# KWL Strategy for Improving Pre-service English Teachers' Performance

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#### Abstract

This article aims to explore the effect of using KWL strategy (what I Know, what I Want to learn, and what I did Learn) during the observation of a practical programme to acquire teaching experience. A descriptive study approach was designed to investigate how 50 pre-service teachers use the KWL strategy to develop teaching performance. Fifty pre-service teachers were interviewed to create a concept map that brings all teaching experiences under four categories: planning, instruction concerns, learner, and evaluation. The results reveal that the use of the KWL strategy enriches pre-service teachers' experience and develops performance, as it increases deeper thinking about the profession and a positive attitude towards teaching. It is recommended that the practical teaching programme use KWL as an effective strategy for improving candidates' teaching, as it leads to activating their prior knowledge about teaching and to enhancing their behaviours towards teaching for further planning and progress.

#### **Keywords**:

KWL strategy, teachers' performance, teachers' development, English Teacher

### Introduction

The Know-Want-Learn (KWL) is a significant strategy that is useful in classrooms and in all subjects. When students access their strategy for a given subject, they must integrate new knowledge with previous knowledge. The KWL strategy is a technique used by teachers to assist learners in stimulating their previous strategy to read, develop understanding during reading, and arrange their ideas and thoughts after reading.

The KWL strategy was established by Donna Ogle in 1986. Since its origin, the KWL strategy has been used as an instructional reading strategy to help new teachers engage students from the beginning of the lesson by activating prior knowledge. The theoretical basis of this strategy goes back to the schema theory, which comprises abstract concepts that organize categories of information and identify the relationship between them, then store these categories in one's long-term memory (Bailey, 2017). This strategy provides a structure for recalling what learners know about a topic, noting what they want to know, and finally listing what has been learned (Fengjuan, 2010).

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This strategy helps students to organize and evaluate their knowledge. Moreover, it is a useful tool for teachers to assess their students. The KWL strategy also helps teachers keep students interested as they think about what they want to know and what they have learned (Sasson, 2008). Accessing prior knowledge and engaging learners' interest prior to beginning a reading activity can improve learners' ability to make associations, enhance understanding, and increase comprehension (Bailey, 2017, p. 1). This strategy reflects the cognitive process of language acquisition (Fengjuan, 2010).

Several studies discuss the effects of using the KWL strategy for teaching different English skills, but most studies focus on reading skills (Hamdan, 2014, Rakhmawati, 2015). On the other hand, some studies investigate the use of this strategy in teaching different subjects such as mathematics or science (Tok, 2013). In fact, the KWL strategy is helpful in almost all subjects (Brozo and Simpson 1991). However, no previous study has proven the effect of this strategy on teachers' performance.

According to Daniel (2011), using the KWL strategy in teaching will encourage active learning, promote academic success, and enhance learning. Students will work together to complete a KWL chart. The result will be effective learning and a good relationship between the students and the teacher, which is essential to applying the KWL strategy, one that offers the possibility of academic success and of an effective relationship between comprehension, learning and prior understanding, which in turn lead to enhancing learning. Furthermore, this technique has been designed to ensure that the learner link the relationship between new knowledge and prior knowledge, arranges the knowledge, unifies it, and epitomizes it (Tok, 2013), (Hamdan, 2014).

In this technique, both teachers and learners start the process of learning by brainstorming about what they already know about a given topic. The teacher leads learners in investigating their information and what they know. Next, teachers write down what the learners know. The role of the teacher is not to correct or assess but to enhance and activate learners to think openly about what they study. There may be various ideas and thoughts being shared, and the teacher can simply ask what the learners want to know. The learners' role is to think of real questions, and the role of teachers is to write down what the students say. Finally, the students write everything they have learned in an article, so they have a chance to integrate their knowledge (Tok, 2013, Rakhmawati, 2015).

The KWL technique can be effectively used to assist in scaffolding the students' thoughts because "problem-solving requires the learners to consider what they know about a problem placed in front of them, what

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they need to know, and what they have already learned" (Sheltered Instruction, cited in Tok, 2009, p. 196).

The KWL strategy also assists struggling learners in bolstering their knowledge so that they can be planned learners. Struggling learners can develop their understanding of given topics. Even for learners who have difficulty using their imagination, using the KWL technique can make them feel that learning is achievable, fun and interesting (Rakhmawati, 2015, Fengjuan, 2010, Maulida & Gani, 2016).

