



English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching practicum: Problems and suggestions for solutions

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Abstract

Although studies on the teaching practicum experiences of pre-service English teachers have tried to identify some problems and offer solutions, research addressing the issue from the perspectives of all stakeholders by examining both the expectations of pre-service teachers and the potential problems they face in this process is rather limited. In this regard, as part of a larger project, this session aims to uncover prospective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' expectations and problems during the practicum process based on the opinions of various stakeholders. 160 pre-service teachers studying in the final year of an English language teacher education program, 22 teacher educators, and 39 English teachers supervising those teacher candidates during the practicum process participated in the study. Data came from two sources: reflective reports requested from all participants of the study in the fourth and eighth weeks of the 12-week practicum process and the focus group interviews conducted with five pre-service teachers, five university supervisors, and five cooperating teachers. The analyses documented problems related to pre-service teachers, their teaching skills, classroom management, pupils, teaching procedures, and school context. Maximizing practice opportunities in quantity and quality and higher levels of communication and interaction among the stakeholders were the main suggestions as solutions to problems. These recommendations and some suggestions for future research will potentially increase the quality and effectiveness of the practicum process.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), EFL teacher education, EFL teaching practicum, Pre-service EFL teachers, Teaching practice

1. Introduction

“Practice does not necessarily make perfect: What is needed is good practice” (Richards & Crookes 1988: 13). However, the components of good practice in teacher training are not so easy to understand and achieve. The principal objective of teaching practice is to afford teacher candidates the opportunity to cultivate their skills in readiness for their future roles as teachers. Prospective teachers regard teaching practice as the cornerstone of their teaching

journey and an essential element of their training (Zeichner, 1990). Furthermore, teaching practice represents the pinnacle of collaboration between universities and schools in teacher education programs (Tang, 2002). Practicum schools serve as venues for teacher-learner engagement, playing crucial roles in foreign language teacher education by offering invaluable benefits to teacher candidates (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

It is an undeniable fact that teaching practices contribute to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes by prospective teachers on the way to becoming good teachers. Through these practices, teachers of the future improve themselves in many aspects regarding the real teaching environment, and they also get used to the people they will work with in the future. The guidance of the supervisors and mentors is the most important aspect of these courses. Additionally, teacher trainees acquire practical experience within authentic classroom settings, thereby recognizing the significance of their job within the teaching practicum. (Yıldız et al., 2016; İşcan, 2017; Yalçın-Arslan & İlin, 2018). Prospective teachers can also identify their strengths and weaknesses with the help of university supervisors and cooperating teachers throughout their teaching practices (Başyurt Tüzeli & Akcan, 2009; Kuter, 2009; Merç, 2015; Serdar-Tülüce & Çeçen, 2016).

Although teaching practice has so many strong aspects, it would not be right to say that it is carried out smoothly. The problems that may arise in this process largely arise from teacher candidates (Merç, 2010). Obviously, teacher candidates are also human beings, and some events can disrupt their teaching quality. Problems related to teaching, such as preparing for lessons, choosing materials, attending classes, and providing information, may also arise (Merç, 2010). The attitudes of cooperating teachers and university supervisors towards student-teachers are also seen as the source of some problems. Some studies indicate that student-teachers feel uncomfortable while teaching in front of university supervisors and cooperating teachers because of their negative attitudes (Akyel, 2015; Damar & Salı, 2013; Celen & Akcan, 2017; Merç, 2010; Merç, 2015). Another factor is related to the school environment in general. Teacher candidates have difficulty in classroom management because they cannot recognize the characteristics of students in a short time (Merç, 2015; Genç, 2016; İşcan, 2017; Mirici & Ölmez-Çağlar, 2017). In some cases, crowded classrooms and a lack of materials at school cause teacher candidates to have problems in their teaching practice (Merç, 2010).

