

Examination of the Pre-service Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions on Teaching Practices: English Language Teaching Case

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the pre-service teachers' experiences and perceptions on teaching practices provided within an internship program carried out at a major state university in Turkey in a holistic way from various aspects. The participants of the study were 65 pre-service teachers studying in the English Language Teaching department at a state university in Turkey. For this purpose, in the study, an explanatory mixed-methods research design was used. A Likert scale questionnaire was conducted with the pre-service teachers to collect quantitative data. Then a semi-structured interview was conducted with eight pre-service teachers to support the quantitative data with qualitative data. The results show that the teaching practice offered within the scope of the internship program is effective as it responds to the needs of pre-service teachers in terms of professional development and mentoring support regarding their teaching professional skills. However, the findings also show that according to the pre-service teachers, there are some issues such as the length of the teaching practice, the inadequacy of mentorship support, organizational problems, and the limited freedom given during teaching practice need to be considered. Finally, the study concludes by presenting some recommendations in line with the results to improve the quality of the teaching practice provided to pre-service teachers in Turkey.

Keywords: English language teaching, internship program, mentorship, pre-service teachers, pre-service teacher education, teacher education, teaching practice

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Introduction

Teacher education has been acknowledged as an important part of the education system since it is assumed to influence the quality of the educational setting and learners (Öztürk & Yıldırım, 2014). This assumption has been supported by relevant studies (Goldhaber, 2007; Rockoff, 2014). If the quality of teacher education provided to pre-service teachers is increased, these prospective teachers will probably offer higher quality education to their students (Krumsvik, 2011; Røkenes & Krumsvik, 2014). Therefore, teachers play a key role and teacher education is important for every country (Azar, 2011; Instefjord & Munthe, 2016; Rafique, 2014).

In almost every country, teacher education is carried out by higher education institutes such as universities within internship programs (Wedell, 2017). The teaching practice in pre-service teacher education is considered a vital part of higher education as it provides professional preparation and development for pre-service teachers by connecting the theory and practice of the teaching profession (Capel, Leask, & Turner, 2006; Batool, Ellahi, & Masood, 2012; Fetherson, 2009; Grudnoff, 2010; Parveen & Mirza, 2012). Teaching practice is also a stage that may affect pre-service teachers' beliefs (Yuan & Lee, 2014), feelings, and decisions about the future (Merç, 2015). In addition, it enables pre-service teachers to develop an awareness of teaching-related issues and apply them in real teaching environments (Yalçın Arslan & Ilin, 2018).

Teaching practices differ in each country in terms of their implementation, method, and structure. In Australia, universities carry out pre-service teacher education courses and they also provide teaching practice to pre-service teachers by cooperating with schools. Pre-service teachers who are at the final stage of their undergraduate education are required to attend schools for 10 weeks to practice teaching. They are also assigned experienced teachers from the internship school to mentor the pre-service teachers during this teaching practice (New South Wales Institute of Teachers, 2009). In the United States of America, teacher education is mostly carried out by the universities that offer a four-year education with a teaching certification at the end of the undergraduate education. However, some of the states offer a teacher education model called Professional Development Schools (PDS). In this model, universities and schools work together and pre-service teachers work as intern teachers at the schools with the guidance of a mentor teacher (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2011). In Turkey, similar to Australia and the US, teaching practices are carried out by higher education institutes (universities), in coordination with internship schools. Currently, pre-service teachers in the final year of their education are assigned to schools for 13 weeks and they practice teaching under the supervision of a mentor teacher. During this period, they get regular feedback from both their mentor teachers and faculty instructors regarding their teaching performances.

