A Bibliometric Analysis of Practicum Research in Preservice Teacher Education: Trends, Themes, and Future Directions (2006–2024)

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Abstract

The current study conducted a bibliometric review of studies that examine practicum experiences in preservice teacher education, and searches were performed in the Scopus database, retrieving publications between 2006 and 2024. VOSviewer was primarily used to analyze 145 peer-reviewed journal articles, examining trends in publications, most-cited articles, keywords, and thematic groups. The findings indicate an increase in interest in practicum research after 2021. The highest-ranked journal in terms of volume and citation impact was Teaching and Teacher Education. Among the most well-cited articles were those that embrace topics on professional identity development, reflective practice, diversity, mentorship, and international field experiences. Cluster analysis identified four main areas related to the practicum research: 1) the structure and evaluation, 2) reflective identity formation, 3) professional development, and 4) application to classes. The most significant contributors were the United States, Australia, and Canada, while the growing presence of publications from non-Western contexts suggests a continuously spreading trend of global involvement in practicum research. The findings are significant and relevant to guide research-based policy making and teacher educator efforts to enhance the quality and effectiveness of practicum courses in teacher education.

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Introduction

Practicum is usually considered the core of teacher education programs, providing the connection between the theory obtained in the course of the studies and life in the classroom. Having an immersive, school-based experience is a shaping moment in the

pedagogical beliefs, classroom practices, professional identity, and agency of preservice teachers, those students in the early stages of professional development. Practicum is an opportunity in the context of English language teaching and learning. In the last twenty years, there has been a growing body of research that assigns importance to the practicum experiences as a contribution to the total development of preservice teachers. An analysis of the worldwide evidence on practicum practices shows that this element of teacher education plays an essential role in the process of reviewing the basic knowledge of the applied field, refining the skills associated with classroom management, and contextualizing the theory in the form of a practical activity (Almuqayteeb & Alzahrani, 2023). However, the practicum does not exist in a vacuum. It is integrated and influenced by a multitude of forces, to which may be attributed to the culture in placement schools, mentoring relationships, national education policies, and wider socio-political discourses. Preservice teachers must learn to negotiate pedagogical, instructional activities, interpersonal relations, and cultural norms. These practicum experience complexities are more pronounced in the current educational environment, where curriculum changes are continually transforming the meaning of language education and imposing new demands on preservice teachers.

Preservice teacher training has been directly influenced by the new trend of curricular development to improve the core competencies of learners by constructing critical thinking, cultural awareness, and communicative proficiency (Kim et al., 2021). These latter will be the teachers who can implement innovative, student-centered teaching methods. Tensions generated by such dissonances between a reform-guided teacher education and practices well established in classrooms have a strong influence on the perception and learning activities among preservice teachers during the practicum. It is usually bewildering that there exists a big gap between theory and practice, especially when one moves out of the university environment to the actual classrooms. While teacher education programs focus on learner-centered teaching, methods of interaction, and reflective teaching, the actual teaching practice in examination-oriented settings usually limits the practice of these ideals. For example, Li et al.'s (2021) study describes the situation of two preservice teachers who departed successfully through their practicum with expectations and reform-based pedagogical beliefs and ended up feeling limited and constrained by the grammar-translation approach adopted by their mentor-teachers as well as the test-based structured curriculum. These experiences bring about emotions of frustration, powerlessness, and confusion, but are also sources of key considerations and pedagogical negotiation.

Practicum experiences are also resilient, adaptive, and self-organizing. To help preservice teachers build teacher agency, appropriate encouragement and positive scaffolds must be provided (Brodie, 2019). Bearing the required support, however, a large number of preservice teachers are capable of accepting the institutional forces so as to comply with their pedagogical values. The fact that preservice teachers are refining their expectations

