Exploring the expectations and experiences of EFL teacher-trainees during the practicum process in a Turkish university[1]

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Abstract

The current study aimed to examine the expectations and experiences of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher-trainees during their practicum process in Turkey. The study employed a mixed research design that included questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions. A total of 58 teacher-trainees from a state-run university participated in the study. The findings revealed that teacher-trainees expect feedback, sincerity, and energy and politeness from their cooperating teachers, as well as guidance on career decisions and reflection. However, emotional support was not identified as an expectation in policy documents. The results showed that cooperating teachers met some expectations, such as treating trainees as future colleagues and accessibility, but fell short in other areas, such as teaching competencies, 21st century skills and mentoring practices. Overall, the study highlights the

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[1] This study is based on the first author's MA thesis entitled *Expectations and Experiences of English Teacher-trainees on Their Cooperating Teachers during Teaching Practice Process* under the supervision of the second author.

importance of understanding teacher-trainees' expectations and experiences in the EFL practicum process.

1. Introduction

Throughout teacher education programs, the practicum process is considered one of the most important parts. In the past decade, the relationship between English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher training and the practicum process has received much attention. The practicum stage is a crucial component of teacher training and is recognized as a central learning experience for teacher-trainees (TTs) (Wright, 2020). It operates under a three-tier system comprising of three major stakeholders: cooperating teachers (CTs hereafter), TTs, and teacher-trainers (Burton & Greher, 2007). Studies have shown that each of these members has specific duties, and all aspects of their roles are crucial for teachers' professional development. Furthermore, TTs report that the support provided by CTs is essential to their growth (Hobson et al., 2008).

It is well-known that the EFL teacher practicum is a crucial aspect of English teacher education in Turkey, as it provides opportunities to put into practice what is learned during the program (Merç, 2004). To utilize this theoretical knowledge effectively, TTs are assigned a CT at designated schools by education faculties. These CTs are experienced, certified teachers who mentor the trainees during their practicum (HEC, 2018). During the process, TTs observe their CTs' lessons before taking over the teaching role themselves to gain experience. While the trainees teach, the CT is actively involved, providing reflection, feedback, criticism, identifying problems, and offering solutions (Maphalala, 2013). However, it is uncertain whether these expectations are always met. Additionally, what personal attributes and competencies make an ideal cooperating teacher is a topic of research. It is thus important to understand the expectations of TTs as these needs and desires may change over time and reflect what is necessary for the trainees to feel more supported and confident in their teaching (Sağ, 2008).

2. Literature review

The practicum process is a series of planned activities designed to familiarize TTs with the teaching profession. The objective is for the trainees to observe teaching practices and skills as a preparatory step for actual teaching upon graduation. The

goal of the practicum is to work with CTs in schools, allowing the trainees to gain a better understanding of the teaching profession and develop the competence to apply their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors in a real-world educational setting, encompassing both general cultural aspects and specific education and teaching practices (Wright, 2020).

EFL teachers have a variety of roles, including language presenter, material developer, evaluator of student performance, communicator, motivator, guide, support for student performance, facilitator, and culture presenter. Some of these roles are not taught in faculty, so they must be learned through field experience. This highlights the significance of teaching practice courses. CTs in schools can assist TTs in understanding their duties and applying them to their future teaching careers (Rao, 2019). The Higher Education Council (HEC, 2018) in Turkey outlines how stakeholders involved in the teacher practicum should be outlined. According to this policy document, the stakeholders can be defined as follows: a CT is a teacher who works in the same field as the TT and provides guidance and support during the TTs' school-based practices. The CT evaluates the TTs' work and collaborates with the university instructor.

There have been numerous studies (e.g., Ambrosetti, 2010; Aydın & Ok, 2019; Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Damar & Salı, 2013; Hobson et al., 2008; Izadinia, 2015; Maphalala, 2013; Merç, 2004; Rakicioglu-Soylemez & Eroz-Tuga, 2014; Sağ, 2008) that have explored the expectations and experiences of TTs with their CT and the overall practicum process in various countries, including Turkey. These studies provide a framework for what is expected from CTs and how the process can be improved. For instance, Hudson and Nyugen's (2008) study on Vietnamese EFL TTs found that the trainees expected their CTs to support them in their practicum process by instructing them on needed skills, building personal relationships, modelling EFL teaching practices, and giving feedback. They also expected their CTs to be enthusiastic, helpful, knowledgeable, and have good communicative competence. The trainees wanted their CTs to instruct them on current education system, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, student motivation and dealing with critical incidents. Similarly, a study by Ambrosetti (2010) investigated the expectations of TTs in the CT-TT relationship. First-year TTs expect their CTs to guide, support, and provide role modelling, while final-year TTs need constructive feedback, support, and inclusivity. The most important aspects of mentoring for TTs largely include guidance, role modelling, constructive feedback, support, and inclusivity.

