The Experiences of The Practicum Dyad: A Meta-Synthesis From Turkish EFL Case (2012-2022)

Öğretmenlik Uygulamasından Deneyimler: Bir Metasentez Çalışması (2012-2022)

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Abstract

Purpose: The practicum component of teacher education programs and its active participants, mentor teachers (cooperating teachers) and student teachers, have a special place in teacher education programs. With a focus on the experiences of this practicum dyad, this meta-synthesis aims to describe a broader picture of practicum practices in the Turkish EFL context.

Design/Methodology/Approach: It investigates the recent qualitative studies published between 2012 and 2022 through a meta-synthesis

Findings: The synthesis identified three main themes: (1) challenges, (2) expectations, and (3) appreciation of both members, which were further categorized as practicum-based, profession-based, and school-based.

Highlights: The results provided not only valuable data to inform a mentor training program but also uncovered the concerns experienced by all three groups, which should be carefully examined, and necessary actions should be taken accordingly. Through a review of in-depth qualitative studies related to the experiences of the EFL practicum dyad, it provides a broader lens for the practicum studies conducted in language teacher education programs in Turkey and raised issues to be addressed by supervisors, mentors, student teachers, and policy makers, which could also lead to further inquiries for other teaching contexts.

Öz

Çalışmanın amacı: Öğretmenlik uygulamasının aktif katılımcıları olan mentor öğretmenler (uygulama öğretmenleri) ve aday öğretmenler, öğretmen eğitimi programlarında özel bir yere sahiptir. Bu ikilinin deneyimlerine odaklanan bu meta-sentez, Türkiye'deki öğretmenlik uygulamalarının daha geniş bir resmini tanımlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Materyal ve Yöntem: Bu amaçla, 2012 ile 2022 yılları arasında yayınlanan son nitel çalışmaları bir meta-sentez yoluyla incelenmiştir.

Bulgular: Çalışmanın bulgularında, (1) zorluklar, (2) beklentiler ve (3) beğeniler şeklinde daha sonra uygulama temelli, meslek temelli ve okul temelli olarak kategorize edilen üç tema belirlenmiştir.

Önemli Vurgular: Sonuçlar, yalnızca bir mentor eğitim programını bilgilendirmek için değerli veriler sağlamakla kalmayıp, aynı zamanda her üç grubun da yaşadığı ve dikkatle incelenmesi ve buna göre gerekli önlemlerin alınması gereken endişeleri ortaya çıkarmıştır. Öğretmenlik uygulamasındaki deneyimlerin gözden geçirilmesiyle, Türkiye'deki dil öğretmeni eğitimi programlarında yürütülen öğretmenlik uygulamaları çalışmalarına daha geniş bir bakış açısı sağlanmıştır ve bu sonucun ayrıca diğer öğretim bağlamları için de daha fazla araştırmaya yol açması öngörülmüştür.

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INTRODUCTION

Student teachers are introduced to the teaching profession during the practicum study, which consists of two practice teaching courses (Practice Teaching I and II), in the last year of the current undergraduate English language teaching program in Turkey. The requirements for Practice Teaching I include observation of a class with a focus on teaching strategies, individual or group microteaching exercises, class supervision, test administration, student progress evaluation, and reflection on the teachers' own methods (Higher Education Council-HEC, 2018). In addition to the skills covered in the first course, student teachers in the other course, Practice Teaching II, plan and teach classes independently, evaluated by the mentor teacher and the university supervisor. Collaboration is essential, especially between the student teacher and mentor teacher, who give the majority of the support to ensure that the candidates get the most out of this process (Farrell, 2001).