The assessment of teaching performance for decision-making policies is not a simple task. It is difficult to create a useful tool or material to evaluate pre-service teachers' performance at the beginning, during, and after teaching. Finally, it is not easy to assign what the practical educational unit must do to improve outputs and to eliminate the obstacles that face the pre-service teachers (Aypay, 2009, He, Valcke, Aelterman, & Zhu, 2013). The innovation of the current paper is the use of the KWL strategy in developing pre-service English teachers' performance. The KWL strategy is a significant strategy that is useful in classrooms and in all areas of education.

To improve practical unit progress and outputs, pre-service teachers' attitudes, performance and knowledge must be supported when they engage in successful teacher training assessment. Cochran-Smith (cited in Aypay, 2009, p. 15) notes that "Recently, there are three types of outputs in teacher training: First, teacher candidate performance data; second, standardized teacher test scores; and third, the effect of teachers' teaching on student-learning".

There are various ways of evaluating pre-service teachers, such as the ordinary procedure of direct observation, the Kinescope Observational, and the TV Observational. These different procedures share common traits. The duration of all the observation procedures, for example, is thirty minutes, and the lessons of a subject take place in classes (Young & Sulzen, 2007).

### The Significance of the Study

- Conducting the study may help pre-service teachers address questions about the training session and improve their previous understanding in relation to the current teaching situation.
- The study may reveal a useful strategy to document English teachers' progress for further planning and deeper thinking about their professional performance.
- The KWL strategy might help pre-service teachers save time and effort of students' background knowledge and initiate the practical programme of what they already know.



• KWL strategy may lead observers to explore uncover areas of development and discover critical areas in the educational process.

## Aim of the Study

The aim of this paper is to identify the usefulness of activating the KWL technique in developing pre-service teachers' performance. For this purpose, the KWL strategy is used to record and to develop the instructional performance of 50 pre-service English teachers at Taibah University's Education College.

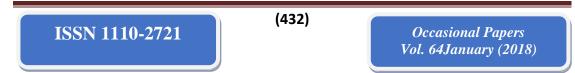
The educational diploma programme in the Education College concludes with field experiences where pre-service teachers have a good opportunity to develop their professional practice and gain the positive attitudes necessary to start their future careers in the English-teaching profession. Through this experience, pre-service teachers find what helps them achieve their educational goals and develop their teaching experience. pre-service teachers must observe actual teaching for seven weeks and then practice teaching in a real classroom, where they apply all the knowledge, theories, and skills gained under the supervision of a faculty member. The supervision provides them with appropriate feedback, modifies their instructional behaviour and encourages them to select, apply and evaluate the appropriate teaching methods and techniques.

The current study is delimited to the use of the KWL strategy as a tool for developing pre-service teachers' performance and uses a sample of fifty female pre-service teachers enrolled in the educational diploma programme at Taibah University in Madinah. To achieve the purpose of the study, three research questions were outlined:

- 1. What do preservice English teachers **know** before starting the practicum programme regarding planning, instruction, evaluation, and learners' concerns?
- 2. What do preservice English teachers **want to know** during the practicum programme regarding planning, instruction, evaluation, and learners' concerns?
- 3. What have preservice English teachers **learned** after the practicum programme regarding planning, instruction, evaluation, and learners' concerns?

# Methodology

Based on the aim of the study to use the KWL strategy as a practical training tool in teacher education programmes, the descriptive method



was conducted using fifty candidates at the second level of the teacher education programme. The pre-service teachers are required to document their progress in each phase of the programme by writing notes at the beginning, middle and end of the teaching practicum in order to record their experiences of what they already know before starting the training programme, what they wanted to learn during the programme, and what they have learned when they finish the programme of the teaching practicum. Furthermore, this strategy is useful in documenting students' progress for further planning and deeper thinking about their professional progress. Additionally, at the end of their training, student teachers were invited to reflect in focus groups on the benefits of the KWL strategy.

#### **Participants**

The current research is limited to female pre-service teachers of TEFL in the Education College of Taibah University, Madinah. Fifty preservice teachers aged from 23 to 24 years old were interviewed to create a concept map that brings all teaching experiences under four categories (planning, instruction concerns, learner, and evaluation) created by the student teachers themselves. Buehl (2017) states that the KWL form produces a concept map that collects all the data together under each category, planned by students working in pairs or groups (see Figure 1), to measure their progress in instructional performance.