The study conducted by Le and Vasquez (2011) focused on TT perceptions of CT feedback, which is an important aspect of the CT-TT relationship. The TTs felt that the feedback they received, which included praise, suggestions, and criticism, was useful for improving their teaching skills. CTs also attempted to create

a supportive environment for feedback sessions and TTs appreciated the alternatives offered rather than being directed in a specific teaching approach. The results suggest that constructive feedback with compliments, suggestions, and criticism in a supportive environment can help TTs notably improve their teaching. Likewise, Martinez's (2016) study explored the feedback expectations of TTs from their CT during the practicum experience. TTs expected CTs to provide constructive feedback, emotional and pedagogical support, and be approachable and flexible. Themes like friendly relationships, constructive feedback, positive reinforcement, and open communication were mentioned as beneficial by TTs. TTs were satisfied with the mentoring of CTs and expected continuous high-quality feedback from them. Some TTs preferred to be left alone in the class to experience teaching without any observance, while others preferred to have CTs' presence.

Izadinia's (2015) research analyzed the perceptions and expectations of TTs and CTs regarding mentoring relationships. Both TTs and CTs expected emotional and academic support, direct communication, and feedback. However, TTs emphasized the importance of mentoring relationships in shaping their teacher identity, while CTs did not see it as vital. Both TTs and CTs emphasized open communication, with TTs saying they might stay silent in an unsuitable mentoring relationship. TTs also expected emotional support from their CT and felt that it was more important than academic support. A study by Aderibigde et al. (2018) found that the majority of TTs had a positive relationship with their CT during the mentoring process, with over half stating that their expectations were met. Positive experiences were likely due to enthusiastic CTs who involve TTs in decision-making and facilitate a critical constructivist approach towards TTs' professional development. However, negative feedback resulted from a lack of discussion and instructive practice rather than learning experiences. The study also found that collaborative relationships were more likely to result in a positive experience for the TTs, while non-collaborative relationships were less likely to be satisfying.

Similar observations regarding the TTs' expectations from their CT's and the practicum process were noted in the Turkish context. To illustrate, a study by Merç (2004) highlighted positive and negative aspects of CTs' actions as seen by TTs. The study was based on interviews with TTs, and shows that problems with CTs can result from lack of cooperation, absence, disruptive behavior, and interference during class. The CTs' quality of reflection was also discussed. On the positive side, TTs mentioned CT support, which involved reflecting on both positive and negative aspects of TTs' teaching. Gökçe and Demirhan (2005) found that TTs' expectations were not met due to CTs' unawareness of their role and inconsistent mentoring practices. This was attributed to the varying perception of the practicum process by CTs and a lack of standard criteria for the practicum tasks. In another study, Sağ (2008) found that TTs expect CTs to have competencies

such as guidance, colleagueship, counseling, and leadership. The CT is seen as a "stakeholder, model, and leader." The most expected role is that of a colleague, meaning TTs want their CT to respect their teaching, avoid interfering, and support them. Additionally, they expected their CT to provide guidance through observation and preparation. TTs' expectations from their teacher-trainer include mediation, guidance, communication, and leadership. Out of the existing studies, Damar and Salı's (2013) study provides more valuable information on the gap between the expectations and experiences of TTs with regards to their CTs. The study evaluated the expectations of TTs and found a gap between their expectations and experiences. It was found that TTs had high expectations for their CTs in terms of supervision and readiness, planning and reflection, and general mentoring. However, the actual experiences of the TTs did not live up to the expectations. The highest rated competence was feedback and reflection. The study also revealed that some CTs were not aware of their duties, while others were not open to updated teaching methodologies and wanted TTs to teach using traditional methods. Some CTs also viewed the EFL teacher practicum as a "sink or swim" approach, where TTs had to manage everything on their own.

As highlighted in Alpan et al. (2014), EFL CTs and TTs view the practicum as an unproductive and meaningless experience. This negative perception, according to the study, is largely attributed to the traditional practices of CTs. Specifically, the study revealed that CTs often imposed their own ideas and methods onto their feedback, expecting TTs to conform to conventional teaching methods. Last but not least, a recent study by Orsdemir and Yıldırım (2020) investigated the opinions of TTs regarding ELT mentoring in Turkey. The most important aspect of mentoring for TTs was modelling, but legal aspects, feedback and work improvement were also considered important. However, some TTs felt that CTs lacked proper feedback and did not provide enough information on class management and lesson facilitation. The study highlights the need for CTs to improve their feedback and mentoring practices, rather than reducing mentoring to just modelling.

As can be seen from the literature review, TTs expect their CTs to support them, provide constructive feedback and guidance, and create an atmosphere conducive to learning. They also prefer CTs who are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and who demonstrate communicative competence. Additionally, TTs expect their CTs to provide role modelling, emotional and pedagogical support, and be approachable and flexible. However, studies have revealed a gap between the expectations and experiences of TTs, indicating that CTs are not meeting their expectations. This gap is largely attributed to CTs who fail to provide enough feedback and guidance, who impose their own methods and ideas, and who are not open to innovative teaching methodologies. It is therefore important for CTs to improve their feedback and mentoring practices in order to better support and guide their TTs.