Research has endeavored to pinpoint the challenges encountered by prospective teachers during their teaching practicum, both in the Turkish context and in different cultural and educational contexts, and has revealed certain problem areas. In a pioneering study in the field, Veenman (1984) examined 83 different studies from different geographical locations, different school levels, and different research methods that revealed the problems perceived by beginning teachers. As a result, classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, evaluating students' work, relations with parents, organization of class work, inadequate materials and equipment, dealing with students' individual problems, and heavy teaching load and preparation time resulting in inadequate education were the most frequently mentioned by beginning teachers. Kwo (1996) found that teacher trainees struggled with understanding students' cultural backgrounds, motivating students to achieve higher levels of learning, and addressing unexpected student inquiries during their teaching practice. Likewise, student teachers in Singapore were discovered to grapple with personal challenges related to maintaining effective classroom management, demonstrating proficiency in front of supervising instructors, enhancing their confidence as educators, attaining favorable evaluations, and earning acceptance and respect from fellow professionals (Mau, 1997). Additionally, Valdez et al. (2000) found that the main problems of teacher candidates were classroom management, teaching and learning, and individual differences.

Great importance is given to teaching practice in teacher training institutions all over the world. The theory behind teaching practice and the expected results from the practice process are quite similar in all teacher training institutions in the world and in Türkiye. However, the way the practicum process is handled varies from one institution to another. The content as well as student and teacher characteristics cause the teaching practice to be carried out differently in different situations (Zeichner, 1990; Wu & Lee, 1999; Burant & Kirby, 2002; Hastings & Squires, 2002). In addition to studies conducted in a wide variety of cultural and educational contexts, Aydın and Bahçe (2001) conducted a study with Turkish English teachers teaching English and identified classroom management, teaching process, communication with students, and problems arising from the status of teacher candidates as the problem areas experienced by Turkish English language teacher candidates. Korukcu (1996) had earlier discovered that both novice and prospective EFL teachers highlighted several aspects of teaching as challenging, including teaching methodologies, classroom management techniques, lesson preparation, and fostering student motivation.

Recently, Başaran Uysal and Savaş (2021) analyzed and categorized the difficulties experienced in teaching practice in 40 studies in the literature with a meta-synthesis study to bring together the common difficulties of teaching practices in English Language Teaching programs in Türkiye. The research results showed teacher candidates, university supervisors, school teachers, students, and school administrators as the sources of these difficulties. However, receiving feedback from practice faculty members and teachers, classroom management of student teachers, lack of cooperation between schools and education faculties, the gap between theory and practice, and target language problems emerged as recurring problems.

Cesur et al. (2021) conducted a review of studies on teaching practice courses in Türkiye and concluded that starting to teach without practice is like jumping into the ocean without learning to swim. In other words, without practical lessons, teacher candidates will experience difficulties when they start working in a school.

Unlike general teaching practices, teaching practicum carried out in the context of foreign language teaching can be separated from other fields due to the 'language proficiency' problem it involves. For example, Başyurt-Tüzel and Akcan (2009) investigated the language awareness of pre-service English teachers in their study and found that these pre-service teachers had difficulty in adjusting the use of English according to the proficiency level of the students. The same result was found by Celen (2016), Çubukçu (2010), Merç (2004), and Selçuk and Genç-Yöntem (2019). Since prospective teachers are accustomed to academic English, it has been evaluated that it is difficult for them to teach using the target language in a real classroom environment where students have low levels of proficiency (Başaran Uysal & Savaş, 2021). Studies conducted in the context of foreign language learning anxiety have also determined that prospective English teachers tend to feel anxious when speaking (teaching) the target language, which causes them to avoid using English (Coşkun, 2013; Merç, 2010; Tüm, 2014). Ölmezer-Öztürk (2021) investigated the stress factors of stakeholders during the practicum process of an English teacher training program, and the findings revealed that lack of teaching experience, lack of experience with students, mentor teachers, supervisors, and practicum logistics were major stressors for pre-service teachers.

Various suggestions have also been presented in order to reduce the problems experienced by pre-service English teachers during the teaching practice process. The necessity of solving possible problems by addressing them together with all stakeholders stands out as a common recommendation of the studies (Başaran Uysal & Savaş, 2021). Tüfekçi-Can & Baştürk (2018) argue that the curricula of English teacher training programs should be revised in

order to better prepare teacher candidates for teaching practice and that the education provided should be based on the needs of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) system. Ceylan et al. (2017) suggested that reflective practice should be included in the practicum process to prepare teacher candidates for the realities of real classroom experiences. Additionally, Taş and Karabay (2016) stated that pedagogical content knowledge courses should include practical components rather than theoretical ones. Mutlu (2014) suggested that mentor teachers could have fewer lesson hours and take more responsibility for training teacher candidates. On the other hand, Kasapoğlu (2015) also emphasized the importance of school-university cooperation, stating that most of the problems arise from the human factor in the practicum process. Supervisors, school teachers, and school administrators should come together before the practicum and clearly communicate their expectations from each other (Aydn & Ok, 2019).