As mentioned above, teaching practices are carried out in various but fundamentally similar ways. The relevant literature shows that the number of studies evaluating the teaching practices is limited both locally (Seferoglu, 2006; Coskun & Daloglu, 2010; Akcan & Tatar, 2012; Karakas, 2012; Öztürk & Yıldırım, 2014; Celen & Akcan, 2017; Yalçın Arslan & Ilin, 2018; Babanoğlu, 2021), and globally (Fetherson, 2009; Peacock, 2009; Grudnoff, 2011; Jackel, 2011; Batool, Ellahi & Masood, 2012; Caires, Almeida & Vieira, 2012; Alamri, 2018; Karim, Shahed, Mohamed, Rahman, & Ismail, 2019; Yin, 2019; Khatib & Rahgoshay, 2021). However, to improve and

maintain the effectiveness and quality of teaching practices offered in pre-service teacher education, regular evaluation is needed (Musset, 2010). In addition, teaching practice which is the main component of pre-service teacher education should be evaluated in terms of its strengths and weaknesses to improve and develop the teaching practices (Mehdinezhad, 2008; Peacock, 2009). Therefore, at this point, it is essential to examine the views, experiences, and reflections of pre-service teachers, one of the most important stakeholders of pre-service teacher education, on these practices (Ulla, 2016; Mangila, 2018). In this context, this study aims to include pre-service teachers as an informative group for teaching practice and to examine their experiences and perceptions holistically from different aspects such as “pedagogical knowledge, learning and professional development, socio-emotional aspects, professional and institutional socialization, support/resources/supervision, and vocational aspects”. For this purpose, the study tries to seek answers to the following research questions. According to pre-service teachers;

1. What are the perceived effects of teaching practices on pedagogical knowledge?
2. What are the perceived effects of teaching practices in terms of learning and professional development?
3. What are the perceived effects of teaching practices in terms of socio-emotional?
4. What are the perceived effects of teaching practices in terms of Professional and Institutional Socialisation?
5. What are pre-service teachers' experiences and perceptions of the Support/Resources/Supervision services provided in their teaching practices?
6. What are the effects of teaching practices on pre-service teachers' perception of vocational development?

Literature Review

It is widely accepted in the literature that teaching practice plays a very significant role in the professional development of pre-service teachers. Accordingly, teaching practice has recently become the focus of many studies, as it is considered one of the most important elements of pre-service teacher education (Çelik, 2008; Babaoğlu, 2021; Ariza-Quiñones, Hernández-Polo, Lesmes-Lesmes, & Molina-Ramírez, 2022). Qazi, Rawat, and Thomas (2012), state that teaching practice is a process that helps pre-service teachers to gain the necessary pedagogical development together with the skills required for the teaching profession (e.g. lesson planning, testing, classroom management, etc.)

The impact of teaching practice on pre-service teachers' professional development has been discussed in many studies (Şahin, Kartal, & İmamoğlu, 2013; Gore, Lloyd, Smith, Bowe, Ellis, & Lubans, 2017; Yang, Liu, & Gardella Jr, 2018) and its significance in pre-service teacher education has been acknowledged. It is accepted that teaching practice also provides the necessary opportunity for pre-service teachers in terms of developing professional knowledge and skills necessary for the teaching profession (Wikan, Klein, 2017; Celen & Akcan, 2017; Babanoğlu, 2021; Khatib & Rahgoshay, 2021). Therefore it is believed that as pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills regarding the teaching profession are developed, their perspectives toward the teaching profession change in a positive way, thus improving the quality of teachers (Caires et al., 2012; Tarman, 2012). At this point, it can be said that the quality of teachers is related to the quality of teaching practice (Haigh & Ward, 2004). The relevant literature also shows that factors such as

effective mentor support (Sim, 2011; Garza, Reynosa, Werner, Duchaine, & Harter, 2019; Phang, Sani & Azmin, 2020), the relationship with school administration, mentor teachers, and feeling like a valuable member of the community during teaching practice (Grudnoff, 2010), affect the quality of teaching practice.

