

Formulating A Conceptual Framework for Teacher Clinical Experience and Induction in Malaysia Teacher Education: A Retrospective Account of Teacher Trainers

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Abstract

This paper depicts how a conceptual framework for teacher clinical experience and induction was formulated in a five-year research programme funded by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The framework is an outcome of research idea conceptualization, which is meant for the development of a teacher clinical experience and induction model. It depicts specific analytical propositions that shape the key concepts associated to teacher education, which in turn illustrates how these concepts relate to each other and forms the conceptual framework. This paper also demonstrates how relevant middle range theories support the personal, professional and contextual dimensions of clinical experience in teacher education. The theory-supported framework was enriched by five evidence-based guiding principles, leading to the creation of a provisional model that can direct the administration and supervision of trainee teachers when they undertake clinical experience and induction in actual schools.

Keywords: Teacher Clinical Experience, Induction, Conceptual Framework, Malaysian Teacher Education Model

Introduction

Teacher education is the fusion of social, ideological, rhetorical and political efforts synergized for nurturing preschool teachers, as well as primary and secondary school teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2005). Stated in Teacher Education Philosophy, a teacher in Malaysia would be a professional, who is regarded as,

...noble in character, progressive and scientific in outlook, committed to uphold the aspirations of the nation, and cherishes the national cultural heritage, ensures the development of the individual and the preservation of a united, democratic, progressive and discipline society (Teacher Education Division, 1982, p.14).

As an essential building block for any formal education system, the importance of a model of teacher education can never be overstressed. According to Freeman (1989), teacher education model is a descriptive model that defines teaching as a decision-making process based on the categories of knowledge, skills, attitude, and awareness and a related framework of two educating strategies—training and development—to teach teaching. Such model is aimed to equip teachers with knowledge and skill to work with the culturally diverse; and to prepare teachers to work with the increasingly diverse student population in urban settings (Davis & Cabello, 1989).

In Malaysia, such model could be referred if not followed by all teacher education institutions in Malaysia for building an educated, united and developed nation. Research by Akademi Kepimpinan Pengajian Tinggi (AKEPT) (Ministry of Education, 2013) found that 50% of the teachers observed failed to deliver their lessons effectively, particularly, their inability to inculcate higher order thinking skills. The National Education Transformation Plan and the Education Blueprint 2013-2025, in line with the Government Transformation Plan (GTP), which emphasis the need for the eleven shifts have made it imperative for teacher education to focus on transformational change rather than incremental change. Therefore, it is crucial to critically review the existing teacher education programme in order to transform the Teacher Education Model so that it will be able to develop quality teachers for the knowledge era and beyond.

Teachers of today and for the future need to be more creative, innovative and able to integrate knowledge across disciplines and domains. Somehow, current teacher education model in Malaysia has not been reviewed and researched comprehensively. Thus, researchers in UPSI were initiated to conduct a research which aims to perform critical analysis of the existing teacher education models in the context of best practices, national needs and global trends and subsequently develop and validate a new teacher education model.

Hence the genesis of a five-year Niche Research Grant Scheme (NRGS) programme, titled “Developing a model for teacher clinical experience and induction for preparing quality teachers for the future” (UERL, 2014). This programme aims to “develop and validate a teacher education model which addresses teacher knowledge, skills, and values within the context of reasoning and the minds for teachers of the future”. Since a substantial teacher education should cover five essential components—curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment, teacher leadership, and clinical experience and induction, the programme aims to be materialized through five integrated projects, as shown in Figure 1.

