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Mentoring Practices in ELT Practicum: What Do the Leading Actors Experience?

Özge Aydın[1], Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Academy, Ankara, Turkey, ozge.aydin@jsga.edu.tr
Ahmet Ok[2], Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey, as@metu.edu.tr

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Mentoring Practices in ELT Practicum: What Do the Leading Actors Experience?

Özge Aydın [1]
Ahmet Ok[2]

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ABSTRACT

The study aspired to explore the fulfilment of mentoring roles-responsibilities from the perspectives of student teachers, supervisors, and mentors. The participants consisted of 194 student teachers from English Language Teaching departments at three state universities, ten supervisors offering Practice Teaching course at these departments, and ten mentors with whom the supervisors and the student teachers cooperated at practice schools. Employing a mixed-methods design, the researchers collected quantitative data from student teachers through a questionnaire whereas supervisors and mentors were interviewed. The student teachers agreed on the fulfilment of their mentors' protector, facilitator-supporter, observer-feedback provider, and friend-colleague roles whereas they partially agreed on the fulfilment of trainer-informant, role model, assessor-evaluator, collaborator, and reflector roles. The qualitative findings of the study also underlined critical aspects regarding the planning and implementation phases of practicum, which is expected to guide teacher educators in mentoring practices.

Being a highly interpersonal, emotional, and social profession (Hudson, 2010), teaching is also considered as 'a skill that can be learned' (Tomlinson, 1995, p. 11). Therefore, as a fundamental element of pre-service teacher education, teaching practice (practicum) calls for student teachers' hands-on experience which lets them bridge the gap between their theoretical knowledge and practice by sensing the real classrooms at

[1] Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Academy, Ankara, Turkey, ozge.aydin@jsga.edu.tr
[2] Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey, as@metu.edu.tr

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practice schools (Tomlinson, 1995). When student teachers have opportunities to embody their own beliefs and skills in teaching, they also start laying the foundations of teacher autonomy (Bullock, 2017).

Despite the fact that Beck and Kosnik (2002, p. 7) see schools and universities as "two largely separate worlds exist side by side", practicum requires a strong cooperation between these two parties (Hudson & Hudson, 2010). Herein, certain actors are equally important, who are namely student teachers as mentees, cooperating teachers as mentors, and faculty members as supervisors. In this three-tiered system, mentors play the leading role in terms of student teachers' progress in the teaching profession (Altan & Saglamel, 2015; Cochran-Smith, 1991). Nevertheless, mentors' lack of awareness in mentoring is frequently reported (Rajuan, Beijaard & Verloop, 2010; Sanders, Dowson, & Sinclair, 2005). As a consequence, mentors bear the risk of not contributing to this crucial period as much as desired (Gursoy & Damar, 2011).

Effective mentoring practices rely on mutual trust, open communication and timely interventions of mentors (Castañeda & Montenegro, 2015; Izadinia, 2016). Since good mentors foster student teachers' problem-solving skills, and provide reflections and feedback on their teaching practices, student teachers start building their own style and improve the quality of their teaching in time (Furlong, 2010; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). On the contrary, mentoring may result in reluctance to teach depending on student teachers' unpleasant practicum experiences (Nguyen, 2014).

Arising from the above-mentioned motives, Practice Teaching is a must course offered to senior student teachers within the scope of pre-service teacher education program in the Turkish higher education context. In their 4th year, student teachers firstly observe classes at practice schools selected by supervisors. Then, they start planning instruction in cooperation with their mentors and take the responsibility of teaching pupils in few sessions. Supervisors sometimes visit practice schools to evaluate student teachers' teaching performances together with mentors, and conduct discussions in regular course hours at the departments. All these procedures are guided by School-Faculty Partnership Booklet (Koc et. Al, 1998) and the directives of Ministry of National Education for mentors (MoNE Directives, 2018).

2. Purpose and Research Questions

This study explores the perspectives of student teachers, mentors and supervisors on the fulfilment of mentoring roles-responsibilities in English Language Teaching (ELT) practicum with the following research question to enhance its further implementation:

1. What are the perspectives of student teachers, mentors themselves, and supervisors on ELT mentors' fulfilment of their mentoring roles and responsibilities?

