

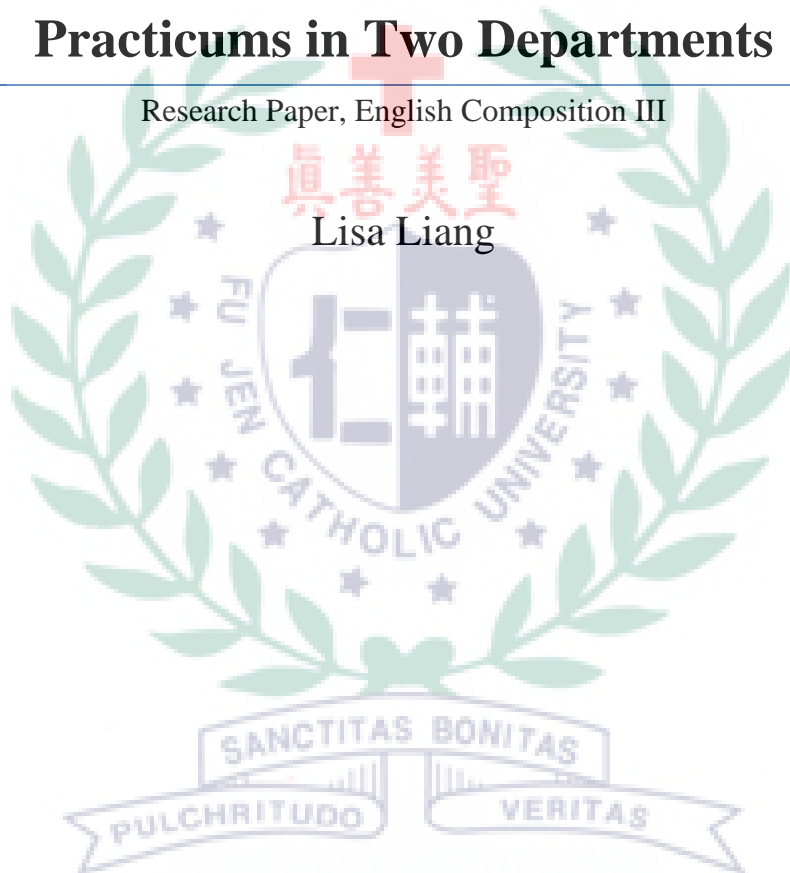
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FJU Professors and Students' Perspectives on Practicums in Two Departments

Research Paper, English Composition III

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FJU Professors and Students' Perspectives on Practicums in Two Departments

To better connect the academic learning with the real workforce, more and more universities and colleges require students to do pre-graduation internships and take practicums during school. Internships and practicums provide students with the opportunities to apply the academic knowledge to actual work place. Different from internships, practicums are the courses which students can take for earning credits, and they also assist students to experience and observe the working environments in a comparatively limited way. There were many studies related to internships, but very few discuss the effects and values of practicums, which should not be neglected. It's essential for students to examine the practical uses of the practicums and for professors to recognize the deficiency. In this research, I selected two practicums from two departments at the Fu Jen University: Practicum in the Early-Childhood Education in Child and Family Studies Department and the Quantity Food Preparation Practice in Restaurant, Hotel, and Institutional Management Department. This research paper investigated the values and benefits of the practicums by examining the students' and professors' perspectives on the chosen practicums.

Child and Family Studies Department (CFS) has “practice[d] the concept of ‘living designer’ on professional fields of childhood development, early childhood education ...” (FJU CFS Department.com). In Child and Family Studies Department, childhood education and care has been one of the major directions for future careers. There are many courses that prepared students to learn and discover more about this area, for example, Behavior Observation of Young Children & Lab, Teaching Materials and Methods in Early Childhood Education I & II, etc. (FJU CFS Department.com). These curriculums provide students with fundamental

understandings and professional knowledge about children and early childhood education. To integrate the skills and knowledge they learned, Practicum in Early-Childhood Education plays the role as a bridge connecting academic knowledge to real practice. The departmental affiliated childcare center is one of the valuable resources where students can take the practicum course (FJU CFS Department.com).

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, early childhood education teachers should be equipped with the updated knowledge in early childhood education, the competency to create a safe environment for children and to assist children's mental and physical development, and the communication skills (Huang 72). Preschool children rely heavily on the assistance of teachers to learn and explore new things, so teachers must know how to create an environment suitable for children. In addition, patience is important for teachers because preschool students require additional communication comparing to older children. Therefore, according to Huang, some key competencies kindergarten educators must possess are classroom management skills, designing practical and useful lesson plans ability, assisting children's development skills, dealing with injuries and accident ability, and so on.