In the literature, researchers have discussed the effectiveness of teaching practices from different perspectives. Öztürk and Yıldırım (2014) aimed to investigate the views of novice teachers on the effectiveness of teaching practice. Their results showed that the beginner teachers' views on pre-service teacher education changed significantly by the faculty they graduated from, the amount of teaching practice during their internship, and the support of the mentor teacher. On the other hand, Tüfekci-Can and Baştürk (2018) found out that pre-service teachers enjoyed the teaching experience in a real classroom and they also developed some traits regarding the teaching profession such as classroom management. Similar to their findings, the studies conducted by Celen and Akcan (2017) and Tindowen, Bangi, and Parallag (2019) highlighted that pre-service teachers regard the teaching practice as very effective as it was responsive to helping pre-service teachers to develop the necessary skills for the teaching profession by providing enough opportunity for teaching practice and providing mentor support. In another study, Seferoglu (2006), aimed to explore pre-service teachers' reflections on the teaching practice they were offered. She revealed that the pre-service teachers pointed out the inadequacy of the opportunity to practice teaching. Also, they stated that if they were offered more teaching practice, this would be more beneficial for their professional development as teachers. Supporting her findings, Jackel (2011) in the study conducted to investigate the effects of internship practices on pre-service teachers' development as teachers, suggested that the amount of teaching practice during internship and the quality of support affect the quality of learning how to teach. In a similar study, Mirici and Ölmez (2017) found that pre-service teachers demanded more teaching practices to develop their teaching skills. On the other hand, in the study conducted to identify the perceptions and experiences of pre-service teachers about teaching practice, Caires et al. (2012) found that pre-service teachers emphasized both some difficulties (e.g., stress and weariness) and some benefits (professional development, efficacy, flexibility) of teaching practice. It is also indicated in the study that the support provided by the supervisors positively affects the teaching efficacy of pre-service teachers.

The studies mentioned above (Öztürk & Yıldırım, 2014; Tüfekci-Can & Baştürk, 2018; Celen & Akcan, 2017; Tindowen et al, 2019; Mirici & Ölmez, 2017; Caires et al, 2012) show that teaching practices have been evaluated from various perspectives. At this point, it has been seen that the challenges and difficulties encountered by pre-service teachers during teaching practices show both similarities and differences. These challenges and difficulties are very important in terms of making teaching practices more effective. For this reason, reflections and perceptions of teacher candidates about teaching practice are very important as they are one of the most important stakeholders of pre-service teacher education (Ulla, 2016). However, it is necessary to evaluate the perspectives and reflections of pre-service teachers from more perspectives in a more comprehensive, that is, a holistic way as the number of studies concerning the effectiveness of teaching practices is very limited, especially in the Turkish context. Thus, this study aims to holistically evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching practice in various aspects.

Methods

In the light of the literature, the study aimed to examine the experiences and perceptions of English pre-service teachers regarding teaching practices within the scope of the internship program in a holistic way in terms of “pedagogical knowledge, learning and professional development, socio-emotional aspects, professional and institutional socialization, support/resources/supervision, and vocational aspects.” For this purpose, an explanatory mixed-methods research design was used. Explanatory research design is used to understand a topic or a problem more efficiently (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In the explanatory design, there are two stages. In the first stage, quantitative data is collected and analyzed. Then, in the second stage, the qualitative data is used to make an in-depth explanation of the quantitative data (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012) In the study, as the first step, quantitative data were collected and analyzed. Then, the qualitative data were collected from pre-service teachers through a questionnaire, and then interviews were conducted with the selected pre-service teachers.

Participants

A total of 65 participants, 39 female, and 26 male, aged 20-31 studying in the ELT department at a state university in Turkey, participated in the study. The necessary permissions were taken from the ethics committee of the university, and the participants voluntarily took place in the study. Demographic information of the participant is given in Table one.

Table 1. *Demographic information of the participants*

		Number	%
Gender	Female	39	60
	Male	26	40
	Total	65	100
Age	20-23	44	67.7
	24-27	19	29.2
	28-31	2	3.1
	32-Above	0	0
	Total	65	100

Teaching Practice Procedure

In Turkey, teaching practices are carried out in coordination with universities and schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MED). According to the instructions determined by MED (2020) on teaching practice to be made by pre-service teachers in internship schools; in each term, pre-service teachers actively teach at least four times in different weeks under the supervision of the mentor teacher. However, in the study calendar of the course, 13 weeks are specified for pre-service teachers to practice teaching. Out of these 13 weeks, four weeks are determined in cooperation with the pre-service teacher and the mentor teacher. The pre-service teacher plans and implements the lesson in these four weeks and receives feedback on its performance from both the practice instructor and mentor teacher. In addition, the practice instructor and the mentor teacher can ask the pre-service teacher to practice teaching more than four lessons "if necessary" and observe their performance. Pre-service teachers have to fill out a self-evaluation form for each lesson they teach during the term and evaluate their performance. In addition, they have to listen to the lessons of their friends with whom they practice in the same

class and evaluate the teaching skills of their friends with the peer assessment form. The responsible faculty member observes each pre-service teacher during this process and provides feedback about their performances with the mentor teacher. The teaching practice process can be seen in the list below (MED, 2020).