Presupposing that mentors already possess necessary awareness and skills for mentoring, previous studies may overlook the idea that Brooks and Sikes (1997, p. 66) state, 'Not everyone can, or should be, a mentor. Simply being a good teacher is not enough, for mentoring is not a straightforward extension of being a school-teacher. Different perspectives, abilities, aptitudes, attitudes, and skills are necessary.' That is why, this study deals with mentoring roles and responsibilities, and their evaluation in a comprehensive manner to enhance further implementations of ELT practicum.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the Study

Employing a mixed-methods design and having a descriptive nature, the present study combined qualitative and quantitative methods (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). First of all, quantitative data were gathered from a vast number of student teachers, which also allowed for the feasibility of data collection

(Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Secondly, semi-structured individual interviews with supervisors and mentors provided a more in-depth and extensive image of mentoring depicted by different data sources (Check & Shutt, 2012). The ethics approval was granted from METU Applied Ethics Research Center on October 11th, 2015 (Document Nu: 28620816/392).

3.2. Participants

3.2.1. Student Teachers/Mentees

The The senior students taking Practice Teaching course in 2015-2016 Spring semester (*N*=194) from English Language Teaching (ELT) departments at three state universities in Ankara, Turkey were the first group of participants in the present study. The ELT departments at these universities were selected as clusters due to their similar student profiles depending on the student rankings in the university entrance exam. The students' ages varied from 20 to 29. Whereas 77.3 % of them (*n*=150) were female, 22.7 % of them (*n*=44) were male. Moreover, 85.6 % of them (*n*=166) were willing to teach after graduation whereas 14.4 % of them (*n*=28) were not. During practicum, 60.8 % of the participants (*n*=118) cooperated with more than one mentor while 39.2 % of them (*n*=76) had only one mentor.

3.2.2. Supervisors

The student teachers' supervisors in charge of supervising Practice Teaching course at ELT departments in that semester also took part in the present study. Five of these supervisors were male whereas five of them were female. As for their academic background, nine of them received a Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching while one of them had a Bachelor's degree in English Philology. In addition, four of them were assistant professors, three were associate professors while two had a Doctor of Philosophy degree and one was an instructor without a PhD degree. Their experience as an academician ranged from nine to 35 years while their supervision experience varied between five to 22 years.

3.2.2. Mentors/Cooperating Teachers

Ten mentors with whom the student teachers and supervisors cooperated at practice schools voluntarily contributed to the study. They all worked at state schools as English teachers. Eight of them were female, and two of them were male. Regarding their educational background, seven of them were Faculty of Education graduates with a Bachelor's degree in ELT, however, three of them graduated from different departments: American Culture and Literature, Sociology, and Economics. Only one of them had a MA degree in English Language Teaching.

All mentors were from different practice schools located in different districts of Ankara. One mentor was from a primary school, six mentors from middle schools, and three mentors from high schools. They had been teaching for 6 six to 25 years. As for mentoring experience, three of them just finished their first year in mentoring. Four had 3 to 7 years, and the other three had 10 to 15 years of mentoring experience. None of them attended a mentor training program.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

The researchers developed a six-point scale (STMS) consisting of 60 items to be rated by student teachers, ranging from *1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Partially disagree, 4=Partially agree, 5=Agree, 6=Strongly agree*. Following the literature review on mentoring practices in teacher education, the items were generated mainly in the light of the most extensive classification of mentoring roles and responsibilities (Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2014). Secondly, informal interviews were carried out with ten recent graduates of ELT departments to derive novel statements from the current state of mentoring practices in the Turkish context.

To assure construct validity, exploratory factor analysis was conducted with 205 student teachers from two state universities, differently from the ones included in the current study. Subsequent to the analyses, nine mentoring roles emerged in the scale, assuring internal consistency with α = .98, and explaining 75.96% of the total variance.

Furthermore, two different individual semi-structured interview schedules were developed: *Mentors' Interview Schedule* including nine, and *Supervisors' Interview Schedule* including ten open ended questions after the careful examination of the available instruments in the literature. Expert opinions were collected on both. Mentors' expectations from student teachers and views on the fulfilment of their own mentoring roles and responsibilities were investigated along with supervisors' expectations from mentors and problems in cooperation.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

After the official clearances, data collection was initiated with supervisors' interviews that were audio-recorded with their consent to enable a more credible data analysis. The interviews were carried out in supervisors' offices. The questionnaire was administered to the student teachers following their vivid experiences of being mentored as a part of Practice Teaching course in the midst of the Spring semester. As the last step, the interviews with mentors started when the researchers got the necessary contact information from the interviewed supervisors. These interviews were also conducted in teacher's rooms, private offices, or empty classrooms ensuring minimum distraction. All interviews lasted between 25 minutes and one hour.