On the other hand, the teaching philosophy of Restaurant, Hotel, and Institutional Management Department (RHIM) is to concentrate on both academic theories and practical application (FJU RHIM Department.com). It aims not only to develop students' appropriate skills and capabilities in the related fields, but also to cultivate their realistic prospect of current environment and future of this industry. According to the mission statement of the department, students will apply theories to real experience by participating in a laboratory restaurant (FJU RHIM Department.com). As a result, they have to take the practicum in producing quantity food in the school restaurant for one semester in the junior year.

In the hospitality industry, “foodservice operations and controls” has ranked the seventh essential subject in a study done by Gursoy, Rahman and Swanger, professors and doctoral students in the School of Hospitality Business Management at Washington State University. Graduates who acquired the expected skills which employers and managers seek are more likely to be hired. They discovered that “leadership, internship/industry experience, ... foodservice operations and controls..” are recognized as highly significant subjects for employees in hospitality industry (Gursoy, Rahman and Swanger 39). Food service is one of the major fields in hospitality industry, so the skills to manage the food production team and to produce food in large quantity is necessary since most foodservice institutions such as restaurants or cafeterias in hospitals all produce food in large quantity. When designing the practicum, teachers had better to integrate the competencies the entrepreneurs anticipated into it, for instance, revenue/asset management, food and beverage management, and food safety and sanitation (Gursoy, Rahman and Swanger 35 & 40).

This study aimed at two aspects: the roles of practicums offered to students in the CFS Department and in the RHIM Department, and investigating the benefits of these practicums. Thus, the research questions are in the following:

Central Question 1: What are FJU Child & Family Studies Department and Restaurant, Hotel, and Institutional Management Department undergraduate students’ perceptions on the practicums?

Subquestion A: What are the benefits for participating in the practicum?

Subquestion B: Is it necessary for undergraduate students who are in this department to participate in such practicum?

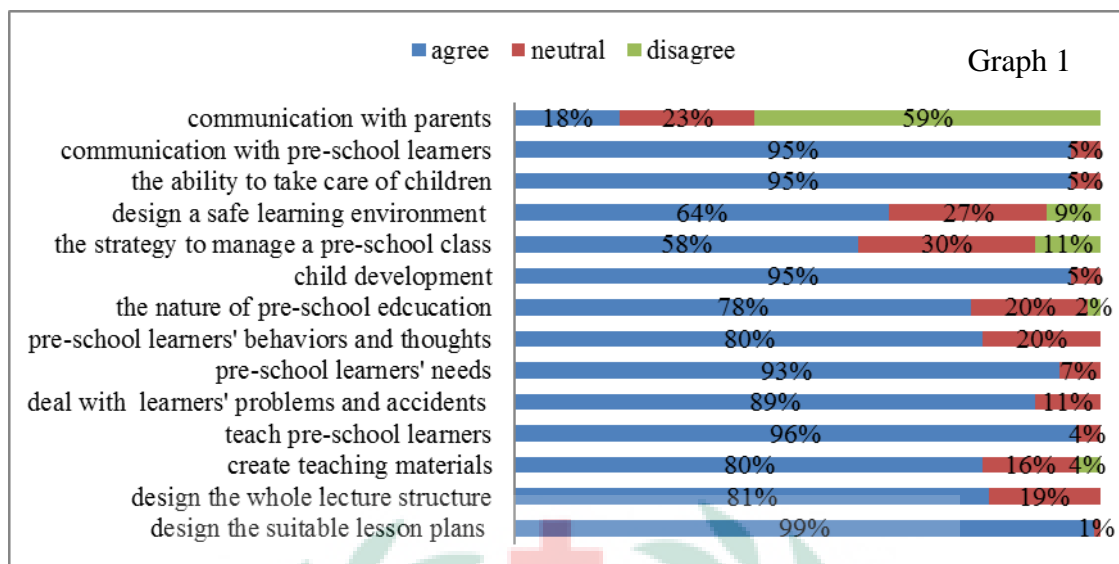
Central Question 2: What are the professors’ perceptions on practicums?

I selected these two departments because the practicums each of them offered

were aimed to integrate and utilize what they learned in the first two years in the department. Moreover, the practicums trained on their possible future paths. In both practicums, students were not only experiencing but also offering services to certain group of people. In this study, the researcher used paper surveys and interviews to collect data. Stratified sampling strategy was used for both survey collection and interviews. Within the respondents, the researcher invited volunteers to be interviewed. Since this study discussed the effectiveness of the two chosen practicums, there were two groups of respondents from the two departments, and four groups of interviewees—professors who taught the practicums and students from the two groups of respondents. For the surveys, both groups selected from juniors and seniors in both departments because they either had taken or were taking the practicum course. Eventually, the researcher received 35 senior and 23 junior valid samples from CFS Department. So the total number of respondents for this group was 58. On the other hand, the researcher got 64 senior and 23 junior valid samples from RHIM Department, and added up to 87 in total.