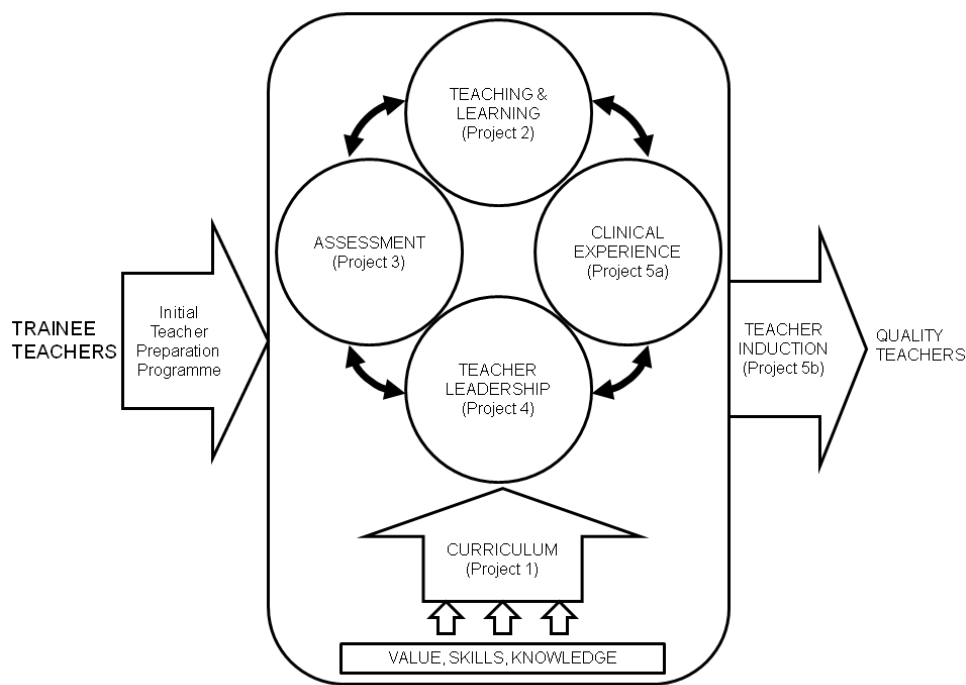


Figure 1: How five projects are integrated into the NRGs programme

This paper aims to outline the NRGs research process and phases involved as the platform on developing a model for Teacher Clinical Experience and Induction. Furthermore, researchers detailed on conceptualization of research ideas and at last the formulation of conceptual framework. The significance of this research is to draw researcher’s attention on this NRGs research project which might be the ultimate answer to fulfil the national needs in producing quality future teachers.

The NRGs Research Process

As shown in Figure 2, the NRGs was started by setting its root upon basic philosophies, including the Teacher Education Philosophy (Teacher Education Division, 1982) mentioned above, and the National Education Philosophy of Malaysia. In Malaysia, education is

...an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonic, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large

(Ministry of Education, 1988).

The basic philosophies determine three dimensions of teacher education, i.e. personal, professional and contextual dimensions, which are operationalized through guiding principles. The guiding principles which are synthesized through five focus areas of the five integrated projects, would determine specific teacher attributes. The teacher attributes will be fused into a provisional teacher education model, which is referred to structure the curriculum of eight teacher education programmes. Empirical studies would be carried to examine the performance of the programme, which in turn will finalize the Teacher Education Model for Quality Teacher.

