

# The impact of pedagogical practicum experiences on the initial training of teacher of an English language teaching program

Impacto de experiencias de práctica pedagógica y educativa en la formación inicial de docentes de un programa de licenciatura en inglés

Impacto de experiências de estágio pedagógico e educativo na formação inicial de docentes de um programa de Licenciatura em Inglês.

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## **Abstract**

Education built on knowledge is fundamental for the development and progress of modern societies and hence the need to understand the scope of pedagogical practices in the initial training of future teachers (Lopes & Blázquez, 2012; MEN, 2013). On the one hand, a mixed study including qualitative and quantitative analysis is presented to measure and characterize the impact on the educational environment of an English Language Teaching pedagogical practicum (ELT program hereafter) of a state university in Colombia. Secondly, the opinions and perceptions of school principals, academic coordinators, main teachers, student teachers and practicum supervisors are analyzed through 5 Likert-scale survey instruments (Campoy & Gómez, 2009). Finally, results and recommendations are presented to the academic community interested in promoting a restructuring of the processes of pedagogical practices in foreign languages programs. Reforms that should be in line with public policies of initial pedagogical training, expectations and needs of teacher training whose view serves to overcome insularism of current curricula.

**Keywords:** Characterization, ELT pedagogical practicum, initial training of teachers, insularism of current curricula.

## Resumen

La educación erigida a partir del conocimiento es fundamental para el desarrollo y progreso de las sociedades modernas; de ahí la necesidad de comprender el alcance que tienen las prácticas pedagógicas en la formación inicial de futuros maestros (Lopes & Blázquez, 2012; MEN, 2013). Por un lado presentamos un estudio mixto que incluye análisis de corte cualitativo y cuantitativo para medir y caracterizar el impacto en el entorno educativo de las prácticas pedagógicas de la Licenciatura en Inglés de una Universidad estatal en Colombia. En segundo lugar, se analizan las opiniones y percepciones de rectores, coordinadores académicos, profesores cooperadores, practicantes y asesores de práctica involucrados en el proceso de práctica del programa a través de cinco instrumentos tipo encuesta con escala de Likert (Campoy & Gómez, 2009). Finalmente, se presentan los resultados y las recomendaciones a la comunidad académica interesada en promover una reestructuración de los procesos de prácticas pedagógicas en los programas de lenguas extranjeras. Reformas en línea con políticas públicas de formación pedagógica inicial, expectativas y necesidades de formación docente con miras a superar el insularismo asignaturista en los planes de estudio actuales.

**Palabras clave:** Caracterización, prácticas pedagógicas y educativas en licenciaturas en inglés, formación inicial de maestros, insularismo asignaturista en planes de estudios.

## Resumo

A educação erigida a partir do conhecimento é fundamental para o desenvolvimento e progresso das sociedades modernas; daí a necessidade de compreender o alcance que os estágios pedagógicos tem na formação inicial de futuros maestros (Lopes & Blázquez, 2012; MEN, 2013). De um lado apresentamos um estudo misto que inclui análises de ordem qualitativo e quantitativo para medir e caracterizar o impacto do entorno educativo dos estágios pedagógicos da Licenciatura em Inglês de uma Universidade federal na Colômbia. Em segundo lugar, analisam-se as opiniões e percepções de reitores, coordenadores académicos, docentes cooperadores, estagiários e assessores de estágio envolvidos no processo de estágio do programa a través de cinco instrumentos como enquete com escala de Likert (Campoy & Gómez, 2009). Finalmente, apresentam-se os resultados e recomendações à comunidade académica interessada na promoção de uma reestruturação dos processos de estágio pedagógico nos programas de línguas estrangeiras. Reformas alinhadas com políticas públicas de formação pedagógica inicial, expetativas e necessidades de formação docente focadas a superar o isolamento disciplinar nos planos de estudo atuais.

**Palavras-chave:** Caracterização, estágios pedagógicos e educativos em licenciaturas em inglês, formação inicial de maestros, isolamento disciplinar nos planos de estudo.

## Introducción

The search for a more robust and inclusive education system in Colombia has made the Ministry of Education (MNE henceforth) reshape its policies to include strategies and approaches to build a comprehensible system for the initial training of future teachers. Its major concern is to offer high quality education in

line with the national development policies and the necessities imposed by the globalization phenomena. There are several investigations conducted in Colombia upon the impact of pedagogical practicum in education programs. Chamorro, González & Gómez (2008) inquire about the collective knowledge built in the classroom with pedagogical practices in three universities in Bogotá. Instead, Insuasty &

Zambrano (2010) are more concerned with understanding how the use of diaries and blog group discussions enhance reflective teaching in practicum experiences. Although the previous studies explore two different aspects in the practicum, it remains unclear the type of practicum developed under the perspective of the different agents involved in the experience and the impact of the ELT practicum programs in light of educational policies of initial teacher training.

This paper accounts for the results of the first phase with the ELT Program at one of the three universities<sup>2</sup>. In the first place, the study inquiries about the impact of the ELT program pedagogical practicum in light of current public educational policies regarding the initial training of teachers of English and the guidelines set in different university academic documentary sources: the University Educational Project (UEP), the Faculty Educational Project (FEP), the ELT Curricular Project (ELTCP); the didactic component courses (second language learning theories, principles of language teaching, course design and assessment and Computer Assisted Language Learning – CALL) and the student teachers' Lesson Plans (LP) of the primary and the secondary cycles. A reviewing of the sources above permitted to propose a characterization and recognize the impact of the pedagogical practicum by depicting lacks and strengths in the process. Finally, five perception surveys were applied to collect valuable perceptions and opinions from student teachers, practicum supervisors, main teachers, school principals and academic coordinators involved in the ELT practicum process.

## **Literature Review**

### **Teaching Practicum in the English Classroom**

Several are the studies conducted within the realm of the teaching of English to observe the practicum experiences of future teachers. To the interests of this study, two international experiences caught the attention. The first one by Starkey & Rawlins (2011) in "Teaching practicum in 21st century New Zealand" which concluded that learning about the environment changes throughout the practice and effective learning environments can be attained through the observation and discussion of the performance and implementation of teaching strategies. As the practice experience progresses, a refinement of the strategies used to focus students on learning is observed and, as the understanding of the learning environment increases, the strategies are more appropriate to be used within a determined context. The other one by Pickering & Gunashekar, (2014), concluded that reflective practice should be the central objective of teacher training in order to have opportunities for autonomous, reflective learning, assimilation and articulation of new ideas. For this, the curriculum must provide a variety of experiences in schools where students can explore reflection and learning from experience.