Against the backdrop of the literature review outlined above, this study aims to understand the expectations and experiences of TTs studying at a public university with regards to their CTs. Specifically, the study is concerned with TTs' expectations of ideal CT actions and responsibilities. The study also explores whether the ideal CT competencies and personal attributes desired by TTs are similar to the ideal described in the HEC (2018) policy documents. Finally, the study compares the experiences of the TTs to their initial expectations by looking for answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the expectations of TTs regarding the competencies and actions of their ideal CT?
2. Are the TTs' expectations of their CT's mentoring consistent with the officially stated duties?
3. To what extent do the TTs' expectations regarding the CT's mentoring practices match their actual experiences at the end of the practicum?

3. Method

3.1. Research design

In this study, a mixed-methods design, involving both qualitative and quantitative data, was adopted. The design used was the concurrent triangulation design, where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected in the same period of time and then analyzed separately by the researcher. Finally, the analyzed qualitative and quantitative data were used for comparison with each other (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions before and after the practicum process. Quantitative data were gathered through online questionnaires in the pre- and post-practicum stages. Convenience sampling was used, with 58 senior-year TTs studying EFL teacher education at a state-run university in Turkey taking part in the study. The HEC policy document (2018) was used to compare and contrast the TTs' mentoring expectations.

3.2. Research context

In Turkish higher education, for a TT to obtain the degree, they must be successful in their teaching practice. The teaching practice course in the undergraduate and pedagogical formation certificate education programs lasts for 6 hours per week over two semesters. During each semester, the TT teaches at least 4 times, in different weeks, under the supervision of a CT. Based on the field of study, the

TT is allowed to plan and teach the lesson. The total teaching time needs to be at least 14 hours in total for 1-2 hours of lesson time, and at least 24 hours for those courses with 3 hours or more. The teaching practices are conducted in public and private educational institutions affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in the province or district where the university is located. The classes and students participating in the teaching practice can be in villages, depending on the physical condition of the educational institutions and the number of CTs (HEC, 2018).

CTs in the Turkish context are a crucial component of the practicum process and have defined responsibilities. According to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) policy documents (2017), a CT is a teacher who teaches in the same field as the TT, provides guidance and support, evaluates their work, and works in collaboration with the university instructor. The responsibilities of a CT, as outlined by the HEC (2018), are as follows:

1. Provide suggestions for teaching activities, monitor and evaluate these activities.
2. Ensure that the required activities are carried out according to the program.
3. Evaluate the TT's teaching practice four times per semester.
4. Evaluate the TT's work at the end of the practicum.
5. Submit signed evaluations of the TT to the education institution and input the data into the Practice Student Evaluation System.
6. Record the TT's attendance and submit it to the education coordinator for forwarding to the faculty.
7. Evaluate the TT's performance during the practicum and input the data into the TT Evaluation System.
8. Coordinate the practicum program with faculty trainers.
9. Assist with the TT's professional development by allowing them to observe lessons and apply various teaching methods and techniques.
10. Provide necessary teaching materials, resources, and environment for the practicum.
11. Help the teacher-trainee plan their daily activities and lessons.
12. Observe and evaluate the TT's work at school.
13. Avoid leaving the TT alone in the classroom for extended periods.
14. Be accessible when the TT needs to leave the classroom.
15. Maintain a file of observation and evaluation forms for the TT.
16. Regularly review the TT's observation file with the practicum instructor.
17. Monitor the TT's progress and contribute to their development in a positive manner.
18. Guide the TT in extracurricular activities (such as ceremonies and meetings).
19. Jointly evaluate the TT's with the university instructor at the end of the program.

At the university, the department of foreign language education also draws on a list of criteria while selecting schools for the TTs. The criteria used by the department of foreign language education at the university for selecting schools for TTs are as follows:

1. The school must have English language classes on dedicated teaching practice days (usually Thursdays or Fridays).
2. The school's facilities, materials, and technology must be adequate for the TT.
3. It is preferred that the cooperating English teacher be a graduate of the English language teaching department.
4. The CT must have at least three years of professional experience.
5. The CT should be willing to provide training to other English teachers.
6. The schools should be located in the city centre or central villages with no transportation difficulties and should be at different education levels (primary, secondary, or high school).
7. Permission for cooperation and implementation must be obtained from the National Education Directorate or other relevant institutions.
8. Feedback from previous semester's TTs will be considered in the school selection process.
9. Feedback from faculty members who have visited the schools to observe TTs will also be considered.
10. The CT must have received mentorship training from the MoNE with a certificate to prove it.