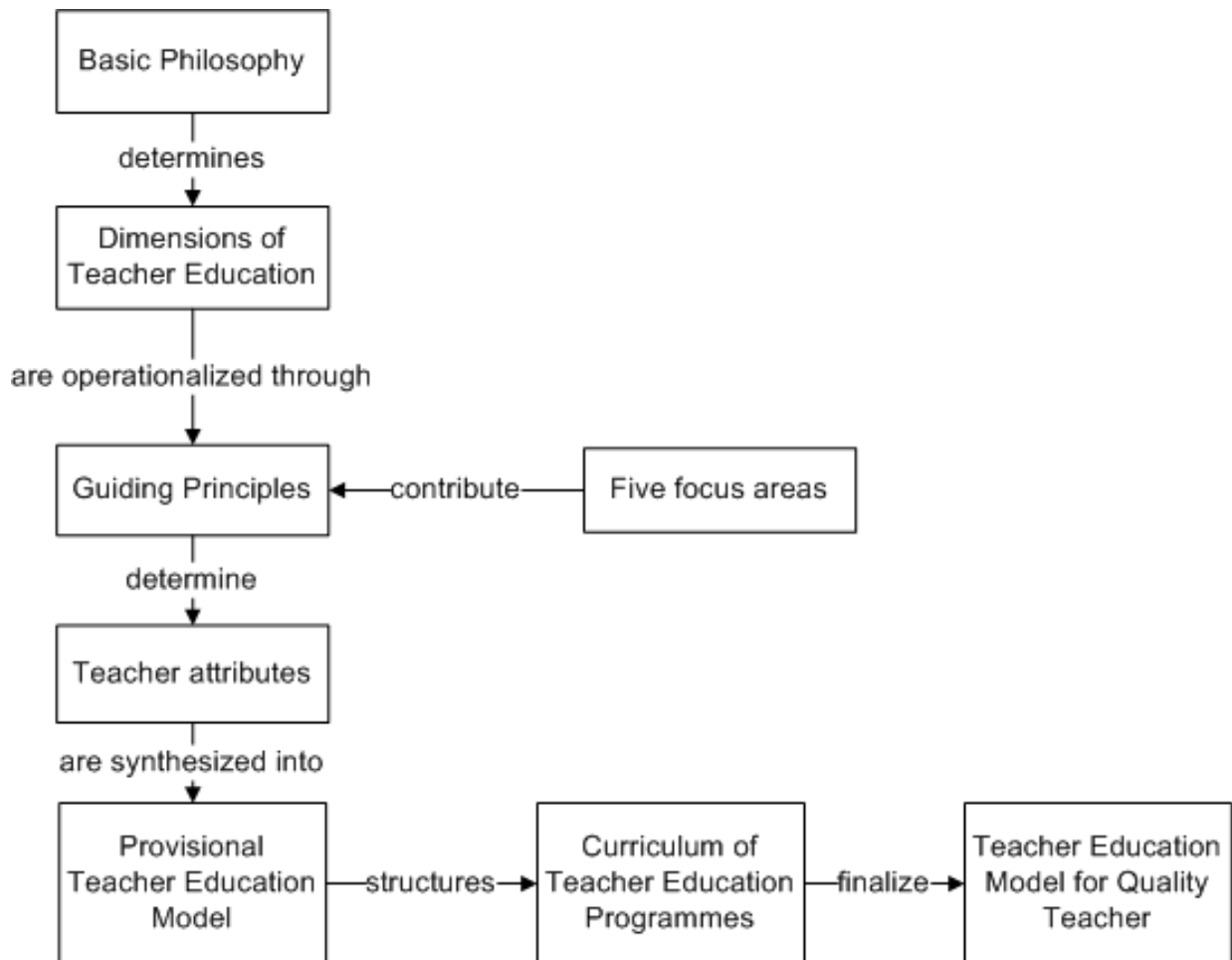


Figure 2: The research process of the NRGs programme

Developing a model for Teacher Clinical Experience and Induction

The paper presents an introspective account of seven teacher trainers from Sultan Idris Education University (UPSI) who involved in the establishment of a conceptual framework for the fifth project in the NRGs programme, which aims to develop a model for teacher clinical experience and induction. According to the approved proposal, the project has been planned to have four phases, as shown in Figure 3. The introspective account depicted in this paper is the

beginning of the first phase, where a critical and comparative analysis of selected models and programmes pertaining to clinical experience and teacher induction was carried out.