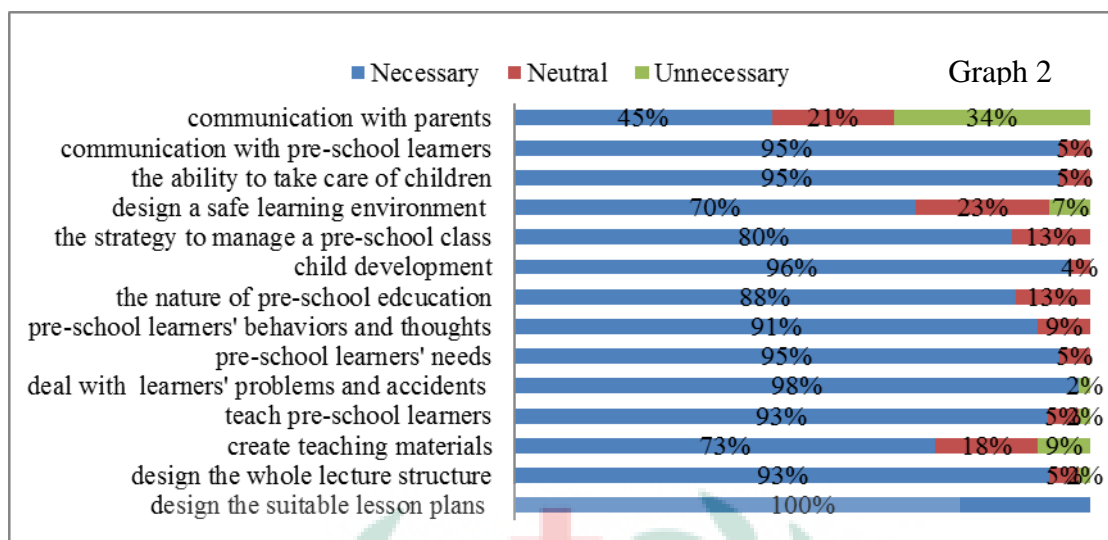
To begin the analysis section, the researcher first examined CFS respondents' perspectives on the benefits of the practicum, which included absorbing more information regarding teaching in a kindergarten, gaining experiences and combining academic knowledge and skills to real practice. From the data collected, all of the respondents agreed that the practicum assisted them in knowing more about the teaching aspect in a kindergarten (Appendix). They responded that the actual teaching experiences enabled them to be more familiar with preschool education and to be closer to observe children's behaviors. Another benefit of participating in the practicum was to integrate the academic theories with actual practices. According to Graph 1, most skills could be applied to the practicum.

The Practicum Helped Applying These Skills to Actual Practice.

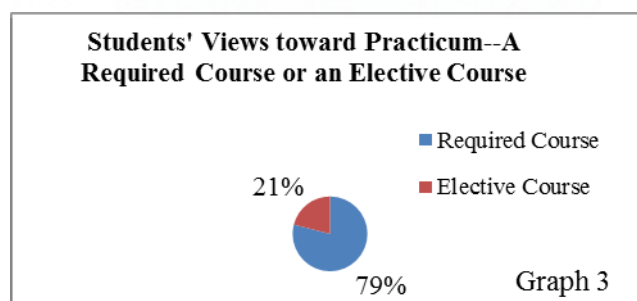


Indicated from Graph 2, CFS students should participate in this practicum. As the data represented, most of the abilities listed received high percentages, which students agreed that the practicum was necessary for applying these abilities, especially the ability “to design the suitable lesson plans” (100 %). According to the interviewees, designing lesson plans was their job, which allowed them to observe the effectiveness of their own design because they were the teachers of their lesson plans. Moreover, practitioners could be trained in dealing with accidents and learners’ problems (98% agree) (Graph 2). One interviewee mentioned that she had encountered a student who wet his pants directly in the classroom, and she had to solve it immediately. Thus, this practicum actually trained students the abilities they required.

Are The Practicum Necessary for Integrating These Skills to Actual Experiences?