The duties and responsibilities of each party involved in the practicum process are prescribed by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (MoNE, 1998). Along with planning practicum activities with the mentor teacher and coordinator, the university supervisor is in charge of ensuring that student teachers are ready for practice teaching, providing them with regular supervision, assisting them when needed, and assessing their performance. The second party, the mentor teacher, is responsible for observing student teachers throughout the practicum activities, ensuring the activities are executed effectively, and documenting the student teachers' performance evaluations. The third-party, student teachers, are expected to progress their personal and professional competencies, keep a portfolio of their studies and practicum reports, and study in accordance with the directions of mentor teachers and university supervisors. Along with the Directive of MoNE for the Teaching Practicum in Schools, the Faculty-School Cooperation Guide (HEC, 1998) was released to help define roles and responsibilities during the practicum time and enhance cooperation between universities and schools. The HEC Guide outlines the responsibilities of mentor teachers, which can be summed up as working with the faculty supervisor, offering guidance and counseling, and evaluating the performance of student teachers.

The practicum dyad with active roles in the practicum process, namely student teachers and mentor teachers, and their experiences deserve special attention since the first step into the profession and the student teachers' equipment with essential theoretical and practical skills are shaped by the relationship between the two (Musset, 2010). It is underlined that the process should be handled with efficient supervision (Youngs & Bird, 2010). The previous research focused on the practicum process and the experiences in the practicum with the intention of understanding the nature of the process (e.g. Bal-Gezegin, Balıkçı & Gümüşok, 2019; Yıldırım & Örsdemir, 2014), reporting problems (e.g. Yavuz, 2011) and suggesting solutions to improve the training process with a wider lens (e.g. Başaran Uysal & Savaş, 2021; Ceylan, Uştuk & Çomoğlu, 2017). Considering the peculiarity of the practicum dyad in the process, the present study aims to fill a gap in the field with a focus on a review of recent qualitative research to locate and emphasize the issues mentioned for a broader picture of the fundamental issues surrounding the practicum dyad in Turkish EFL context.

The Practicum Dyad

Mentor Teachers

In literature and practice, cooperating teachers are identified as experienced educators who serve as mentors to student teachers in their classrooms. Because the interaction between cooperating teachers and student teachers is primarily defined within the framework of mentoring, they are often referred to as "mentor teachers" (Odel & Huling, 2000). With their training and experience in the classroom, cooperating teachers are seen as mentors who support the professional and personal growth of student teachers by imparting knowledge, offering support, and acting as role models (Anderson & Shannon, 1988).

Since mentoring has been conducted with varying interpretations of the roles (Zantig, Verloop & Vermunt, 2001), several definitions of the term have been presented (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). Healy and Welchert (1990) assert that mentoring is "a dynamic, reciprocal relationship in a work environment between an advanced career incumbent (mentor) and a beginner (protégé) aimed at promoting the career development of both. In other words, both the mentor and the protégé benefit, improve and expand their teaching repertoire" (p.17). Underlining the hierarchical relationship between mentor and student teacher, Smith's (2007) definition is as follows: "a particular mode of learning wherein the mentor not only supports the mentee but also challenges them productively so that progress is made" (p. 277). From a different perspective, Malderez (2009) sees mentoring "as being supportive of the transformation or development of the mentee and of their acceptance to the professional community" through a process of "support for the person during their professional acclimatization (or integration), learning, growth, and development" (p. 260). Moreover, Wright (2010) puts emphasis on the collaboration and partnership between mentor and mentee as integral processes in mentoring. Lai (2005) uses three components in the nature of the mentoring, relationship, process, and context to conceptualize mentoring. It is asserted that the relational dimension of mentoring is about the relationship between mentor and student teacher, the developmental dimension focuses on the mentoring behaviors and functions performed for the personal and professional development, and the contextual dimension is the effect of school culture on teacher learning. Drawing on this conceptualization, Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010) proposed the following comprehensive definition:

Mentoring is a non-hierarchical, reciprocal relationship between mentors and mentees who work towards specific professional and personal outcomes for the mentee. The relationship usually follows a developmental pattern within a specified timeframe and roles are defined, expectations are outlined and a purpose is clearly delineated. (p. 52)

In this reciprocal relationship between mentor and student teacher, the ultimate aim is the professional and personal development of both, the development of the latter being more important. It is underlined that the two parties, context, nature of the relationship, and means to promote development have different roles in the realization of development. Means for personal and professional development involve extending the knowledge of student teachers on teaching and giving them social and psychosocial support related to work or career in face-to-face meetings (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). These practices, in turn, promote the professional development of mentor teachers through the new responsibilities they undertake, as those practices give mentors the ability to analyze their own teaching and environment from different perspectives.