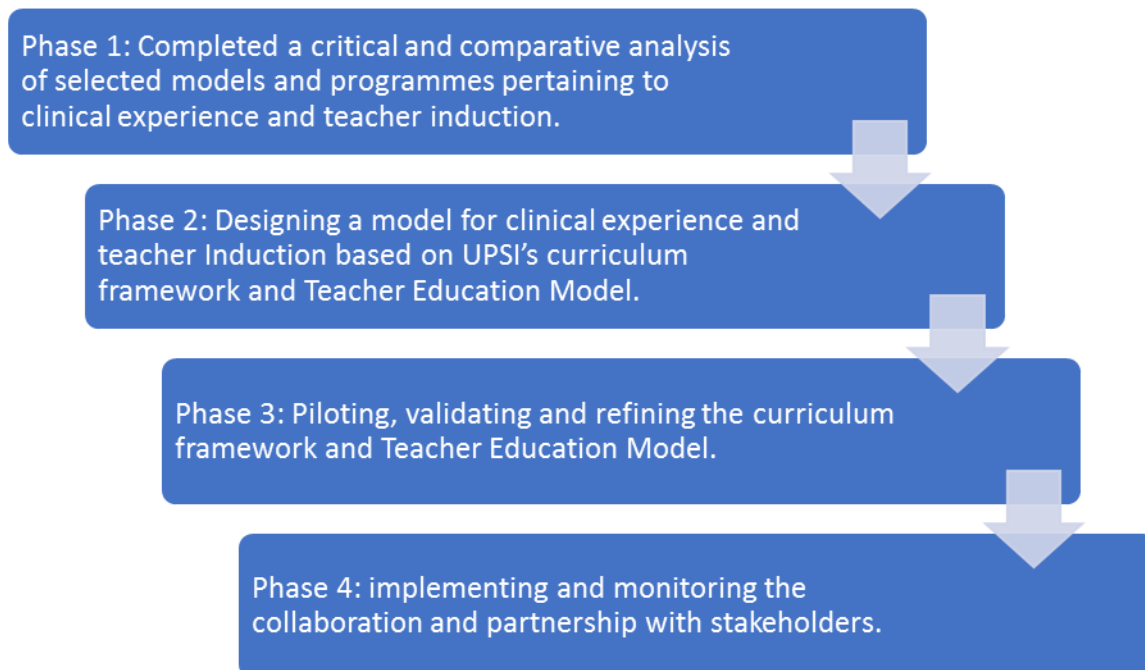


Figure 3: The fifth project in the NRGs has been divided into four phases

Conceptualization of Research Ideas

Prior to the critical and comparative analysis, a series of meetings and debates were conducted to conceptualize research ideas held upon this project. The definitions of key concepts associated to this research project, i.e. clinical experience, teacher induction, internship, practicum, student teachers and trainee teachers, were discussed and defined based on analytical propositions gathered from reputable dictionaries. The defined concepts were then cross-referenced related terms used in medical doctor clinical experience. A generic medical doctor clinical experience in a five-year doctor education programme was referred in the conceptualization process, as shown in Figure 4. The research team chose to learn from the William Osler, who is regarded as the father of modern medicine, as he created the first residency programme for specialty training of physicians. In particular, he was the first who brought medical students out of the lecture hall for bedside clinical training, hence the notion 'clinical experience'.

