Mentoring Expectations and Experiences of Prospective and Cooperating Teachers during Practice Teaching

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Abstract: This study aimed to explore prospective and cooperating teachers' perceived and received roles and responsibilities regarding mentoring practices during practice teaching in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. Data were gathered from reflective journals of the prospective teachers and interviews with the dyad members of practice teaching. The findings of the study pose implications for practice teaching applications and indicate a need for an effective socio-professional network between the prospective and cooperating teachers during practice teaching. The study provides suggestions to involve the dyad members in the planning and application stages of the practice teaching experience.

Introduction

Practice teaching is an essential component of teacher education programs (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Ferrier-Kerr, 2009; Farrell, 2008; Borg, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Johnson, 1999), and is vitally important for teacher preparation (Gareis & Grant, 2014). Although classroom teaching, learning to teach through observations, reflecting on the teaching practices are the main constructs of practice teaching, the mentoring practices of the cooperating teachers (CTs) also play an equally significant role in the professional learning of the prospective teachers (PTs) (Hennissen, Crasborn, Brouwer, Korthagen & Bergen, 2011;Butler & Cuenca, 2012). During practice teaching, there is on-going professional interaction between the dyad members (Gebhard, 2009; Day, 1999) where CTs act as sources of initial consultation and observation for the PTs. However, due to differences in perspectives, expectations, personalities, and lack of definitional clarity about the roles assigned to the participants, reaching a mutual understanding between CTs and PTs during practice teaching can become a challenge (Hobson, 2012; Butler & Cuenca, 2012).

There is not a common ground in defining the context of relationship among the dyad members of practice teaching (Gareis & Grant, 2014). In the context of initial teacher education (ITE), a number of sources have cited different priorities of mentoring practices during practice teaching experience (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2006; Grossman, Hammerness & McDonald, 2009; NCATE, 2010; Greenberg, Pomerance & Walsh, 2011). One of the reasons of a variety of priorities could be because mentoring is considered as successful where the mentoring practices are 'personalized and adapted to the needs of the individual mentee' (Hobson, 2012, p. 67). Although, mentoring is largely a socially constructed practice (Butler & Cuenca, 2012), documenting the efforts and characteristics would allow the ITE programs to shape the professional experiences of the participants (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). Considering the role of mentoring practices in professional learning of PTs, learning to teach is often assessed in close relation to the context where teaching practice takes place (Tillema, Smith & Leshem, 2011).

Hence, in order to meet the professional learning needs, create an effective context for mentoring relationships, and provide a basis for a productive mentoring, the expectations and experiences of the dyad members of practice teaching need to be identified and examined. The present study focuses on both PTs and CTs' reflections on their perceived and received roles, responsibilities regarding mentoring practices during practice teaching. In line with this aim, the research questions are formulated as follows: 'What are the perceptions of prospective EFL teachers about the mentoring practices and their professional role in practice teaching?' and 'What are the perceptions of CTs about the mentee roles of PTs and their professional role in practice teaching?'

The role of mentoring in practice teaching

Mentoring during practice teaching has received a prominence in recent years due to the perceived need for change in the organization of the field experience in ITE programs (Walkington, 2005; Ferrier-Kerr, 2009; Hennisen, et al., 2011). The need for change stemmed from a variety of sources: 1) the increasing need for and the recognition of the value of professional learning in natural workplace environment (Bolhuis & Voeten, 2001; Korthagen, Loughran & Russell, 2006); 2) the questioning of the practical relevance and applications of theory-based courses that are often blamed for the disconnectedness between university education and field-based teacher training (Cabaroğlu, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Yeşilbursa, 2011; Zeichner, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust & Shulman, 2005); and 3) the reported professional value of mentoring practices both for CTs (Arnold, 2002) and PTs (Koç, 2012) in school-based learning environment. In a number of studies, the role of the professional networks between CTs and PTs during practice teaching, implications for professional development for both groups (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009) and contributions to the process of learning to teach (Lindgren, 2005) have been reported.

Mentoring has an important impact on the early teaching experiences of PTs (e.g., Asención-Delaney, 2012; Daloğlu, 2006). It requires special attention to create a systematic effect on the learning of teaching so that practice teaching becomes an effective professional learning experience for PTs. Malderez (2009) defines mentoring as a process crucial to teacher development in terms of focusing on the teachers' ability to succeed in a specific workplace context. Thus, mentors play a variety of roles, such as *self-trainer, networker, social, academic and psychological supporter* (Koç, 2012); *socializing agents, instructional coaches, emotional supporters* (Butler & Cuenca, 2012).

Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010, p. 52) defined mentoring as 'a non-hierarchical, reciprocal relationship ... follows a developmental pattern within a specified timeframe and roles are defined, expectations are outlined and a purpose is (ideally) clearly delineated'. In a practice teaching context, CTs are expected to report on PTs' performance and recommend a grade to the university supervisor (US) at the end of the experience. Thus, CTs are involved in the overall evaluation, which limits the opportunities to building up a fully confidential relationship between a CT and a PT and brings power-play (Sundli, 2007) into consideration. Considering mentoring applications as 'a power-free, non-assessing communication in a symmetrical relationship' (Sundli, 2007, p. 210), the relationship between the dyad needs to be confidential, requiring openness and trust (Podsen & Denmark, 2007). Therefore, when the definitions of mentoring roles are not defined, participants of the mentoring experience rely on their own schema of what

they understand from their professional experience (Haggard, Doughtery, Turban & Wilbanks, 2011).