3.5. Data Analysis

After the completion of interviews, the qualitative data were transcribed verbatim for the analysis. During the transcription process, the researchers' familiarity with the data increased. The codes and themes were elicited through content analysis. In this way, the researchers had an opportunity to harmonize the themes obtained from the two actors, and these results enriched the quantitative findings. To assure trustworthiness, besides the use of different triangulation methods, the consistency between the inter-coders were found between 70 % and 88 % on the codes and themes in the interviews. Additionally, the questionnaire presented descriptive statistics via SPSS 21.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, METU).

4. Findings

The actors' perspectives on the fulfilment of mentoring roles and responsibilities were reported in line with the dimensions of the scale: (1) Trainer-Informant, (2) Role Model, (3) Protector, (4) Assessor-Evaluator, (5) Facilitator-Supporter, (6) Collaborator, (7) Observer-Feedback Provider, (8) Reflector, and

(9) Friend-Colleague. For each, the student teachers' ratings were first displayed (See Appendix A), and then the interview data were integrated.

4.1. Trainer-Informant

The student teachers *partially agreed* on their mentors' fulfilment of this role (*M*=4.25, *SD*=1.21). About 50 % to 59 % of them *agreed* that mentors fulfilled their *trainer-informant* responsibilities like informing mentees about English language curriculum and how to assess pupils' progress, relating aims, methods, and techniques, briefing about the lessons beforehand, giving hints for time and classroom management.

Mentors also underlined letting mentees benefit from their teaching experience by informing them about time management, the use of voice and body language in classes, lesson planning, establishing good relationships with pupils, administrators and parents, invigilating, managing pupils with special needs or multiple intelligences as exemplified in the quotation below:

Once we try to show mentees the role of a teacher in class: the relationships established between the teacher and the pupils, the teacher and the school, our attitudes towards the profession. Because student teachers firstly observe mentors, we have a very serious responsibility. (OM1: O=Mentor's institution code, M1=Mentor's ordinal code)

One mentor also emphasized the importance of demonstrating the realities of teaching with the solutions to the arising problems as another responsibility.

I think it is necessary to show the reality, it is not all lavender and roses. There are definitely some shortcomings. We should show them. Everything is not perfect, so you [mentees] may encounter problems, you may cope with them in these ways. (GM3)

Supervisors also touched upon mentors' responsibility to inform mentees about English language curriculum, rules and regulations of Ministry of National Education, and administrative procedures at schools. However, when mentees and mentors did not share similar beliefs in teaching, these contradictory approaches might lead to conflicts during mentoring as illustrated with the following words:

Mentees see 'what not to do' instead of 'what to do' at practice schools. They sometimes see mentors teaching through obsolete methods. Mentees know what I teach them; what I expect from them, so they fall into a contradiction. (GS3: G= Supervisor's institution code, S3: Supervisor's ordinal code)

4.2. Role Model

The student teachers *partially agreed* on their mentors' serving as a *role model* (*M*=4.15, *SD*=1.27). About 53 % to 66 % of them *agreed* on mentors' commitment to teaching, being open to professional development, motivating mentees for the profession, modelling the use of body language and tone of voice.

Mentors accepted the responsibility for encouraging mentees at practice schools and setting good examples of teaching as their role model. Planning instruction, providing mentees with various methods and techniques, demonstrating teacher authority while having student-centred classes were seen as other significant responsibilities for this role. Some mentors also emphasized being enthusiastic about the profession.

My mentee says, 'Your class is so different from the others.' because at the beginning of the term, the first thing I said was 'Everyone will make mistakes. You will participate. This is my teaching philosophy.' I want to pass on this philosophy to student teachers because it is not only giving grades and leaving when the bell rings. (OM2)

Nevertheless, some mentors complained about their colleagues' demotivation and digression from idealism in the profession after spending many years there. They thought this might be the reason behind their old-fashioned ways of teaching.