In the local context, the study by Insuasty & Zambrano (2010) reports the results of a study that examined how practitioners could be empowered as more reflective teachers. Six practitioners participated in the study during a

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<sup>2</sup> This paper emerges from a project financed by Ascofade to characterize, design and test a robust practicum program for the BA programs of the faculties of education in three public universities of the south-east Colombian region. The larger study is divided into three stages, the first one to describe the practicum process of the BA programs of the three faculties of education and determine their impact in schools. The second stage aims at designing invigorated practicum programs based on the results obtained in the first phase to enhance the practicum interfaculty mobility and finally the last stage will focus on the piloting and evaluation of the practicum programs conceived.

semester. The data was collected through newspapers, blogs, metaphors, conferences and questionnaires. The results showed that the practitioners enriched their perceptions about what reflexive teaching means. In this line the same authors in the study “Experiencias reflexivas de asesoría en la práctica docente”, aimed at appraising the effects of a reflexive supervision proposal on the improvement of the teaching practicum feedback process of an EFL program. They concluded that student teachers can be empowered as reflective practitioners and encouraged to be the supporters of their own professional development if they receive feedback not only to inform what happened in the classroom, but also to provide a space to reflect upon their teaching practice (Insuasty & Zambrano, 2014, p. 390).

On the other hand, the study by Padilla & Espinoza (2015) “La práctica docente del profesor de inglés en secundaria. Un estudio de casos en escuelas públicas” indicates that success in achieving the language proficiency in English expected in the student lies in the performance of the teacher, their conceptions, meanings, actions organized and developed in the classroom context, in addition to the focus of his teaching. All this involves a complex task that has been called teaching practice and in this the professionalism of the educator, his responsibility and commitment must be reflected on what he does.

Fernández et al. (2018) described the incorporation of ICT in the pedagogical practices of the future teachers from preschool, elementary, secondary and university cycles of seven degree programs of the faculty of education of a public university. The study outlined the ICT competencies of these student teachers in light of public policies in this regard from three aspects: 1) The degree of incorporation of educational technology in the

practicum processes, 2) The demonstrated ICT competences and their infusion in the classroom, and 3) The technological resources available in educational institutions. The study concluded that although there was incorporation of ICT in classroom practices, still its use was poor and therefore innovation was barely visible in five of the programs studied and good with the student teachers of the ELT program and the Spanish language program.

Finally, the research “Nuevas miradas, viejos problemas: las relaciones entre formación inicial y ejercicio profesional docente” by Latorre (2006) paved the way to characterize the ELT practicum process as it provided elements to focus on the concepts and discourses explicit in the different documents which regulate the ELT practicum program studied. Latorre proposes eleven different criteria of distinction to knowledge in relation to the pedagogical practicum and three types of knowledge in practicum: the **empirical** which insists on the fact that teaching experiences lie on common sense and teachers’ personal experiences, the **practical** which suggests that teachers stick more to echo policies, standards and main trends in education and the **theoretical-speculative** in which teachers reflect on the pertinence of educational policies, adapt their teaching experiences to the context, systematize their own experiences on grounded theory approaches or in accordance to theoreticians in the educational field so as to transform the reality of the classroom or knowledge itself (Latorre, 2006 p. 26).

The Table 1 includes the description to each of the eleven criteria for the three types of knowledge proposed by professor Latorre. Basically, it indicates that educational agents have a body of diverse knowledge from which they elaborate their theories and principles.

<b>Criteria of Distinction</b>	<b>Knowledge Type 1</b>	<b>Knowledge Type 2</b>	<b>Knowledge Type 3</b>
1. nature	empirical	practical	theoretical-speculative
2. relationship that establishes with the object of knowledge	resulting from the personal experience of a subject in front of the object and in a specific situation personal knowledge	directly linked to the object, rooted in situations and very specific contexts, formulated "on purpose" local knowledge	elaborated at a distance and with independence of the object
3. relationship with practice	direct operation, useful application	direct operation, useful application, policies or regulations	general knowledge, indirect, guidance, orientation
4. structuring level	absence or weakness in its internal structuring	strong internal structuring as a socio-technical system that operates in action, global competence, expertise in a field of work	organized and flexible structuring of theoretical and theoretical-practical knowledge, in view of knowing and intervening reality
5. general objective	replicate permanently used knowledge	contribute to the knowledge of theoretical nature, new information generated through the description of empirical procedures and its results.	know to redesign, reformulate and, eventually elaborate, a new knowledge
6. scope of knowledge acquisition	personal trajectory situations lived by the actor	Readjust a pre-existing knowledge concrete situations experienced in the field of professional practice	instances of formal training
7. modes of knowledge acquisition	personal experience	experimentation in the professional context, observation to others and observation of others	study, reflection and personal and collaborative analysis
8. possibility of knowledge explanation	not communicable declaratively because	implicit in the action, but explicit through	Knowledge is likely to be explicit and

	they are implicit in the action	descriptions of procedures used and / or the results obtained	communicated in its principles and senses	
9.	possibility of objectification of knowledge	not objectifiable	partially objectivable in some of its elements at the descriptive level	Knowledge is likely to be objectified itself and its contents
10.	possibility of knowledge formalization in the discourse by the actors involved	not formalized	partially formalized in some of its elements at the level descriptive in its effects	formalized in a speech
11.	relationship that the actors involved establish with knowledge	opaque to the actor, unconscious possession	partially opaque to the actor, conscious possession of its effects, but not of its principles	recognizable and appropriable, conscious possession of its principles, senses and effects.

**Table 1.** Typology of pedagogical knowledge (Latorre, 2006, tipología de saberes [typology of pedagogical knowledge])

### Pedagogical and Educational Practice

The Ministry of National Education states in paragraph 2 of article 2 of Resolution 18583 of 2017, that educational degree programs must ensure that students acquire preparation in pedagogical practices. To achieve this, higher education centers will design the curricula of the bachelor programs ensuring that their graduates have the ability to ensure the relevance and achievement of educational processes from the appropriation of the Basic Standards of Competencies, curricular guidelines and quality references in order to strengthen the learning processes of the students. For this, the program must include training in pedagogy, didactics of school knowledge, disciplinary training and research both pedagogical and specific to the discipline. The curriculum must also include training components and academic spaces dedicated to pedagogical and educational practice from three scenarios: 1. *Practice observation*, in which the student observes the

dynamics of the classroom, institution, group management and the teaching of a discipline in the context of performance. 2. *Immersion practice*, the student develops teaching processes in a classroom of a school accompanied by the classroom teacher and 3. *Research practice*, the undergraduate student participates or develops educational projects in context (MNE, 2015, p. 11). Clearly, contemporary higher education is evolving into network cooperation among higher education institutions, society and productive clusters. The social responsibility of knowledge is gaining strength; hence the importance of studying the problems of the context, of attending to social needs, of helping to close the gaps in inequality and the role of human sciences and arts in the process of building modern societies becomes a must (Latorre, 2006).

### Pedagogical and Educational Innovations

For the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), educational

innovations include various aspects: of different processes and of the technological, didactic and pedagogical diversity of people. In this manner, a pedagogical innovation implies the implementation of a significant change in the materials, methods, contents or contexts involved in teaching-learning process. Hence, the emphasis on the need to generate new and better teaching-learning processes in different educational milieus require more challenges to comply with the regulations established by the Ministry of Education and the training needs of the social and cultural context of each region. Only in this way is it possible to produce effective, pertinent and effective changes in the students, contents and materials used in the educational process of the English classroom (ITESM, 2017).