Because mentoring practices in teacher education are based on a variety of contexts including prospective, in-service, or distance teacher education, the expectations and roles are not clearly and systematically conceptualized by the national councils of education (Hudson, 2004; Koç, 2012). Due to its context-dependent nature, it is difficult to set and determine a specific definition of the mentoring roles and practices (Lai, 2005, 2010). Thus, the lack of agreement between the definitions and the actual practices of mentoring practices are evident in practice teaching applications in Turkey (Koç, 2012; Kuter & Koç, 2009),which leads to problems in achieving a systematic and objective mentoring process during practice teaching.

Most of the mentoring research conducted in Turkey focused either on the perceptions of CTs as mentors (e.g. Koç, 2012) or PTs as mentees (e.g. İlin, İnözü & Yıldırım, 2007).From either perspective, the reflections on the professional learning processes, problems that caused burnout and stress on the participants during practice teaching were examined (e.g. Seferoğlu, 2006; Boz & Boz, 2006; Çelik, 2008; Haser, 2010). However, a comparison study on the perspectives and expectations of the dyad members, definition of roles and responsibilities throughout the practice teaching have not been conducted in the EFL teacher education context in Turkey.

In this respect, the current study highlights how participants define each other's role and the extent to which they meet their expectations from mentoring practices. Although the study builds upon previous studies in the literature, it differs in a number of significant ways. First of all, it focuses on the ways that PTs and CTs reflect on the assigned and perceived roles and responsibilities throughout the practice teaching. Second, the study attempts to examine the reflections of the dyad regarding their priorities in the socio-professional network of practice teaching. Finally, the study aims to determine the needs of the dyad members to maintain and expand the professional nature of mentoring relationship during practice teaching.

Methodology

Research Design

This exploratory case study utilized qualitative research design and data analysis techniques because of its unique nature to 'gain a first-hand understanding of social *realities* involved … in describing and analyzing values, behaviors, settings and interactions of participants' (Sultana, 1991, p. 59). In the current study, insights into the experiences and expectations of PTs and CTs were given priority while examining the socio-professional network dynamics of the dyad members of practice teaching.

It is a participant-oriented study aiming to identify and examine the opinions of the participants with a holistic focus; it is context-sensitive and inductive in terms of the data interpretation process drawing on different perspectives (e.g. Yin, 2009, 2011). Therefore, a case study methodology was ideal to implement in the current setting of the study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with both groups of participants, and reflective journals kept by the PTs throughout the semester.

Research context: Prospective EFL teacher training and practice teaching

The study context is the undergraduate English Language Teaching program at a large state-run university in Ankara, Turkey. The university is an international, English-medium university, and the students of this particular program are prospective EFL teachers. In Turkey, Faculties of Education are responsible for training PTs since the foundation of Council of Higher Education (CHE) (Çakıroğlu & Çakıroğlu, 2003; Yüksel, 2012). According to the latest curriculum development by CHE (2007), EFL PTs are enrolled in a variety of field-related courses (e.g. language teaching methodology, linguistics, literature) and pedagogical courses (e.g. educational psychology, materials and program evaluation) throughout their undergraduate studies. As a component of the curriculum, EFL PTs have to take two field experience courses in the senior year. The first one is School Experience that requires PTs to conduct observations on the teaching practices of CTs at a cooperating primary and/or secondary school. In the final semester, the PTs take their second field experience course, Practice Teaching, which requires them to conduct observations of the teaching practices of the CTs and to teach self-prepared lessons. Throughout practice teaching, EFL PTs are engaged in attending the English language classes at the cooperating schools, designing lesson plans, materials and incorporating assessment tools to their teaching practices while they are working with CTs at the cooperating schools and attending the university seminars by the supervisors (Eren, 2012, 2013).

Participants

The PT group participated in the current study consisted of twenty-two senior EFL PTs (male=5, female=17) at the aforementioned ELT program. EFL PTs in this program were divided into 8 sections in an alphabetical order for practice teaching. The PTs that participated in the current study were assigned to the section of one of the researchers who was the university supervisor in the present study. Therefore, a convenience sampling strategy (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) was utilized.

The cooperating school selected for this particular section was a state-run secondary school in Ankara, Turkey. The year of experience of the CTs attended the study (N=4, female) varied from eight to fifteen years. Due to the fact that there are no specified requirements proposed by the CHE (1998) for CTs to become mentors, administration of the cooperating school determine the assignment of CTs as mentors. The CTs participated in the present study were assigned as mentors to a number of PTs in the previous years.

In this study, the researchers assumed a dual role – that of researchers and of supervisors. Within this framework, particular attention was paid to guiding and helping the PTs to engage in teaching practices at every stage of the practice teaching experience. At the same time, as the researchers engaged in a case study, collecting data from multiple sources utilizing multiple was aimed. Prolonged engagement with the participants, which is regarded as one of the defining qualities of qualitative research, enabled the researchers to be a natural part of the study, build trust with participants, get familiar with the school-context culture, and check for misinformation that stems from distortions introduced by the researchers or the participants. This context provides researchers with direct access to data sources, and this leads to obtaining an insight into the phenomenon, and to understand, interpret and analyze it effectively (Creswell, 2007).

Data collection procedures

The database of the study consisted of written (reflective journals) as well as audio-recorded data sources (audio-recorded interviews). Table 1 summarizes the data sources of the study. The reflective journals (N=110) examined for the study were kept by the PTs biweekly throughout the practice teaching course. The reflective journals were one of the requirements of the course but they were not evaluated. All PTs voluntarily participated, systematically kept and submitted the journals. The semi-structured interviews with the PTs and CTs were conducted towards the end of the semester. The participants were given an informed consent form to participate in the study and asked to choose their pseudonyms. In addition, the data sources were labeled as *Int.* for the interviews and *RJ* for the reflective journals with the number of the journal entry. A reflective journal entry of a participant was referred with the pseudonym of the participant and the number of the reflective journal, (e.g. Mina, RJ1).