The weekly teaching practice process in Turkey is designed as follows:

- ✓ School observation (Observation of the mentor teacher's professional and institutional duties in the school)
- ✓ Review of curriculum and annual plan
- ✓ Lesson planning, selecting, and sequencing activities
- ✓ Teaching methods and techniques
- ✓ Selecting materials, and designing activities (Technology use)
- ✓ Management of the learning process, in-class communication, and interaction
- ✓ Questioning techniques
- ✓ Observing studies for knowledge-based and skill-based learning outcomes,
- ✓ Preparation and implementation of a lesson plan (four weeks)
- ✓ Evaluation of teaching practices

Research Instruments

In this study, to collect the quantitative data, a Likert scale questionnaire adapted from the “*Inventory of Experiences and Perceptions of the Teaching Practice*” developed by Caires and Almeida (2001), was used/ It consisted of 30 5-point Likert-type questions (from “1: Strongly Disagree” to 5: “Strongly Agree”) under the dimensions; “Pedagogical Knowledge”, “Learning and Professional Development”, “Socio-Emotional Aspects”, “Professional and Institutional Socialization”, “Support/Resources/Supervision” and “Vocational Aspects”. It also had two multiple-choice questions for demographic information of the pre-service teachers. To support the quantitative data with qualitative data, a semi-structured interview form with nine open-ended questions was used. The questions in the interview form were created to obtain comprehensive data on the pre-service teachers' experiences with each of the dimensions in the questionnaire. Eight pre-service teachers (four males, and four females) participated in the interviews. They were chosen among the pre-service teachers who attended teaching practices, and were volunteers to participate in the interview.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires was analyzed descriptively, and percentage, frequency, and mean scores were calculated. Data were analyzed using SPSS 22 software. Qualitative data obtained from the interviews were first transcribed, then using Nvivo 12 Pro software, content analysis was carried out. As a result of the content analysis, the themes, categories, and codes were created by the researcher. To ensure the reliability of these themes, categories, and codes, another researcher checked the coding of the analysis. Then, the final form of the coding of all data was given. In the findings section, sample statements of the participants were presented. While presenting these statements, participants were coded as P1, P2...

Results

The findings regarding the experiences and perceptions of the pre-service teachers on the teaching practice for each dimension were presented separately. First, the quantitative data obtained through the questionnaire, and then the explanatory information obtained as a result of the interviews about each dimension was presented.

Pedagogical Knowledge

The data obtained for the pre-service teachers' views on the effects of the Internship Program on pedagogical knowledge was analyzed, and the mean and standard deviation scores of their responses are presented in Table two.

Table 2. *Pre-service teachers' views on the effects of the internship program on pedagogical Knowledge*

Item No	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
7	"I know how to organize and maintain classroom management"	4.29	.63
1	"I know how to assess student performance in a classroom"	4.28	.67
2	"I can adapt my teaching based upon what students currently understand or do not understand"	4.28	.54
6	"I am familiar with common student understandings and misconceptions"	4.26	.71
4	"I can assess student learning in multiple ways"	4.06	.70
3	"I can adapt my teaching style to different learners"	3.92	.85
8	"I know how to select effective teaching approaches to guide student thinking and learning in language learning"	3.86	.90
5	"I can use a wide range of teaching approaches in a classroom setting (collaborative learning, direct instruction, inquiry learning, problem/project-based learning, etc.)"	3.78	.82