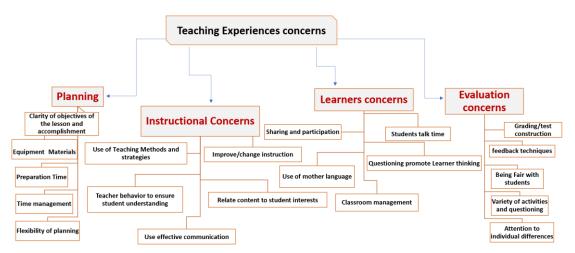


Figure 1 Teaching experiences classified under four categories

The instruments were prepared and designed based on the literature review and the interview results about the above concept mapping. Consequently, the KWL form (see appendix 1) was designed to achieve the aims of the research and was used as a tool to collect data, which allowed us to gather information that PSTs are able to report about

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themselves, such as beliefs and motivations about learning and their reactions to learning (Mackey, & Gass, 2005).

The survey was to be used as a basis for providing a brief description of the effectiveness of the course in preparing student teachers. The questionnaire was later shown to a group of instructors in the Education College who approved the appropriateness of the questionnaire and ensured that all items measure viewpoints about using the KWL strategy in the practicum programme. These instructors agreed that it was a suitable research sample, as it included all teaching experiences.

Training teaching practicum members is essential for effective EL instruction. Moore (2003) studied pre-service teachers' perceptions of their field experiences by documenting their perceptions and their field supervisors' feedback over three consecutive semesters. Results indicated that longer field experiences were required to better prepare and encourage teachers' pedagogical abilities.

#### An overview

#### The definition of the KWL strategy

Sale (2008, p. 364) reports that the KWL strategy is a strategy that teachers use to record students' statements about what they know (K), want to learn (W), and, after reading, what they learned (L) and to generate a discussion about the topic through a chart or worksheet. KWL is a strategy mainly used in reading (Younos, 2012). Carr and Ogle (in Fritz, 2002, p. 1) state that the KWL strategy is a process that teaches students active reading skills by stating previous knowledge, asking questions, and recalling significant information in the text to increase comprehension. Zhang (2010) mentions that "K-W-L" stands for what I Know, what I Want to learn, and what I Learned.

According to the current study, the term "KWL strategy" is defined as an opinion tool and process that pre-service teachers use to improve their teaching performance.

Recently, education systems have tried to adopt various methods or strategies to effectively promote students' levels in every aspect of the education field. Although some methods used to transfer knowledge or information are not always reliable, they are gradually updated in order to fit current demands and learner needs. For instance, in teaching the English language, different strategies are used to help students acquire and master language skills. Although some of those strategies succeed in improving student competence, others do not effectively achieve their goals. Hence, pedagogical specialists attempt to insert modifications or changes in those strategies to more effectively reach their determined

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goals. Javed (2010) noted the benefit of integrating strategies in the teaching process as a useful means of gaining knowledge, engaging students in the learning environment, and remembering and recalling information; in addition, teachers can depend on the strategy in order to effectively evaluate students.

One recent and influential method is the KWL strategy, which involves what learners already know, what they want to know and what they have already learned. According to (Alsaudi, 2017), "Know, What, and Learn (K.W.L) is one of the metacognitive strategies (what do I know? what do I want? and what have I learned); this strategy activates students' prior knowledge and makes it a starting point for linking the new information in order to have the means of learning". This strategy is widely used in reading classes and has gradually been used to teach writing.

#### The advantages of KWL.

The KWL strategy stimulates students to recall all the data or information that they know about a given topic; it requires that students refresh their memory and then increases their curiosity to know more about that topic by creating a column titled "What do I want to know" under which students are encouraged to ask questions and are induced to build their knowledge and to learn many more details. Fengjuan (2010) noted some advantages for learners who apply the KWL strategy; for example, they will be able to learn independently and to organize prior knowledge in conjunction with current knowledge.