Data Source		Group(s) Collected	Context for Collection	Quantity	Special Aspects
Written	Reflective Journal entries	PTs	Out of class	110 entries	Reflective and retrospective notes
Data Source		Group(s) Collected	Quantity of Recordings	Length of Recording	Total length (approx.)
Audiotaped	Semi-structured face-to-face interviews	PTs	22	Approx. 55 min.	20 hours
		CTs	4	Approx. 45 min.	3 hours

Table 1: Summary of Data Sources

Reflective Journal Entries

In the field of teacher education research, journals and autobiographies have been widely employed to support and study teachers' understandings of their own learning and teaching practices (Borg, 2006). Reflective writing has also been used in the field of teacher education to document teacher development, encourage reflection and receive feedback on teacher education courses (Bailey, 1990; Johnson, 1994; Appel, 1995; Numrich, 1996; Sakui & Gaies, 2003).In language teacher education research, reflective journal writing is used with other data collection sources (e. g. observations, interviews) to provide additional insights into the cognitive processes of the practitioners (Borg, 2006).

In order to have a clear understanding of their practice teaching experiences, the PTs in the current study were asked to keep reflective journals that consisted of open-ended reactions and observations about their practice teaching experiences. These included comments about the students, the curriculum, the teaching practices of the CTs, lesson planning and the practice, in-class instructional activities, post-lesson feedback and the teaching experience itself.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with both groups of participants in order to gather an in-depth understanding of the perceived and received nature and essentials of mentoring practices according to expectations and experiences of CTs and PTs. Since semi-structured interviews provide rich data for identifying personal and professional experience

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), this reflexive approach to data collection made it possible for the participants 'to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 349).

In light of the techniques, principles and procedures proposed in Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the semi-structured interviews with PTs and CTs were composed of open-ended questions asking both groups of participants to describe and clarify their experiences, expectations and self-perceptions of their role in the socio-professional network of practice teaching. In order to examine the essentials of mentoring practices received by the participants, they were also asked to address the challenges they experienced in the process of practice teaching. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researchers. All participants were asked questions related to the themes framed around the following:

1. The mentoring and mentee expectations during practice teaching. The participants were asked to define mentoring practice and its significance in practice teaching, in addition to their experiences and expectations during this process.
2. The participants' perceived professional role in practice teaching. The participants were asked to reflect on their role in contributing to the current professional learning context during practice teaching.
3. Challenges experienced and suggestions to improve the socio-professional interaction during practice teaching. The participants were asked to discuss the challenges they encountered and provide suggestions to mentoring practices during practice teaching.

Data analysis procedures

The study aimed to provide insights of the participants about their roles in the process and priorities of mentoring practices and applications. The gathered data were coded and categorized by using the constant comparison method based on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Qualitative data analysis software (NVivo 9) was used to code, store and analyze the data. In order to label the emerging categories and concepts, first the interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Second, the reflective journals were segmented into the framework developed through the transcription analysis of the interviews. The data analysis procedures were framed around inductive analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Miles, Huberman& Saldana, 2014). During the content analysis, coding, noting and memoing strategies (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) were carried out.

The data were first organized without any theory imposed and the emerging categories were identified accordingly. Both researchers read and re-read the categories by highlighting and tagging the key words and sentences. The emerging themes represented the participants' perspectives on their professional interaction during practice teaching. The researchers checked the coding consistency by calculating the agreement percentages to test inter- and intra-coder reliability.

Results and Discussion

The content analysis of the data suggested that there were three reoccurring themes regarding the mentoring practices: role expectations, experiences, practices and self-perceptions, in addition to challenges encountered during practice teaching with possible suggestions. In the following sections, the themes will be examined from each participant's perspective.

Mentoring expectations and experiences throughout the practice teaching

Although there are studies suggesting that mentoring is mutually beneficial for both mentors and mentees and could be used as a way of school-based professional development (Carpenter & Blance, 2006; Hawkey, 1997; Buetler & Cuenca, 2012; Hudson, 2012), the roles assigned to the stakeholders of practice teaching described in the Turkish context are in non-specific terms without any stated objectives to be achieved or criteria to be evaluated. Although CTs are involved in the evaluation and assessment aspect of practice teaching, they are considered as mentors in the CHE regulations (1998) and their mentoring roles are defined as guides, advisors, and encouragers to PTs. However, the socio-professional nature of the mentoring applications is not defined, which ignores the basis for professional collaboration between the CTs and PTs. In this study CTs and PTs were used as interchangeable terms for mentors and mentees.

Expectations of the Dyad

In order to analyze the mentoring and mentee expectations and characteristics, both groups of participants were asked to define mentorship and identify their roles in the process, in addition to their expectations within the socio-professional context (Tang, 2003) of practice teaching.

PTs' expectations

The expectations of the PTs were grouped under two main themes: instructional and mentoring practices of CTs (See Figure 1). In terms of instructional practices, PTs highlighted their desire to observe CTs as *role models* in the classroom, both professionally and at a personal level. In terms of professional modeling, PTs expected CTs not to make any language related mistakes, use English as a medium of instruction, and increase the student engagement. Considering PTs expectations from CTs, the role of mentoring practices of the CTs was also highlighted. PTs expected CTs to provide detailed, constructive feedback by providing support and encouragement. In addition, in terms of maintaining a role in the socio-professional context, PTs expected CTs to assist the transition phase of getting to know the dynamics of the school environment and guide PTs to act as future colleagues and professionals in the school environment.