3.3. Participants

The study was conducted in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 school year, using convenience sampling. According to Waterfield (2018), this type of sampling involves selecting participants based on their availability, either geographically or through interpersonal closeness. The study included 58 participants, consisting of 36 females and 22 males, all of whom were studying in an English Language Teaching Department at a public university in south-western Turkey at the time of data collection. The ages of the participants varied, with the majority being aged between 22 and 24. All participants were final-year students enrolled in the teaching practice course. The demographics of the participants, in terms of ages and genders, are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Characteristics of the participants

Age	N	%
20	2	3.4
21	11	19
22	25	43.1
23	12	20.7
24	3	5.2
25	3	5.2
27	1	1.7
35	1	1.7
Gender	N	%
Female	36	62
Male	22	38

3.4. Data collection

The data were collected through online questionnaires and interviews, which included open-ended questions to further understand the numerical data. According to Gill et al. (2008), questionnaire surveys are aimed at inferring the characteristics and thoughts of participants. The questions were constructed in a non-evaluative manner. Although the study of Rakicioglu-Soylemez and Eroz-Tuga (2014) inspired the present investigation, the researchers, in accordance with the policy documents of the HEC (2018) and the Teacher Strategy Paper by the MoNE (2017), constructed themes of the questionnaire. The online questionnaire included questions assessing TTs' expectations and experiences about collaboration, the school and teaching environment, constructive criticism, technology literacy, guidance, leadership, being up to date in the field, flexibility, professional assistance, and supervision (see Appendix for the sample items included in the questionnaire).

The data were collected in two phases. Pre-practicum (expectations) data were collected in the first week of 2020-2021 fall term. Post-practicum (experiences) data were collected after 2020-2021 fall term ended. Quantitative data were collected through online questionnaires held in the Google Forms. Both pre- and pot-practicum questionnaires included the same items. The items were about assessing TTs' expectations and experiences about collaboration, school and teaching environment organization for practicum and the like. Additionally, to collect qualitative data of TTs' expectations, open-ended questions regarding expectations from and experiences of TTs with their CTs were added. Questions used in the interviews and open-ended questions were aimed to assess TTs' attitudes towards CTs' practices.

3.5. Data analysis

All data were recorded with the permission of TTs under the conditions of anonymity and confidentiality. Verbal data were transcribed into written text. Peer-check

and supervisor-check were used to reduce the risk of misunderstanding. Qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Neuendorf, 2001; Schreier, 2012) was the main analytical framework of analysis with an eye to offering "subjective interpretation of the content of the text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for different research questions and answers from open-ended questions were analyzed as a supplement to quantitative data. Participants were numbered for anonymity purposes. After each qualitative data, the initial letter of the word *participant* and the number of the participant (e.g. P1) was noted.

Descriptive analysis was employed to interpret and compare quantitative data (Sheard, 2018). Google Office Suit applications were used to create graphs showing the distribution of numerical data, including pre- and post-practicum data, to answer one of the research questions.

To address issues of validity and reliability, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed for this study, as the reliability of qualitative studies is often called into question (Creswell, 2018) and it can be difficult to draw implications from one single dataset (Dörnyei, 2011). This mix of research techniques has the advantage of considering the benefits of both methods. Surveys are useful for exploring participants' beliefs (Neuman, 2013), but it is necessary to ensure construct validity. The questions used in this study were all derived from official policy documents, such as the HEC (2018), as well as teacher competencies outlined in the Teacher Strategy Paper (HEC, 2017). Peers and supervisors checked these questions for relevance. On this basis, it was concluded that the questions were appropriate for the research. Although this research builds on that of Rakicioglu-Soylemez and Eroz-Tuga (2014), the focus is on recent policy documents, incorporating surveys and interviews based on the most recent updates. To ensure the validity of the questions, they were once again checked by peers and supervisors, with no items added or removed, and incoherent items were reworded.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative data

The research collected numerical data via a pre-practicum questionnaire and a post-practicum questionnaire. The pre-practicum questionnaire presents the expectations of the TTs while the post-practicum questionnaire presents their experiences. By comparing the two, it was possible to determine the TTs' actual experiences match their expectations. The pre-practicum data is presented in

Table 2, which shows that the TTs anticipate that all mentoring actions will be conducted with a high level of competency by their CTs.

Table 2 Pre-practicum questionnaire mean scores

| Item	Expected mentoring actions	*M*
1.	Collaboration	4.6
2.	School and teaching environment organization for practicum	4.5
3.	Constructive criticism	4.68
4.	Technology literacy	4.48
5.	Guidance	4.55
6.	Leadership	4.51
7.	Being up to date in the field	4.53
8.	Flexibility	4.65
9.	Professional assistance	4.55
10.	Teaching analysis for reflection	4.62
11.	Supervision	4.51
12.	Effective reflection	4.63
13.	Handling critical incidents	4.48
14.	Detecting problems	4.36
15.	Devising solutions for detected problems	4.48
16.	Ability to explain teaching choices	4.7
17.	Help of implementing different techniques	4.68
18.	Providing teaching necessities and materials	4.62
19.	Introducing to school environment	4.48
20.	Support for lesson planning and execution	4.6
21.	Accessibility	4.32
22.	Monitoring	4.37
23.	Defining teacher-trainee as a prospective colleague	4.27
24.	Validity of evaluation	4.5
25.	Objectivity of evaluation	4.56
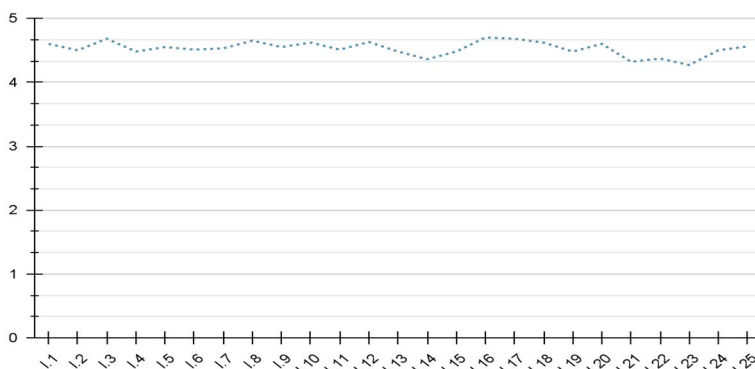
Figure 1 Quantitative data of teacher-trainee expectations from their CTs