and reformulating success and utilizing selective feedback can be utilized to show the emergent and non-linear nature of professional development since it constitutes an adaptive learning process (Almutawa & Alfahid, 2024). It is impossible to separate the professional learning of preservice teachers and identity negotiation and self-efficacy development. Practicum is not merely the time when the teacher is supposed to explore the ways of teaching, but the time of reconciling between the internal expectations and the external reality. These types of competencies as the ability to reflect critically, be empathetic, and seek to survive without certainty, are thus considered to be significant competencies that are developed at this stage. Practicum is an important, multifaceted field experience through which preservice teachers are models of professionals. The identification of practicum as a process that is dynamic and situated, rather than a one-size-fits-all component, also allows educators, researchers, and policymakers to be better placed to assist preservice teachers in a meaningful and responsive way. Since English language education is a continuous body of knowledge, strained by ever-changing demands in curriculum, the world in general, the practicum remains a significant site of reflection, strength, and responsive teachers.

Although an increasing number of research studies were conducted on the practicum experiences in teacher education, it is crucial to be informed about the current trends, significant publications, and the patterns that scholarly interests are experiencing. Most of the previous studies centered on empirical case studies or thematic analysis that may have failed to provide a holistic approach to the practicum issues across time. Meanwhile, there is scanty bibliometric research that has been tried or undertaken in this field. Bibliometric analysis can offer a conventional and unbiased manner of examining the category, evolution, and influence of research on practicum. It is critical to conduct such meta-analyses to arrive at the research trend, maturity of the research area, and evidence-based curriculum design, policy making, and research continuation. In addition to this, it is imminent in the systematization of knowledge and justification of the more unified and cumulative processes of academic development. Therefore, this paper attempts to illustrate and carry out a bibliographic and visualization analysis of the literature related to preservice teachers' practicum experiences and related issues. This study aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1: How many research-related publications were produced each year from 2006 to 2024?
RQ2: What are the most prominent keywords in literature?
RQ3: Which countries have contributed most significantly to the production of research papers on preservice teachers' practicum experiences?
RQ4: Which papers on the practicum have received the highest number of citations?
This paper utilized *Grammarly* for the purpose of proofreading.

Literature Review

Practicum in Teacher Education

Practicum experience is one of the most significant elements in guiding the professional growth of preservice English language educators, despite being full of challenges associated with institutional frameworks, mentoring, and teaching in the educational setting. Alamri (2018) points out that preservice teachers encounter challenges in the process of transferring from theoretical course curriculum to the reality of classroom teaching practices, including the regulation of students and the adjustment to instruction methods. Indicating the dynamic and developmental nature of teacher identity, Tang et al. (2019) stress the importance of a balanced combination of challenge and support during practicum, which is the key to successful learning. In the same line, Allen et al.'s (2013) study demonstrates the potential of schools and universities' partnerships in terms of helping teachers develop through offering a supportive structure that would lead to an improved understanding of teaching excellence.

An increasing literature expounds on the nature of reflective practices and identity formation during the practicum experience. Eksi and Gungor's (2018) study demonstrates the effect of sociocultural influences on building professional selves of preservice teachers through the use of a narrative inquiry. Gungor and Gungor's (2018) study presents the 3R model, which includes research, rehearsal, and reflection, as the model of collaborative development of teachers. Becker et al.'s (2019) study also emphasizes the necessity of specific coaching at the time of practicum to supplement content-related pedagogical knowledge. Short-term teaching experiences are believed to affect beliefs and result in a closer understanding of the other culture in an international setting (Ciftci & Karaman, 2019; Zhu et al., 2020). Dang et al.'s (2024) study revealed how practicum may transform the ideas about teaching languages among EFL preservice teachers. As opposed to technical skills development, the emotional and psychological well-being of preservice teachers is also becoming a major issue. Concerned with the stress and identity tension in a practicum experience, particularly in a different cultural context, Mairitsch et al.'s (2021) study provides documentation of those tensions. Pattison-Meek (2025) is innovative as it answers questions from the perspective of high school students regarding how they view and react to preservice teachers, which provides information on how the personality relationship influences teacher confidence and performance. Other studies (i.e., Cochran-Smith, 2003; Loughran & Menter, 2019) highlight the need to revisit the role of the teacher educator by stating that to prepare teachers for professionalism, teacher educators must learn to support mentoring.