On the other hand, Castellanos (2015) argues that there are no tools to generate impact on its own, quite the contrary, if used improperly, without a clear purpose and / or without involving complementary aspects, it may even undermine the initial purpose of its introduction in any system. According to this, it is required that teachers be highly trained in the management of systems, in the resolution of problems which result from the teaching-learning processes and interactions and mainly in the appropriate selection of learning contents, taking into account factors such as the context, the population, the interests and needs of the students. So teachers should strive for fostering innovation in the classrooms (Moreno, 1994; Osorno et al, 2002) upon the building of collective knowledge (Chamorro, González & Gómez, 2008).

Undoubtedly, encouraging the realization of transdisciplinary innovative strategies based on joint problems with other areas of knowledge is necessary to overcome curricular insularism. A constant study of the needs and the educational context, the implementation of varied pedagogical and didactic tendencies can be vital to reinforce the accompaniment that

from pedagogical practice is done to schools and social educational contexts. Sánchez & Pérez (2011) suggest that recharged and excessively fragmented curricular designs, contribute to the mere reproduction and transmission of knowledge which is accommodated as subjects, unconnected plots, prerequisites, or administrative and cumulative protocols of information (p. 148) rather disconnected from the complexities of the schools system.

## **Methodology**

It is worth mentioning that the larger project is structured in three central phases; the present study accounts for some of the findings obtained in the first phase conducted in the ELT program in one of the three universities. Below, a description of each one of the project phases is presented:

**Phase I: Characterization:** This phase was developed between January 2017 and December the same year. It served to characterize the pedagogical practices of the English Language Teaching program of a state-run university in Colombia.

**Phase II: Design:** The aim of this phase was to design a proposal of a robust ELT pedagogical practicum program taking into account the different findings resulting from the analysis conducted during the study in phase I.

**Phase III: Implementation:** In this phase the ELT program will pilot in different schools and/or extracurricular contexts the program for pedagogical practicum designed in phase II, to evaluate its success or weakness in the pedagogical practicum of the ELT Program according to the guidelines proposed by the Ministry of Education in the recent years.

The particular methodology implemented in the phase I, followed an exploratory mixed research approach which included quantitative and qualitative instruments. The qualitative interest was to characterize the pedagogical

practices in light of university, School of Education and ELT program regulations. Its exploratory nature resided in the fact that current scenarios, in which these pedagogical practices took place, needed to be described and critically systematized. Also, the use of a triangulation process and subsequent correlation of the Likert scale surveys was necessary to better comprehend the perceptions of the agents involved in the teaching practices.

Accordingly, the project sought to critically recognize the conceptual and procedural support of the pedagogical practicum of the ELT program, its impact on the initial training of future teachers, to build from there an alternative pedagogical and educational practicum program that allows training the teacher required by today's context needs without ignoring current public regulations regarding initial training.

### **Instruments, Participants and Data Collection**

For the first phase of the present study, the instrument of knowledge typologies (Latorre, 2006) used in the larger project was adopted. It consists of eleven categories to distinguish the different type of knowledge found in the practicum experiences. Subsequently, five Likert scale survey-type perception instruments were proposed to obtain the opinions of the actors involved in the process of pedagogical practicum in the ELT program, the following are the instruments used in the first phase which included a sample of 105 participants distributed as follows:

1. Knowledge typology tables (11 tables were completed from twelve academic documentary sources).
2. Perception survey for school principals (11 people took the survey).
3. Perception survey for student teachers (52 people took the survey).
4. Perception survey for main teachers (12 people took the survey).
5. Perception survey for practicum supervisors (18 people took the survey).
6. Perception survey for academic coordinators (12 people took the survey)

The instruments above were applied during 2017. For the instrument of knowledge typologies; the analysis included twelve different documentary sources: the University Educational Project (UEP), the Faculty Educational Project (FEP), the Faculty Practicum Regulations (FPR), the English Language Teaching Program Practicum Regulations (ELTPR), the ELT Curricular Project (ELTCP), the four didactic component course syllabi (second language learning theories, principles of language teaching, course design and assessment and Computer Assisted Language Learning – CALL) and the student teachers' Lesson Plans (LP) from primary and secondary cycles.

Because of the complexity in the completion of the instrument of knowledge typologies, the first two instruments were applied in the first semester of 2017 and the other four in the second semester of the same year. The focal samples for each instrument were set at a minimum of 10 people per instrument because of the difficulty to collect the data from the different actors involved in the research process. For the instrument number 2 to student teachers, the sample was collected with all the student teachers from the primary and secondary school, the university and the technological cycles (SENA) ending the semester 2017-1.

### **Results**

#### **Documentary Analysis to Distinguish the Type of Knowledge in the Practicum Process**

A qualitative documentary analysis was



conducted by resorting to twelve academic sources above mentioned. It was done inductively to reveal the generalizations from the sources utilized to feed the first instrument as it was necessary to synthesize all the information available. As Fraenkel & Wallen (2006) suggest, the data analysis in qualitative research relies heavily on description; even if some statistics are calculated, the qualitative research tends to be used in a descriptive rather than an inferential sense. That is why it was helpful to analyze the information provided with the instrument of knowledge typologies.

In the first place, an analysis to the UEP, FEP, the ELTCP, the FPR and the ELTPR was carried out. Secondly, a review of the four didactic component courses was included the same as with the LP from student teachers in the primary level. The LP from student teachers in the secondary level were broken down and finally the student teacher journals. The percentage assigned to the finding from each one of the twelve sources reviewed was 8.33% and resulted

from the division of the eleven types of knowledge proposed by Latorre (2006). Thus, the sum in each category resulted from the frequency of elements found in the sources analyzed.

The Table 2 summarizes the findings of the eleven criteria to characterize the nature of practicum conceived by the different bodies of the university. To do so, a methodological triangulation technique (Denzin, 1970b) was applied by coding the data of the twelve documentary sources. Although this is not a grounded theory study, the axial coding approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Benaquisto, 2008) was used to classify in three types the ELT program practicum experience: Experiential, Reproductive and Transformative. Secondly, a coding frame technique (Cohen et al. 2008, 467; Larossa, 2005) was implemented to reveal the extant relationships by including the degree of prevalence of practicum tendencies in the sources reviewed. Such degrees were thus placed from the highest to the lowest percentages in the transformative practicum category.