Mentor roles	Role definition
Instructional practices	--Uses target language as a medium of classroom language --Understands, engages and motivates the students in class --Is always motivated and enthusiastic about teaching, consistent and objective in all stages of teaching
Mentoring practices	--Provides constructive written/oral feedback and professional support --Creates and maintains a welcoming socio-professional context for PTs

Figure 1 : Expectations of the PTs

Instructional practices of the CTs

PTs reflected on their expectations from CTs as to use English as a medium of instruction at all times in the classroom. According to the reflections of the PTs, CTs preferred to use Turkish most of the time either to give instructions or to teach the content. PTs were confused with the fact that in the undergraduate courses, target language-use was given the priority, whereas in the actual classroom setting, learners were exposed to the target language through their native language. PTs questioned the value of target language use in the English language classes. One of the PTs, Esra, reflected on her confusion about the use of target language in the classroom by stating:

> "…at the beginning of the lesson, she [the CT] introduced the lesson in Turkish… but then I realized she told everything in Turkish and asked students to complete the exercises in English… She used Turkish as a medium of instruction but expected the students to learn English…"

In addition, PTs focused on the relationship the CTs had with the students in the classroom. In their personal relationships and conversations with the students, PTs emphasized CTs' ways of getting the students involved in the learning process. Some of the PTs were satisfied with the attitudes of the CTs, as Ceyda remarked

> "There is a very good connection with the students [in the classroom] and the CT… She [the CT] is always energetic and warm and by being so, she creates a warm atmosphere for her students during the lessons." (RJ3)

According to PTs' reflections, the ways of CTs understanding, encouraging and motivating the students revealed that consistent and motivating teacher behavior was the priority role of the CTs. On the other hand, there were PTs who were critical about the relationship CTs had with the students in the classroom. Emel, for instance, noted that

> "…What I was concerned about [considering CTs behavior towards the students] was the teacher's [CT's] attitude towards the children [students in the classroom]. I do not think students are enjoying the way she [the CT] addresses them… She uses nicknames while warning the students." (RJ1)

CTs' role was defined as the expert in applying language teaching methods during the instructional delivery and managing misbehavior in the classroom. According to the content analysis, PTs were highly concerned about the teaching motivations of the CTs. Some of the PTs gave a number of examples related to CTs' teaching motivation. Esra believed that the CT '…was very successful and motivated at the beginning of the lesson. She [the CT] greeted the class with enthusiasm' (RJ2). Esra added more in her reflective journal by commenting that '…She was very enthusiastic during the lesson… She was always smiling [to the students] and encouraging [the students who are having difficulty in the class] (RJ2)'.

On the other hand, some of the PTs considered the teaching actions of the CTs as lacking motivation and pointed out that '…She [the CT] seemed as if she was trying to wait for the time to pass [without doing anything] (Meltem, RJ2)'.From PTs' reflections, it can be concluded that PTs considered CTs' coming late/on-time to class or the amount they spent on the stages of the lesson, in addition to using every opportunity to involve the students in their learning process as signs of teacher motivation in the lesson.

Mentoring practices of the CTs

In terms of PTs' expectations from mentoring practices, PTs considered CTs' responsibility for providing constructive feedback after observing the micro-teachings as an important facet of mentoring. Although providing feedback is an essential component of practice teaching (Portner, 2008), due to the non-standard mentoring applications of CTs and inconsistent approaches to giving feedback lead to the understanding that giving feedback is a personal attribute of CTs. A group of PTs highlighted that some of the CTs were unwilling to spare time to give feedback after observing the teaching practices of the PTs. The following extract from a reflective journal of a PT provides an example of a CT's unwilling attitude for spending time to give some feedback:

> She [the CT] just gave me the book and told me the pages to be covered. After the lesson [PT's macro-teaching session], she was too busy to give feedback, and told me that she would give feedback in the following week …How could she remember what I [the PT] just did in the class after a week time? (RJ5)

On the other hand, another group of PTs reported that CTs devoted time for feedback but did not have a standard understanding of giving constructive feedback. The consistency of a CT's attitude for giving feedback was defined as an objectively and a standardized procedure. Nuray and Canan complained about the CTs' inconsistent attitudes towards giving feedback and further suggested that:

> CTs' attitudes in providing feedback are not consistent. One day, she gives constructive and detailed feedback, the other day, all she says is "It is OK" … One day she focuses on my ways of handling errors, the other day, she focuses on the organization of the worksheet I used in the class (Nuray, RJ5)
> This week I made my third macro-teaching [in the class, while the CT is observing] and I really felt unhappy and incompetent after my mentor's feedback. She did not focus on my teaching [lesson plans and materials used]; she just made comments about where I stood in the classroom [in terms of teacher movement]. (Canan, RJ5)

In addition to receiving feedback, PTs also emphasized the need for instructional support throughout the practice teaching. Some PTs had contradicting experiences with the CTs depending on the personal attitudes towards providing instructional support. The following extracts were examples of a PT's mentoring experience with two CTs. One of the PTs, Canay, compared the professional support received from two CTs indicating that one of the CTs asked her to 'observe (me) [the CT] and learn [as an ultimate source]'; on the other hand, another CT asked Canay to observe her to make suggestions to the CT's teaching practices, and discuss ways to improve future teaching practices. Here are two extracts of Canay's reflections about the two examples of mentoring practices she experienced;