Methodology

Data Collection

The bibliometric dataset was drawn from the Scopus database to explore the trends and tendencies in the studies of preservice teachers' practicum experiences. The database has been searched based on the related keywords, including "preservice teachers",

"practicum", "teaching practice", and "teacher education". The database included the study of peer-reviewed journal articles of the 2006-2024 period written in English under the coverage of education and applied linguistics. The final dataset included 145 publications after duplicates and irrelevant papers were removed through manual screening of titles, abstracts, and keywords. Bibliographic data such as titles, abstracts, keywords, authors, publication years, countries, and citations were exported in plain text or CSV format, which were compatible with the analysis tools used in this study.

Data Collection Procedure
The corpus of this investigation was composed of the article titles and abstracts, and all the data were obtained from the Scopus database. The results of the earlier research (Klapka & Slaby, 2018) suggest that digital libraries as effective instruments of academic analysis. Therefore, Scopus was chosen due to its high number of peer-reviewed journals and the opportunity to introduce the highest quality academic information.

This study builds upon the bibliometric analysis conducted by Huyen et al. (2023), as their work provides an explanation of the data analysis process in detail. In Step 1, the Scopus database was selected as the primary source for data collection due to its comprehensive indexing of peer-reviewed literature. In Step 2, the search was conducted using the following key terms: ("practicum" AND "preservice teachers" AND "teacher education") OR ("preservice teachers" AND "teaching practicum") OR ("practicum" AND "preservice teacher education") OR ("practicum" AND "language teacher education") OR ("practicum" AND "student teachers"). To refine the results, filters were applied to include empirical studies published between 2006 and 2024, and within the subject areas of Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities. Although the initial intention was to search from 2004 in order to analyze trends over the past two decades, the Scopus platform automatically restricted results starting from 2006. This likely reflects the fact that Scopus's indexed records for this research area begin in that year. An initial set of 170 articles was retrieved. Following a manual screening of titles, abstracts, and keywords, 25 studies were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria. These excluded publications were primarily from unrelated fields such as special education, STEM, and business. In Step 3, the final dataset comprised 145 peer-reviewed journal articles, which were used for the bibliometric analysis in this study.

Figure 1

A Flow Chart of Search Strategy and Selection Processes
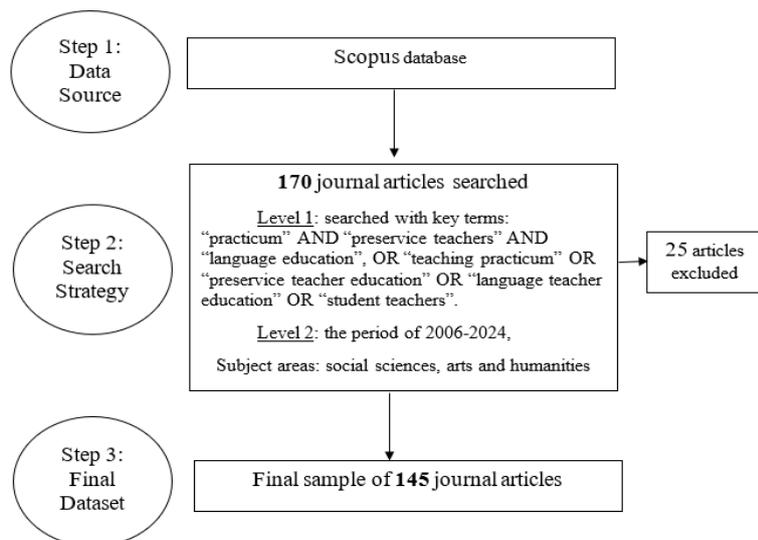
Bibliometric Analysis with VOSviewer