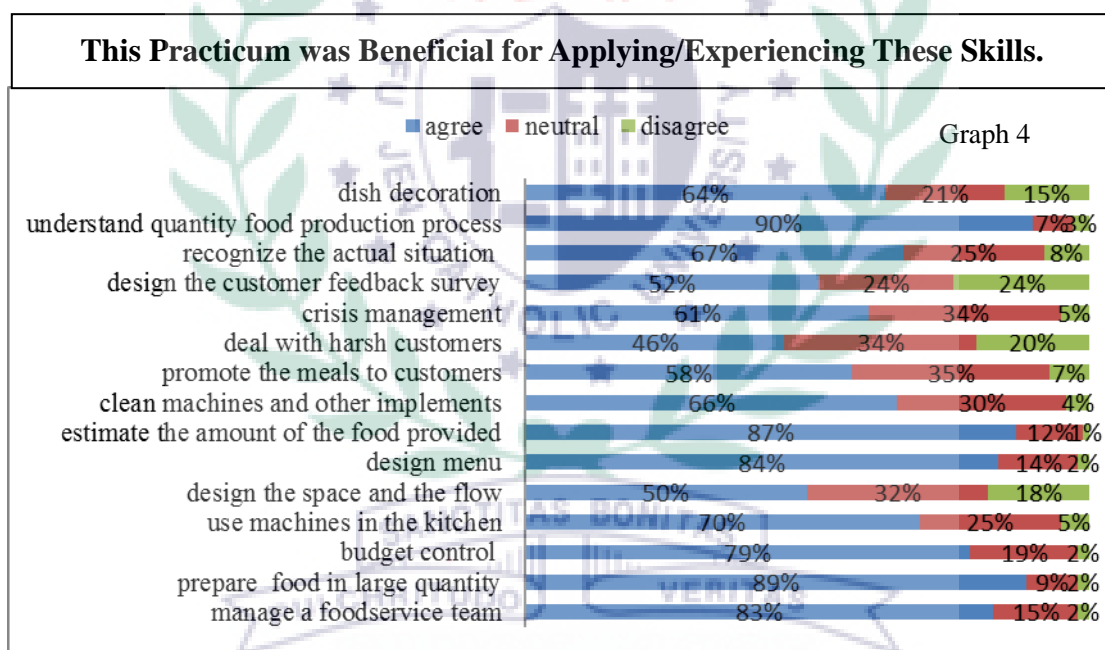
In addition to their reflection over the necessity of the practicum, all respondents would suggest this practicum to their school brothers and sisters (Appendix), and 79 percent of respondents believed this practicum should be a required course (Graph 3). Most of the respondents indicated that the practicum provided practitioners the actual experiences in the real work field. According to interviewees, they had to design lessons, create materials, and most important of all, they would have direct contact with children, which allowed them to communicate more frequently with children. Besides, they could better understand the theories, and even generate new perspectives, not to mention that they could inspect their own learning and misunderstandings. Therefore, most respondents would like this practicum to be a required course which they strongly recommended CFS majors to



take.

On the other hand, RHIM students also held positive views toward Quantity Food Preparation and Practice, which expanded their knowledge in food service

production. First, it assisted them in integrating what they learned into real practices. According to Graph 4, respondents gave positive feedback to most abilities listed. For example, 90 percent of the respondents agreed that the practicum helped them understand the quantity food production process, from menu design, procurement, cooking, to services, etc. What’s more, interviewees also said they would estimate the food amount on their own, which was a way of training; that’s why this ability received 87 percent of agree. Overall, this practicum was beneficial for applying academic knowledge and abilities to real practice. In essence, 76 percent of respondents agreed they combined previous learning with actual practice, and 80 percent agreed that this practicum aided them in knowledge integration (Appendix).

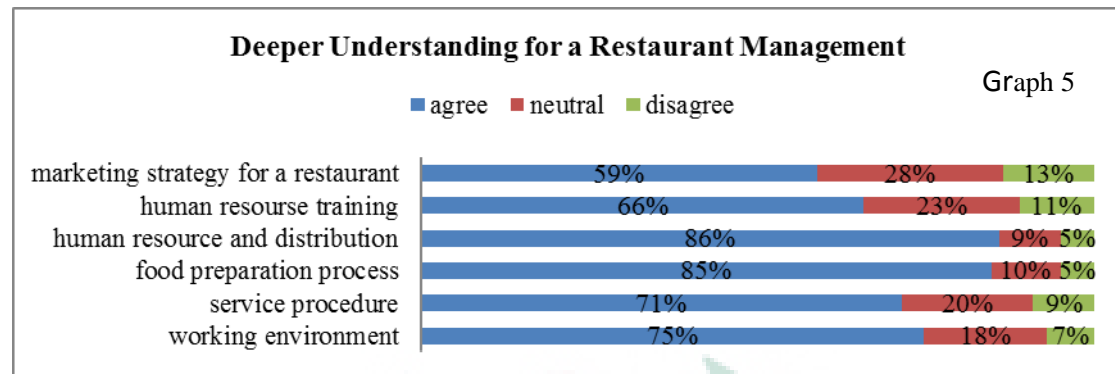


Furthermore, the practicum enabled practitioners to acquire a deeper understanding about restaurant management, especially in human resource distribution and food preparation process (Graph 5). Two interviewees responded to the work distribution among students—arranged previously and occupied different positions in turn. For instance, they would be the head chefs in rotation, and then kitchen assistants, servers, and so on. Through this method, they gained insight about the duties and workloads in various positions. Besides, they had to provide the meals

