

Student Teachers' views of Practicums (Teacher training Placements) in Turkish and English Contexts: a comparative Study

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Abstract

How student teachers experience their transformation into serving teachers in the liminal social spaces of the school-based practicum (teaching practice) is of key importance to them, their future students and their educators. The practicum is a challenging experience for student-teachers, even with help from university and school-based mentors, as their knowledge of practice, power and culture in schools lacks sophistication. The practicum, an under-researched but important aspect of education, was investigated in this study by asking 480 student teachers in three universities in Turkey and England in 2010-2011 about how well their universities prepared them for the practicum; what made practicums successful; and how practicums fostered their professional development. Participants generally thought the practicum helped them to develop skills in student and classroom management, in meeting students' diverse learning needs, in recognising multiple students' perspectives, and in grounding their understanding of what it meant to be a teacher 'for real'.

Keywords: practicum, mentoring, school-based training, university-school partnerships

Introduction

Teacher education prepares student teachers, sometimes called pre-service teachers, to practise competently and independently (Ten Dam & Blom, 2006). One aspect of that education is placing trainees in schools to gain understanding of the realities of teaching. These placements are generally called practicums. Practicums are intended to help student teachers begin to understand the perplexing experiences of teacher practice, developing complex professional knowledge to become successful teachers (Glazier, 2009). During practicums, student teachers observe established teachers at work, prepare instructional materials for the students whom they then teach with or without the help of a mentor, and teach classes of school students, often observed by experienced teachers. They are encouraged to consult with school and university colleagues, experiment with ideas and theories studied in university (Sim, 2006) and reflect on their practice experiences (Lucas, 1999 in Myles et al., 2006). Although practicums often focus on technical skills such as classroom management and effective instruction (Field and Latta 2001), rather than encouraging student teachers to reflect deeply on their professional values, identities and practice, student teachers and their mentors consistently regard highly the value of school placements (practicums) to teacher education (Segall, 2002 in Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005).

Performing in the liminal social spaces of their practicums allows student teachers to begin their transformation to being serving teachers (Shields, 2003, 12–13). During this they interact with people of different status in a school, including teachers and students, playing a peripheral role with each of these communities of practice (Busher et al., 2007). This is particularly challenging as student teachers' cultural knowledge of practice and power in schools lacks sophistication compared with other members (Pierce, 2007). However, they are supported in their development by school-based teacher mentors, often reported by student teachers as being crucial (Wilkins and Lall, 2010), and university based tutors. In part this is to help student teachers reflect on their practice (Harrison et al., 2005; Schon, 1987), a central aspect of learning to become successful teachers (Zeichner & Liston, 1987 in Harford & MacRuairc, 2008).

This study is important because research into student teachers' experiences of the practicum is limited but to provide student teachers with the most appropriate support for

their development, teacher educators and school-based mentors need to understand how student teachers experience the practicum. Some research suggests that appropriate support includes helping student teachers to interrogate theory and practice in the light of the other and bridging the gap between theory and practice (Beeth & Adadan 2006). Other research emphasises the importance of helping student teachers to develop knowledge of teaching prior to their practicums (Trumbull & Fluet, 2008), in part through micro-teaching opportunities at university, as well as learning how to reflect on practice.

The study on which this paper is based investigated the views of 480 student teachers' and their university supervisors' and school-based teacher mentors' about student teachers' school-based training (practicums) during the year 2010-11, although this paper only reports the views of the student teachers. The choice of sites for the study, a major city in Anatolia, Turkey, and a major city in the Midlands of England was fortuitous – an example of opportunity sampling. However, it had several advantages. Most of the student teachers involved in the study in both countries experienced the practicum in urban areas so their views of it are likely to reflect those locations. The universities involved in the study are large and well-respected institutions in their countries, familiar with supporting research and attracting students internationally as well as from all over their own countries. Their departments of education, from which the student teachers in the study came, are large and well-established and attract students as trainee teachers from all over their respective countries. Consequently the student teachers in both universities were not from a narrow locality and were preparing to teach a wide and similar variety of different school subjects in Primary and Secondary schools. All the investigators were familiar with each other's educational systems. The investigators had worked together previously, studying education, and the English investigators had worked on a previous project about education development in Turkey, albeit with different collaborators from Turkey. Both educational systems in the two countries are strongly centralised under government control, prescribing how teachers should act in schools, what curriculum should be followed by school students of different ages and by trainee or student teachers. Both systems emphasise the importance of including all students in education, but use performative approaches to evaluate schools', teachers' and students' achievements, in large measure to keep control of education (Jeffrey and Troman, 2012).