The views of pre-service teachers on the effect of the internship program on pedagogical knowledge are seen that they consider the effect of the internship program on providing classroom management (\bar{X} =4.29, Sd=0.63), evaluating student performances (\bar{X} =4.28, Sd=0.67) and adapting teaching processes according to students (\bar{X} =4.28, Sd=0.54) is high. On the other hand, it is seen that they view that the effect of the internship program on using various teaching approaches in classroom environments is relatively less than the other items. However, in general, the level of responses in all items is above the medium level. In the interviews with pre-service teachers, it was seen that the effect of internship practices on assessment of learner performance, teaching different types of learners, using different types of teaching methods and approaches, effective classroom management, and effective teaching were emphasized. Sample statements of pre-service teachers regarding these effects are given below.

"I learned how to manage a classroom, how to prepare for lessons, and how to use teaching approaches more effectively." (p.1)

"To be honest, before practicing teaching I thought that I would never teach a subject to students because I had no experience in teaching. After I practiced teaching I realized that I could teach any subject to any student." (p. 6)

"One of the benefits of the teaching experience was learning how to understand whether I taught effectively to students and whether they learned or not by learning how to assess their performances." (p. 7)

“The biggest contribution of the internship program during my teaching practice was that I learned how to make a lesson plan and prepare for my classes. This will help me too much when I start to teach professionally in my future life.” (p. 4)

Learning and Professional Development

The data obtained for the pre-service teachers' views on the effects of the Internship Program on learning and professional development was analyzed, and the mean and standard deviation scores of their responses are presented in Table three.

Table 3. *Learning and professional development*

Item No	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
11	“Teaching practice is an important complement of the first years of Initial Teacher Education”	4.35	.80
13	“The teaching practice has contributed to my personal development”	4.26	.73
12	“The first years of teacher education have prepared me for the demands of the teaching practice”	4.15	.83
9	“I’m developing the necessary skills for the autonomous and competent exercise of teaching”	3.89	.77
10	“Teaching practice was sufficiently varied to prepare me for the different challenges of the teaching profession”	3.66	.99

According to Table three, when the views of pre-service teachers on the effect of the internship program on learning and professional development are examined, It is seen pre-service teachers have positive opinions about the teaching practice offered in internship practices is an important part of teacher education They also consider teaching practice is also important for personal development ($\bar{X}=4.26$, $Sd=0.73$), and providing the necessary skills for the teaching practice ($\bar{X}=4.15$, $Sd=0.83$) is high. On the other hand, it is seen that pre-service teachers think the effect of the teaching program on other items is slightly lower. However, in general, the level of responses in all items is above the medium level. In the interviews with pre-service teachers, they stated that internship practices were very beneficial for their professional development, teaching practice, empathizing with teachers, and helping to feel like a real teacher. Sample relevant statements are given below.

“I think it was a very significant and useful process. It helped me to improve myself professionally and personally. It also allowed me to practice what I learned in the classroom. For instance, I learned how to manage a classroom, how to prepare for lessons, and how to use teaching approaches more effectively.” (p. 1)

“One of the main benefits of the Internship Program was allowing me to practice what I learned. So, I was able to see my strengths and weaknesses” (p. 7)

“The teaching practice was a good and beneficial experience for my future teaching. It helped me to develop myself both personally and professionally because I learned new teaching strategies and how to cope with difficulties.” (p. 2)

However, in the interviews, one of the participants (p.8) stated that the internship practice was a challenging process for him. He stated;

“I think it was a challenging experience for me. I had many difficulties during the internship. I felt very excited while teaching and sometimes I forgot what to say and what to do. Sometimes I thought I would not be a teacher in the future. Because I thought it would be a waste of time for me. Because I thought that I would not learn anything through the internship practices as it is just a compulsory process to be able to graduate, not a process to develop us as good teachers.”

Socio-Emotional Aspects

The data obtained for the pre-service teachers' views on the Internship Program in terms of socio-emotional aspects was analyzed, and the mean and standard deviation scores of their responses are presented in Table four.