In Figure 1, the expectations of TTs are depicted graphically. It is evident from the results that TTs expect their CTs to possess a high level of competency in

all mentoring actions. Specifically, they want their mentors to provide constructive criticism, be flexible, analyze teaching to facilitate reflection, offer effective reflection, help implement various techniques, and provide teaching resources and materials. It is also clear that they want their mentors to be able to criticize and reflect on their performance in a flexible manner. Furthermore, they wish to be assisted in using various methods and techniques in the practicum. Lastly, the most sought-after action was receiving explanations regarding why certain methods, techniques, and strategies are used in the classroom to teach effectively.

Table 3 reveals that TTs had higher expectations prior to the practicum than what they actually experienced afterwards. Their experiences were not as satisfactory as they had anticipated before commencing their practicum at the designated schools.

Table 3 Pre-practicum and post-practicum quantitative data mean scores

Item	Expected mentoring actions	Pre-practicum	Post-practicum
1.	Collaboration	4.6	4
2.	School and teaching environment organization for practi-	4.5	3.9
3.	cum	4.68	4.17
4.	Constructive criticism	4.48	3.94
5.	Technology literacy	4.55	3.93
6.	Guidance	4.51	3.96
7.	Leadership	4.53	3.96
8.	Being up to date in the field	4.65	4.05
9.	Flexibility	4.55	4.1
10.	Professional assistance	4.62	4.08
11.	Teaching analysis for reflection	4.51	4.03
12.	Supervision	4.63	4.12
13.	Effective reflection	4.48	4.08
14.	Handling critical incidents	4.36	4
15.	Detecting problems	4.48	3.84
16.	Devising solutions for detected problems	4.7	3.82
17.	Ability to explain teaching choices	4.68	3.91
18.	Help of implementing different techniques	4.62	3.87
19.	Providing teaching necessities and materials	4.48	3.55
20.	Introducing to school environment	4.6	3.77
21.	Support for lesson planning and execution	4.32	4.32
22.	Accessibility	4.37	3.93
23.	Monitoring	4.27	4.29
24.	Defining teacher-trainee as a prospective colleague	4.5	4.08
25.	Validity of evaluation	4.56	4.15
	Objectivity of evaluation		

When the overall results are inspected, it turns out that in the majority of the items (i.e., items 1-14), the gap between experiences and expectations is quite small. Hence, there is no huge divergence. However, the responsibility of

introducing them to the learning environment (19th item) revealed a slightly larger discrepancy. Moreover, items such as convenience and viewing the teacher trainers as potential future colleagues are in line with what the TTs had expected. Supplementary interviews can provide more insight into the perspectives of the trainees. Qualitative data may aid in understanding the causes of the discrepancies between expectations and lived experiences. Figure 2 displays the pre and post-practicum data.
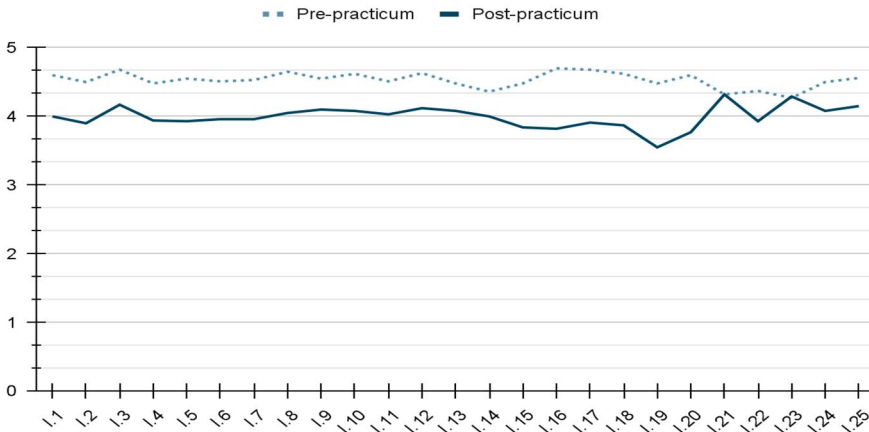

Figure 2 Post and Pre-practicum Data of TTs Experiences and Expectations

4.2. Qualitative data

The responses of TTs to open-ended queries and interviews are shown in Table 4, which details the abilities and behaviors that they consider to be the 'perfect' ones. Table 4 provides information regarding mentoring competencies and activities.