Student Teachers and Mentoring

Student teachers are the senior-year students of teacher education programs who are assigned to a classroom for their practicum studies to improve their knowledge of classroom practice with the guidance of a mentor teacher and the supervision of a university instructor. In contrast with a great deal of research into the role of mentors in mentoring, a relatively limited number of research have tapped into the place of student teachers in this relationship, which may be due to its nature perceived to be hierarchical. In most cases, student teachers have been the focus of studies aiming at understanding their expectations related to the practicum process (e.g. Akcan, 2015; Hudson & Nguyen, 2008; Ilın, 2014; Iznidia, 2016; Koç, 2008). However, mentoring is a reciprocal and mutual process (Freeman, 2008), and the role of student teachers in mentoring is just as crucial as that of mentor teachers.

As opposed to the popular belief that student teachers are the receivers of support and guidance provided by cooperating teachers during the mentoring process, student teachers are actually active participants (Walkington, 2005). The reciprocal nature of the mentoring relationship is reflected in the connectedness of mentor and student teachers' roles. There is a clear link between the roles of mentor and student teachers, which underlines that any professional development would take place bidirectionally. It is well-documented that mentoring, on the one hand, has benefits for mentor teachers, such as self-improved work ethic, enhanced collegiality, and critical reflection on their own practices (Lai, 2005; McGee, 2001; Walkington, 2004). On the other hand, all these benefits serve as an important step that prepares student teachers for their future careers. Given the role of egalitarian structure in shaping the relationship between the two for the effective professional development of both (Bradbury, 2010), it is essential to understand their experiences to offer implications for improvement. Therefore, this meta-synthesis aims to present a review of recent qualitative research on the experiences of the dyad. The main research question guiding the synthesis is: "What are the experiences of the practicum dyad (i.e. mentors and student teachers) in practicum?". Based on the analysis in the scope of the current synthesis, an overview of the qualitative studies in three categories are introduced, and the findings are discussed with pedagogical implications.

Method

It is crucial to use a wider critical lens in order to provide a clear description of the issue discussed (Thorne et al., 2004). Thus, the meta-synthesis approach was adopted in the present study to reach the interpretive results by integrating and comparing the findings obtained from the relevant qualitative research (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). Through a "research on primary research" (Kinn et al., 2013, p. 1286), the study aimed at examining not a sample but related qualitative studies with a novel interpretation (Barroso et al., 2003).

The qualitative meta-synthesis as a method of inquiry includes problem identification, inclusion criteria, data retrieval, the definition of differences and similarities between the studies focused on, and analysis of the findings (Thorne et al., 2004). It begins by developing research questions and identifying relevant studies, then moves on to choosing what to include, evaluating the studies, and then reviewing them analytically (Erwin et al., 2011). Conducting a comprehensive search of the literature through a variety of techniques (e.g., journal runs, subject searches in bibliographies, and indexing services), meta-synthesis uses methodological and temporal boundaries for the research (Barroso et al., 2003).

In line with the described meta-synthesis procedures, several methodical steps were followed. The process started with the identification of research question(s). Next, in the phase of literature searching and selection of studies, the focus was on the international peer-reviewed articles published in English. The search for the articles was in August 2022 and the inclusion criteria were that the studies (i) focused on the experiences of student teachers and (ii) mentor teachers at practicum schools (iii) employing/including a qualitative research design and were published (iv) between 2012–2022 (v) with clearly stated research aims, questions and methodology (vi) in Turkish EFL context. Four electronic databases, The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Taylor & Francis Online, Scopus, and Web of Science, were searched for the related articles using keywords such as "mentor/cooperating teacher challenges in Turkey", "practice teaching experiences in Turkish EFL context" and "pre-service/student teachers' perspectives on practicum" etc. Excluding reviews, conference proceedings and analytical papers, the search was resulted in 24 articles. The studies with a different focus from the scope of this meta-synthesis such as mentoring in-service/novice teachers and practicum studies including other disciplines were removed from the final list of articles, which yielded

nine research articles selected for the synthesis aims. Following the article listing, a table was constructed providing descriptive information about the articles (e.g., participants, research focus, and data collection tools), as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Analysis table