There is a huge group of teachers in Ministry of National Education, who spent years, but still were demotivated and half-dead with the idea of teaching and leaving. We have difficulties in keeping them alive, so it gives the same feeling to student teachers as well. (OM2)
We graduate as idealists, and then we lose it. … Sometimes when mentees teach in English, I translate into Turkish. They do not want me to do so. (GM2)

Two of the mentors who did not graduate from Faculty of Education talked about their drawbacks regarding methods and techniques in teaching. One did not receive any teacher education in ELT at all; therefore, s/he accepted mentees as superior to herself/himself. Another mentor underscored insufficient English language competencies by saying:
Sometimes I think that I am burned out. You know a lot in English, but you teach only one unit of it. You do it for 16 years, and you feel that you have become rusty. I had a private American tutor two years ago because I thought that I had forgotten to speak English. (HM1)
I could not receive any teaching education because there was no Faculty of Education at my university in those times. … I received an alternative teacher certificate. Can you believe that? We were appointed as English teachers with formation in classroom teaching! (HM1)

Integrating technology into classes, developing teaching materials, transmitting the culture of the target language to pupils, getting prepared for the spontaneity and multidimensionality of classrooms, giving effective instructions, and making the most of instructional time were expected from mentors by supervisors. Nevertheless, they thought most mentors failed:
We educate our student teachers as ideal teachers, but they cannot transfer anything from the university to the practice school. The difficulties begin here. Student teachers say 'Mentors only teach grammar but nothing else. What will we do?' (HS2)
My student teachers complained that their mentor insulted and beat pupils. Seriously this is something I could never anticipate. I am thinking of changing that mentor. (GS2)

4.3. Protector

The student teachers agreed on their mentors' fulfilment of responsibilities as a protector (*M*=4.75, *SD*=.96). Almost 52 % to 82 % of them *agreed* mentors were accessible, defending mentees' rights, refraining from creating power struggle and unfavourable conversations.

It was revealed that some mentors tended to use mentees as substitute teachers. This situation was gladly reported because both mentors seemed unaware of the fact that mentees were not supposed to teach in classes in the absence of mentors:
One teacher did not come to the school. I had a colleague with three student teachers. I sent one of them to that class standing idle to substitute the absent teacher. (OM2)

On the other hand, supervisors expected mentors to protect mentees' teacher identity in classes without abusing their presence and leaving them alone for their own comfort. However, drudgery imposed on mentees was also voiced by their supervisors.
Mentors started to leave mentees alone in class because they tried to evade their responsibilities. While most mentors smoke or drink tea in teachers' room, our student teachers sweat in front of the class. (HS2)
I came across with one mentor who made the mentee tutor in English for her child. There were some mentors making mentees evaluate all exam papers. (GS2)

Furthermore, some supervisors indicated that mentors might be ignorant of mentees' integrity at practice schools, and insult mentees from time to time by behaving them harshly. One supervisor asserted,
'My mentees said that their mentor had scolded them.' (HS2)

4.4. Assessor-Evaluator

The mean score of this role (*M*=3.95, *SD*=1.51) indicated the student teachers *partially agreed* on the fulfilment of the responsibilities such as preparing a document file on observation and evaluation, assessing it after practicum, and appreciating mentees' professional progress.

One mentor criticized his/ her evaluation skills by saying, '*Were all the grades I gave fair? Not at all, but I gave them. (HM2)'.* Another mentor demanded more cooperation from the supervisors at this point because s/he felt alone without much guidance in practicum:

If supervisors had given us a written document or a list for the things that we needed to pay attention in the beginning, we would have paid more attention to these things. ... I wish we could have evaluation meetings with supervisors for the things we fulfilled, or we did not fulfil with mentees. (GM4)

Supervisors expected mentors to utilize the provided evaluation forms and include the rationale behind their grading. Nevertheless, one supervisor stated only a small number of mentors completely filled in these forms, and mentors' late submissions caused problems:

Some mentors never wrote their comments while completing these forms ... Only numerical parts were completed. This could not give us enough feedback. As a supervisor, sometimes I felt that I could not completely perceive mentors' viewpoints because I did not always have an opportunity to talk to mentors face-to-face. (OS1)

