Michigan, HLPs are teaching practices that can be explicitly taught, practiced, and assessed during training (Ball & Forzani, 2009), enabling pre-service teachers to respond effectively to diverse K–12 classroom needs (Grossman, 2018).

In Chile, HLPs integration in English language teacher education is relatively recent, beginning with a private university's Faculty of Education (Müller & García, 2016). The 19 HLPs were implemented across pedagogy programs, aiming for graduates to master and apply them independently and effectively in real classrooms. Other Chilean universities have adopted similar practice-based approaches.

Although grounded in theory, empirical research on the progressive development of HLPs within Chilean practicum experiences is limited. International studies from contexts such as the U.S. and Finland demonstrate the positive impact of structured HLP implementation on teacher effectiveness (Ball & Forzani, 2011; Niemi, 2015). In Chile, however, there is a lack of evidence on how HLPs are progressively integrated and adapted in teacher education. This highlights the need to align teacher training with real classroom demands to ensure meaningful application of pedagogical skills.

Research highlights persistent challenges for pre-service teachers—particularly in classroom management, lesson planning, and student engagement (Barahona, 2020; Goh & Matthews, 2011). Inconsistent exposure to HLPs across practicum stages hinders the transfer of pedagogical knowledge to practice (Matsumoto & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021), underscoring the need for a coherent and structured HLP progression.

Research Objectives

This study examined the alignment of HLPs in practicum syllabi, student experiences, and faculty perspectives to identify gaps and strengths, ultimately proposing recommendations for a structured progression model.

The study aimed to propose a structured model for the progressive integration of High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) across practicum courses in an English language teacher education program. It examined the current distribution of HLPs, their

alignment with course objectives, and explored the perceptions of both pre-service and tutor teachers regarding their effectiveness. Based on this analysis, the study has offered a model to enhance the coherence and practical applicability of HLPs throughout the program.

Methodology

This mixed-methods study examined HLP integration across six practicum stages through document analysis and surveys. Qualitative and quantitative techniques assessed the presence and sequencing of HLPs in syllabi, handbooks, and rubrics. The sample included 283 pre-service teachers and seven tutor teachers, offering diverse perspectives on implementation.

A researcher-made survey with closed- and open-ended questions examined perceived preparedness, confidence in HLP implementation, and instructional gaps. Document analysis data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, using statistical trends and thematic coding to identify patterns, gaps, and areas for improvement. Survey data underwent quantitative analysis to determine correlations across practicum stages, with descriptive statistics measuring HLP effectiveness and thematic analysis uncovering emerging trends from open-ended responses.

Results

The document analysis revealed inconsistencies in the alignment and progression of High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) across practicum courses. While HLPs appear in syllabi, their implementation lacks a scaffolded structure. Early practicum stages emphasize theory with limited guided practice, whereas later stages demand full application without sufficient preparation. Although some practices—like lesson planning and student engagement—are well integrated, others, such as formative assessment and differentiated instruction, show inconsistent treatment. Notably, only 45% of course syllabi explicitly reference formative assessment, despite its importance in adaptive teaching.

The analysis revealed a misalignment between course objectives and practicum expectations. In 60% of the syllabi, learning goals focused on theoretical understanding of HLPs without explicitly assessing their classroom application. This dissociation was echoed in survey responses, with 52% of pre-service teachers reporting feeling unprepared for real-time instructional decisions, despite the program's efforts to implement the full pedagogies of practice and learning cycle (McDonald et al., 2013).

Survey results revealed notable variation in pre-service teachers' perceived preparedness to implement HLPs across practicum stages. In early practicum experiences, 72% reported feeling overwhelmed when applying classroom management strategies, especially in student engagement and differentiation. Furthermore, only 38% believed their theoretical training sufficiently prepared them for real classroom contexts.

In intermediate practicum stages, 65% of pre-service teachers reported successfully implementing at least three HLPs, reflecting increased confidence compared to 42% in initial stages. However, 48% of participants noted that they still struggled with real-time lesson adaptation based on student needs, suggesting a need for further scaffolding in dynamic instructional decision-making.

In professional practicum experiences, 80% of students reported successfully integrating HLPs simultaneously, particularly in lesson planning and formative assessment. However, 27% still struggled with behavior management, suggesting that even in advanced stages, structured support remains necessary. Additionally, tutor teachers highlighted inconsistencies in feedback practices, with 54% indicating that clearer evaluation rubrics could better support student learning.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data offered a nuanced understanding of gaps and misalignments in the progression of HLPs, especially in relation to pedagogies of practice and the theory–practice connection across practicum courses. Survey findings highlighted participants' concerns and identified the most underdeveloped HLPs. These results underscore the need for a coherent and intentional progression of HLPs throughout the six practicum stages.