Title	Author	Participants	Data collection tool
Stress in English Language Teaching Practicum: the Views of All Stakeholders	Coşkun (2013)	11 school administrators, 31 mentors, 68 student teachers 7 supervisors	Open-ended surveys and interviews
Mentoring Expectations and Experiences of Prospective and Cooperating Teachers during Practice Teaching	Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez & Eröz-Tuğa (2014)	22 student teachers, 4 mentor teachers	Reflective journals and semi-structured interviews
Student teaching from the perspectives of cooperating teachers and pupils	Altan & Sağlamel (2015)	21 mentor teachers	Open-ended questionnaire
Assessing the Performance in EFL Teaching Practicum: Student Teachers' Views	Merç (2015)	117 student teachers	Questionnaire and interviews
Evaluation of an ELT Practicum Programme from the Perspectives of Supervisors, Student Teachers and Graduates	Celen & Akcan (2017)	33 graduates 3 supervisors 55 student teachers	Survey, focus group interviews, individual interviews
Classroom Management Problems Pre-Service Teachers Encounter in ELT	Keser & Yavuz (2018)	44 student teachers	Interviews
Pre-Service English Teachers' Practicum Expectations and Attainments	Ulum (2020)	20 student teachers	Open-ended questions
Stress in Practicum: Voices of Preservice Teachers, Mentors, Supervisors and Administrators in An English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) Program	Ölmezer Öztürk (2021)	24 student teachers, 11 mentor teachers, 6 supervisors, 4 school administrators.	Journals and interviews
Mentoring Practices in ELT Practicum: What Do the Leading Actors Experience?	Aydın & Ok (2022)	194 student teachers, 10 supervisors, 10 mentor teachers	Scale and interviews

In the data analysis phase, the major findings of the studies in the form of themes were tabulated and included as data. Thematic analysis was employed to synthesize the filtered qualitative research (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Drawing on the methodological framework developed by Noblit and Hare (1988), each of the studies in the list was read, and the findings were listed by including codes, categories, and themes in order to identify how the studies were related. Then, the studies were compared to identify the similarities and differences, followed by the production of overarching themes. As an important criterion for a scientific inquiry to be trustable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), reliability was ensured via intra-rater reliability, and the same analysis process in the coding of the data was repeated by the researcher after three weeks. The first and second coding were compared to eliminate the differences, and conclusions were drawn after minor revisions. Finally, the analysis produced three broad themes. A sample for coding is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Sample coding

Reference	Excerpt	Finding	Category
Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez & Eröz-Tuğa (2014)	PTs considered CTs' responsibility for providing constructive feedback after observing the micro-teachings as an important facet of mentoring. PTs also emphasized the need for instructional support throughout the practice teaching.	The need for instructional support The need for feedback	Practicum-based expectation
Ölmezer Öztürk (2021)	The findings revealed that lack of classroom teaching experience, lack of experience with students were the major stress factors for PTs.	Lack of classroom experience Lack of experience with students	Practicum-based challenge

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed that the studies conducted to gain insight into the practicum experiences are very scarce in the identified time period. The thematic analysis revealed three overarching themes for each part of the dyad under focus: student-teachers' and mentor teachers' (i) challenges, (ii) expectations, and (iii) appreciations. The three main themes emerged in the findings were further categorized as profession-based, practicum-based and school based. Profession-based findings refer to the reports of the participants related to the teaching profession itself, such as classroom experience or management skills. The second category, practicum-based, is used for the findings about the procedures or tasks to be followed throughout the practice teaching like support from parties of the practicum and paperwork. The school-based category implies the findings related to practicum school environments like school facilities that have an effect on the experiences of either mentors or student teachers. The details for each article are presented in the following sections along with the discussion of the results based on the related literature.