Therefore, the teacher must always be ready to try and accept any recommended strategies for the sake of increasing student levels. Preservice teachers especially must be equipped with similar strategies to familiarize themselves with this kind of strategy, with its technique and how to use it in their own lives, must recognize how to turn information from a theoretical framework to a practical framework, and must learn how to build a bridge between academic life and their practicum experience. In addition, preparing pre-service teachers with this kind of strategy is very important for improving their teaching and enhancing their performance. Smith and Greene (2013) reported that the pre-service teachers tend to focus on themselves, their appearance and on whether students like them or not more than on the learning objectives; these authors added that teacher educators must shift their thoughts and direct them to thinking beyond themselves, and should qualify them to concentrate more on the learning process, pedagogical contents and how to teach students effectively. Moussaid & Zarhouni (2017) studied many problems often faced by pre-service teachers in their practicum, reporting that the most common problem is lesson delivery, as pre-service teachers do not know how to proceed through a lesson and suffer from not being

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able to manage transitions. Hence, supplying pre-service teachers with a KWL strategy or a comparable one might be a beneficial resolution to help them overcome many of the obstacles they frequently face, as it helps teachers move smoothly from one teaching segment to another and facilitates linking the current lesson with a previous one. Moreover, it is also considered a useful tool in evaluating student success. Furthermore, adopting KWL strategies will support teachers in managing class time by helping them plan how long to spend on each category; it will also motivate students to participate more in class.

In studying pre-service teachers' cases and after a closer look at their current situation, almost all teachers have experienced the same difficulties. Moussaid & Djennane (2015) tried to catalogue some of those problems and listed over ten of such problems, among which are lesson delivery, inexperience, lesson pace management, contextualization and modelling, and assessment for learning. Their research led them to recommend, for example, integrating smart methods or strategies in class while teaching to help teachers overcome some of those problems. Moreover, these will influence a teacher's self-confidence, enabling him/her to reach goals smoothly.

Another study concerning pre-service teachers was conducted by Cho (2017) and was aimed at revealing the reflections of trainee teachers on their own teaching. Trainees were shown a video recorded while they were teaching and then asked what items or points needed more attention. Many of them have agreed that their problems revolved around the topic of how a teacher knows if students understand the lesson. Another issue involved problems related to the effectiveness of a teacher's explanation.

On the other hand, according to many studies that investigate and analyse the effects of the KWL strategy on both teachers and students, Fengjuan (2010) examined the integration of the KWL strategy into English-language teaching for non-English majors, and the results proved that integrating KWL strategies in the teaching process motivates active learning in both learner and instructor. In addition, this strategy was very effective in developing complete language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

### Findings

Student teachers' written responses to the K and L columns of the KWL worksheet were analysed using SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, to determine frequency and



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percentage. The analysis found signs of student teachers' learning progress in all categories.

Table 1 What pre-service English teachers know before starting thepracticum programme

KNOW	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	
	Clarity of lesson objectives and accomplishment		68.0	68.0
INSTRUCTION	Use of teaching methods and strategies	38	76.0	79.2
EVALUATION	Being fair with students	36	72.0	73.5
LEARNERS	Sharing and participation	32	64.0	65.3

This table indicates that 79% of respondents know how to use the teaching methods and strategies, 73.5% know how to be fair with students, 68% know how to set and achieve the objectives of the lesson, and only 65.3% know how to engage learners' sharing and participation.

Table 2 What pre-service English teachers want to know during thepracticum programme

WANT TO LEARN		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
PLANNING	Time management	37	74.0	75.5
INSTRUCTION	Teacher behaviour to ensure student understanding	26	52.0	53.1
<b>EVALUATION</b>	Feedback techniques	29	58.0	59.2
LEARNERS	Classroom management	31	62.0	63.3

Table (2) indicates that 63% of respondents want to learn more about classroom management while 75.5% want to learn about time management and only 60% want to learn feedback techniques. Only 53% of the respondents want to learn about teachers' behaviour to ensure student understanding.

Table 3 What pre-service English teachers learned after thepracticum programme

LEARNED	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	
PLANNING	Flexibility of planning	28	56.0	57.1
INSTRUCTION	Teacher behaviour to ensure student understanding	22	44.0	44.9
EVALUATION	Variety of activities and questioning	27	54.0	55.1
LEARNERS	Questioning promotes learner thinking	29	58.0	59.2

Table 3 indicates that 60% of respondents learned questioning to promote learner thinking, 57% learned flexibility in planning, 55% learned to design a variety of activities and questions, and only 45% learned what behaviours by teachers ensure student understanding.