> I asked her [one of the CTs] about what I should do to engage the students in my lesson [throughout the macro-teachings]. She said 'observe me [the CT] and learn [how to engage the students in class in the learning process]… Should I memorize her [teaching] actions? (RJ3)
> She [another CT Canay observed] was very professional and approached me as a colleague. She tried to find answers to my questions [related to teaching practices]. She [the CT] even asked my opinion about her way of teaching... I would become a teacher soon, and I want to become a colleague like her... (RJ4)

In addition to the roles of the CTs as provider of feedback and professional support, PTs also referred to CTs as socio-professional mediators at the cooperating school, introducing them to the students and school administration in addition to being responsible for creating the context for PTs to adjust. PTs did not have a consistent experience in terms of adjusting to the school context. Some of them were treated as colleagues, whereas others' professional role and socialization were completely ignored.

> What made me think about this [PT's feeling connected to the school context] was our mentor's [referring to CT] introducing us to the class [to the students in the classroom that the PT will work with throughout the practice teaching]. (Elif, RJ1)
> My peer and I sat at the back rows, the students [in the classroom] were looking at us as strangers… They [the students] were strangers to us as well… the CT came to the class...nodded at us and began the lesson…. She did not introduce us to the class… I was expecting her to introduce us to the students… (Eray, RJ1)

PTs specifically addressed the importance of the physical environment provided for the PTs by the school administration throughout the practice teaching. Although EFL PTs were given a separate room, they felt somewhat left alone and alienated from the socio-professional context of the school. The following extracts are examples representing PTs' eagerness to find out about the socio-professional context of the school that they are pursuing their practice teaching.

> We [referring to all PTs] were sent to a separate room where we were told to wait for the classes ... We were left alone…felt alienated from the school [actual teaching environment], the teachers [referring to the CTs], even the students... During the breaks, I noticed that some students were visiting the teachers... and we were not there [to observe the relationship between the CT and the students outside the class]. (Kubra, Int.)
> Yes we were given a separate room for our private use but I would prefer to be in the teacher's room, instead. (Pinar, Int.)

The given extracts of PTs' reflections showed that PTs were more concerned about the general teaching practices. They hardly mentioned their expectations and experiences about the lacks and needs of EFL teaching. PTs focused more on their teaching positions and processes of learning to teach rather than reflecting on their content knowledge and practice. Although strengthening the subject-matter knowledge of the PTs gains a prominence (NCATE, 2010), as Clift and Brady (2005) reported, in teacher education research, focus on content areas has moved from a focus on generic teaching behavior (e.g. lesson planning, time management, using materials) to a focus on thinking about the teaching context. In addition, PTs felt unattached to the school context despite the fact that they spent a great deal of time at the cooperating school during practice teaching. Providing a separate room was not a good way of involving PTs in the socio-professional context of practice teaching. In conclusion, PTs reflections on their professional role in the school context did not represent an effective way of involving in the profession.

CTs' expectations

As Figure 2 displays, CTs' expectations from the PTs throughout the practice teaching course were grouped under two main headings; instructional and mentee practices. In terms of

instructional practices, CTs reflected on their expectations from the PT as an assistant to the teaching process rather than a prospective colleague. In addition, in terms of mentee practices, CTs expected PTs to be respectful and attending observers in general, contemptuously referring to the PTs as 'students'.

Mentee roles	
Instructional practices	--shares and asks for teaching ideas
	--provides teaching assistance
Mentee practices	--informs about the content of the weekly tasks
	--attentive observers
	--successful and careful student
	--listens to the mentor
	--open to changes and act flexible

Figure 2: Expectations of the CTs

Instructional practices of the PTs

In terms of instructional practices, CTs highlighted the importance of informing CTs regarding the teaching practices that PTs were planning to implement in the classroom during the practice teaching. Although PTs were about to graduate and become EFL teachers, CTs agreed on the idea that PTs were not responsible for the students' achievement in class and CTs were responsible for the students' learning and academic achievement. Hence, PTs had to report on their teaching plans to be implemented in the classrooms. The following extract from an interview represents the feeling of responsibility that a CT carries throughout the practice teaching experience:

> "When PTs are in class, all they do is to take notes and look around…observe the classroom dynamics… It [observation] is effective but they [PTs] do not have a role in students' learning and achievement... It is me to who is going to answer all the questions that the administration or parents ask … My students are taking exams… their grades are very important... I need to be in control…" (Sena, Int.)

Therefore, CTs considered themselves as the only authority in the classroom to control the teaching practices of the PTs. Related to being in the control, all CTs participated in the current study agreed on the idea that PTs were in the class to provide assistance to the CTs. According to CTs, assistance was defined as 'adapting the lesson plans for the micro-teaching sessions, bringing extra materials to the class and helping CTs to evaluate the exams'. One of the CTs admitted that she had been away from the recent developments in the field due to the number of teaching hours. She emphasized that PTs were very good at materials development and they should assist the CTs in terms of preparing materials for the classes.

> PTs are great in materials development… I think I forgot about preparing materials and games [since her graduation from the undergraduate program] compared to PTs' creative ways of implementing the language teaching activities in the class. They [the PTs] are very good at it. What they should do is to assist CTs in preparing materials… We [CTs] do not have much time... We may need assistance as well. (Ada, Int.)