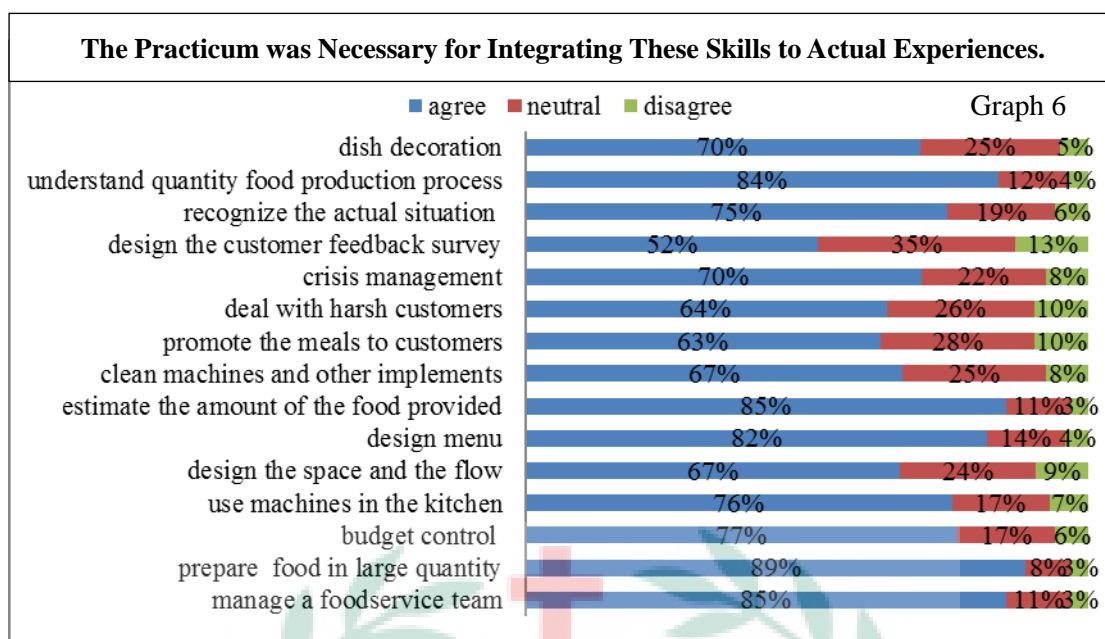
The Practicum was Necessary for Integrating These Skills to Actual Experiences.

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which they would sell to FJU students, so they would definitely gain the experiences of preparing food in large quantity.



Moving from examining the benefits of the practicum, next part analyzed whether this practicum was necessary for the RHIM majors to take, in two aspects: a required or an elective course, and this practicum was necessary or not to apply the abilities listed in Graph 4, through students' perceptions. First of all, 94 percent of respondents believed this practicum should be a required course (Appendix). They pointed out that this practicum not only cultivated the essential skills but also accumulated their experiences. Interviewees also responded that it is a significant and unique experience which they should involve in it because they learned many practical skills. Furthermore, Graph 6 demonstrated the high percentages which students considered this practicum as an indispensable method for utilizing important abilities. Many items received high percentages of agree, such as a food service team management and menu design. Practitioners had to decide their own menus, considering nutrients, side dishes with entrees, and flavor, etc. As a result, according to interviewees, they could integrate different knowledge together and put menu design, the concept, into real practice. To summarize, RHIM respondents gave positive responses to this practicum because it was beneficial and significant for them, and it was necessary for them to understand deeper about food service field and the whole process of food production.