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1. UEP = University Educational Project
  2. FEP = Faculty Educational Project
  3. FPR = Faculty Practicum Regulations
  4. ELTPR = English Language Teaching Program Practicum Regulations
  5. ELTCP = English Language Teaching Curricular Program
  6. SLLT = Second Language Learning Theories Syllabus
  7. PLT = Principles of Language Teaching Syllabus
  8. CDA = Course Design and Assessment Syllabus
  9. CALL = Computer Assisted Language Learning Syllabus
  10. LPp = Student Teachers Lesson plans - Primary
  11. LPs = Student Teachers Lesson plans - Secondary
  12. JI = Student teachers journals
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**Table 2.** Coding for the Table

Type of knowledge identified	Practicum experience categories			Degree of prevalence
	Experiential practicum	Reproductive practicum	Transformative practicum	
4 In relation to practicum aims	25% (LPp, LPs, JI)	41.6% (LPp, LPs, CDA, UEP)	66.6% (UEP, FEP, ELTCP, ELTPR, LPp, LPs, SLLT, CALL)	

10 In relation to knowledge formalization in the discourse by the actors involved	8.33% (LPs)	16.66% (LPp, LPs)	50% (UEP, ELCTP, SLL, CDA, CALL, JI)	High
1 In relation to its nature	25% (ELTCP, LPp, LPs)	41.6% (FEP, LPp, LPs, CDA, PR)	41.6% (UEP, FEP, LPp, LPs, CALL)	
9 In relation to the objectification of knowledge	33.3% (ELTPR, LPp, JI)	25% (FEP, LPp, LPs)	41.6% (UEP, FEP, FPR, ELTCP, ELTPR)	
11 Relationship that the actors involved establish with knowledge	16.6% (LPp, LPs)	16.6% (LPp, LPs)	41.6% (UEP, ELTCP, PLT, CALL, CDA)	
3 In relation to the practicum itself	25% (CDA, LPp, LPs)	41.6% (FEP, ELTPR, LPp, LPs, SLLT)	33.3% (FEP, PLT, LPp, LPs)	
2 In relation to the object of knowledge	33.3% (ELTCP, LPp, LPs, PLT)	25% (FEP, LPp, LPs, SLLT)	33.3% (UEP, ELTCP, LPs, CALL)	Medium
5 In relation to the structuring level	16.6% (LPp, LPs)	25% (LPp, LPs, PLT)	33.3% (UEP, FEP, LPp, CALL)	
7 In relation to the type of acquisition	16.6% (ELTCP, LPs)	16.6% (ELTCP, LPp)	33.3% (UEP, ELTCP, LPs, CALL)	
8 In relation to explicit possibilities of explanation	25% (PLT, LPp, LPs)	41.6% (FEP, LPp, LPs, JI, CDA)	25% (UEP, ELTCP, CDA)	Low
6 In relation to the scope of knowledge acquisition	8.33% (LPs, CALL)	33.3% (FEP, LPp, LPs, CDA)	25% (UEP, FEP, CDA)	

**Table 3.** Practicum Categories in Relation to the Knowledge Criteria Identified

There is a high prevalence of transformative tendencies in several of the sources studied specially for the type of knowledge: “in relation to practicum aims” (66.6%), “in relation to the knowledge formalization in the discourse by the actors involved” (50%), “in relation to its nature” (41.6%), and the “relationship that the actors involved establish with knowledge” (41.6%). The following types of knowledge were less prevalent in all the sources reviewed, thus its prevalence was rated as medium for the types “in relation to the practicum itself” (33.3%), “in relation to the object of knowledge” (33.3%), “in relation to the structuring level” (33.3%), “in relation to the type of acquisition” (33.3%). Finally, there was a low prevalence for the types of knowledge “in relation to explicit possibilities of explanation” (25%) and “in relation to the acquisition dimension” (25%). Interestingly, there was a concomitant prevalence of experiential practicum behaviors which were mainly base on empirics, personal common sense and repetition and memorization of patterns in the student teachers lesson plans as seen in several of the categories for the types of knowledge identified. For instance, in one of the LPs a student teacher wrote:

We will play a word memorizing game; I will start by saying a word, for example: “dessert”, the next person says “dessert” and “watermelon”, then, the next person says “dessert”, “watermelon” and “magazine”. It’s a chain and students have to repeat what the last people have said, but we will do it by rows. (LPs-R1-A1).

In another LPs the following was found:

Ask them things about those animals to strengthen WH questions (e.g. Do you like dogs? what sound do they make? What do dogs eat? (Give them options and ask them if they agree, like some human food like fruit or junk food), what is the animal that dogs do not like? Where you can see a dog?). (LPs-R2-A2).

In the student teacher LP for primary school graders, one read: “Introductory PPT and video: students will watch an introductory video and also they will be given a telling the time hand-out to guide themselves as I get to explain the topic. We will practice and review some vocabulary” (LPp-R3-A3).

In another LPp, the student teacher wrote:

Later, the teacher will teach some verbs through movements. Students will find ten verbs in a bag, the teacher will choose the students at random so they can pick up one of the verbs, read it and write it on the board, then s/he will make the mimic and the students can guess the meaning of the verb” (LPp- R2-A2).

The reproductive tendencies in the practicum were also high in the majority of the twelve sources analyzed, especially for the categories “in relation to practicum aims”, “in relation to the practicum itself” and “in relation to explicit possibilities of explanation” with 41.6% respectively.

The new educational trends propose the construction and reconstruction of knowledge, the experience that leads the student to ask questions that should be tried to be solved with the application of methods according to the situation, but with the scientific knowledge that leads to the solution of problems, participation and integration with society. (ELTCP-R2-A2. Trans.).

Furthermore in the CALL syllabus description, the statement below appeared:

This course seeks to give students an extensive overview of language teaching and learning enhanced by computers. This will engage students in the exploration of a variety of environments in language learning by using and discussing powerful

and existing applications of computer technologies in the language classroom and the creation of Classroom Pedagogical Projects – CPP, useful to use and test the knowledge gained through reading, discussions and manual experiments through ICT's. (CALL, p. 2).

In relation to the acquisition dimension, reproductive tendencies in the FEP were found:

Teacher training is defined from the guidelines of the pedagogical model that determines the curricular design in line with basic and professional competences (Article 2 Resolution 5443 of July 30, 2010) that must be developed with the curricular plans in each program, to train cognitively brilliant teachers, with great human development, capable of solving problems and talented to act in their environment building and transforming realities. (FEP, p. 5).

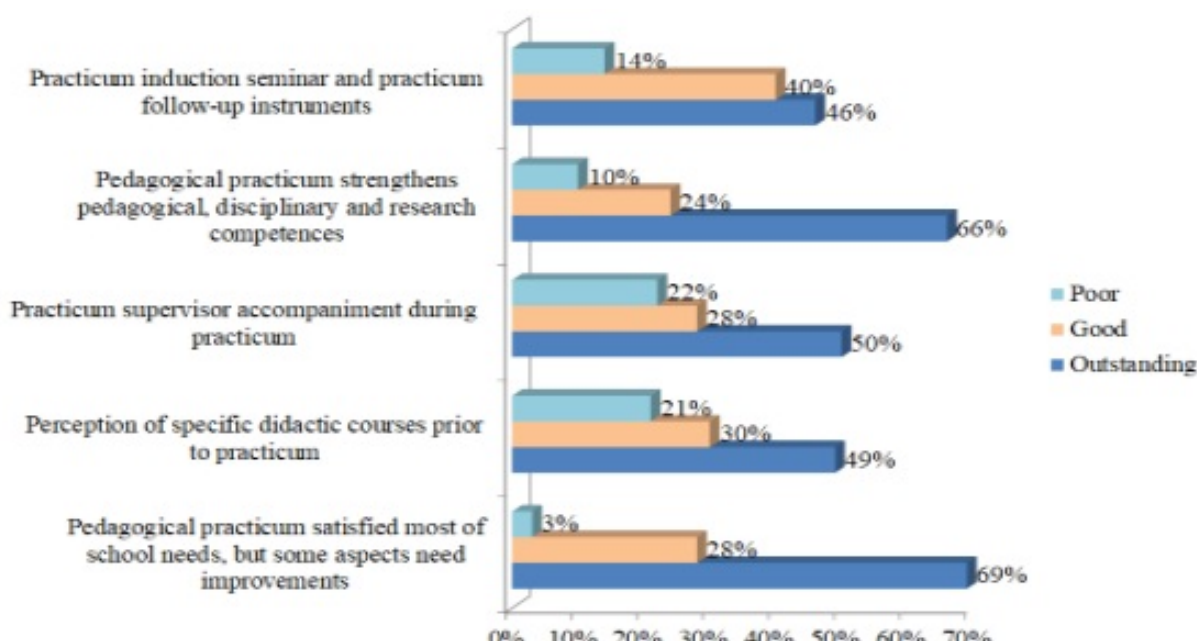
However, in the CDA, clear examples of transformative nature emerged:

Before facing a real context to teach English to secondary school pupils, it is important for students to know and explore the basic procedures and principles to course design, lesson planning, textbook analysis and evaluation, well as a practical manner in such a way that students are empowered with basic knowledge and skills required for effective teaching of English. (CDA, p. 1).

Transformative tendencies were also identified in the ELTCP in relation to the practicum itself:

In recent years, the project of Pedagogical Innovations has been launched within the teaching practice of the ELT Program basically to motivate practitioners to reflect on a certain problematic situation they wish to solve in the context of their classes and to explore a plan of action tending to their solution in innovative manners. (ELTCP, p. 72).

Broadly speaking, in the analysis



**Chart 1.** Perception Survey for Student Teachers.

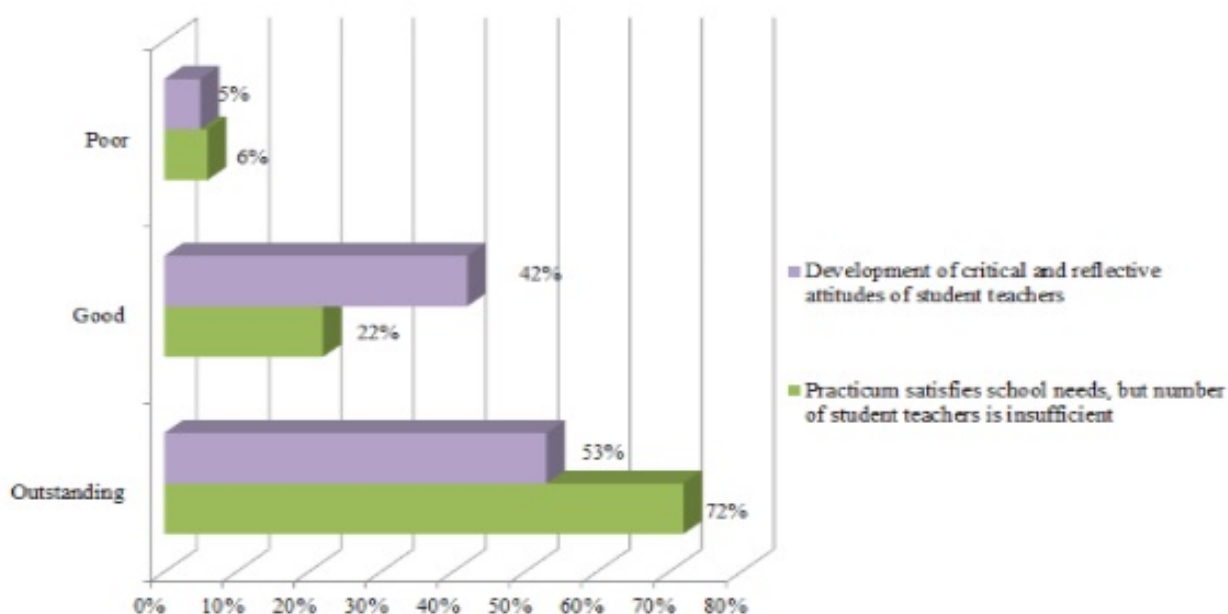
assessment and testing. A variety of relevant themes are incorporated in a theoretical, as done to the twelve sources, practicum experiences with reproductive and transformative tendencies were present in most of the eleven types of knowledge scrutinized.

### Perception Survey for Student Teachers<sup>3</sup>

For 69% of the student teachers the pedagogical practicum satisfied most of school needs, but some aspects need improvements, the 28% of them think that the development of their practicum does contribute positively to reach the objectives set by the schools and 3% reckon that

their work responds satisfactorily to the needs found in the different schools.

It is of great interest to know that 49% of the student teachers see outstandingly the training received in the didactic and pedagogic courses prior to the practicum experience. The 30% consider that these courses provided them with solid foundations to achieve good classes and to know the reality of school. Conversely, the 21% of surveyed ones feel that these courses do not place them in the educational reality nor train them to face special demands from students who come from vulnerable communities for example.



**Chart 2.** Perception Survey to Practicum Supervisors.

When it came to the practicum supervisors, half of the student teachers considered their accompaniment constant during class observations and advice sessions; such supports had helped them to strengthen their teaching performance. On the contrary, the 28% of the student teachers stated that the work

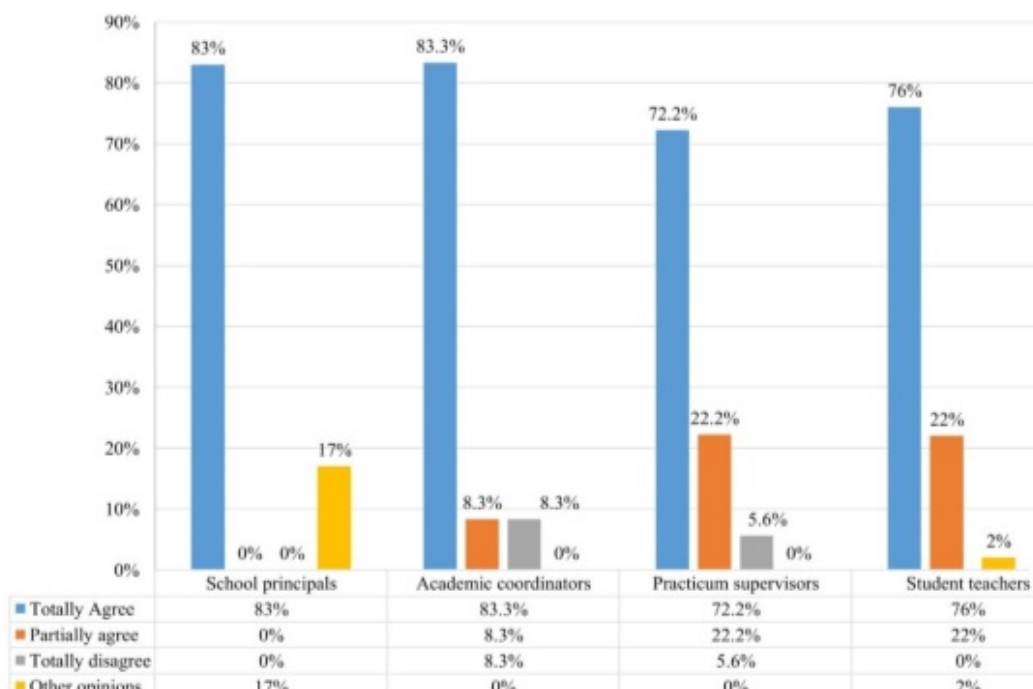
of practicum supervisors is good and helpful to strengthen some methodological aspects, but rather intermittent. Finally, the 22% of student teachers feel that the accompaniment was insufficient to help them be performant in the practicum experience and gain confidence in terms of classroom management.