Furthermore, PSTs were asked to reflect on changes in the KWL strategy. Student teachers in Case Studies 1, 2 and 3 were invited to reflect, either individually or in focus groups at the end of the module, on the impact of the study on their learning and on themselves as learners.

#### Discussion

Results show that the KWL strategy is very effective in evaluating teachers because it helps to motivate self-directed learning (Yu, Zhang, Xu, Wu, &Wang, 2013). Similarly, this strategy supports student teachers in enhancing their performance because it connects their prior knowledge with their experience. In addition, this evaluation method reduces pre-service teacher stress, which may be faced in the traditional way. This strategy helps each student teacher develop his or her weakest point.

As expected, we found that the majority of participants (79%) know how to use teaching methods and strategies after spending 4 years studying the theoretical aspects of teaching methodology. It is obvious that student-teachers face difficulties in time and class management, as 63% and 75.5% of respondents wanted to learn more about those aspects. This finding shows the importance of selecting and organizing experiences (Mok et al., 2006). Finally, the majority of respondents (60%) learned most about questioning to promote learner thinking, and 57% also learned how to be flexible in planning.

The above findings indicate that most pre-service teachers find that the KWL strategy stimulates their own dynamic learning, and that this



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requires teachers be provided with training opportunities (Cho, 2017) (Fengjuan, 2010).

Moreover, in focus groups at the end of the training, student teachers were asked to reflect on the benefits of the KWL strategy, and they noted the positive impact it had on their learning. The responses were analysed, and it was found that the KWL method is useful to their selfassessment in general and to their teaching performance in particular, especially on what had been learned. They also conveyed having learned more about the concepts of teaching practicum concerns. The student teachers reported that the KWL strategy gives them a better management of resources, arrangement of teaching experiences and help-seeking learning goals (Mok et al., 2006).

### (a) Conclusion

After investigating how to extend the effect of applying the KWL strategy, it was found that the KWL strategy motivates teaching and instruction in both teachers and students. This paper makes the following contributions:

- 1. This paper illustrates a detailed process for integrating the "KWL" scheme into a teaching practicum.
- 2. This paper shows that this integration involves efforts by all educational actors: supervisors, instructors, and pre-service teachers.
- 3. The KWL strategy can be a very effective strategy in attaining the furthermost goal of wide-ranging improvements in teaching and is worthy of further consideration and attention. There are indications that more research is needed to obtain new results. The "KWL" strategy has not been extensively studied, which leads us to conclude that many findings have yet to be made in future studies.

### (b) Recommendations and implementation

The findings and conclusion in this study support the following recommendations:

- 1. Use the KWL strategy in evaluating student teachers because of its potential to improve student teacher performance and critical thinking in the teaching experience.
- 2. Use the KWL strategy in evaluating student teachers to open doors to a wide range of studies and further experimental research.
- 3. Apply the KWL strategy in a teaching practicum programme to help evaluate student teacher progress.
- 4. Design various courses to help supervisors use the KWL strategy in their evaluations.



- 5. Organize orientation workshops for using the "KWL" strategy to help pre-service teachers and supervisors evaluate more effectively.
- 6. Teaching evaluators should share with universities the use of the "KWL" strategy in evaluating teaching in order to share updated findings.

#### **Further research**

"KWL" can function as a very effective strategy in reaching the furthest goal of wide-ranging improvement in teaching, and is worthy of further consideration and attention. There are indications that more research must be carried out to attain new results. The "KWL" strategy has not been extensively studied, which leads one to conclude that many insights are yet to be uncovered in future studies. Studies have shown that teachers are typically prepared theoretically, but with little focus on practice in real classrooms and with microteaching or imaginative classrooms. Similar observations were made in the Saudi context.

#### Appendix 1 The KWL form

Name of pre-service teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Date

The Know-Want-Learn (KWL) strategy, is an educational strategy usually used for evaluation. The aim of this form is help you to activate the KWL technique in developing pre-service teachers' performance. It helps you integrate new knowledge with previous one, arrange experiences and store them for future plan. Please write down the teaching experiences as required in the following: -

Ν	K-W-L for document teaching experience			
	K (Know)	W (Want to Know)	L (Learning)	
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

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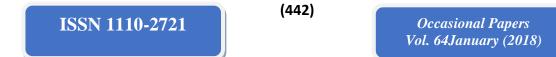
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