VOSviewer was utilized to perform the bibliometric mapping and visualization. It is a free software tool used for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks, primarily for analyzing scientific literature (https://www.vosviewer.com/). VOSviewer includes co-authorship analysis, keyword co-occurrence analysis, and citation analysis. The software generates visual maps that highlight influential authors, countries, institutions, and the most cited documents. Keyword co-occurrence networks are also visualized to illustrate conceptual linkages among research topics and reveal dominant and emerging themes in the field. Thresholds for inclusion (e.g., minimum occurrences of a keyword or citation count) are set to focus the analysis on the most significant data points. VOSviewer allows for citation-based understanding of the research landscape, offering a comprehensive and multidimensional view of how practicum-related research has evolved over the past decade and a half. Cluster analysis in VOSviewer was another useful analytical tool for this study. It is a method used to group similar items (e.g., keywords, authors, or publications) based on their patterns of co-occurrence or citations. The purpose of cluster analysis is to uncover thematic structures or research communities within a larger body of literature.

Results and Discussion

How Many Research-Related Publications were Produced each year from 2006 to 2024?

Figure 2 illustrates the number of publications on the topic of practicum in preservice teacher education from 2006 to 2024. In general, the numbers indicate an obvious tendency towards increasing, especially over the last few years. The volume of published materials between 2006-2020 was rather modest and varied between two and ten documents annually. This period shows a relatively limited and somewhat restricted interest in the area in general, despite some occasional surges in popularity in 2017.

Nonetheless, since 2021, there has been an evident increase in publication activity with a sharp increase every year, culminating in over 30 articles published in 2024. The sharp spurt witnessed in the past few years indicates the increased professional concern of all those interested in research in relation to practicum. One can explain it by the fact that it received renewed interest following post-pandemic educational challenges related to teacher education, curriculum, and pedagogical changes, and the expansion of digital publishing in academia in general (Flores & Swennen, 2020). The recent increase in the level of publications is also evidence of the maturing and diversification of the field, with more active scholarly participation across contexts and regions. The current trend aims to support the necessity of including the tendency of thematic evolution and the agenda of future steps in the sphere of teacher education.

Figure 2

Publications by Year
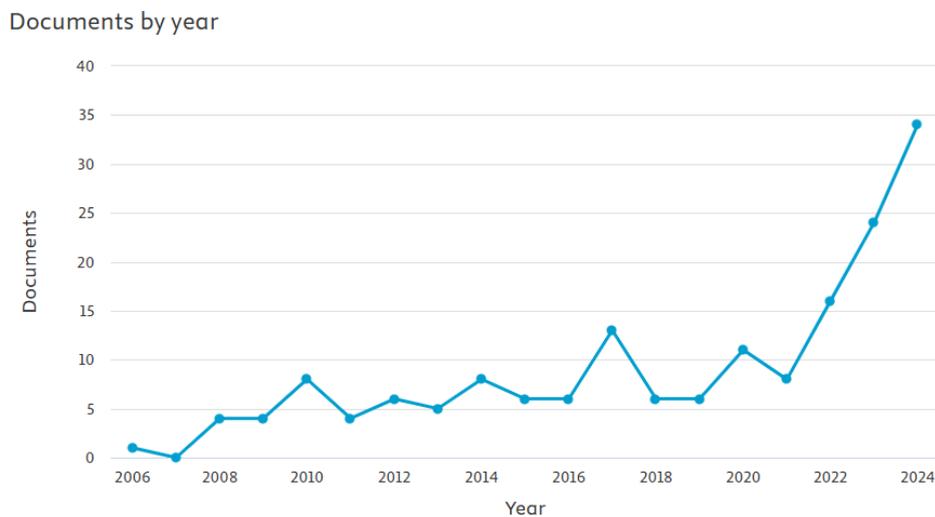
What Are the Key Themes and Trends in Prior Literature?
Cluster analysis in VOSviewer was used to answer RQ 2. Figure 3 shows the relations among the items, and Table 1 demonstrates four clusters with specific item information. Cluster 1 focuses on the structure, support, and evaluation of practicum processes. The existence of words such as 'mentor', 'supervisor', 'reflection', and 'evaluation' creates an impression of formative assessment, quality of mentorship, and institutional guidance. The presence of 'lack', 'problem', and 'suggestion' denotes the inconsistencies or deficiencies in the attainment of practicum implementation; whereas, the target populations or participants are stressed out as 'teacher candidate' and 'preservice teacher'. These terms stress the significance of mentoring relationships (Clarke et al., 2014; Hudson, 2010), and the frequently occurring words, such as 'teacher candidate' and 'preservice teacher', represent the lived experiences of encountering persistent challenges and preparing for the teaching profession. (Valencia et al., 2009).
Cluster 2 emphasizes academic discussion in the EFL setting, in particular, professional and reflective practice. The frequent repeated indices of 'identity', 'reflective practice',