Table 4. *Socio-emotional aspects*

Item No	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
14	“The teaching practice is positively affecting my self-concept and self-efficacy”	4.09	.91
16	“The teaching practice has been responsible for high levels of psychological weariness”	3.72	1.11
15	“The teaching practice has been responsible for high levels of physical weariness”	3.52	1.17
18	“The teaching practice has been causing disturbances on my diet patterns (schedules, appetite, type of food consumed...)”	2.61	1.49
17	“I've been having sleeping problems during the teaching practice (insomnias, nightmares, insufficient hours of sleep...)”	2.29	1.27

When Table four is examined, according to the views of pre-service teachers on the effect of the internship program on socio-emotional aspects; It is seen that they consider the effect of the internship practices on their self-concept and self-efficacy (\bar{X} =4.09, Sd=0.91) is of high level. However, pre-service teachers think that internship practices have an above-average effect on physical (\bar{X} =3.72, Sd=1.11) and psychological (\bar{X} =3.52, Sd=1.17) weariness. On the other hand, it can also be seen that pre-service teachers think that the effect of internship practices on their daily life is quite low. However, In the interviews with pre-service teachers, it was seen that some pre-service teachers indicated that during the internship program, they had some problems. Sample statements of pre-service teachers regarding these effects are given below.

“I had many difficulties during the internship. For example, I had to wake up too early to go to the Internship school, and it was far from my house. Therefore, I had some sleep problems and felt tired during the internship. Also, I felt very excited while teaching, and sometimes I forgot what to say and what to do. Sometimes I thought I would not be a teacher in the future.” (p. 8)

“I do not think I was able to practice teaching sufficiently. It was only one day a week. I needed more time to practice teaching.” (p. 4)

Professional and Institutional Socialization

The data obtained for the pre-service teachers' perspectives on the Internship Program in terms of professional and institutional Socialisation was analyzed, and the mean and standard deviation scores of their responses are presented in Table five.

Table 5. *Professional and institutional socialization*

Item No	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
19	“Working closely with experienced teachers has been very important to my learning process”	4.15	1.17
23	“I’ve got a good relationship with the school board	4.06	1.06
22	“I feel welcome in my school”	3.97	0.81
21	“I’m satisfied with the resources that the school provided for my teaching activities”	3.41	1.37
20	“It’s difficult to develop teamwork in the school where I teach”	3.01	1.05

According to the Table five, when the views of pre-service teachers on the effect of the internship program on professional and institutional are examined, It is seen that they think that the effect of the internship practices on the benefits of cooperation with experienced teachers on their learning process (\bar{X} =4.15, Sd=1.17), and their relationship with the school board (\bar{X} =4.06, Sd=1.06) is high. Another notable finding is that pre-service teachers' views on the item regarding the development of teamwork in the internship school are relatively lower (\bar{X} =3.01, Sd=1.05) than the other items. However, in general, the table shows that the level of responses in all items is above the medium level. Sample statements of pre-service teachers regarding these findings are given below.

“The organization of the Internship Program was awful at the very beginning. Our schedule changed a few times, and it was annoying because there was a conflict with our courses at the university. But the school administration helped us to solve this problem.” (p. 4)

“My mentor teacher and school administrators were very kind and supportive of me, therefore I didn’t have any problems during my internship processes.” (P. 1)

Support/Resources/Supervision

The data obtained for the pre-service teachers' views on the Internship Program in terms of Support, Resources, and Supervision was analyzed, and the mean and standard deviation scores of their responses are presented in Table six.

Table 6. *Support/resources/supervision*

Item No	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
25	“The supervision has been an important source of emotional support”	3.74	1.00
24	“My teaching practice is being closely followed by my supervisors”	3.38	1.35
26	“There is a good articulation between the university and school supervisor”	3.34	1.29

According to Table six, while it is noteworthy that the level of participation in the item, which emphasizes the significance of mentorship in terms of emotional support, is high (\bar{X} =3.74, Sd=1.00), it is seen that the level of participation of the other items is above the medium level.

In the interviews with pre-service teachers, they stated both positive and negative opinions regarding support, supervision, and resources provided during the internship practice. Feedback, advice, and support provided during their internship practice constituted their positive statements. Some of their positive statements are given below.