As Allen (2007) emphasizes the benefits of mentoring for both parties, the dynamic and complex nature of the mentoring relationship has become an agenda in the study. The critical role of mentoring is defined as the transfer and the continuation of knowledge throughout the

practice teaching experience. In addition to mentoring practices of the expert to novice, studies have also reported on reverse mentoring practices as well (e.g. Greengard, 2002; Allen & Eby, 2003; Allen, 2007).Reverse mentoring is considered as a way of encouraging professional learning in workplace and facilitating cross-generational relationship (Murphy, 2012). In reverse mentoring practices the novice shares their expertise with a senior colleague focusing on an updated subject or technological expertise (Murphy, 2012). The data revealed that EFL PTs also acted as reverse mentors during practice teaching and shared their updated skills in materials development with the CTs.

Mentee practices of the PTs

The second subtheme of the CTs' expectations from the mentee practices of PTs was being respectful and attentive observers of the teaching practices in the classroom. CTs observed that during class time, some PTs showed no or little interest to the lessons, seemed bored of the observations and some of them even were busy with a task unrelated to the observation.

> "…Sometimes I feel that my mentees [observing the CT during the class hour] are off the topic… I do not see the enthusiasm in their eyes… I feel that they [PTS] are losing their interest in teaching and focusing on something else." (Ada, Int.)

What CTs expected from PTs was showing the eagerness to learn to teach by attentively observing the CTs' teaching practices and listening to and applying their suggestions. Although CTs highlighted the importance of PTs' informing CTs about the weekly tasks beforehand, CTs emphasized being open to changes and acting flexible were also important assets of PTs due to the fact that classrooms were considered as a *jungle* from time to time. However, according to the content analysis, CTs did not offer any expectation regarding the school-based professional development of the PTs apart from becoming attentive assistants to the CTs.

When the reflections of the both participant group were compared, point of views of the participants were refuting. Although both focused on similar issues with regards to CTs' mentoring practices and PTs' processes of learning to teach; the role definitions and expectations from each other were based on different means. The reflections on the mentoring experiences identified the priorities of PTs as their socio-professional relationships with the CTs rather than their concerns related to foreign language teaching. In terms of professional learning, PTs considered receiving constructive, objective and consistent feedback as an important facet of mentoring. According to PTs' reflections on feedback, the inconsistent practices of the CT lead them to consider providing feedback as a personal trait and a favor from the CTs. In addition to variation in the mentoring practices, the PTs also reflected on the need for professional autonomy and collaboration during practice teaching. PTs highlighted the need for professional support as receiving opportunities to test out their own teaching practices in the classrooms during practice teaching. The tensions between the role assumptions emerged in the data analysis with the self-perceptions of the participants.

Self-perceptions of the participants

Pask & Joy (2007) define the focus of mentoring as attending to the mentee in addition to defining the educational context, teaching and mentoring issues. Therefore, defining the roles of the dyad in the mentoring process becomes a necessity before attending to the practices of each.

In order to examine the mentoring practices in the current context, the participants were asked to define their perceived role in the classroom and throughout the practice teaching experience in general. According to the thematic analysis, PTs perceived themselves as indirect agents in the practice teaching process, either as a stranger in the current context or as an assistant to the CT. On the other hand, CTs seemed to describe their role as active agents of practice teaching who are effectively taking care of the professional development needs of the PTs.

The intra-personal reflections of PTs focused on their role in the socio-professional network of practice teaching. The metaphors used by the PTs to define their role in the current context were thematically grouped according to the reflections of the PTs.

When PTs were asked to define their role in the classroom, some (Nuray, Merve, and Canay) highlighted that they were *guests* in the classroom and their role was to *make regular visits.* Moreover, they were *not given any responsibility in the classroom* considering that *they will leave the classroom to the actual teacher when they complete their micro-teachings*. As Eray and Canan highlighted, some PTs considered themselves as *students* [not as prospective professionals] and they were in the classroom *to sit at the back rows and just to observe and learn to teach*. Some PTs (Hakan, Murat, Esra, Ceyda) defined their role as *task accomplishers* as they *attend to the classrooms and complete the weekly teaching tasks then leave the school.* The PTs who defined themselves as task accomplisher considered themselves *somewhere in between a student and a teacher.* These PTs (Ceyda, Emel) could not decide *whether [they] were students or teachers in the classroom.*

There were two salient ideas represented in the following metaphors that PTs used to define their role during practice teaching. Özge characterized herself as a *ghost* for not having a concrete role in the teaching process and Meltem as an *owl* for *not belonging to the group and observing from outside*. On the other hand, a few PTs (Seda, Pinar, Kubra) considered themselves as prospective professionals.

In the interviews, the CTs described their role as *supporters* in terms of providing constant feedback and guidance. CTs asserted that the feedback they provided had an important role in the PTs' learning to teach. One of the CTs, Ada, claimed that all CTs observed *a significant change in the PTs' attitudes and teaching practices* throughout the practice teaching. CTs claimed that they also act as a *trouble-shooter,* as [they] *solve any kind of problem that PTs are experiencing* during practice teaching. Finally, all CTs asserted that the mentoring practices they provided were effective in terms of maintaining a negotiator role as a *messenger* by conveying the necessary needs of the PTs to the administration and the students in their classes. Hence, CTs' roles in the process were perceived as active and central agents of professional learning. When compared to PTs' perceived role definitions in the current context, CTs were more confident and content about their role in practice teaching.

