

Early Teacher Identity of Pre-Service EFL Teachers During the Practicum Process: Preliminary Findings from Turkish Higher Education Context

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate how pre-service EFL teachers develop their early teacher identity during the practicum process and whether this process has an impact on their teacher identity development. The participants included 126 pre-service EFL teachers studying in the final year of an English language teacher education program at a state university in Türkiye. The data were collected during the fall semester of 2022-2023 academic year through early teacher identity measure and the participants were asked to complete the scale at the beginning and the end of a four-month practicum process in which they performed teaching practice and made observations at state schools. The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that early teacher identity perceptions of participants significantly differed at the beginning and the end of the semester, the latter referring to a higher level. The participants demonstrated higher levels of identity perception in all sub-categories including self-categorization as a teacher, confidence in becoming a teacher and participation as a teacher. It was also shown that whereas previous informal teaching experience might have a role on early teacher identity perceptions, no difference was found between genders. Concluding that the practicum process influenced pre-service teachers' early teacher identity perceptions significantly, the study offers several suggestions regarding the implementations of teaching practice in language teacher education programs.

Keywords: EFL, higher education, practice teaching, pre-service teachers, teacher identity