“My mentor teacher helped me with preparing for the lesson. Also warned me about the mistakes that I did while teaching and always encouraged me.” (p. 4)

“After practicing teaching my mentor teacher gave timely feedback about my experience. This allowed me to correct my mistakes and teach more effectively.” (p. 6)

However, interruption by the mentor teacher, not being given responsibility during teaching practice, and apathy of the mentor teacher was the main focus of their negative statements. Some of these statements can be seen below.

“My mentor was a very cold person, and usually ignored me when I asked for help or guidance. I usually experienced communication problems with my mentor teachers. I felt very worthless.” (p. 2)

“While I was trying to practice teaching, my mentor always interrupted me for the mistakes I made and warned me in front of the students. I was also not given full control of the classroom. This made me feel demotivated, and I even forgot what to say and what to do. My mentor affected me badly.” (p. 8)

Vocational Aspects

The data obtained for the pre-service teachers' perspectives on the Internship Program in terms of vocational aspects was analyzed, and the mean and standard deviation scores of their responses are presented in Table seven.

Table 7. *Vocational aspects*

Item No	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
27	“I'm beginning to feel like a teacher”	4.40	.93
30	“I think that teaching may fulfill my expectations in terms of: Personal satisfaction/ Social status/Professional satisfaction/Economical stability/ Quality of life (holidays, free time...)”	4.17	.63
29	“The teaching practice experience is making me believe that I have no vocation to be a teacher”	2.45	1.30
28	“If I could go back, I would have chosen another course/profession”	2.05	1.38

It can be seen in Table seven that pre-service teachers have a high level of perspective regarding the feeling like a teacher during the Internship Program ($\bar{X}=4.40$, $Sd=0.93$). In addition, they also have a positive attitude towards the item that teaching will meet their expectations in terms of personal satisfaction, social status, professional satisfaction, economical stability, and quality of life ($\bar{X}=4.17$, $Sd=0.63$).

On the other hand, it is also seen that pre-service teachers' perspectives towards the sufficiency of the Internship Program to prepare them for different challenges of the teaching profession are at a medium level. In the interviews with pre-service teachers, they stated the teaching practice provided within the Internship Program helped them to love their profession and

to feel like a real teacher. For example, Participant one stated, “Even if I do not think I adequately improved myself pedagogically, I am beginning to feel like a teacher.”

Discussion

In this study, the experiences and perceptions of English pre-service teachers regarding teaching practices within the scope of the internship program in a holistic way in terms of pedagogical knowledge, learning and professional development, socio-emotional aspects, professional and institutional socialization, support/resources/supervision, and vocational aspects were examined.

The general results of the study in terms of “pedagogical knowledge” and “learning and professional development” revealed that the teaching practice offered within the Internship Program adequately responds to the needs of pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers believe that teaching practice contributed significantly to their professional development as they learned how to prepare a lesson plan, how to maintain classroom management, and how to teach effectively using various teaching methods and approaches. The results support previous findings of the studies that emphasize the multiple gains and achievements that take place during teaching practice (Caires & Almeida 2005). Similarly, Capel, Leask, and Turner (2006) indicate that teaching practice is the stage where pre-service teachers can improve their proficiency more than at any other professional development stage. Khatib and Rahgoshay (2021) state that teaching practice prepares pre-service teachers for the teaching profession and helps them overcome the challenges and issues that may be faced in the future. On the other hand, in the pre-service teachers stated that teaching practice allowed them to experience how they can teach the language skills in a real teaching environment as it provided the necessary teaching practice of what was learned in classroom education which is supportive of the findings of the studies conducted by Ulla (2016), Wikan and Klein (2017), Ariza-Quiñones et al. (2022). As this result can be explained in general, it can also be evaluated in terms of English language teaching. English teaching covers the teaching of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills at almost all levels (Marlina, 2018). Therefore, English pre-service teachers may need both more observation and more teaching practice to gain sufficient experience in teaching processes. In the study, pre-service teachers also emphasized this situation in the interviews by stating that the length of the teaching practice is not sufficient and an extended period of teaching practice is necessary for a better experience. This suggestion is consistent with the research suggesting that providing an extended teaching experience provides pre-service teachers with the opportunity to assume the responsibilities of a teacher (Ewart & Straw, 2005; Seferoglu, 2006; Ngai, 2009).