I tried to have post-conferences with my student teachers in two weeks, but this could not be possible. Because the evaluation forms reflecting mentors' viewpoints arrived late, I could not discuss them with mentees. (OS1)

Some supervisors also questioned mentors' abilities to evaluate student teachers with these words, *'I sometimes ask myself; is that mentor able to evaluate my mentee? (OS2)'* Mentors' insufficient awareness of the terms included in the evaluation forms was another issue voiced by the supervisors:

There is an evaluation form; some mentors do not have a grasp of the terms in the form. They do not know their meanings. I mean, they will assess mentees, but they do not know the term in the assessment criteria. (GS2)

4.5. Facilitator-Supporter

The student teachers *agreed* on mentors' fulfilment of this role (*M*=4.56, *SD*=1.04). About 50% to 72% of student teachers *agreed* that their mentors facilitated their adaptation to the profession, selected appropriate ELT teaching strategies, found resources, supported them to learn about rules and routines at practice schools, and shared their concerns in the process.

With the aim of supporting mentees professionally, mentors touched upon providing lesson plans, annual plans, and other resources for them since '*they [mentees] have never seen such things before (GM1)'*. Mentors were also aware of their critical responsibility to help mentees how to control their excitement, manage classrooms, and establish teacher authority. One mentor exemplified a lived experience in this issue:

One mentee came to me in the break and said, 'I cannot establish authority in the class.' I went to the class; I said, 'Guys, now your teacher has ultimate authority. Do not upset her!' I mean our support is so important because mentees are uptight about what they are going to do. (OM2)

Herein, some supervisors criticized mentors on assigning teaching tasks late, restricting mentees' professional autonomy, or not preparing the class with the following words:

My mentees are there to fulfil some tasks. To do so, the classroom environment should be ready. If my mentee sees a classroom with breakdowns, completing that task may not be meaningful enough. Mentors have a responsibility at that point. (OS2)

4.6. Collaborator

The student teachers' responses on this role were closer to *partially agree* on the six-point scale (*M*=3.86, *SD*=1.36). Only two of the six responsibilities were assessed as *agree*, one of which was continuous cooperation and communication with mentors whereas the other was giving more responsibilities to foster mentees' autonomy.

Although most mentors mentioned the necessity of frequent communication and collaboration to achieve effectiveness in practicum, one mentor affirmed that s/he was not much aware of mentoring responsibilities, and another one complained about the disappearance of supervisors until final teaching tasks.

No matter what the mentee did on that day, wrote a good lesson plan that was three pages long etc. This is not my concern indeed. This is supervisors' concern. … I do not know whether it should be my concern or not. Maybe my drawback is here. As a mentor, should I revise mentees' lesson plans? (GM2)

I have never been asked for collaboration. If collaboration is requested, I will do it. … We [mentors] see supervisors when they bring mentees to schools and arrange the programs. We cannot see them any longer. (OM2)

As a good collaborator, supervisors expected mentors to keep a good record of mentees, invite them to observe more classes, and share their observations. However, some comments interpreting impeded collaboration among these parties were displayed below:

I do not want mentors to shut their eyes to mentees' absenteeism because they have some practicum requirements to fulfil to get a diploma. I want to be sure that mentors pursue them in a well-disciplined way. (OS3)

Not every mentor tends to collaborate: 4 out of 10. In the simplest expression, having a stranger in the class might unsettle the mentor. (HS3)

4.7. Observer-Feedback Provider

The overall mean score (*M*=4.46, *SD*=1.29) showed that the student teachers mostly *agreed* on their mentors' fulfilment of this role. Almost 51 % to 66 % of them *agreed* that mentors could detect their strengths and weaknesses, give feedback, and share their professional ideas.

Mentors commonly noted observing mentees without interrupting their teaching and providing constructive feedback afterwards to advance their professional development. However, some talked about their insufficient time to communicate with mentees by saying, '*If they had a chance to stay longer in the afternoon, it might be better in terms of communication. (GM2)*'

You [mentors] should say to mentees: 'Yes, you made that mistake, but now you can make that mistake. Next year you will overcome this.' Our criticism should be constructive, not destructive. (GM1)

Nonetheless, one mentor particularly pointed out his/her incompetence in detecting mentees' shortcomings during observations.