As a result, the common point of all studies in the literature is as follows: Teaching practice is perhaps the most important element of teacher training programs and the most significant element that needs to be constantly examined and improved. However, although it is not possible to purify teaching practices from all problems, it is important to determine the expectations of teacher candidates about the practicum process and the possible problems they may encounter in this process, to identify the problems they have experienced and/or already exist, to offer possible solutions to these problems, and to inform teacher candidates who will experience this process in the future. Within this understanding, this study aimed to reveal prospective EFL teachers' expectations and problems during the practicum process, taking the opinions of the stakeholders in the process to help student teachers have a more effective teaching practicum experience.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants and Context

At this stage, 160 teacher candidates who took the Teaching Practice I course of the Anadolu University Faculty of Education English Language Teaching program in the Fall semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, 22 university supervisors who guided them, and 39 cooperating teachers working in schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, where the teacher candidates practiced teaching, participated in the study. Detailed information about the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Participants

		N	%
Student teachers		160	100
Gender	Female	88	55
	Male	64	40
	Not stated	8	5
Previous teaching experience	Yes	56	35
	No	104	65
Current GPA	4.00-3.50	17	10,6
	3.49-3.00	61	38,1
	2.99-2.50	58	36,3
	2.49-2.00	22	13,8
	1.99 and below	2	1,3
University supervisors		22	100
Gender	Female	16	72,7
	Male	6	27,3

		N	%
Years of experience as a supervisor	1-5 years	9	40,9
	6-10 years	1	4,5
	11-20 years	4	18,2
	21 and more years	8	36,4
Cooperating teachers		39	100
Gender	Female	33	84,6
	Male	6	15,4
Practicum school type	Primary	9	5,6
	Secondary	27	16,9
	High School	3	1,9
Years of experience as a school teacher	1-5 years	2	5,1
	6-10 years	4	10,3
	11-20 years	24	61,5
	21 and more years	9	23,1
Years of experience as a cooperating teacher	1-5 years	15	38,5
	6-10 years	12	30,8
	11-20 years	10	25,6
	21 and more years	2	5,1

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

As qualitative data collection tools were used within the scope of this research, reflection reports were written by the participants, and focus group interviews were held. A reflection report guideline was created separately for teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors. The prepared guideline was sent to three field experts, and their opinions were received. The revised guidelines were formally arranged according to the opinions received and took their final form. Finally, a focus group interview protocol was prepared and sent to three field experts to receive their opinions.

All participants of the study during the 12-week teaching practice process were asked to write a reflective report in the fourth and eighth weeks of the practice process, and at the end of the process, a total of 242 reflective reports were collected from the participants. In addition, focus group discussions were held separately with five teacher candidates, five university supervisors, and five cooperating teachers, and consequently, in-depth opinions were collected on the problems experienced by the teacher candidates.

Qualitative data obtained through reflective reports and focus group interviews were analyzed by adhering to the qualitative content analysis scheme of Creswell (2012). The recordings from the focus group discussions were transcribed and made ready for analysis, along with reflective reports. Then, antecedent codes were given to similar and related sections in the data set containing reflective reports, and then these antecedent codes were brought together to create broader themes.

3. Findings

3.1 Results Obtained from Reflection Reports: Student Teachers

Within the scope of the reflection reports in the qualitative phase of the research, student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors were asked to express in detail their expectations from the teaching practice process and the problems they experienced during the process. First of all, the data obtained regarding the expectations of teacher candidates from the teaching practice process are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Expectations of Student Teachers from the Teaching Practice Process

Themes	Codes
Expectations regarding teaching skills	*Improving teaching skills (x24) *Overcoming the fear of teaching (x18) *Theory-practice discrepancy (x8) *Recognizing deficiencies as a teacher candidate (x4)
Expectations for students	*Establishing a good bond with students (x14) *High level of English (x6)
Expectations for the cooperating teacher	*Establishing a good relationship with the cooperating teacher (x11) *Cooperating teacher sharing his/her experiences (x6)
Expectations regarding the school context	*Real classroom environment experience (x16) *Making observations about the classroom and school environment (x7)

As Table 2 presents, the expectations of teacher candidates from the teaching practice process are grouped under four main headings: expectations regarding teaching skills, expectations regarding students, expectations regarding cooperating teachers, and expectations regarding the school context.