Challenges and suggestions of the dyad

Although the perceptions of CTs and PTs regarding the practice teaching applications have been addressed in the literature (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009; Farrell, 2008; Hall, Draper, Smith & Bullough, 2008), the challenges and suggestions to solve problems have not been addressed from the perspectives of the dyad members of practice teaching in an EFL setting. In order to examine the role assumptions of the participants during practice teaching, participants were asked to address the problems they experience in order to have a fuller understanding of the mentoring applications during practice teaching. Thus, according to the data analysis, the perceived

problems and solutions examined by the participants evolved around three main topics (See Figure 3). Firstly, PTs emphasized the need for an evaluation of the applications of all stakeholders throughout the practice teaching experience at the cooperating school. Secondly, PTs reported the lack of a systematic approach to giving feedback needs a change. Finally, PTs stressed CTs' ways of preparing the necessary socio-professional context for PTs to get involved at the school setting. On the other hand, CTs referred to PTs' readiness for the profession, and lack of organizational procedures of practice teaching in general.

Prospective teachers	Cooperating teachers
Evaluation of practice teaching	Professional readiness of the PTs
Systematic feedback	Clinical supervision applications
Mentoring practices	

Figure 3: Challenges and solutions to practice teaching problems

PTs' challenges and suggestions

PTs suggested that cooperating schools, administration and the CTs as mentors need to go through an evaluation by the participants and the stakeholders at the end of the practice teaching experience. Since the current practice teaching applications require a number of applications by the participants, an overall evaluation to increase the quality of mentoring practices to maintain a *quality teaching* environment for the PTs is highlighted as a necessary advancement by the PTs (Nuray, Int.; Selda, Int., Canan, Int.). PTs suggested that CTs need to be evaluated at the end of practice teaching experience according to the extent to which they provide effective mentoring practices to PTs referring to possible opportunities for CTs to become mentors.

Secondly, the PTs asserted that the post-feedback sessions need to be based on a systematic objective procedure either by following a checklist or by filling out a form to maintain the continuity and consistency in the mentoring practices of the CTs.

Finally, PTs suggested CTs to spend a certain amount time with the PT and asked for a systematic *plan of action* to follow during their teaching practices in order to engage PTs in the socio-professional context of the cooperating schools. PTs expected CTs not only to address PTs' professional needs throughout the practice teaching experience but also to be informed about the CTs' weekly teaching schedule, lesson plans, topics to be covered throughout the semester, exams dates and even parent-school meetings.

According to the content analysis of the metaphors, it was observed that PTs were the subsidiary figures of practice teaching whereas CTs were the primary ones who contribute to the professional learning of the PTs. Similar to Patrick's (2013) study, the current study revealed conflicting narratives of practice teaching experiences of PTs and CTs. CTs focused on their contribution to the profession and act as the expert in the classroom, ignoring the professional practices of the PTs. According to the results of the current study, CTs were considered to be present in the class to assist and observe CTs' teaching practices.

CTs' challenges and suggestions

When compared to the challenges experienced and suggestions offered by the PTs, CTs seemed to have both parallel and conflicting statements. The challenges and suggestions focused on the professional readiness of the PTs, and the faculty-school partnership practices during

practice teaching. The CTs asserted that during practice teaching, they had the chance to spend time with the PTs and observe their personal and professional attitudes towards the profession. According to CTs' evaluations, PTs were experiencing problems in classroom management, keeping calm during the classroom teaching performances and having difficulty in adjusting their teaching practices for different levels of students throughout the semester. Due to lack of experience, PTs hesitated to make adaptations in the lesson plans and had difficulty in adding more to the teaching practices (i.e. alternative in-class activities, making contingency plans) on their own. As a suggestion, CTs offer noted the need to extend field experience courses throughout the ITE. Although benefits of extended teaching practice applications have been reported widely in the literature (e.g. Zeichner, 2006; Atay, 2007; Liaw, 2009), the effectiveness of extending the timeframe of teaching practice without objective and systematic indicators of performance could not reach its targeted aims.

In terms of faculty-school partnership, CTs asserted that the number of PTs attending the classes (approximately 5-6 PTs per CT) was too high to provide effective mentoring practices. Due to the high number of assigned mentees, CTs had difficulty in finding time for meeting the needs and responding to the demands of the PTs. As a CT highlighted during the interviews, the administration should ask CTs whether they want to have PTs in the classrooms or let CTs decide the number of PTs attending their classes.

> …My [the CT's] schedule is very tight and I [she] had difficulty in finding time to give feedback to my mentees [attending to Dora's classes] I think at the very beginning [before the semester begins], the administration could have asked whether we [all CTs at the department] wanted to have PTs or at least let us [CTs] decide on the number of mentees we would be able to work with. (Dora, Int.)

Conclusion

The current study examined the perceptions of EFL PTs and CTs about the mentoring practices and their professional role in practice teaching. According to the results of the study it is clear that PTs are not the only group of participants who need a comprehensive introduction to the practice teaching applications in terms of expectations and requirements. CTs also need to be informed about conducting mentoring practices addressing the professional needs of the PTs and understanding the mutual benefits of mentoring PTs during practice teaching. As it is suggested in the literature, CTs need an official training to become mentors (Ambrosetti, 2014; Portner, 2008). According to Kyriacou (2007, p. 4), 'a teacher may know how to teach well, but that may not translate easily into the role of how best to guide and help student teachers develop their own expertise'. Thus both universities and the schools as main institutions involved in practice teaching should consider offering orientation programs to the practice teaching stakeholders.

Considering the conflicting tensions during mentoring practices, foreign language teacher education programs need to ensure that effective practice teaching experiences are provided for PTs. In the micro setting, the professional interactions should be based on effective communication of the dyad (Malderez, 2009) so that PTs become familiar with the classroom context; are motivated to become teachers, and willing to pursue their career with increasing student achievement (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2005) as their focus. On the other hand, in a macro sense, both participant groups need to be aware of the roles (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009) and responsibilities expected by the other group. All participants of practice teaching should focus on

preventing the inequalities of role distributions among the members of the socio-professional network of practice teaching.