My supervisor is going to come to observe one mentees' teaching for the third time because he did not think the previous ones were sufficient. This is a wonderful thing; I think this should happen because I cannot tell mentees about their drawbacks as much as their supervisors do. (GM2)

By appraising observation and feedback as mentors' key responsibilities in practicum, most supervisors desired to get feedback from mentors concerning mentees' language, teaching and time management skills, but there were some unexpected events as exemplified below.

When I went to the practice school, my mentor was sitting in the teachers' room and knitting. I said 'Where is our mentee? What is s/he doing?' The mentor said, 'The mentee is teaching in the classroom.' (GS2)

4.8. Reflector

The overall mean (*M*=3.96, *SD*=1.45) indicated the student teachers *partially agreed* on their mentors' fulfilment of this role. About 38 % to 53 % of them *agreed* on mentors' providing self-reflection opportunities, raising their awareness of reflection, explaining the rationale behind methods and strategies, and revealing the pros and cons of them with the alternatives.

Only one mentor asserted that s/he questioned his/her mentoring to a great degree due to heavy responsibilities of practicum. Similarly, three supervisors attached much importance to mentors' having reflective skills as depicted:

I think mentoring responsibility is too heavy. In fact, I question myself all the time while putting my signature. Of course, I know that something lacks. … I mean I look in a mirror a lot. (HM2)

Above all, a mentor should be open to criticism. When you sit together and have a conversation, the mentor should be someone who … tries to overcome her/his shortcomings instead of continuously feeling herself/himself justified. (HS2)

4.9. Friend-Colleague

The overall mean score of the last dimension was M=4.79 (SD=1.07), showing the student teachers *agreed* on the fulfilment of their mentors' *friend-colleague* role. Almost 57 % to 85 % agreed that their mentors were approachable, established open communication, used humour, accepted them as colleagues, prevented them from feeling lonely, and introduced them as prospective teachers to their pupils.

In their interviews, some mentors expressed mentees' anxiety at practice schools by saying, '*They feel as if they were like small fish thrown into the ocean from an aquarium. They feel frightened. (HM2)*' Therefore, some carefully touched upon the need of behaving mentees as their colleagues with these words:

Mentees come here; they sit in front of the doors. How do they feel in such a case? We need to make them feel precious. … One day, we were drinking tea in teachers' room. They said, "We never entered a teachers' room before." (GM1)

Practicum was appraised by many mentors as a mutual learning process because while mentees had up-to-date information in the field, most mentors did not know what was new in ELT.

Just like mentees have the things to learn from me, I also have the things to learn from them. I graduated 16-17 years ago. … I already said when they first came: 'Teach me something.' (GM3)

Adaptation to the teacher role by taking responsibilities, dealing with the emerging challenges, and getting used to professional discourse community including pupils, teachers, administrators, and all school staff were considered as the primal needs of student teachers in the eyes of their supervisors Nevertheless, some supervisors reflected mentees' complaints about feeling themselves degraded at practice schools:

We [supervisors] think that mentees are our students, but at the same time they are our colleagues. The mentors should approach our mentees in the same way. Some were so helpful in this issue, but some caused more withdrawn mentees because they looked down on mentees. (HS3)

5. Discussion

When the findings coming from the three main actors of practicum were investigated based on the nine mentoring roles-responsibilities, both mentors and supervisors reached a compromise regarding mentors' responsibilities to inform mentees about ELT curriculum, rules and regulations put forth by Ministry of National Education, and to train them with problem-solving skills and contemporary teaching methods as

a consequence of their *trainer-informant* role. However, student teachers partially agreed on mentors' fulfilment of such responsibilities similar to their supervisors reporting problems in this role. These findings were congruent with the literature depicting mentors' incompetent practices in the Turkish context (Rakıcıoglu-Soylemez, 2012), and out-of-date approached and methods (Hudson & Hudson, 2010; Sudzina & Coolican, 1994).

Student teachers desired to qualify their mentors as role models employing "the best practices" (Maggioli, 2014; Rajuan, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2010), and in the present study, mentees mostly agreed that their mentors served as a *role model*. Nevertheless, some demotivated mentors away from setting good examples of teaching for student teachers were described in the interviews, similarly to the previous studies (Nayir & Cinkir, 2014; Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006). Mentors' negative attitudes towards mentees or pupils posed obstacles to this role (Mutlu, 2014; Tok & Yilmaz, 2011). The reason might be an understanding ('Flesh yours, bones mine.'; an old Turkish proverb) in some Turkish contexts, which falsely justifies teachers' violent acts to ensure classroom discipline (Lozano & Kizilaslan, 2013; Piskin, Atik, Cinkir, Ogulmus, Babadogan, & Cokluk, 2014).