The findings obtained from the answers given by the teacher candidates regarding the problems they encountered during the practicum process in their reflection reports are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Problems Encountered by Student Teachers During the Practicum Process

Themes	Codes
Problems with students	*Students' not understanding the instructions (x32) *Students' not participating (x21) *Low language level of students (x18) *Students' use of L1 (x10) *Inclusive students (x6)
Problems with classroom management	*Inability to provide classroom management (x36) *Time management (x20)
Problems with the teacher candidate	*Anxiety while teaching (x12) *Voice/intonation problem (x10) *Target language level/use of the teacher candidate (x7) *Material selection/preparation appropriate to the students' levels (x7)

As Table 3 shows, the problems encountered by teacher candidates in the first weeks of the practicum process are grouped under three main headings: problems related to students, problems related to classroom management, and problems related to the teacher candidate himself.

3.2 Results Obtained from Reflection Reports: University Supervisors

University supervisors, who are the other participant component of the reflection reports and take part in the teaching practice process, were also asked to express their opinions on what the student teachers' expectations were from the teaching practice process and the problems they experienced during the practice process. First of all, the findings regarding the expectations of pre-service teachers from the teaching practice process in the eyes of the university supervisors are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Expectations of Teacher Candidates in the Perspective of University Supervisors

Themes	Codes
Expectations regarding teaching skills	*Putting theoretical knowledge into practice (x9) *Delivering effective lessons (x4) *Effective material preparation (x3) *Improving classroom management skills (x3)
Expectations for students	Getting to know the student profile (x4) Learning to approach the students (x2)

The findings in Table 4 reveal the expectations of teacher candidates in the eyes of the university supervisors, and it is seen that these expectations are generally collected under the headings of improving teaching skills and getting to know the students. While expectations regarding teaching skills include putting knowledge into practice, giving effective lessons, preparing effective materials, and developing classroom management skills, it appears that expectations regarding students include knowing the student profile and learning to approach the students.

Another issue that the university supervisors who participated in the study focused on in their reflection reports was the problems that the prospective teachers experienced during the practice process. In this regard, the findings obtained based on the writings of the university supervisors are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Problems Experienced by Teacher Candidates in the Eyes of University Supervisors

Themes	Codes
Problems with teaching	*Lesson plan preparation (x16) *Appropriate material preparation (x11) *Skill teaching stages (x10) *Inability to put theoretical knowledge into practice (x10) *Inability to interact in class (x8) *Not being able to get down to the students' level (x6)
Problems with classroom management	*Time management (x9) *Class management (x8) *Instant decision making (x4)
Problems with students	*Inclusive students (x5) *Students not understanding the activities (x4) *Students not participating (x4) *Students' low level of target language (x4) *Students are used to using their native language (x4)

The findings obtained in line with the answers of the university supervisors showed that, in their eyes, the problems experienced by the student teachers were generally grouped into three main groups: problems related to teaching, problems related to classroom management, and problems related to students. The university supervisors stated that the situations where teacher candidates have the most problems are related to teaching skills, and that the problems they experience in this regard include issues such as preparing lesson plans, preparing appropriate materials, lack of knowledge about skill teaching stages, not being able to put the knowledge into practice, not being able to interact in the classroom and not being able to get down to the students' level.