Challenges of The Practicum Dyad

The systematic review and synthesis of the research studies revealed that the members of the practicum dyad experienced profession-based, practicum-based, and school-based challenges in the Turkish EFL context. For student teachers, profession-based challenges were identified as a lack of classroom experience and experience with students (Ölmezer Öztürk, 2021), inadequate classroom management skills (Altan & Sağlamel, 2015; Coşkun, 2013; Keser & Yavuz, 2018), assessment and observation (Celen & Akcan, 2017; Coşkun, 2013; Merç, 2015). The student teachers' lack of classroom experience and experience with students was identified by Ölmezer Öztürk (2021) who invited student teachers to write reflection reports about their practicum experiences in an English language teacher education program. The study showed that classroom experience is one of the major sources of stress since it causes the student teachers to struggle to successfully control the class, which makes them anxious during instruction. The insufficient knowledge about the students, the presence of demotivated students with unexpected questions, and the students' use of the first language were among the challenges related to the lack of classroom experience.

In the same line with Ölmezer Öztürk (2021), portraying a direct relation between the lack of classroom experience and inadequate classroom management skills as a challenge for student teachers, Keser and Yavuz (2018) focused on the student teachers' classroom management skills on a broader sense and interviewed senior students at a department of English Language Teaching to gain insight into their reflections about classroom management. The researchers found that crowded classes with unmotivated students mainly affected their classroom management abilities and caused problems in the flow of their teaching. Similarly, classroom management was a source of challenge for mentor teachers. According to Altan & Sağlamel's (2015) study, in which the practice teaching was investigated from the mentor teacher perspectives through open-ended questions, the mentor teachers thought that letting student teachers take control of the lessons could create noise in the classroom and caused loss of the control.

Considering that classroom management is a tough skill for a teacher to acquire (Milner & Tenore, 2010), there is no doubt that student teachers with no or very limited classroom experience have problems in the control of a classroom. The difference and variety of sources causing the loss of control, such as demotivated students or unexpected questions, require a great amount of classroom time to find out and get used to using ways to overcome such sources of stress as exemplified by one of student teachers: "I do not know what to say or how to react when they say something weird in class or show up doing nonsense things" (Ölmezer Öztürk, 2021, p.25). The finding points to the need for mentor teachers' awareness of sharing pedagogical knowledge on classroom management and classroom orientation to compensate for the limited time spent in the teaching environment throughout practice teaching.

Challenges related to assessment and observation of student teachers' teaching performances were highlighted by Celen and Akcan (2017) in their findings of focus-group interviews with student teachers. It was found in student teachers' reports that the observation guidelines were unstructured, leading them to lose their focus. They also stated there was no transition between observing a mentor teacher and teaching in front of a class, emphasizing the necessity of small teaching tasks for student teachers before teaching a whole lesson. At this point, collaboration is essential to ensure a smoother transition from being a student to being a teacher (Wright, 2010). This collaboration should be supported by the enthusiasm of the student teacher in undertaking teaching responsibilities. Practicum courses that would address the importance of small teaching tasks could provide a solution on the part of the student teachers as it would do for the unenthusiastic student teachers' characteristics identified among the practicum-based challenges reported by mentors (Coşkun, 2013; Ölmezer Öztürk, 2021). The collaboration should also be supported by the mentors' guidance, emerged as a practicum-based challenge experienced by mentors. The mentors' challenges about guidance were reported by Aydın and Ok (2021) who interviewed mentor teachers about their roles as mentors. The findings showed that the mentor felt alone in the process and had trouble supporting the student teachers' professional development, given the heavy responsibilities. A training program with content that includes necessary mentoring skills, namely personal attributes and pedagogical knowledge (Hudson, 2004), is necessary for the guidance of mentors and the promotion of collaboration. The preparation for the mentoring position is also necessary to reduce the possibility that mentors' contributions to the professional growth of student teachers would simply be based on their own knowledge and common sense rather than on theoretical and pedagogical understanding.