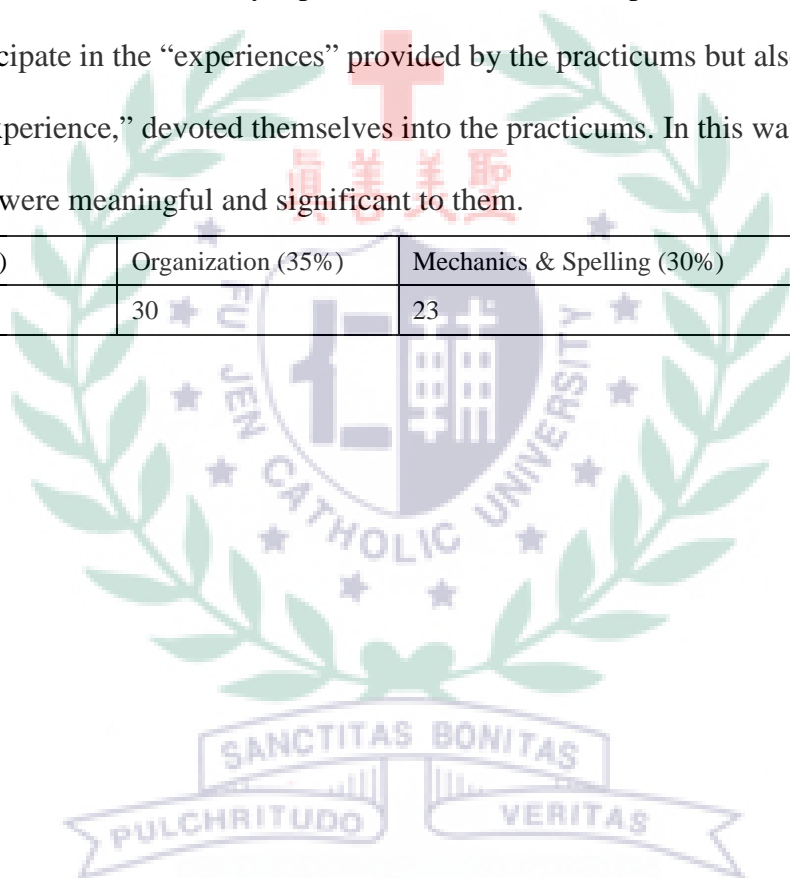


After discussing the students’ perspectives on the two practicums, the next section investigated the professors’ perceptions. First, an Early-Childhood Education Professor explained that the goal for this practicum was for practitioners to know more about children and to prepare them for early-childhood education. Suggested by the professor, the spirit of the practicum was to provide students an experience to observe the working environment and to find out further whether they like it or would want to continue it as their future career. This was corresponded to the students’ responses, which “experience” was also mentioned frequently by them. Moreover, the professor anticipated students to explore themselves, to enhance practical abilities, and to grasp the precious opportunity for this experience. On the other hand, Quantity Food Preparation and Practice professors also responded that this practicum was mainly to provide “experience” rather than training them to be great chefs. One of the professors pointed out that quantity food production was only a concept, so the practicum was aiming at turning this concept into real practice; only through real practice that students could understand food preparation and process. One of them even indicated that this practicum emphasized on team spirits because they worked as a team, so everyone should follow the orders and fulfill their duties. To conclude,

similar to students' responses, "experience" was the essence of the practicums in both departments.

Overall, both practicums were beneficial and necessary for students in both departments because they offered students an opportunity to train and apply academic knowledge into real work place. "Experience" was especially crucial for both practicums because it was a significant target of the practicums according to the professors, and it was constantly repeated in the students' responses. Students not only had to participate in the "experiences" provided by the practicums but also had to "actively experience," devoted themselves into the practicums. In this way, these practicums were meaningful and significant to them.

Content (35%)	Organization (35%)	Mechanics & Spelling (30%)	Total Score
28	30	23	81



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Appendix

Survey—RHIM Department

I. Basic information

1. What grade are you in?
 - A. Junior
 - B. Senior
2. Have you taken this practicum?
 - A. Yes (Go to Q. 3)
 - B. No (This is the end of the survey. Thank you for your time.)
3. Did you pass the course (practicum)?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No. Explain why not? _____
4. What kind of jobs do you plan to get in the future?
 - A. jobs related to hotel management
 - B. jobs related to restaurant
 - C. jobs related to tourism
 - D. jobs related to mass food service (not limit to restaurant, but also hospital, etc.)
 - E. others _____

II. Your understanding about the practicum

1. Did you prepare yourself before participating in the practicum before it started?
 - A. yes
 - B. no
2. Before you participated in the practicum, did you expect to learn or acquire skills or knowledge through it?
 - A. yes
 - B. no (go to question 4)
3. If you did, what kind of skills or knowledge did you expect to acquire through it? (Circle all that apply.)
 - A. how to manage a food service team
 - B. how to prepare delicious food in large quantity
 - C. how to set the budget limit for food service
 - D. how to use the machines in the kitchen
 - E. how to design the space and the flow in the kitchen

- F. how to design menu, regarding nutrition information, traits, common flavors, for different days
- G. how to count the total amount of food needed for one time
- H. how to clean the machines and other implements
- I. how to promote the meals you produced to customers
- J. how to deal with harsh customers
- K. how to do crisis management
- L. how to design the customer feedback survey
- M. the actual situation in a real restaurant
- N. the actual process of raw materials
- O. how to decorate the dishes
- N. others_____

4. If you did not expect to acquire any skills from the practicum, please explain why not.

III. Your feedback about the practicum

Q: Do you think the practicum help you utilize or apply these skills or knowledge? Please rank it from 1(the least helpful) to 5(the most helpful).