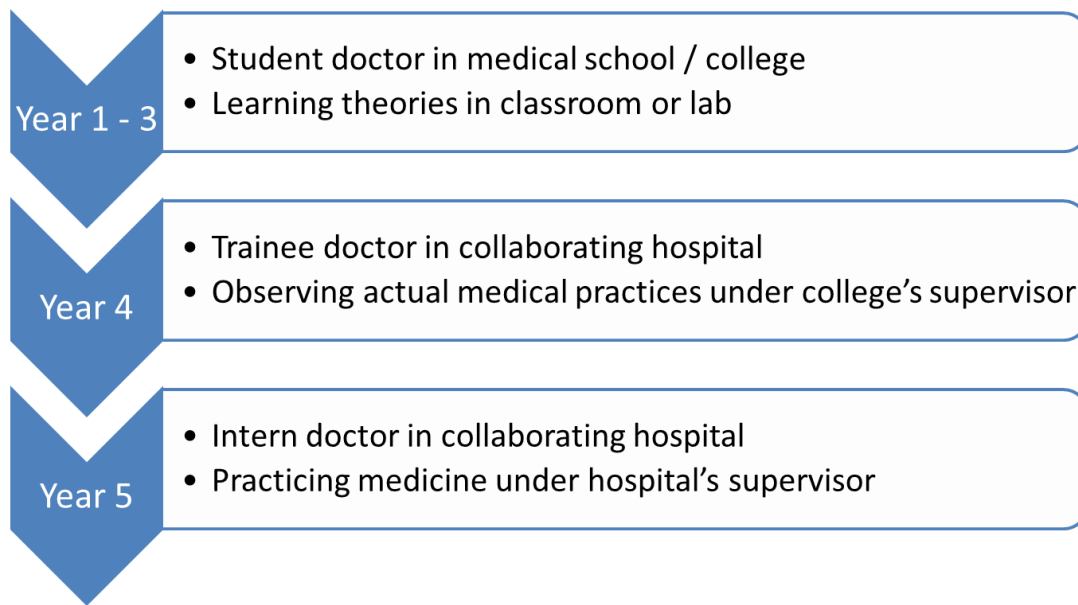


Figure 4: Generic clinical experience of a medical doctor

Formulation of Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework was developed in this project to define the basic concepts and relations in the teacher clinical experience (Figure 5). The core concept of the framework is clinical experience, which is the practical section in a teacher education programme. In the context of clinical experience for teacher education, the notion of “clinical” is relating to the observation and treatment of actual students in school rather than theoretical or laboratory studies, causing observable and recognizable indications.