Proposed Model for the Progressive Integration of HLPs
Based on these findings, we proposed a structured model for the progression of HLPs throughout the practicum sequence in our EFL teaching program. This model aims to address the identified gaps by ensuring a more systematic and scaffolded approach to HLPs implementation, aligning theoretical instruction with hands-on classroom experiences. Besides, it takes into consideration the HLPs preservice teachers should master according to the initial (1 and 2), intermediate (3 and 4), and professional (5 and 6) practicum courses they are undergoing.

Table 1

Proposed Model for an English Language Teacher Education Program at a Chilean Private University

No.[a]	High-Leverage Practices	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
1	Making content explicit	green	blue	blue	green	green	green
2	Leading a productive discussion				blue	blue	blue
3	Eliciting and interpreting students' thinking	blue	red	red	red	red	red
4	Implementing norms and routines for discourse						
5	Identifying students' thinking patterns	blue	blue	red	red	red	red
6	Attending to students' thinking patterns				blue	blue	blue
7	Designing single lessons			blue	blue	green	green
8	Setting up and managing small group work				blue	blue	blue
9	Implementing organizational routines	red	red	red	red	red	red
		blue	blue	blue	blue	blue	blue
10	Building respectful relationships						
11	Setting learning goals			blue	green	green	green
12	Coordinating and adjusting instruction	orange	orange	orange	orange	orange	orange
13	Designing sequences of lessons			blue	blue	green	green
14	Checking students' understanding			blue	blue	green	green
15	Selecting and designing assessments	orange	orange	orange	orange	orange	orange
16	Providing feedback to students				green	blue	blue
17	Communicating with families					blue	blue
18	Analyze the practice with the purpose of improving it	red	red	red	red	red	red
19	Communicating with other professionals	green	green	green	green	green	green

Note. Red: Cross-cutting HLPs will be addressed transversally throughout all practicum experiences, considering the complexity of each stage with a gradual progression in terms of decomposition, representation, and approximation. (McDonald et al., 2013). Blue: Practicum in which the cycle of pedagogies of practice is completed, encompassing decomposition, representation, and approximation. Additionally, students engage with the full learning cycle (McDonald et al., 2013). Green: HLPs addressed implicitly or indirectly as an introductory approach before their decomposition or later, considering them as prior knowledge for the performance of the ongoing practicum. Orange: HLPs not incorporated into practicum programs. However, they are addressed in other courses. White: HLPs not addressed in practicum programs.

[a] Assigned numbers according to *Manual Sistema de Prácticas* (Müller & García, 2016).

Discussion

The study found a strong correlation between structured exposure to HLPs and increased classroom confidence among pre-service teachers, supporting prior research emphasizing scaffolded learning and guided responsibility (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Grossman et al., 2009). Participants with consistent, incremental exposure reported greater adaptability and classroom management skills, while those with fragmented experiences faced challenges. Gaps in mentorship, misalignment between course objectives and practicum expectations, and inconsistent feedback practices emerged as key barriers. The study also reinforces Hattie and Timperley's (2007) claim that structured, actionable feedback enhances teacher self-efficacy. These findings highlight the need for greater coherence between theory and practice,

emphasizing that the effectiveness of progressive HLP integration depends on aligned mentorship and assessment strategies.

Implications

The study proposes a structured model for the progressive integration of High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) in English language teacher education in Chile. First, this model supports the gradual development of pre-service teachers' expertise, from guided practice to instructional autonomy, and offers a replicable framework to enhance the coherence and practical relevance of practicum experiences in similar programs. Second, the study underscores the importance of targeted mentorship training for tutor teachers, recognizing their critical role in supporting pre-service teachers. It advocates for providing mentors with tools and strategies—such as workshops on effective mentorship and the development of evaluation rubrics aligned with HLP competencies—to enhance the quality of feedback and guidance (Grossman, 2024). Third, this study emphasizes the need to align theoretical instruction with practical classroom experiences. Ensuring coherence between course objectives and practicum expectations helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, better equipping pre-service teachers for real-world teaching challenges. Finally, this study is limited to a single teacher education program in Chile. Future research should explore the integration of HLPs across multiple institutions to identify potential variations in their implementation. Longitudinal studies following pre-service teachers into their early professional years could provide valuable insights into the long-term effects of structured HLP integration.

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Ethics Declarations

This study followed ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and gave their voluntary consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed throughout the research process.

Competing Interests

No, there are no conflicting interests.

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