The student teachers' practicum-based challenges included a lack of support from other practicum parties. The lack of support from other parties, namely, mentors, supervisors, and school administrators, was reported by Coşkun (2013). In the study, student teachers argued that they did not receive satisfactory guidance and were seen as substitute teachers. They also commented that they did not receive any administrative support. The lack of collaboration between universities and schools may be the cause of this issue (Hughes, 2002). According to Kasapoğlu's (2015) review of studies on practicum issues in Turkey, the school experience was not carried out in line with the objectives established by the universities and collaborating schools, highlighting the non-fulfillment of formal requirements, tasks, and responsibilities associated. The lack of cooperation between the school and universities is negatively reflected in the relationship between mentors and student teachers, causing communication problems between the two, as evidenced in the studies included in this meta-synthesis. Mentor teachers' expectations reported by the previous research fell under the practicum-based expectations, which were more cooperation from university supervisors and frequent communication. Aydın and Ok (2021) referred to this theme with their findings in mentor teachers' comments that underlined the necessity of frequent communication and collaboration to achieve effectiveness in practicum. The mentors thought that the disappearance of supervisors until final teaching tasks resulted in their unawareness of mentoring responsibilities, referring to the challenges described earlier.

The meta-synthesis also showed that self-perception of professional efficacy was among the profession-based challenges mentors experienced in the practicum period. As indicated by Ölmezer Öztürk (2021), they believed that student teachers potentially hold negative opinions about their language skills and the ability to make up and catch up with the curriculum, which made them stressed. Clarke et al. (2013) suggest that mentors may have concerns about and may not be able to trust their pedagogical content knowledge to provide various viewpoints. The finding, therefore, highlights the importance of training on the part of the mentor, which was also underlined by mentors themselves in previous studies (e.g., Hamilton, 2010).

Expectations of The Practicum Dyad

The systematic review and synthesis of the research studies showed the expectations stated by the practicum dyad. For student teachers, practicum-based expectations were instructional support and feedback from mentors (Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez & Eröz-Tuğa, 2014; Ulum, 2020), rearrangements for practicum studies to include more opportunities for observation and teaching practices in different school settings (Celen & Akcan, 2017) and different assessment procedures (Merç, 2015).

The instructional support and feedback were reported by Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez and Eröz-Tuğa (2014), who examined reflective journals of student teachers. The researchers found out that student teachers expected instructional support in the form of constructive feedback and discussion of the ways to improve future teaching practices instead of only observing mentors with the intention of learning how to teach. Similarly, Ulum (2020) indicated the student teachers' expectations for support from their mentors to improve their teaching skills in the interviews conducted with student teachers in an English language teacher education program. Given that teacher development cannot occur independently of other teachers (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005) and it is instead a social process reliant on communication and interaction, observing student teachers in action and providing feedback are crucial factors in determining how well they perform in their careers. According to previous research (e.g. Menegat, 2010), providing instructional support necessitates having a thorough awareness of mentoring duties, the requisite personal qualities, and pedagogical skills to approach student instructors. A lack of information about mentoring causes mentors to struggle to give the appropriate support.

The absence of enthusiasm and interest in the position might be an explaining factor contributing to the lack of understanding about mentoring (e.g. Koç, 2008), raising concerns about the mentors chosen. Practice teaching is typically seen as a process in which student teachers merely observe and conduct a class for a few hours. Practice teaching, however, is a process that should be framed by collaboration with high motivation and interest, addressing the importance of training of mentors.

The rearrangement of practicum studies, especially in terms of the inclusion of more opportunities for observation and practice, was reported by Celen and Akcan (2017). It was revealed in the study that student teachers wished to be introduced to the profession and start practicing teaching in the teacher education program earlier so that they would spend more time in real classrooms. The experience in different school settings, state-private schools or primary-high schools, was also reported as an expectation and student teachers expressed that experience at different school settings would provide valuable insights into their abilities to adapt their teaching abilities. In addition, it was found in the present meta-synthesis that student teachers had expectations about the assessment procedures used in the practicum process. In the interviews conducted with the student teacher members of the dyad, Merç (2015) found that they found planning-preparation, general organization, and assessment by university supervisors more effective means for assessing their performance compared to assessment by cooperating teachers, writing observation, and reflection reports. In the Turkish EFL context, it is very common for mentor teachers to perceive attendance as the most significant criterion in assessment due to the cooperation problems and unavailability of training on assessment.