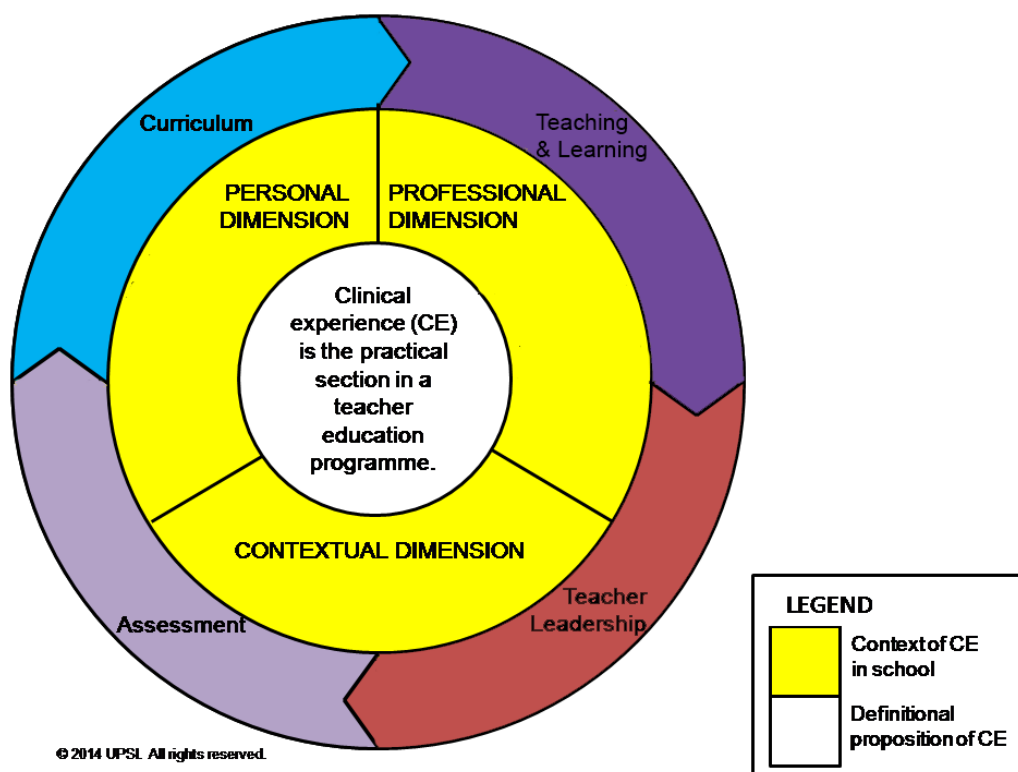


Figure 5: Conceptual framework of this research project

The formation of the conceptual framework takes a pragmatic approach in which there is no commitment to any one system of practice. Instead of arguing about which system of practice is better, a pragmatic teacher believes that truth is what works at the time in school. This section of teacher education programme focuses on the accumulation of clinical experience as a school teacher. Throughout the experience, trainee teachers would apply knowledge, skills and values they acquired from teacher education institution to resolve open problems which they encountered in school. The problems are open because there should be more one solution which the trainee teachers can formulate to solve authentic problems that they engaged with in school settings. The problems can be incurred through professional, personal or contextual dimensions in the school settings. In professional dimension, trainee teachers would face issues associated to teaching, administration, reflection, supervision and assessment; while in personal dimension, they develop their values and attitudes towards being a school teacher. As for contextual dimension, trainee teachers would deal with diverse learners. Figure 6 depicts the relations between authentic events, open problem-solving and clinical experience in school.

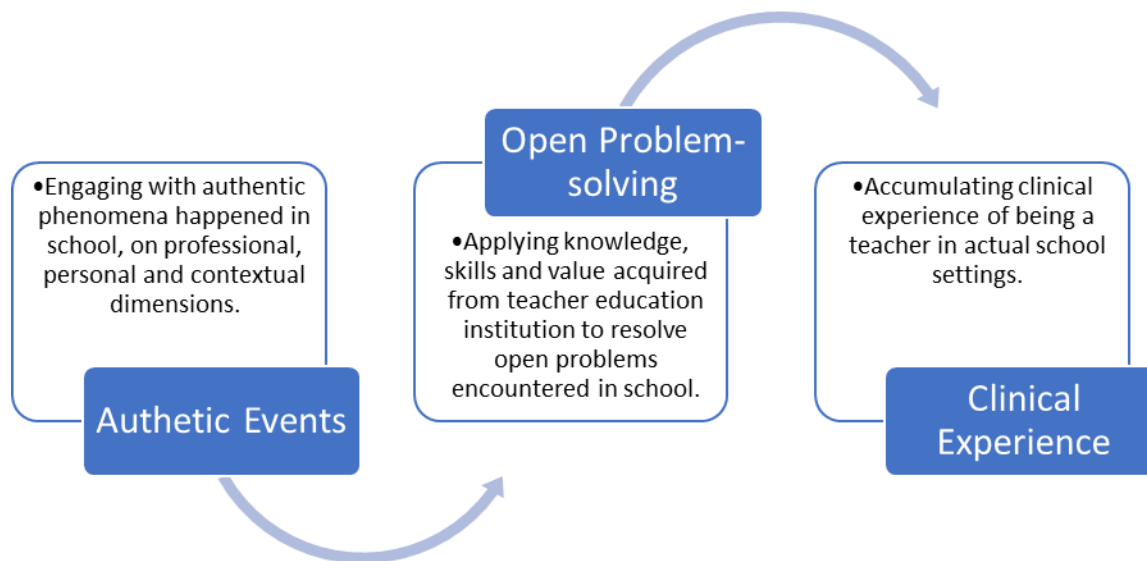


Figure 6: Trainee teachers engage with authentic events and solve open problems when accumulating clinical experience in actual school settings.

Like other pragmatic experiences, the teacher clinical experience focuses on the outcomes—the action, situations, and consequences of practice, rather than precursor conditions which were described or explained by lecturers in teacher education institution. The key concern is what works and problem-based solutions rather than how the practice works. Therefore, the authentic events and open problems being faced by trainee teachers in actual school settings are the determinant factors of the quality of teacher clinical experience.