3.3 Results from Reflection Reports: Cooperating Teachers

The last participant group in the reflection reports and data collection phase of the research was cooperating teachers, who are another important stakeholder of the teaching practice process. At this stage, the prospective teachers' expectations from the teaching practice process and the problems they experienced during the process were examined in the eyes of the cooperating teachers, and they were asked to express their detailed opinions in their reflection reports. First of all, the findings regarding the expectations of student teachers in the eyes of the cooperating teachers are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Expectations of Teacher Candidates in the Eyes of Practicing Teachers

Themes	Codes
Expectations regarding teaching	*Gaining teaching experience (x14) *Putting theoretical knowledge into practice (x12) *Gaining teaching practice (x9) *Getting to know textbooks (x6)
Expectations regarding students	*Getting down to student level (x10) *Communicating with students (x8) *Getting to know students (x7) *Ensuring student participation (x3)
Expectations relevant to the school context	*Gaining classroom environment experience (x8) *Adjusting to the school environment (x4)

According to Table 6, the expectations of student teachers in the eyes of the cooperating teachers are in parallel with the other previously reported stakeholder opinions and are grouped under three main headings: expectations regarding teaching, expectations regarding students, and expectations regarding the school context.

Another issue that the cooperating teachers participating in the research were asked to focus on in their reflection reports was the problems experienced by the student teachers during the teaching practice process. The findings regarding the problems experienced by teacher candidates in the eyes of the teachers are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Problems Experienced by Teacher Candidates in the Eyes of Cooperating Teachers

Themes	Codes
Problems with teaching	*Obligation to use English (x12) *Giving instructions (x9) *Not being able to get down to the students' level (x9) *Staying true to theory (x7)
Problems with classroom management	*Classroom management (x14) *Time management (x12) *Instant decision making (x3)
Problems with students	*Getting down to the students' level (x8) *Students not understanding the instructions (x6) *Reluctance of students (x6) *Students are accustomed to using their native language (x3)
Problems with teacher candidates	*Anxiety while teaching (x12) *Adjusting the tone of voice (x9) *Reluctance to teach (x3)

It has been revealed that the most basic problems expressed by the cooperating teachers regarding the problems experienced by the teacher candidates during the teaching practice process are problems related to teaching. These problems generally include teacher candidates feeling obliged to use English in their lessons, having difficulty giving instructions appropriate to the students' level, having trouble getting down to the students' level, and trying to stick to theoretical principles in their lessons.

3.4 Results from Focus Group Discussions

In addition to the reflection reports, focus group interviews were held in groups of five with both student teachers, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers in order to provide data diversity in the study and to collect in-depth data at the end of the teaching practice process. During the interviews, the participants were asked to express their ideas in detail about whether the expectations of the student teachers were met during the teaching practice process, as well as what solutions could be produced to prevent the problems experienced during the teaching practice process in the coming years and to improve the process.

All stakeholders participating in the focus group discussions stated that the expectations of the teacher candidates were generally met at the end of the teaching practice process. Student teachers, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers all stated that the expectations regarding teaching skills, students, cooperating teachers, and the school context, which were mentioned in the teacher candidates' expectations at the beginning of the process and expressed in their reflection reports, were generally met, and that the process was productive for the prospective teachers. They stated. Some excerpts from the interviews showing that expectations were met are presented below.

"My general expectation was that this process would improve me, and I can say that I completely achieved this goal. For example, at the beginning of the practicum, I had many concerns about my own teaching skills, and I expected to overcome these concerns during the practicum. I was nervous, especially during my first lesson, but I never lost control, and this tension decreased over time. As I practiced, my competence began to increase over time. 'I'm still not perfect, but seeing this improvement has given me a lot of confidence.'" (Focus Group – Student Teacher - 3)

"We think that we have achieved our outcomes with the interim evaluations we have made by cooperating with the supervisors in our school on the following issues: dealing with the purpose, content, scope, and evaluation of the course, giving feedback on time, and guiding the candidate teacher in our practices." (Focus Group – University Supervisor - 2)

"If I had to make a general evaluation, of course there were problems and shortcomings, but I think that the expectations of the teacher candidates in my group were met in terms of both improving their teaching skills and getting to know the profile of secondary school students." (Focus Group – Cooperating Teacher - 5)

The last issue in which the participants in the focus group discussions were asked to express their ideas in detail was to minimize the problems experienced during the teaching practice process and to offer solution suggestions to improve the process. During the interviews, it was noteworthy that all participants shared their views on the issue of student teachers spending more time in the schools and increasing the practicum period within the scope of teaching practice. In addition, one of the important issues in the meeting was that student teachers and university supervisors emphasized the arrangements that should be made for skills courses. Finally, one of the important conclusions of the interviews is that the cooperating teachers underlined the deficiencies in the practical knowledge of the student teachers and suggested that they be given additional training at this point. In general, the solutions of all stakeholders participating in the interviews regarding the teaching practicum process are presented in Table 8 as a list of suggestions.