1	manage a food service team	1	2	3	4	5
2	prepare delicious food in large quantity	1	2	3	4	5
3	set the budget limit for food service	1	2	3	4	5
4	use the machines in the kitchen	1	2	3	4	5
5	design the space and the flow in the kitchen	1	2	3	4	5
6	design menu, regarding nutrition information, traits, common flavors, for different days	1	2	3	4	5
7	count the total amount of food needed for one time	1	2	3	4	5
8	clean the machines and other implements	1	2	3	4	5
9	promote the meals you produced to customers	1	2	3	4	5
10	deal with harsh customers	1	2	3	4	5
11	crisis management	1	2	3	4	5
12	design the customer feedback survey	1	2	3	4	5
13	know/recognize the actual situation in a real restaurant	1	2	3	4	5
14	enhance your understanding of food production process	1	2	3	4	5
15	decorate the dishes	1	2	3	4	5
16	others:	1	2	3	4	5

IV. Do you think the practicum is necessary for integrating what you learned in the classroom with the real work? Please rank the following abilities from 1 (totally unnecessary, you can understand and apply it even without a practicum), to 5 (totally necessary, this practicum is very helpful for actually applying the skill)

1	manage a food service team	1	2	3	4	5
2	prepare delicious food in large quantity	1	2	3	4	5
3	set the budget limit for food service	1	2	3	4	5
4	use the machines in the kitchen	1	2	3	4	5
5	design the space and the flow in the kitchen	1	2	3	4	5
6	design menu, regarding nutrition information, traits, common flavors, for different days	1	2	3	4	5
7	count the total amount of food needed for one time	1	2	3	4	5
8	clean the machines and other implements	1	2	3	4	5
9	promote the meals you produced to customers	1	2	3	4	5
10	deal with harsh customers	1	2	3	4	5
11	crisis management	1	2	3	4	5
12	design the customer feedback survey	1	2	3	4	5
13	know/recognize the actual situation in a real restaurant	1	2	3	4	5
14	enhance your understanding of food production process	1	2	3	4	5
15	decorate the dishes	1	2	3	4	5
16	others:	1	2	3	4	5

V. Overall Reflection for the Practicum

Please rank it from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

1	You understand more about the working environment of a restaurant.	1	2	3	4	5
2	You understand more about the service procedure of a restaurant.	1	2	3	4	5
3	You understand more about the operation process of a restaurant.	1	2	3	4	5
4	You understand more about the human resource distribution of a restaurant.	1	2	3	4	5
5	You understand more about the human resource training of a restaurant.	1	2	3	4	5
7	The practicum is helpful for your future development.	1	2	3	4	5

8	You understand more about the quality management of raw materials.	1	2	3	4	5
9	You understand more about the quality management of the food preparation process.	1	2	3	4	5
10	You know the disposal methods of food wastes.	1	2	3	4	5
11	You understand more about the marketing strategies of a restaurant.	1	2	3	4	5
12	You understand more about how to attract customers.	1	2	3	4	5
13	You would advise your school brothers/sisters to take this practicum.	1	2	3	4	5
14	You learn more about the future working environment	1	2	3	4	5
15	This practicum puts what you learned into real practice.	1	2	3	4	5
16	This practicum integrates what you learned in the previous years	1	2	3	4	5
17	This practicum helps you recognize your deficiency.	1	2	3	4	5
18	This practicum helps you arouse more enthusiasm for the RHIM courses.	1	2	3	4	5
19	This practicum gives you a sense of achievement (marketing aspect).	1	2	3	4	5
20	This practicum gives you a sense of achievement (food production aspect).	1	2	3	4	5
21	This practicum gives you a sense of achievement (providing service aspect).	1	2	3	4	5
22	This practicum gives you a sense of achievement (financial aspect).	1	2	3	4	5
23	Through the practicum, you had encountered obstacles.	1	2	3	4	5
24	On encountering obstacles, you had utilized what you learned to solve problems.	1	2	3	4	5
25	On encountering obstacles, you cooperated with classmates to solve problems.	1	2	3	4	5

I. Basic information

1. What grade are you in?
 - A. Junior
 - B. Senior
2. Have you taken this practicum?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No (do only part II)
3. Did you pass the course (practicum)?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
4. What kind of jobs do you plan to get in the future?
 - A. a kindergarten teacher
 - B. a school counselor
 - C. an academic scholar related to child development
 - D. an academic scholar related to psychology fields
 - E. a counselor
 - F. public servants
 - G. other_____

II. Your understanding about the practicum

1. Did you prepare yourself for the practicum before it started?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
2. Before you participated in the practicum, did you expect to learn or acquire skills or knowledge through it?
 - A. Yes (go to question 3)
 - B. No (go to question 4)
3. If you did, what kind of skills or knowledge did you expect to acquire through it? (circle all that apply)
 - A. how to design lesson plans
 - B. how to design the whole lecture structure
 - C. how to produce the teaching materials
 - D. how to teach pre-school learners
 - E. what are the needs of pre-school learners
 - F. how to deal with pre-school learners
 - G. know more about pre-school learners; behaviors and thoughts
 - H. know more about the nature of pre-school learning
 - I. know more about child development
 - J. other_____
4. If you didn't expect to acquire any particular skills through the practicum, please

explain why you didn't.