Table 4 Themes of Qualitative Data about Ideal CT for TTs

Themes mentioned in collected data	Frequency
Professional guidance	7
Affection	3
Feedback and reflection	2
Emotional support	2
Communication competency	1
Self-assessment	1
Showing realities of the profession	1
Innovation	1

Several responses highlighted the idea of professional guidance being an official mentoring responsibility, although some participants requested career guidance, which may be seen as an essential part of a TT's development but is not

a formal task. Professional guidance pertaining to practicum duties, however, can be considered an official mentoring responsibility. These points are illustrated in the following excerpts in the words of interview participants:

My ideal CT would help me teach effectively and show me how to engage with students how to act around students, how to stand, how to walk, etc. As we learn our field knowledge in faculties, what we need is to use this knowledge effectively to teach English in classes (P4).

Participant 4 also expects the CT to check lesson plans and make necessary alterations for more efficient teaching:

Additionally, I like my plans organized, so, as an experienced teacher, I would like my CT to check my plans and make comments about them (P4)

Another participant appears to be uncertain about the teaching profession and views CT as a mentor who can help with making career choices:

I am not really sure about my future career, there are many options around me, and I do not know which ones will be suitable for me, it would be nice if my CT can help me find the best way by sharing his/her experiences and knowledge (P7).

In response to the open-ended item in the questionnaire, Participant 10 expressed the necessity of having a CT who could lead the way in how TTs should teach. Moreover, she highlighted the significance of practice and the combination of knowledge:

My CT should be able to give direction - to prevent teacher-trainees from turning into fish out of the water, they can talk about the following. In reality, teaching conditions should be able to offer solutions to classroom management difficulties. Having knowledge of what to consider when addressing the age group. Theoretical courses we take at the university may be out of date until we graduate (P10).

The results showed that TTs requested to be shown affection, despite it not being an obligation of the CT. This suggests that they were feeling disconnected from the school, and were in need of a sense of belonging:

My ideal CT would behave to his/her students nicely, sincerely, and politely. He/she would do certain acts like being energetic in the classroom and ask about students' personal life (P15).

Although affection can be subjective, Participant 13 describes the specific criteria to feel affection from the CT:

> *My ideal CT would act as if we teacher-trainees are his/her younger siblings. We want to see affection and attention to ourselves during the practicum. I guess it can help us feel better in school as we are not a natural part of the school environment. At least we feel like it. I want a CT that can help me feel like I am an appointed teacher rather than a person that is trying to fit in school. (P13)*

It appears that the TTs in the study require a response to and consideration of their work from the CTs. Despite the TTs feeling competent, they have anxieties about their teaching. Furthermore, policy documents repeatedly stress the importance of reflection and feedback (HEC, 2018):

> *My ideal CT would give me detailed feedback. I find feedback as the most beneficial part of the practicum because when I teach in front of the class, I can't be mindful of my posture, mimics, etc. My ideal cooperating teacher should explain all the things I do good or bad during class time so that I can be more mindful of my behaviors to change them for better teaching (P4).*

Besides Participant 4, Participant 7 also emphasized the necessity of taking time to reflect in order to improve teaching capabilities and increase teaching skill:

> *My ideal CT can help me focus on achievable goals in my teaching by reflecting on and assessing my performance. I know theoretical knowledge about my area, but I do not know how to use this knowledge to teach the English (P7).*

The qualitative data make it obvious that the majority of the TTs' desires were fulfilled in terms of professional assistance, thorough responses, and fondness for mentoring and the like. Consequently, the quantitative data affirms that most of the TTs experienced what they wanted. To illustrate, Participant 1 talked about the aid she got from the CT. Furthermore, she drew attention what she learned at the university and what she observed at the school:

> *My cooperating teacher was able to help me in every way possible, and she was a great teacher and a professional. but- as I have observed, I realized that things we learn in schools and what she has applied in classes were 80% different within the means of constant use of GTM [Grammar-Translation Method] and deductive teaching (which I think benefits learners in these kinds of schools) which is always reminded by our university lecturers to avoid using (P1).*

Participant 12 discussed the type of feedback that CT provides and the characteristics it should include. It is obvious that the participant's desires regarding the quality of the feedback were satisfied:

The most important aspect of the practicum was the detailed, effective and supportive feedback to the student and I thought that my cooperating teacher would meet this, it was quite positive (P12).

The interview data made it clear that some participants were disappointed with the practicum process and anticipated negative outcomes. However, the CT and positive classroom environment exceeded their expectations.

Before my practicum I had concerns about students if they would meet us in a good manner or not. However; the moment I entered the classroom all my concerns disappeared because there were a bunch of cuties greeting us with big smiley faces. There was not much differences from my expectations on this experience, moreover my CT's positive energy and passion on teaching English language made me feel blessed. I gladly chose this department with the aim of being an English language teacher for everyone willing to learn and enhance their English. Therefore I'm satisfied with the experience I had (P16).

Participant 10 expressed many favorable views about her CT. Overall, it is apparent that the expectations concerning the typical duties of a mentor, such as providing feedback and being a good role model for students, are fulfilled:

I think that my expectations were met in every way. Because I had criteria such as the use of technology, communication with students, making students love English, not discouraging the student's enthusiasm for learning while giving feedback, and not behaving in a way that would create prejudice against English. My cooperating teacher met all of these criteria (P10).