'influence', and 'relationships' suggest that the cluster examines the role of the practicum experiences on teacher identity and the reflective practice of an EFL teacher. The fact that 'articles' and 'evidence' are found in it testifies to the research character of this cluster. Cluster 2 results show two things: 1) reflection as a catalyst for identity construction and professional growth (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Farrell, 2022) and the ongoing commitment to evidence-based approaches of teacher learning processes (Tsui, 2007).

Cluster 3 revolves around conceptual precincts on practices of practicum experiences, such as 'beliefs', 'views', and 'change'. The existence of 'gap', 'impact', and 'professional development' indicates research conducted to examine the role practicum plays as or indicator of a change in thinking and professional development of teachers. Keywords such as 'reflective journal' and 'researcher' imply the concentration on information gathering instruments and research techniques, analyzing inner change. This supports that practicum experiences encourage pedagogical practice (Borg, 2018; Johnson, 2009) and professional transformations (Nguyen, 2017).

The practical implementation of teaching strategies and assessment in the classroom during practicum is connected to Cluster 4. The words 'assessment', 'classroom', 'implementation', and 'perception' are likely to concentrate on the process teaching methods practicum students use and how they are measured in their practical implementations. Keywords like 'quality', 'importance', and 'need' imply a strong interest in improving practicum design and relevance. This emphasis on enactment resonates with studies that view practicum as a critical space for developing instructional competence and pedagogical reasoning to enhance the effectiveness of practicum design and align with evolving educational demands (Grossman et al., 2009; Zeichner, 2010).

Table 1

Cluster Analysis

Cluster 1 (17 Items)	Cluster 2 (12 Items)	Cluster 3 (11 Items)	Cluster 4 (10 Items)
evaluation	article	belief	assessment
lack	EFL	change	classroom
lesson	English	gap	implementation
mentor	evidence	impact	importance
number	foreign language	Professional development	need
perspective	identity	reflective journal	order
practicum course	influence	researcher	part
practicum experience	professional identity	service teacher	perception
preservice teacher	reflective practice	term	quality
problem	relation	time	way
questionnaire	relationship	view	
reflection	teaching practice		
sense			
suggestion			
supervisor			
teacher candidate			
work			

Figure 3

Network Visualization of Practicum in VOSviewer

Which Countries have Contributed most Significantly to the Production of Research Papers on Preservice Teachers' Practicum Experiences?

Figure 4 shows that the United States is ahead in the sphere of practicum-related research, with 40 publications that place the country as the most active one in the field. Australia is next with 28 papers, as it pays much attention to teacher education and practicum frameworks. Canada is the third nation (17 publications), which indicates the existence of a strong research background based on the bilingual and multicultural education environment in the country. Some importance is also reflected in Spain and Turkey with 13 and 11 publications, respectively, revealing that there is active academic interaction in Europe and some parts of the Middle East. Hong Kong and Norway have contributed 9 documents, consistently being interested in the studies of practicum, especially within localized educational contexts. New producers are Saudi Arabia (7 publications) and South Africa (7 publications), which indicates that an increasing amount of investment in the development of research in this area comes from regions facing the Global South. Such trends point out that the studies on the practicum experiences are international, but the most numerous publications belong to the English-speaking countries of the Western world, which may indicate the geographical focus in the framing. However, the presence of countries outside the Anglophone world suggests expanding fields of interest and the possibility of expanded cross-cultural research in the future. The geographical spread presents both concentration and diversification. On the one hand, the dominance of English-speaking countries demonstrates how global

scholarship has been shaped by Western academic traditions (Canagarajah, 2002). On the other hand, the increasing participation of non-Western countries signals opportunities for cross-cultural and comparative practicum research. Such expansion is critical for diversifying perspectives, contextualizing practicum practices, and addressing the needs of teachers in varied educational systems worldwide (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