Current conception of the purposes of practice teaching is defined by the CHE (1998) in Turkey. Due to the vague, general statements and lack of performance indicators on the roles and criteria for practice teaching, the application in the school settings may vary significantly from institution to institution and even from CT to CT within the same institution. The lack of criteria and indicators leads to inequality and inconsistency among the mentoring applications. As a result, the evaluation and assessment of the practices are conducted subjectively on personal bases. The definition of roles and criteria for becoming a mentor in practice teaching needs an update according to the needs and expectations of the participants. The clarity of roles and criteria plays an important role in terms of providing consistent mentoring practices during practice teaching.

The practice teaching applications vary highly both within and across programs (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2005). Therefore, there is a growing need to examine the cases of foreign language teacher education practices in Turkey to grasp the gist of the practices that needs to be altered. In a broad sense, the study joins others in suggesting a framework for field experience courses and formulating guiding standards (Shulman, 1999); therefore, the results can be used as a framework to build up a knowledge base in this content area. Since field-based experience has been recently defined as a 'wicked problem' (Southgate, Reynolds & Howley, 2013), the foreign language teacher education studies need to focus on helping PTs with a 'local touch' in order to let PTs meet the local needs, wants and lacks (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 16).

Professional identity formation is an ongoing process of identification of professional self-image and negotiation with significant others, mediated by prior learning and teaching experiences. Although prior beliefs play an important role (e.g. Borg, 2006; Da Silva, 2005) in professional learning, Buitink (2009) reported that PTs can develop their own practical theory when they are given the chance to actualize their practices. Thus, socialization process through balancing the roles of the participants (Intrator, 2006; Ong'ondo & Jwan, 2009) is a very important aspect of practice teaching.

The nature of the relationship between PTs and CTs has an important role in PTs' beliefs, which depend on the enacted practices (Tang, 2003; Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). Moreover, socio-constructivist mentoring approaches improve sense of teacher efficacy beliefs, enthusiasm and job satisfaction of the recipients (Richter, Kunter, Lüdtke, Klusmann, Anders & Baumert, 2011). Additionally, the clarity of role definitions has the potential to increase the awareness of the assigned role and minimize potential problems (Koç, 2012) during practice teaching. Although PTs spend a considerable amount of time in the cooperating schools during practice teaching, the contingent and interactive aspects of practice teaching have been neglected in teacher education programs (Grossman, 2011) and the role of mentoring in shaping EFL PTs' learning to teach during practice teaching are issues we still have little information about (Borg, 2011). Thus, ways of integrating PTs in their professional learning experience interactively rand revealing their content related professional learning experiences require further attention in the foreign language teacher education studies.

The results of the current study convey a discouraging portrait of the developments field experience practices in EFL teacher education. Considering the experiences of the participants, the fact that similar problems that Zeichner (1990) examined still exist in the field experience courses is thought-provoking and challenging for foreign language teacher education programs.

Limitations and implications

Several limitations of the study warrant attention. First, the study examined a case of the mentoring practices at a school setting in Ankara, Turkey. The analysis of reflections of all PTs and CTs took place at the practice teaching experience during the semester could indicate a thorough analysis of the mentoring practices. Second, the role definitions and responsibilities of the participants assessed through self-report data collection procedures. The chosen format was used because the researchers were interested in having an in-depth understanding of the socio-professional context of practice teaching and the nature of professional dynamics of the dyad members of practice teaching. Data analysis of the study showed that CTs and PTs have contradicting interpretations of the mentoring practices. However, for further analysis, it would be interesting to collect additional data about the mentoring relationship from other stakeholders, such as the administration and the university supervisor to provide a deeper understanding of the professional interaction process. Third, the study focused on one aspect of field experience, socio-professional context of practice teaching focusing on mentoring relationship between the dyad and did not investigate other potential sources (i.e. administrative activities conducted at the cooperating school, school-faculty relationship). Therefore, future studies should consider the complex system of socio-professional dynamics of practice teaching and analyze their unique effects on PTs' professional learning activities. Sixth, the study is limited to examining the mentor–mentee relationship, the content of their discussions and the initial skills of PTs were not addressed. Since qualitative studies are bounded by the context in which they were conducted, the results may not be easy to transfer to other contexts (Yin, 2009). Therefore, a replication strategy to find out whether the pattern matches other cases and quantitative studies focusing on the nature of mentoring relationship would allow comparing and generalizing the results across studies, participants and contexts.

Despite the limitations, the study is significant in the sense that it contributes a voice from the dyad members of practice teaching in an EFL setting. In addition, the study raises concerns about the need to reconsider the field experience aspect of EFL teacher education programs in the light of socio-constructivist theories so that every participant finds the chance to practice theory and theorize their own practice. In addition, the results of the study could guide the policy makers and the CHE in Turkey for making the necessary revisions in the regulations of field experience courses.

Finally, CTs indicated that PTs experience a culture shock in the real teaching environment after spending most of their time with theoretical undergraduate courses. According to CTs, PTs had difficulties in adjusting to the realities of classroom setting and taking the control of the teaching practices. Therefore, they experience a great difficulty in handling their anxiety in the classroom in addition to the time management problems. Considering the fact that they are given a subsidiary role in the classroom, expecting PTs to be comfortable with the teaching context is contradicting.

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