Table 8: Solution Suggestions for Improving the Teaching Practicum

Stakeholder	Suggestions for Solution
Student Teachers	*Selection of cooperating teachers who are willing to participate in the teaching practice process *Cooperating teachers' giving more detailed feedback *More observation visits by university supervisors *Giving more importance to teaching practices in pre-practicum courses *Making the lesson plans implemented in pre-practicum courses compatible with real life *Switching to an integrated approach in skills teaching *More case/situation-oriented teaching in skills-teaching courses *Providing training to teacher candidates regarding teacher-student interaction *Providing financial support to teacher candidates for the materials used in teaching practice. *Increasing the time spent in the practicum school *More teaching hours during the practicum process *Spreading the teaching practice to all years of the program *Holding an orientation meeting before the practicum process begins *Sharing information about the practicum schools at the beginning of the semester *Encouraging cooperation between teacher candidates

Stakeholder	Suggestions for Solution
University Supervisors	*Providing more teaching practices in skills-teaching courses *Giving more feedback to teacher candidates *Preparing sample lessons for teacher candidates *Making skills courses a prerequisite for teaching practicum *Reducing the burden of cooperating teachers *Increasing the motivation of cooperating teachers *Orientation meeting before the practicum process *Restructuring the content of the skills teaching courses *A course for grammar teaching to be included in the program
Cooperating Teachers	*More teaching practices by teacher candidates *Providing training regarding the anxiety experienced by teacher candidates *Inclusion of courses for in-class applications in the program *Teacher candidates teaching alone in the classroom rather than in groups or pairs *Increasing communication between practicum stakeholders *Teacher candidates spending more time at practicum schools *Creating a platform where teacher candidates can share their experiences *Providing additional training for teacher candidates for preparing level-specific activities and giving instructions. *Providing training to teacher candidates on classroom management

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to document the problems that English language teacher candidates encounter throughout the teaching practicum in order to make the process more efficient, by taking the opinions of both the student teachers and the other stakeholders (university supervisors and cooperating teachers) involved in the practice and proposing solutions to these problems. For this purpose, all stakeholder groups were asked to write a reflective report in the fourth and eighth weeks of the practicum process. A total of 242 reflective reports were collected from the participants at the end of the process. Finally, focus group interviews were held with five teacher candidates, five university supervisors, and five cooperating teachers separately. All these data were examined qualitatively, and important findings were obtained.

Findings regarding teacher candidates' expectations from the teaching practice process reveal that teacher candidates' expectations from the teaching practice process are grouped under four main headings: expectations regarding teaching skills, expectations regarding students, expectations regarding cooperating teachers, and expectations regarding the school context. In the eyes of the university supervisors, the expectations of the student teachers appear to be generally grouped under the headings of improving teaching skills and getting to know the students. While expectations regarding teaching skills include putting knowledge into practice, giving effective lessons, preparing effective materials, and developing classroom management skills, it appears that expectations regarding students include knowing the student profile and learning to approach the students. Finally, in the eyes of the cooperating teachers, the expectations of the student teachers were determined as expectations about teaching, expectations about students, and expectations about the school context.

The problems encountered by teacher candidates in the first weeks of the practicum process are grouped under three main headings: problems related to students, problems related to classroom management, and problems related to the teacher candidate himself. In addition, university supervisors expressed problems related to the school context, and