Figure 4
Publications by Country

Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.
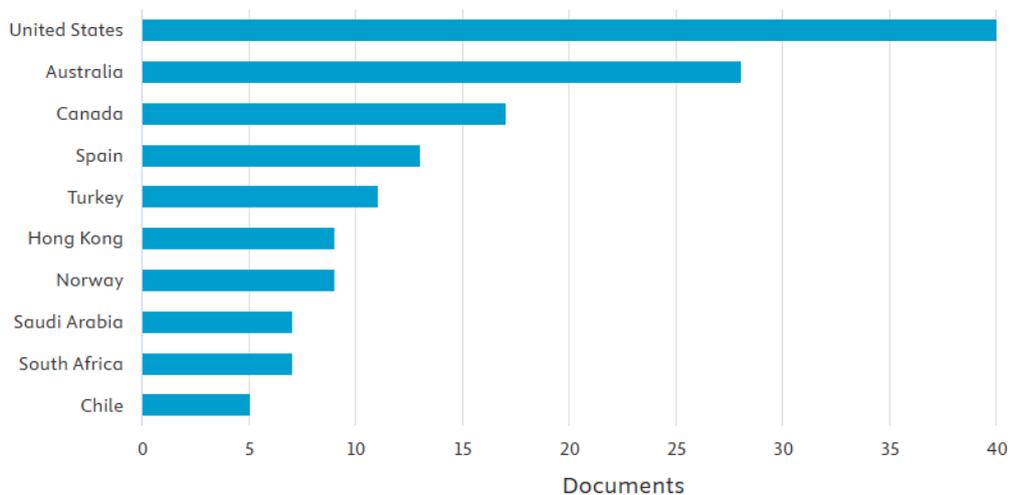
Which Papers on the Practicum have Received the Highest Number of Citations?
The primary journals presented in this study include *Teaching and Teacher Education* with 13 publications, followed by the *Journal of Teacher Education* with 6 publications. Both the *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* and the *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education* contributed 4 publications each, making them key sources in the reviewed literature.

The 10 articles shown in Table 2 with the highest number of citations date to the period between 2006 and 2024, with the number of citations between 42 and 197. Pence and MacGillivray's (2008) article entitled "The impact of an international field experience on preservice teachers" has been cited 197 times, occupying the first place among the cited articles and reflecting its important role of field experience on preservice teachers in the field of education. The thematic range of these most cited articles spans vast areas of thought and knowledge, including identity development, mentorship, diversity, global perspectives, reflective practice, and a multidimensional and multifaceted practicum process in teacher education. The above examination indicates that the highest-impact research in the area of preservice teacher practicum experiences is focused on internationally recognized journals, such as *Teaching and Teacher Education.*

Table 2

Journal Articles with the Highest Citations on the Topic of Preservice Teachers' Practicum

Rank	Citations	Article Title	Authors	Year	Journal
1	197	The impact of an international field experience on preservice teachers	Pence, H.M., & Macgillivray, I.K.	2008	Teaching and Teacher Education
2	121	Lesson study with preservice teachers: Lessons from lessons	Sims, L., & Walsh, D.	2009	Teaching and Teacher Education
3	89	Conceptualizing teacher identity as a complex dynamic system: The inner dynamics of transformations during a practicum	Henry, A.	2016	Journal of Teacher Education
4	70	Preservice teachers' inquiry in a professional development school context: Implications for the practicum	Mule, L.	2006	Teaching and Teacher Education
5	69	Uncovering preservice teachers' beliefs about diversity through reflective writing	Kyles, C.R., & Olafson, L.	2008	Urban Education
6	64	Talkin' in the company of my sistas: The counter languages and deliberate silences of Black female students in teacher education	Haddix, M.M.	2012	Linguistics and Education
7	53	Preservice teachers' professional identity development and the role of mentor teachers	Izadinia, M.	2016	International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education
8	49	Enhancing preservice teachers' motivation to teach diverse learners	Whitaker, M.C., & Valtierra, K.M	2018	Teaching and Teacher Education
9	45	International service learning and critical global citizenship: A cross-case study of a Canadian teacher education alternative practicum	Larsen, M.A. & Searle, M.J.	2017	Teaching and Teacher Education
10	42	Feedback consistencies and inconsistencies: eight mentors' observations on one preservice teacher's lesson	Hudson, P.	2014	European Journal of Teacher Education