Although student teachers agreed that mentors' *protector* role was fulfilled; both mentors and supervisors mentioned undesirable mentoring practices such as using mentees as substitute teachers or private tutors, leaving mentees alone and vulnerable to the unexpected events in classes as found in the previous studies (Ekiz, 2006; Simsek, 2013; Tok & Yilmaz, 2011). Such deeds might be an outgrowth of insufficient awareness in mentoring.

Student teachers partially agreed on their mentors' fulfilment of the *assessor-evaluator* role whereas mentors demanded more cooperation from supervisors in evaluating mentees because some felt lost there. Supervisors were also hesitant about whether mentors were competent enough to evaluate student teachers. Underlined as an important shortcoming in the current study, communication and collaboration between these actors can be strengthened through mentor trainings to diminish mentors' hesitations in mentoring (Delaney, 2012; Koc, 2012; Maphalala, 2013).

Some mentors saw mentees as threats in their classrooms unlike the nature of their *collaborator* role. Coskun (2013) similarly defines this situation as one of the leading stress factors for mentors in practicum. As some supervisors proposed in the interviews, mentors' insecurity due to mentees' presence might arise from their low self-confidence or incompetence (Bullough, 2005).

Regarding mentors' *observer-feedback provider* role staying at the core of teaching practice (Bullock, 2017), student teachers, mentors, and supervisors had different perspectives. Most student teachers agreed their mentors provided them with continuous feedback while most mentors bemoaned inadequate time to do so as also declared by supervisors and evidenced in the literature (Altan & Saglamel, 2015; Yavuz, 2011). Moreover, some mentors felt incompetent in detecting student teachers' weaknesses as much as supervisors did, and hence they counted on supervisors for the provision of feedback. However, supervisors highly expected mentors to do so, so there was no consensus between both parties even in such a critical issue. This eminently requires a clarification of role descriptions and expectations, and longs for mentor trainings (Ambrosetti, 2012; Yordem & Akyol, 2014).

Among the others, *reflector* role was surprisingly emphasized the least by the interviewees. It can be inferred that reflection stayed as a missing aspect in practicum although reflective skills have been valued much in the literature (Fischer & Andel, 2002; Yildirim, 2011).

Student teachers stated their agreement on their mentors' *friend-colleague* role at practice schools. Both mentors and supervisors confirmed that student teachers were in need of being accepted as a colleague and included in the school community with enough opportunities to explore teaching (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Sag, 2008). However, supervisors revealed some mentors assuming themselves superior to mentees hinting at a hierarchical relationship nourished by "power games" between mentors and mentees (Nayir & Cinkir, 2014).

6. Conclusion and Implications

The perspectives of the leading figures in practicum are always worth consulting, and their suggestions for professional development are required to be handled cautiously. Therefore, in the light of the findings of the current study, to motivate mentors and practice schools, there should be some additional incentives provided by Ministry of National Education, otherwise, mentoring is going to be seen as a burden instead of an insightful pay-back to the teaching profession.

Mentor selection criteria seem to be a requirement for supervisors because mentors' educational background, professional readiness, motivation, competence in mentoring, or even use of English were criticized by the participants of the current study. Since 2018, MoNE has issued another up-to-date directive declaring that a mentoring certificate will be required for teachers who would like to be mentors (MoNE Directives, 2018). With a similar purpose, to renovate mentors and promote them professionally, collaborative teaching and learning opportunities should be presented to them, through which they will get used to work in pairs or groups, reflect, observe, and be observed by others. There needs to be to-the-point trainings for mentors to guide them concerning how to mentor in more standardized ways. Innovations in ELT, communication, problem-solving, and feedback-giving skills should be the fundamental issues to be elaborated during such trainings (Borden, 2014). In addition, role clarifications are required to be ensured so that mentors' dilemmas can be resolved in the profession, and they fulfil their mentoring roles-responsibilities in a more effective way.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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