The student teachers were also reported to have profession-based expectations. The studies showed that they expect to be oriented to the school and the profession to act and feel as a teacher. The participants in Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez & Eröz-Tuğa's (2014) study stated that mentors are responsible for creating the context for student teachers to adjust and thus should act as socio-professional mediators at the practicum schools and introduce them to the students and school administration. As another theme

emerged related to the lack of knowledge on mentoring, the finding reminds of the criteria for teachers to be assigned as mentors. Years of teaching experience as a selection criterion for mentors is insufficient since it does not offer a suitable answer to issues with motivation. Given that mentors' motivation plays a significant role in their behavior and, consequently, practices, it is crucial to include this criterion in the list of requirements to be created based on field research.

Appreciations of The Practicum Dyad

Apart from the challenges and expectations of mentor and student teachers, the meta-synthesis revealed their appreciation, which deserves close attention for the safety of mentoring practices. It was found that the detected appreciations of both members in the practicum dyad were practicum-based. The student teachers were found to appreciate the opportunity to experience a real classroom environment, seminar discussions, peer experience, feedback they received after teaching (Celen & Akcan, 2017), and the good relationships with mentor teachers (Ulum, 2020). The results illustrate the importance of the focus on defining the "relationship" between mentors and student teacher in the related research (e.g. Healy & Welchert, 1990; Smith, 2007) and of the practice teaching in the professional development of student teachers (Farrell, 2008).

Likewise, on the part of the mentor teachers, practicum as a mutual learning process was appreciated (Altan & Sağlamel, 2015; Aydın & Ok, 2021). Preparation for real contexts, as well as the opportunities for the exchange of ideas through reflective practices that promote motivation, are perceived as valuable experiences. As evidenced by Aydın and Ok (2021), mentors viewed the process as one of mutual learning since, while student teachers had current knowledge in the area, the majority of mentors were unaware of recent developments in the field. The results indicated the reciprocity in mentor-student teacher relationship (Freeman, 2008), in contrast to the common interpretation of hierarchy in their interactions. The appreciation noted by the mentors underlined that student teachers are not the only receivers of support and guidance but are actually active participants (Walkington, 2005). Thus, reciprocity has the potential to transform the teachers involved, which makes the role of student teachers in mentoring as important as mentor teachers.

Given the challenges experienced by student teachers, it is important to state that the context plays a crucial role in the nature of the practicum experience. In Celen and Akcan's (2017) study, the student teachers were found to appreciate their engagement with teaching duties in a real school environment, which is similar to the findings reported by Ulum (2020), who observed such appreciation by some of the student teacher participants. Partial appreciation displayed in the studies showed the specific experiences of those participants and the variety in experiences, supporting the claim that mentoring practices are context-dependent and unique to each experience (Richards, 2008; Farrell, 2012). In addition, the studies provided evidence for the possibility of achieving effective practicum processes on the student teachers' side, which calls for further studies that investigate how successful practices are achieved.

CONCLUSION

Through a review of nine qualitative studies related to the experiences of EFL practicum dyad, this study provided a broader lens for the practicum studies conducted in language teacher education programs in Turkey and raised several issues to be addressed by supervisors, mentors, student teachers, and policy makers, which could also lead to further inquiries for other teaching contexts. The selection criteria in the current meta-synthesis resulted in only nine papers, therefore, the experiences discussed here can be incomplete. The limited number of qualitative studies is a call for further studies with in-depth analysis of practicum experiences. Moreover, further research studies should be conducted on the views of the practicum dyad with a focus on particular practices such as professional dialogues, observation conferences, and the language of feedback. Besides, comparisons are needed between successful and poor examples of such practices to understand the reasons behind the failures and suggest solutions.

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