By examining the results of post-practicum interviews and responses to open-ended questions, it is evident that TTs who responded "disagree" or "strongly disagree" were subjected to negative experiences during their practicum. These issues included difficulties with material creation, uncooperative teachers, inadequate feedback, inflexible circumstances, and inadequate technological capacities. Despite the expectation that CTs should give necessary instructional aids to the TTs (HEC, 2018), Participant 13 seems to be facing an issue with material production and compelled to devise materials not only for the classes TTs teach, but also those taught by their CT:

Our CT made us prepare materials for both our teaching and her teaching, it was really hard for us to afford material costs every week. I wish we did not have to prepare materials each week. I mean, I understand when we make materials for our teaching, but I cannot understand how materials that we are not going to use will develop our teaching (P11).

The HEC (2018) policy document stresses the significance of collaboration in the practicum process, and even the teacher who supervises TTs is referred

to as a "CT." It is evident that cooperation is a major factor in the practicum. The following is a comment from Participant 11:

> *I encountered different situations than I expected in my school experience. I was in secondary school. The level of the students was not what I expected. To explain, the 5th graders were at the 3rd or 4th-grade levels. The 6th graders were also at the 5th or 4th-grade levels. While I was teaching, my cooperating teacher was reluctant to cooperate with me. It negatively affected my practicum (P11).*

When asked about the ideal actions and duties of a CT, feedback was always the most crucial factor. Besides receiving negative and positive comments about feedback from Participants 2, 12, and 17, they also mentioned their unfavorable experiences about it:

> *I could not get the essential feedback about the way I taught and my lesson plans except for 'It was very good' (P2).*

> *It was a good experience for me to take part in this kind of atmosphere even if it was not enough in terms of feedback (P12).*

> *I don't think we were observed very extensively by our cooperating teacher (P17).*

It became evident from some responses that emotional support has a huge weight in TT's expectations from CTs. Participant 18, for instance, encountered a rigid attitude from the CT and felt emotionally distressed as can be seen in the following remarks.

> *I expected the cooperating teacher to be flexible, understanding, but I did not receive such a feedback, and what I remember from the internship was the reports and lesson plans that we have written more than 50. I am writing this with regret and wish success to my friends who will be working with our lovely cooperating teacher this term (P18).*

A number of TTs who took part in the study mentioned that some CTs use age-old techniques to teach without any help from technology:

> *She also did not use technology in many cases, I think students were bored of the classes and so students' interest was very low (P1).*

Taken together, qualitative data indicate that the majority of the CTs met the expectations of the TTs, who appear to be satisfied with the practicum process. However, the potential for negative experiences should be addressed by the relevant authorities, given that TTs may be negatively influenced by such encounters.

5. Discussion

In response to the first research question (i.e., the expectations of TTs regarding the competencies and actions of their ideal CT), the pre-practicum quantitative data showed that there were expectations of high competency from TTs. Qualitative data were more useful when assessing the ideal CT from the TT perspective. Themes found in the qualitative data concerned professional guidance, affection, feedback and reflection, emotional support, communication competence, self-assessment, innovation and showing realities of the profession. Comparison of the two types of data showed that TTs expected their CTs to provide reflection, affection and professional guidance. Additionally, the qualitative data suggested that TTs felt anxious during the practicum process and wanted their CTs to help them feel comfortable before a class. Post-practicum data also suggested that when TTs had supportive CTs, they experienced positive outcomes. Furthermore, being sensitive to the emotions of TTs was implicitly mentioned. It can be concluded that TTs expected their CTs to have official mentoring responsibilities competently, with the most highlighted need being assistance with feedback and reflection. Qualitative data supported this outcome and further demonstrated the needs of TTs. The current research also highlighted that TTs wanted to develop their teaching skills without negative emotions, due to poor communication.

Regarding the second research question, qualitative data concerning ideal CT competencies and actions were compared with mentoring responsibilities identified by HEC (2018). The most recurrent themes were professional guidance, affection, feedback and reflection, emotional support, communication skills, self-assessment, creativity and demonstrating the realities of the profession. Even though supportive behaviors can make TTs feel more at ease in the school environment, as they typically experience anxiety, these are not part of the official duties of CTs. However, it is difficult to draw a sharp line between what is officially required and what is not in regards to duties. For instance, professional guidance is a duty, but when TTs ask for career advice, it does not fall into the official duties. On the other hand, when teaching and classroom management guidance is taken into consideration, it is seen as an official responsibility of CTs. With that being said, particular acts such as sincerity, treating the trainee as a colleague, sharing experiences, being open to innovations, a good communication style, and displaying the realities of the practicum process do not stand among the official duties of CTs.

The data from pre- and post-practicum studies showed that there are slight differences between TTs' expectations and experiences. Although it is hard to make definitive claims, it is clear that the expectations and experiences of TTs in relation to their CTs are largely similar. Although the data did not show

drastic differences, further research is still needed to more accurately determine the outcomes. Moreover, even small differences should be taken into account due to the potential outcomes of negative experiences. It is ideal for TTs to have similar experiences in all areas, rather than excellence in one school and mediocre experiences in another. It is also important to note that negative cases, even if rare, should be given attention as they can have lasting impacts on TTs' professional teaching life.