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<sup>3</sup>Detailed charts and annexes of the surveys are included in the document "Resultados instrumentos & anexos - fase I", available in the references.

The 66% of the respondents accepted that the experience of the pedagogical practicum outstandingly strengthen their pedagogical, disciplinary and research competences in the area of L2 teaching. Whilst 24% of them said that

solely pedagogical and disciplinary skills have been strengthened. Solely a 10% of the student teachers affirmed that they had been able to strengthen their disciplinary and investigative skills in the area of English.



**Chart 3.** Practicum Experience Contribution to the Achievement of School Goals and Objectives and the Enrichment of Instructional Guidelines.

The 46% affirmed that the induction seminar and the practicum follow-up instruments is appropriate and pertinent; the 40% stated that it is sometimes appropriate and pertinent. The 14% think that it is inappropriate and decontextualized from local educational realities, barely relevant, long and meaningless to deal with the reality they face in the classrooms. For the 72% of practicum supervisors the practicum experience satisfied the needs of schools in the city and its outskirts even if the number of student teachers is insufficient. The 22% consider that the work and number of student teachers is good and the 6% of practicum supervisors believe that the practicum does not meet the specific needs of and the number of student teachers is small to attend the schools in Neiva and the periphery.

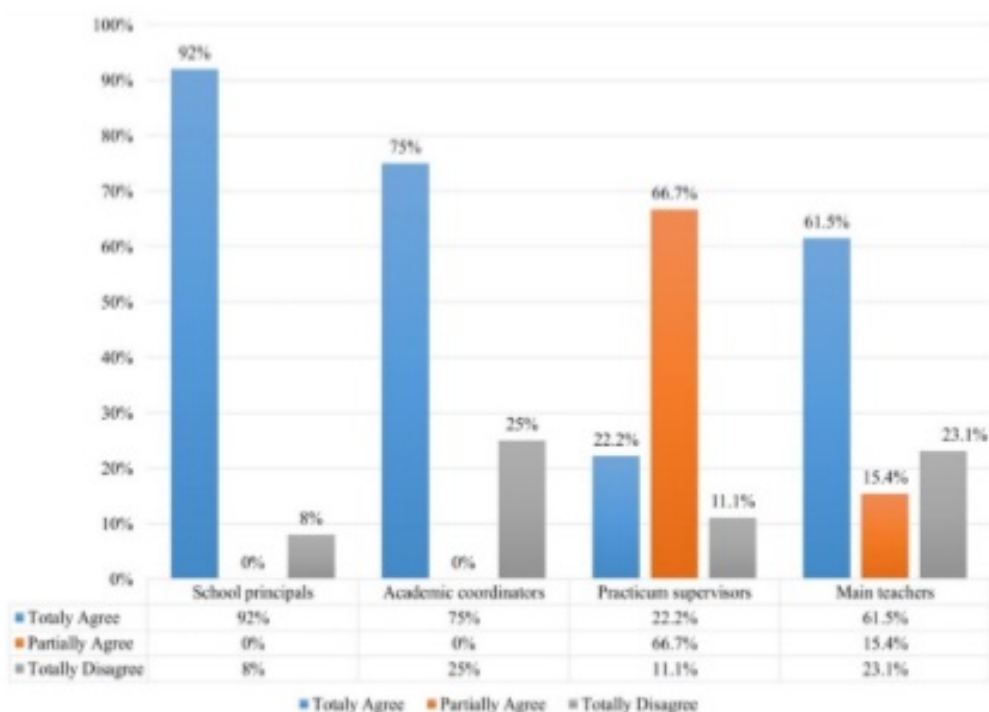
Conversely, 53% of the practicum supervisors reckon that the student teachers develop critical and reflective attitudes, incorporate effectively practicum supervisors' suggestions and assume active roles as teachers by reflecting on their teaching performance. The 22% of practicum supervisors consider that the student teachers do well in general terms and the remaining 5% believe that their impact is rather relative as the student teachers only describe their teaching experience, but do not reflect on their performance nor make adjustments to teaching activities.

In the charts below the correlated data from the different instruments is presented. This provided meaningful insights from the agents involved in terms of the impact and pertinence of the practicum experience including the

innovation processes undertaken.

The Chart 3 correlated the perception of school principals, academic coordinators, practicum supervisors and student teachers about the contribution of the practicum experience to achieve the goals and objectives of the schools and the enrichment of school instructional guidelines. It was concluded that school principals (blue bar) with 83% totally agreed; on the other hand the other 17% had

other opinions (yellow bar). Likewise, it was seen that 83.3% of academic coordinators totally agreed while 8.3% of them were partially in agreement and the remaining 8.3% disagreed (grey bar). Interestingly, the practicum supervisors with 72.2% completely agreed, the 22.2% partially agreed and the 5.6% of them totally disagreed. The percentages for the student teachers were rather similar with 76% who completely agreed; the 22% of them partially agreed and the 2% who opted for other opinions.