Conclusion

This bibliometric study provides a comprehensive overview of the research landscape concerning preservice teachers' practicum experiences over the period from 2006 to 2024. This paper discusses a gradual increase in academic focus on the topic of practicum, especially over the course of the last few years, and a visible increase in publications since 2021 can be distinguished. This trend may be a consequence of reawakened interest in teacher preparation through the disruption caused by the pandemic, shifts in educational policy, and the growing interest in reflective, context-specific teaching practices worldwide.

This paper has found *Teaching and Teacher Education* to be the most dominant journal in the sector, while other sources also emerge as key centers to publish high-impact, empirical studies that influence the theory and practice of teacher preparation. The current paper has uncovered the eminence of important studies that deal with the topics of international field experience, reflective practice, identity formation, diversity, mentorship, and inquiry-based learning. These resources rank high in citation and prove the multidimensional orientation of practicum experiences and support the importance of mentoring, contextual issues, and cultural negotiation in the formation of professional identity. The articles that have been quoted the most still inform the modern knowledge of what constitutes practicum experiences to be transformative and meaningful. This study determined four general research themes by using the techniques of keyword co-occurrence and cluster analysis: (1) the structural and evaluative aspects of practicum; (2) the reflective and identity-oriented aspects, in particular, in EFL contexts; (3) the cognitive and affective growth of preservice teachers, and (4) implementation and assessment at the classroom level. The contributions of the research manifest a diversifying world, which has necessitated further investigation into teacher agency, belief systems, and cross-cultural adaptation. Although countries in the West, like the United States, Australia, and Canada, are still leading in terms of geographical distribution of practicum research, the increasing participation of countries like Turkey, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa indicates the continued global participation in research in the future. This increased involvement creates an avenue for further trans-situational and welcoming research in the future.

Despite offering valuable insights into the landscape of practicum research in preservice teacher education, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis was limited to publications indexed in the Scopus database. While Scopus is a comprehensive and reputable source, it does not capture all relevant research, particularly studies published in regional or non-English language journals. As a result, important contributions from certain countries or in languages other than English may have been excluded. Second, the focus on titles and abstracts as the primary corpus for keyword analysis may not fully capture the depth or nuance of each study's themes and methodologies. Some relevant topics discussed in the full text of the articles might have been overlooked. Third, the manual screening process, although carefully conducted, is inherently subjective and may have introduced researcher bias when determining inclusion or exclusion based on relevance.

All in all, this bibliometric mapping assists in formulating the meta-understanding of the practicum scholarship. This is a resourceful piece that researchers, teacher educators, and policymakers can use to create evidence-based and culturally effective practicum programs. Together with the expansion of the volume of literature and growth of certain directions of research interests as regards to the development of a relatively large

number of particular areas, this encourages the thought that practicum research is expanding in magnitude and is now becoming more diverse and cross-disciplinary.

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Eunjeong Park: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Formal Analysis, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project Administration.

Generative AI Use Disclosure Statement

Generative AI tools were used solely for proofreading and improving the clarity of the language.

Ethics Declarations

World Medical Association (WMA) Declaration of Helsinki–Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the World Medical Association (WMA) Declaration of Helsinki. According to institutional and national regulations, ethical approval was not required for this study.

Competing Interests

No, there are no conflicting interests.

Data Availability

Not applicable.

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