Overall, the findings discussed in this paper suggest that TTs have expectations of their CTs that go beyond the official duties outlined by HEC (2018). In parallel with the findings of this study, findings from the studies of Hudson and Nyugen (2008), Ambrosetti (2010), Le and Vasquez (2011), Martinez (2016), Izadinia (2015), Aderibigde et al. (2018), Merç (2004), Gökçe and Demirhan (2005), Sağ (2008), Damar and Salı (2013), Alpan et al. (2014), and Orsdemir and Yıldırım (2020) all emphasize the need for CTs to provide guidance, reflection, affection and professional guidance. Furthermore, the current data suggest that TTs would benefit from supportive behaviors from their CTs, such as being sensitive to their emotions and helping them feel comfortable before a class. The data also highlight the need for CTs to improve their feedback and mentoring practices, rather than reducing mentoring to just modelling.

However, it is important to note that even though these expectations may be voiced, they do not necessarily fall into the official duties of CTs. For instance, professional guidance is a duty, but when TTs ask for career advice, this does not fall into the official duties. CTs should also be aware of the differences between the expectations and experiences of TTs, and any small differences should be taken into account due to the potential outcomes of negative experiences. Therefore, it is important for CTs to be aware of their role and responsibilities, as well as the expectations of the TTs, in order to ensure a successful and productive practicum experience.

6. Limitations of the study

In the study, 58 final year TTs were asked to identify their ideal competencies and personal attributes for their CTs, with the answers collected through different data collection methods. Additionally, the role expectations and experiences of these CTs from a TT perspective were obtained through online questionnaires. However, as Rakicioglu-Soylemez and Eroz-Tuga (2014) indicate, it is likely that TTs are not aware of what they should expect from their CTs, which could limit the study since most of them may not anticipate certain roles and acts that could help them to grow professionally. Some of the TTs only realized that some of the duties were missing only after policy documents were presented to them. Furthermore, the

study only coversed one ELT faculty in Turkey, meaning that the findings can be considered case-specific, thereby cannot be generalized. Various factors, such as success rate of university exam, ethnicity, religion, learning background, aptitude for teaching, and many others, may influence TTs' ideal CT. Thus, a study that includes more participants with different parameters may enhance the generalizability of the research.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

This study has explored the expectations of TTs of their CTs during a practicum experience. Pre- and post-practicum data exposed that TTs expected their CTs to provide reflection, affection and professional guidance. Furthermore, the data highlighted the importance of supportive behaviors from CTs, such as being sensitive to the TTs' emotions and helping them feel comfortable before a class. It is important to note, however, that these expectations may not necessarily fall into the official duties of CTs. Therefore, it is essential for CTs to be aware of their role and responsibilities, as well as the expectations of the TTs, in order to ensure a successful and productive practicum experience.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are provided for CTs:

- Improve feedback practices: CTs should upgrade their feedback practices to include more reflection, as well as providing constructive criticism, rather than just modelling.
- Provide emotional support: CTs should be sensitive to the emotions of TTs and help them feel comfortable before a class.
- Be open to innovations: CTs should be open to new ideas and innovations, as well as be willing to share their experiences with the TTs.
- Be aware of expectations: CTs should be aware of the expectations of the TTs, as well as their own role and responsibilities, in order to ensure a successful and productive practicum experience.
- Maintain professionalism: CTs should maintain a professional attitude and treat the TTs as colleagues, while also demonstrating the realities of the practicum process.

These recommendations are expected to help CTs provide a better practicum experience for TTs and help meet their expectations. Furthermore, these recommendations can be used as a guide for TTs in selecting a CT for their practicum experience.

It is obvious that further research is needed to better understand the expectations and experiences of TTs in relation to their CTs. Studies should explore

the impact of CTs' competencies and actions on TT outcomes and emotions, as well as the practices of CTs in providing feedback and reflection. Additionally, a comprehensive comparison of TTs' expectations and experiences in different contexts is needed to identify any differences between the expectations and experiences. Furthermore, research should analyze the role of CTs in providing guidance and support to TTs in different school contexts, and examine how CTs can be better prepared to meet the expectations and needs of TT. Finally, an investigation of how TTs perceive the role and responsibilities of their CTs should be conducted. All of these studies might provide valuable insight into the importance of CTs and the impact they have on the development of TTs during the language teacher education process.

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APPENDIX

Sample questionnaire items

I expect my mentor to:
- collaborate with me to make my teaching more efficient.
- organize school and class environment for effective practicum
- criticize my teaching application in a friendly and constructive manner.
- make use of information technologies such as technological devices in his/her teaching.
- guide me in a professional manner.
- lead me in my teaching with his/her professional competence.
- update himself/herself constantly to improve his/her professional skills.
- act flexibly when necessary
- assess and evaluate your teaching objectively throughout the term.
- see me as a future colleague instead of a student.
- help me with my professional development and enable me to observe his/her teaching and apply different techniques in classes