**Chart 4.** Perception of High-impact Innovative Projects Transcending School Curricula.

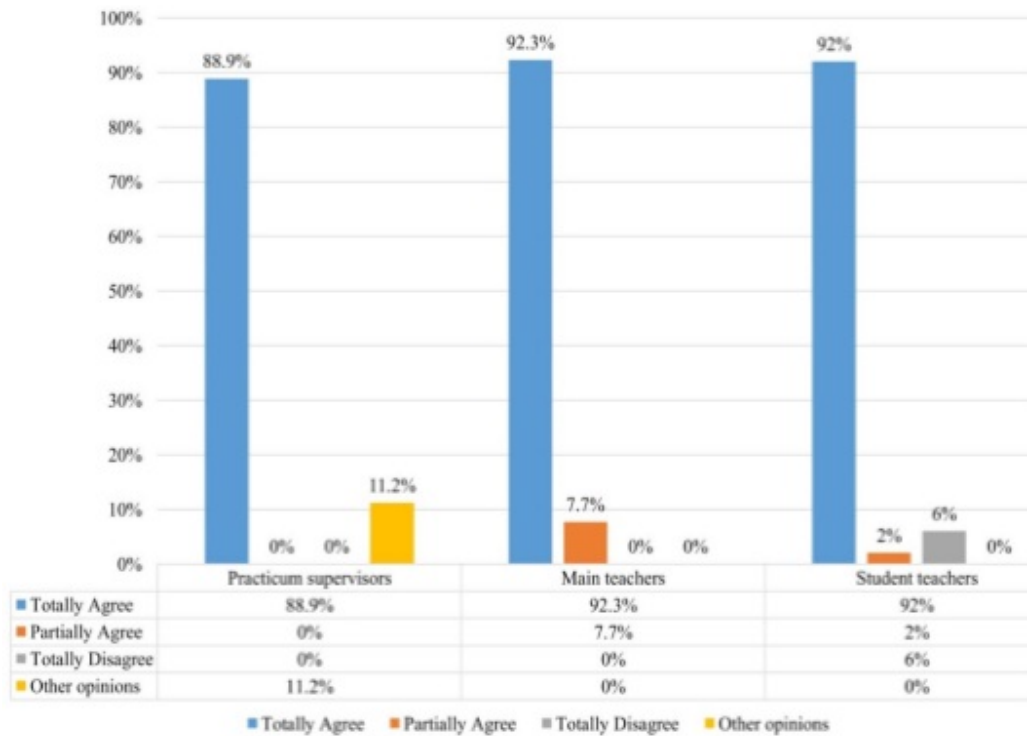
The Chart 4 showed the correlation of opinions by the school principals; the academic coordinators, the practicum supervisors and the main teachers about the significant impact of innovation projects performed by the student teachers which transcended school curricula. According to the chart, the 92% of the school principals were totally in agreement with the statement while the other 8% thought the opposite. For the 75% of the academic coordinators the statement was totally correct and surprisingly the other 25% totally disagreed.

On the other hand, the practicum supervisors with 22.2% agreed with the statement, the 66.7% of them partially agreed and the 11.1% of practicum supervisors totally disagreed.

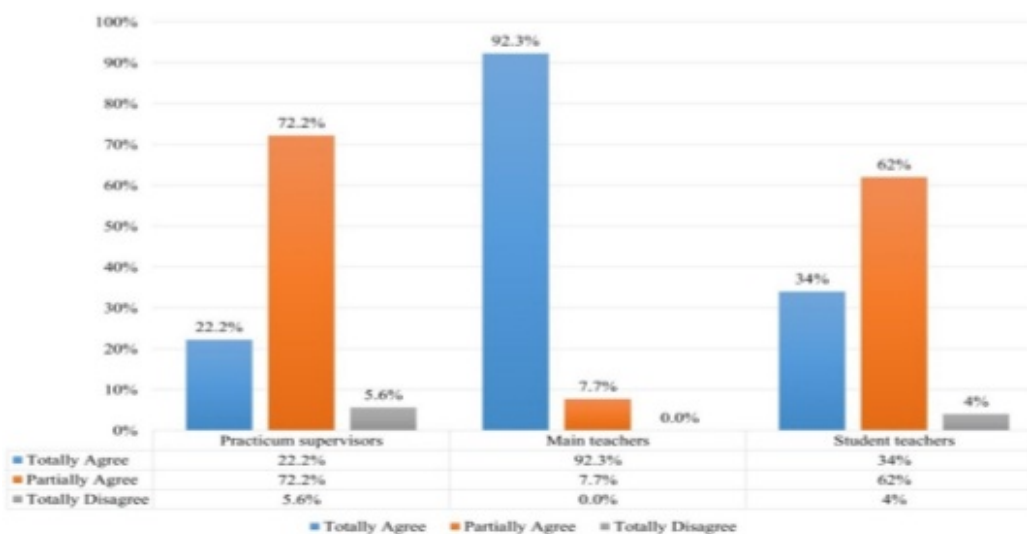
The Chart 5 above included the correlation of opinions by the practicum supervisors, the main teachers and the student teachers about the positive impact of the practicum experience for the initial training of the ELT program future teachers. It was observed that the 89.9%, 92.3%, and 92% of the practicum supervisors, main

teachers and student teachers totally agreed with the statement proposed. In the same way, the 7.7% of main teachers and the 2% of student teacher partially agreed. On the other hand, the 6% of student teachers totally disagreed and

feel unmotivated by the educational panorama they may face and therefore a tenth of them consider to not teaching to look for other horizons in the middle term. The 11.2% of practicum supervisors had other opinions on the matter.



**Chart 5.** Positive Impacto f the Practicum Experience for ELT Future Teachers.



**Chart 6.** The ELY Pedagogical Practicum Meets the Needs of Schools in the City and its Surroundings.



The Chart 6 included the correlation of opinions by the practicum supervisors, main teachers and student teachers about the fact that the ELT pedagogical practicum met the needs of the schools in Neiva and the periphery. As observed, the 22, 2%, 92,3%, and 34% of practicum supervisors, main teachers and student teachers were totally in agreement with the statement. Also, the 72,2%, 7,7 and 62% of practicum supervisors, main teachers and student teachers were partially in agreement while the 5,6%, of practicum supervisors and the 4% of student teachers totally disagreed with the statement.

## Discussion

To achieve the objectives in the present study, six data collection instruments were designed and applied; the first instrument on knowledge typologies included eleven different distinguished types of knowledge presented in the practicum experiences which were aligned to three types of practicum: experiential, reproductive and transformative. The objective of this instrument was to typify the pedagogical practicum of the ELT program in one or several of these three categories according to the model proposed by Latorre (2006). Three sources of information were analyzed: the first since the University Educational Project (UEP), the Faculty Educational project (FEP) and the ELT Curricular Project (ELTCP). The second one from the syllabi of the didactic component courses (second language learning theories, principles of language teaching, course design and assessment and Computer Assisted Language Learning – CALL) and finally from the student teachers' Lesson Plans (LP) developed in the primary and the secondary cycles. The Table 1 above presented the type of practicum found in the ELT program and the degree of prevalence of the practicum experience and its tendency from the information collected in the curricular project

through the typologies instrument<sup>4</sup>. It clearly indicated that most of the knowledge typologies of the ELT program teaching practicum fit the category of **transformative practicum**. However, the objectives of the ECP suggest the imperative need to promote pedagogical and curricular modernization in accordance with social, educational, historical, cultural, political, economic and philosophical demands. In the same way, the syllabi of the ELT program aim at the development of transformative practices of local educational realities.

Interestingly, the analysis to the LP's by the student teachers rather show **reproductive and experiential practices**. The student teachers tend to stick to L2 national and international standards resulting from public regulations, foreign models and theory developments, but little is done from critic or alternative standpoints from the students teachers' own reflections as stated by the practicum supervisors (Chart 2). It was found on most of the LP's analyzed that the student teacher planned the classes based mostly on their experience with the kids rather than trying to base them on fresher approaches. In the criteria of analysis 1 'in relation to its nature' more evidence in the empirical and practical category was found rather than in the theoretical-speculative. The student teachers were more concerned with the description of the activities to develop than on the impact of their actions as teachers in the students (chart 2). Consequently, they devoted themselves more on the filling up of practicum monitoring instruments than on exploring the transformation of their actions in the practicum nor related the class activities they proposed to the reflection processes they undertook in the journals.