III. Your feedback about the practicum

Q: Do you think the practicum help you utilize or apply these skills or knowledge? Please rank it from 1(the least helpful) to 5(the most helpful).

1	design lesson plans which are suitable for certain age of students	1	2	3	4	5
2	design the whole lecture structure	1	2	3	4	5
3	create teaching materials	1	2	3	4	5
4	teach pre-school learners	1	2	3	4	5
5	deal with pre-school learners' problems and accidents	1	2	3	4	5
6	know what the needs of pre-school learners are	1	2	3	4	5
7	know more about pre-school learners' behaviors and thoughts	1	2	3	4	5
8	know more about the nature of pre-school learning	1	2	3	4	5
9	know more about child development	1	2	3	4	5
10	Learn strategies for managing a pre-school learners' class	1	2	3	4	5
11	design a safe learning environment for children	1	2	3	4	5
12	The ability for taking care of children	1	2	3	4	5
13	The communication skills with children	1	2	3	4	5
14	The communication skills with adults	1	2	3	4	5
15	others:	1	2	3	4	5

IV. Do you think the practicum is necessary for integrating what you learned in the classroom with the real work? Please rank the following abilities from 1(totally unnecessary, you can understand and apply it even without a practicum), to 5 (totally necessary, this practicum is very helpful for actually applying the skill)

1	design lesson plans which are suitable for certain age of students	1	2	3	4	5
2	design the whole lecture structure	1	2	3	4	5
3	create teaching materials	1	2	3	4	5
4	teach pre-school learners	1	2	3	4	5
5	deal with pre-school learners' problems and accidents	1	2	3	4	5

6	know what the needs of pre-school learners are	1	2	3	4	5
7	know more about pre-school learners' behaviors and thoughts	1	2	3	4	5
8	know more about the nature of pre-school learning	1	2	3	4	5
9	know more about child development	1	2	3	4	5
10	Learn strategies for managing a pre-school learners' class	1	2	3	4	5
11	design a safe learning environment for children	1	2	3	4	5
12	The ability for taking care of children	1	2	3	4	5
13	The communication skills with children	1	2	3	4	5
14	The communication skills with adults	1	2	3	4	5
15	others:	1	2	3	4	5

V. Overall reflection on the practicum

1. Do you think the practicum help you know more about the real operation (teaching aspect) in a kindergarten? Why and Why not? Explain in detail below.
2. Do you think this practicum help you adapt into the future work place? Why and why not? Explain in detail below.
3. From the overall experience, will you suggest this practicum to those who will take it in the future?
4. Do you think the practicum is helpful for the future job? Why and why not?
5. Do you think it should be the required course? Why and why not?
6. Do you think this practicum is helpful for you to recognize how well you learned in the school and how much you still need to improve? Why and why not?
7. What kind of learners do you think is the most suitable ones for participating in this practicum?
8. In your opinion, are there any differences between taking a practicum in a kindergarten within school campus and one outside the campus?
9. In your opinion, are there any similarities between taking a practicum in a kindergarten within school campus and one outside the campus?
10. Do you have any suggestions to the practicum? (for example, extending the total time, etc.)
11. Have you ever encountered any obstacles over this practicum? How did you solve it?
12. Have you ever felt a sense of achievement during the practicum? Describe it in detail.

Interview—RHIM professors

1. How long has this practicum been established?
2. How long have you taught this practicum?
3. What are the purposes for establishing this practicum?
4. What kind of skills or knowledge do you want to bring to students?
5. Do you think this practicum should be a required course for the students?
6. From your perspective, how do you think students find it helpful for the future job?
7. Do you think there may be other alternatives for this practicum? In other words, in your opinion, is there any other ways to help students gain similar knowledge or skills through other practicum?
8. How do you prepare for teaching students about this practicum?
9. Do you have any anticipation toward students?
10. What new skills or knowledge do you think students can learn through this course?
11. What skills or knowledge do you think students already learned through previous courses but which can be enhanced through the practicum?
12. Do you have any suggestion to the students who will take this practicum?
13. Do you have any suggestion to the current practicum style, etc.?

Interview—CFS Professors

1. How long has this practicum been established?
2. How long have you taught this practicum?
3. What are the purposes for establishing this practicum?
4. What kind of skills or knowledge do you want to bring to students?
5. Do you think this practicum should be a required course for the students?
6. From your perspective, how do you think students find it helpful for the future job?
7. Do you think there may be other alternatives for this practicum? In other words, in your opinion, is there any other ways to help students gain similar knowledge or skills through other practicum?
8. How do you prepare for teaching students about this practicum?
9. Do you have any anticipation toward students?
10. What new skills or knowledge do you think students can learn through this course?
11. What skills or knowledge do you think students already learned through previous courses but which can be enhanced through the practicum?
12. Do you have any suggestion to the students who will take this practicum?

13. Do you have any suggestion to the current practicum style, etc.?