A teacher education programme typically consists of practical sections and non-practical sections. While the practical section is the clinical experience, the non-practical sections are divided into four equally important and interrelated aspects of teacher education, which are:

- Curriculum section
- Teaching and learning section
- Teacher leadership section
- Assessment section

These four sections are regarded as non-practical in the sense of actual teaching practice in schools, because the educational context of these sections is deliberately situated in teacher education institutions. Nonetheless, the attainment of learning outcomes associated to these four sections is essential, because this would afford trainee teachers to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes of being a good teacher before practicing in actual school contexts.

Conclusion

In the next phase of the study, this project will examine the rationale, advantages and disadvantages of setting one-time clinical experience in teacher education programme. This in turn will justify the need for a new structure of generic Malaysian teacher education

programme. The initial teacher clinical experience will be refined and validated continuously over the remaining years of this NRGs programme.

The standard of our education in the eyes of the world depends on our ability to ensure that all teachers have the most relevant skills and knowledge needed to deliver quality education to our student. A comprehensive strategy to transform teacher education through clinical practice must be part of any significant national approach to school reform. It is hoped that this research will serve as a road map for preparing the effective teachers.

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Appendix A: Conceptualization of Research Ideas

Key Concepts	Definitions for this research project	Origin and sources of adaptation
Teacher	A person who teaches, especially in a school. In the context of this project, teachers are divided into student teachers, trainee teachers and school teachers, in which teachers who have started the induction are regarded as school teachers.	Etymological description written in Oxford Dictionaries stated that ‘teacher’ was originated from Old English <i>tæcan</i> 'show, present, point out', of Germanic origin; related to token, from an Indo-European root shared by Greek <i>deiknunai</i> 'show', <i>deigma</i> 'sample'.
Clinical	Trainee teachers’ practical contact with and observation of events in a school which are relating to the observation and teaching of actual students rather than theoretical or laboratory studies.	Relating to the observation and treatment of actual patients rather than theoretical or laboratory studies. The etymological description stated in Oxford Dictionaries(2014) that the concept of “clinical”was formed in late 18 th century: from Greek <i>linikē</i> ‘bedside’; while the the concept of “clinic” was originated in mid 19 th century (in the sense ‘teaching of medicine at the bedside’) from French <i>clinique</i> , from Greek <i>linikē</i> (<i>tekhnē</i>) 'bedside (art)', and from <i>klinē</i> 'bed'.
Experience	Practical contact with and observation of facts or events.	The etymological description in Oxford Dictionaries (2014) stated that ‘experience’ was originated in late Middle English, via Old French from Latin <i>experientia</i> , and from <i>experiri</i> ‘try’.
Clinical experience	A practical section of a teacher education programme in actual school(s), which could include	Medical doctor clinical experience, especially the William Osler’s Medical System.

	“practicum”, “internship” and “industrial training”.	
Teacher induction	Teacher induction is the action or process of inducting newly graduated teachers to actual school, i.e. a formal introduction to a new job or position as a school teacher.	Adapted from Oxford Dictionaries (2014).
Internship	Internship is a period of time spent receiving or completing training in an institution as a part of becoming qualified teacher. It refers to any official or formal programme to provide practical experience for trainee teachers in the teaching profession.	Adapted from Oxford Dictionaries (2014). In the hierarchy of medical practitioner, interns are doctors who have graduated medical school and are in their first year of a residency training program.
Practicum	Practicum is a practical section of a teacher education programme. In this project, practicum is subset of teacher clinical experience.	Adapted from Oxford Dictionaries (2014).
Student teachers	Students who are studying in institutions of teacher education	Student doctor, i.e. first three years study in medical school; from the hierarchy of medical practitioner.
Trainee teachers	Trainees who are learning in primary or secondary school(s), within the studentship of a teacher education programme.	Trainee doctor, i.e. on the job learning in hospital; from the hierarchy of medical practitioner.
Supervision	Supervision is the process of observing and directing the practice of trainee teachers in school during the clinical experience and teacher induction.	Adapted from Oxford Dictionaries (2014).