On the other hand, in the perception surveys is clear that the practicum of the ELT program

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<sup>4</sup> See the typology charts (pp. 78-170) in the document "Resultados instrumentos & anexos - fase I" included in the references.

partially satisfied the needs of the schools in the city (chart 4). Interestingly, for the main teachers the satisfaction is quite high in contrast to the opinion of practicum supervisors and student teachers who, to a large extent, were partially in agreement with the assertion. Even so, it is worth considering the fact that the main teachers accompanied most of the time the student teachers in their classes and this regular presence allowed to see more clearly the process implemented and the teaching performance of the student teachers in class. Conversely, the practicum supervisors sporadically accompanied the process of the student teachers in the classrooms as signaled by the student teachers (Chart 1).

Likewise, most of the school principals, academic coordinators and main teachers fully agreed that the student teachers implemented innovative projects which impacted positively the schools (Chart 4) even if the perception of more than a tenth part of practicum supervisors and the fourth part of the academic coordinators were not satisfied with the innovation proposals of the student teachers. One important element to discuss is that 78% of the student teachers thought that the contribution and accompaniment received from the practicum supervisors was constant and of great help contrary to the 21% who disagreed. Some considered the accompaniment helpful to their teaching experience, and the others saw it rather poor to strengthen their teaching performance because of its intermittency. What is important was the fact that 78% of the student teachers agreed that the main teachers provided them with valuable support to carry out their teaching practicum satisfactorily.

Although the didactic component courses preceding the practicum prepared the students for the teaching action, the perception surveys suggested that the courses were not enough to make student teachers gain confidence to master classroom management (Chart

1). Thus, an adequate student teachers' classroom management was not achieved until the immersion stage took place as they had the chance to face the social and cultural reality of the schools. Clearly, for the school principals and the academic coordinators there is an urgent need to have more student teachers to attend the demand; this coincides with the perception of 5% of the practicum supervisors who considered that the practicum satisfied the needs of schools even when the students teachers cannot support all schools of the city and its surroundings (Chart 6).

## **Conclusions**

According to the analysis and characterization upon the levels of formalization of knowledge by the student teachers in the practicum experience, the ELT practicum program at the public University firmly involves different agents in the process and points to the consolidation of a practicum program with transformative tendencies. Transformative because of the innovation projects that generate micro processes that alter the realities of the English classroom as the proposals are based on solid theoretical principles, varied teaching approaches and, in some cases, included joint efforts or proposed interdisciplinary solutions to solve specific classroom issues beyond insular responses (Chart 4).

Parallel, they presented nuances of reproductive character, especially with the student teachers' lesson plans where the practicum was more inclined in the reproduction of those same theoretical principles; they did not delve into the need to generate processes of own knowledge production: the student teachers insisted on echoing knowledge rather than producing new curricular and pedagogical constructions in each class. Indeed, the LP's demonstrated experiential and reproductive practices for the different cycles analyzed.

More than two thirds of student teachers pondered that the training preceding the practicum of the ELT program had been appropriate, relevant and effective to address the educational diversity of the local educational context. The 14% of students believed that the practicum follow-up was not very constant, which is in line with similar findings evidenced in other studies on the accompaniment of practicum processes (Montgomery, 1999; Insuasty & Zambrano, 2011). Nearly three quarters of the student teachers reckoned that the didactic courses that preceded the practicum prepared them well, but they were not enough to have them feel confident and be able to demonstrate good classroom mastery.

Undoubtedly, the practicum experience has a positive impact on the comprehensive training of the ELT program future teachers as perceived by the agents involved in the process. This is demonstrated in the results of the perception surveys carried out to school principals, academic coordinators and main teachers. Besides, for the practicum supervisor, the cooperating teachers and the student teachers, the experience allows exploring the real context of the schools of urban and surrounding areas of the city and adjusts to its demands (Charts 3, 4, 5 and 6). It also allows the incorporation of research and innovation as a relevant praxis for the solution of specific problems and needs, both in the classroom of English and in schools. The experience gives to student teachers the opportunity to reflect on their teaching performance and on their role as social agents of change. This is explained in the different practicum monitoring instruments where reflection and innovative approaches were always present in the pedagogical act. It is clear that the sensitization to research (Wedell, 2009) centered in the classroom and the subsequent systematization of innovative experiences is a fundamental element in initial training as

suggested by previous studies (Edge, J. & Mann, S., 2013), and adds to the positive perception of the ELT practicum program.

Finally, it is worrying that after the ELT program practicum experience more than a sixth of future teachers consider looking for other job opportunities in the middle term (Chart 5).

## **Recommendations**

The student teacher perception survey revealed that half of them still stated that the accompaniment done by the practicum supervisor was insufficient to strengthen their abilities and skills inside the classroom. It is of great help to student teachers the implementation of more effective and relevant accompaniment strategies by the practicum coordinator and the practicum supervisors to improve the pedagogical practicum support. The avoidance of prolonged intermittence in the accompaniment by the practicum supervisor is vital. Therefore it is necessary to find ways to motivate the practicum supervisors so that their commitment and classroom follow-up becomes constant.

According to the results, the schools in Neiva and its surroundings require more support from the student teachers and the practicum process by the ELT program, especially for the primary cycle where English teachers are necessary as signaled by school principals, academic coordinators and practicum supervisors<sup>5</sup>. They stated that although the practicum responds to school necessities and contexts, there is still a lack of student teachers to cover all public schools. Therefore the ELT program should not abandon the accompaniment provided to schools in primary grades as it is there where the student teachers begin spreading the importance of learning a new language, the appreciation of

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<sup>5</sup>Chart 1, (p. 19); Chart 4.16 (p. 68) and Chart 5.4 (p. 72) in the document "resultados instrumentos & anexos - fase I", included in the references.in the references.

other cultures and the building of students' tolerance to other cultures and manners presented in the world<sup>6</sup>.

The realization of trans-disciplinary innovation plans or joint strategies from different areas of knowledge to solve problems should be invigorated to avoid curricular insularism. Thus; as other studies suggest (Montero, 1990; De la Torre, 1998; Díaz, M., 1998, 2000; Wedell, 2009; Starkey & Rawlins, 2011; Edge & Mann, 2013; Padilla & Espinoza, 2015), a constant reviewing of the needs and the educational context demands, the implementation of varied pedagogical and didactic tendencies and the ongoing innovation can be vital to reinforce the practicum accompaniment in different schools and social contexts of the city of Neiva and its surroundings.

Finally, the "scale i" of the frame of reference for the evaluation of educational innovation projects proposed by López & Heredia (2017), should become a powerful guide to allow both practicum supervisors and student teachers to ponder the pedagogical intervention proposals aiming at achieving more disruptive and revolutionary innovations (ITESM, 2016, p. 5, 6) to overcome curricular insularism. It is a didactic tool useful to evaluate educational innovation projects, promote true impacts in the teaching-learning process and in the orientation of the effort towards concrete actions and constant improvements. In this sense, the scale i should not, for any reason, be considered as an evaluation tool to judge and dishearten the student teachers upon the success, failure or quality of their innovation proposals.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibidem, graph 3.3 (p. 40) in the references.

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