cooperating teachers expressed problems related to the teacher candidates themselves. In particular, the results obtained from qualitative data are parallel to studies conducted on the experiences of English language teacher candidates in Türkiye during the teaching practicum process. In particular, Başaran Uysal and Savaş (2021), in their meta-synthesis study to bring together the common difficulties of teaching practices in English Language Teaching programs in Türkiye, showed teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, university instructors, students, and school administrators as the common sources of these difficulties. In addition to these general difficulties, as revealed in this study, receiving feedback from cooperating teachers and university instructors, classroom management of student teachers, lack of cooperation between schools and universities, the gap between theory and practice, and target language problems are problems that do not disappear over time (Başaran Uysal & Savaş, 2021). Problems related to classroom management have been frequently emphasized in previous studies. For example, Keser and Yavuz (2018) specifically examined the classroom management difficulties of prospective teachers in teaching practice and revealed that there are four main reasons for classroom management problems: organization of classroom activities, crowded and noisy students, unmotivated students, and interaction between student teachers and students. This study also revealed that student teachers have problems with lesson planning. Similar problems have been identified before in the Turkish context. For example, Çubukçu (2010) stated that pre-service teachers believed that they had learned the intricacies of writing lesson plans, but they had difficulties in ordering and integrating activities, establishing connections between outcomes, achieving goals, and time management. Yavuz (2011) similarly stated that prospective teachers had problems with time management while preparing their lessons for teaching practice.

In general terms, it has been frequently stated in the literature that teacher candidates come face to face with the 'real world' during the teaching practice process and, in fact, experience real-world problems (Başaran Uysal & Savaş, 2021; Çepik & Çepik, 2015; Çubukçu, 2010; Gürsoy, 2013; Mutlu, 2014; Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez & Eröz-Tuğa, 2014; Seymen, 2012; Tüfekçi-Can & Baştürk, 2018; Yangın-Ekşi & Yılmaz-Yakışık, 2016; Yavuz, 2011). What is important at this point is to identify the problems that are likely to arise or are directly encountered, to clearly identify the source of the problems, and to offer certain suggestions to solve these problems as much as possible.

4.2 Suggestions

Within the scope of solution suggestions for improving the teaching practice process, some general suggestions can be listed when the data obtained from teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors are combined with those expressed in the relevant literature.

First of all, some suggestions can be made, especially for decision makers, within the scope of planning the teaching practice process. For example, it is frequently brought up that teacher candidates should be in practice schools for longer periods of time. According to the current program, this time seems insufficient for teacher candidates, who have a six-hour practice obligation per week. All stakeholders agree on the need for teacher candidates to spend more time in practice schools and to be provided with more practice opportunities. In cooperation with relevant stakeholders, this period can be increased, or the teaching practice can be extended to all years of faculty education.

Of course, the solution proposal expressed above seems to be a proposal for quantity, and some planning should be made to increase the quality of the teaching practice process. The most important suggestion at this point is that teacher candidates must be prepared for this

practice in many aspects before starting their teaching practicum. It is emphasized that teacher candidates should be better equipped in terms of teaching techniques and methods, especially in the years before the practicum. Therefore, the pre-practicum courses should be designed as practically-oriented as possible; students should do sample practices; case studies should be given a lot; activities should be prepared for students with different language levels; and classroom management and instruction training should be given more carefully. At this point, relevant programs need to take action and take the necessary precautions.

During the practicum process, the necessity of keeping communication and interaction between stakeholders at a maximum level comes to the fore. Before the practicum process begins, orientation/information meetings must be held for all stakeholders; the process must be followed meticulously, especially by the university supervisor; the student teachers must make an effort to eliminate all kinds of problems they encounter in practice; and the cooperating teachers must be selected from among the willing and enthusiastic teachers in this regard. It is very important that they transfer the necessary knowledge and constantly guide them. Therefore, it would be appropriate for the relevant teacher training institutions and the Directorate of National Education to act jointly and make decisions for the success of the teaching practicum.

Future research suggestions resulting from this research are listed below.

- In light of the results obtained in this study, the methods and strategies used by teacher candidates to solve the problems they encounter can be identified.
- Some practices can be changed/suggested during the teaching practicum by taking the practical opinions and suggestions of the university supervisors and cooperating teachers who guide the teacher candidates. The effectiveness of these practices can also be measured.
- As a result of this inquiry, the solution suggestions suggested by English language teacher candidates, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers can be implemented, and the functionality and effectiveness of these suggestions can be examined.
- A workshop/seminar on teaching practice can be organized for English language teacher candidates just before the teaching practice course, and the effectiveness of this training can be measured.
- A similar study can be applied within the scope of teaching practicum in countries other than Türkiye in cooperation with foreign co-researchers, and the results can be evaluated comparatively.

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