The introduction of pre-service teachers into the teaching environment is described as a dynamic process that includes the adaptation and interactions of pre-service teachers with the experienced members of this environment (Caires et al., 2012). During this process, pre-service teachers try to adjust to the teaching environment and gradually develop the feeling of “belonging” with the help of the support they get from the school administration and mentor teacher. The feeling of “belonging” or in other words, acceptance and recognition to the community, gained by pre-service teachers has significant effects on their professional development, as well as their future teaching performances (Flores & Day, 2005; Krecic & Grmek, 2008; Lamote & Engels, 2010, Grudnoff, 2010). In the study, in terms of socio-emotional aspects, and professional and

institutional socialization, the results showed that pre-service teachers generally had good relationships with their mentor teachers, and school administration in the internship schools. They indicated their mentor teachers supported them in many ways such as teaching how to maintain classroom management, and how to prepare a lesson plan and teach more effectively. However, some pre-service teachers had some negative experiences since their mentor and other school staff ignored them and did not help them during teaching practices.

On the other hand, it can be understood from the results that the support provided by mentor teachers to pre-service teachers plays a significant role in pre-service teachers' professional development. Pre-service teachers expect the support of their mentor since mentoring is beneficial as it includes feedback on teaching practice and professional development of pre-service teachers (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh & Wilss, 2008). In the study, the support the pre-service teachers received from their mentor teachers had both negative and positive effects on their teaching practice. Some pre-service teachers stated that their mentor teacher ignored them or frequently interrupted them while practicing teaching. They also indicated that they were not given full control of the classroom and they could not feel like a teacher. It is important that pre-service teachers feel free and have a full teaching experience in this process. At this point, the mentor teacher should guide the pre-service teachers towards independence to create their understanding of teaching and learning strategies and thereby help them improve their self-confidence and professional development since mentoring is one of the best and most effective ways to prepare teachers for the teaching profession (Portner, 2003; Alabi, 2017; Garza et al., 2019; MacGee, 2019). Although pre-service teachers need the support and feedback of their mentor teachers to improve their teaching practices (Hudson, 2014), literature shows that if not given effectively, in some situations, feedback may even hinder academic benefit (Dowden, Pittaway, Yost & McCarthy, 2013). This situation can be related to the approach and attitude of mentor teachers, and since almost every pre-service teacher works with a different mentor teacher, there is no standard for the way feedback is given, and each mentor teacher may have a different way of giving feedback. This is also emphasized in the interviews with the pre-service teachers. While some of the pre-service teachers indicated that their mentor teacher always encouraged them by supporting them with lesson plan preparation, classroom management, and also by providing feedback about their mistakes during their teaching practice; some pre-service teachers stated that they were uncomfortable with the constant intervention of mentor teachers. Finally, the findings in terms of vocational aspects of the pre-service teachers showed that despite some negativities, thanks to the teaching practice provided within the internship program, the pre-service teachers had the opportunity to practice what they learned in the classroom and this helped them to start to feel like a real teacher.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the experiences and perceptions of English pre-service teachers regarding the teaching practices provided within the scope of the internship program in terms of pedagogical knowledge, learning and professional development, socio-emotional aspects, professional and institutional socialization, support/resources/supervision, and vocational aspects. Considering the results obtained from the study in general, it can be said that the teaching practice provided within the internship program was useful since it was responsive to the needs of the pre-service teachers and also effective in helping pre-service teachers to develop themselves for their

profession professionally. However, despite their mostly positive experiences and perceptions, there are still some challenges, and issues that pre-service teachers experienced during their internship processes, especially in the mentorship support, length of the teaching practice, and organizational problems of the internship program. For this reason, regular feedback, and evaluation should be obtained from all the stakeholders of the Internship program and solutions should be sought to the identified problems. For example; the length of the teaching practice could be extended for a more effective internship program. Moreover, further research could be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of internship programs in different aspects to identify the issues and possible solutions for these issues.

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