In this study, data was mainly collected by questionnaire, using closed and open-ended questions, from student teachers in three universities in two cities in Turkey and England. A small amount of data was also collected by semi-structured interviews, focused on the same topics as the questionnaire, with students and with education tutors and school-based mentors. A mixed methods approach was used for pragmatic reasons as some data, such as students' evaluation of aspects of the practicum, was more easily collected with attitude scales, while students' views and comments about their experiences on the practicum were more flexibly collected through open-ended questions. The use of two complementary methods did not undermine our intention to construct a social interactionist study that recognised the importance of hearing the voices of participants in a situation in order to make sense of it and how they experienced it. It was through hearing student teachers' voices discussing the questions posed in the study about how well student teachers thought their universities prepared them for the practicum; what made practicums successful; and how practicums fostered their professional development that teacher educators and school-based mentors would gain the greatest insights into how to improve the provisions of practicums for their different student cohorts. In England only, student teachers were also asked about the ways in which policy contexts affected their experiences of the practicum.

Before joining the project, participants were asked to give their informed consent but no major ethical issues were envisaged or encountered. 370 student teachers responded in Turkey and 110 replied in England, a response rate in Turkey of 64.6% in University A and 35.4% in University B and 50% in University C in England. However, whilst only 100, 34 men and 65 women (27% of student teacher participants) in Turkey completed the open-ended questions all student teachers in England gave some answer to the open-ended questions. The qualitative data was recorded in English for British participants and in Turkish for Turkish participants and then transcribed into English for analysis in England thematically by site before cross-site comparisons were made. The quantitative data was analysed by site with descriptive statistics.

Different perspectives on the practicum

The training year for student teachers can be conceptualised by two complementary dimensions. One contrasts the importance of developing student teachers' technical skills with that of developing a robust and self-reflexive teacher professional identity. The other raises questions about the competing or shared roles of universities and schools in developing new teachers.

The first dimension contrasts the importance of honing classroom management techniques and lesson planning skills with the development of student teachers' values and dispositions that indicate someone who is a teacher (Kelchtermans and Hamilton, 2004). Although technical skills are necessary for successful teaching (Conway and Clark, 2003), some student teachers believe they benefit most from more rounded discussions about what it means to be a teacher (Rajun, 2008). However, the development of teacher identity is subject to constant change through fluctuations in teachers' personal circumstances and in the socio-political, economic and organisational contexts of teaching. It is a combination of both incremental developments in practice and more transformative episodes (Rodgers and Scott, 2008).

Central to constructing the first dimension is the feedback given by more experienced teachers (either from a University or from a partnership school or jointly) to student teachers after observing student teachers' lessons. Feedback contributes to the development of teaching skills and to the wider dispositions for becoming a teacher, such as the ability to critically analyse one's own performance (Fletcher, 2000; Tang and Chow, 2007). The balance between developing the technical skills of teaching and encouraging a deeper level of critical reflection on performance is seen as difficult to achieve (Koerner, et al., 2002).

The nature of the feedback processes depends on cultural practices and curriculum frameworks (Wang, 2001). Discussions of it are often embedded within those on mentoring student teachers (Anderson, 2007) and the different power relationships mentoring can or should construct. For example, some researchers emphasise the importance of collaboration between student teachers and mentors (Akcan and Tatar, 2010), others emphasise the use of questioning of student teachers at a deep level by mentors (Jyrhama, 2001) and still others emphasise the professional knowledge that mentors bring to feedback situations with student teachers (Parker-Katz and Bay, 2008). Some student teachers welcome feedback as essential for developing their skills and identities as teachers, but others find it difficult to resolve the

tension between the developmental and assessment purposes of observation and feedback (Brandt, 2008; Holland, 2005).

The second dimension is the conflicting or complementary roles of universities and schools in helping student teachers to develop educational theory and practice. One perspective of this dimension is of, 'two largely separate worlds exist[ing] side by side' (Beck and Kosnick, 2002b, p. 7) with the universities dealing largely with educational theory while schools develop student teachers' practices. It is a view with which some student teachers concur (Allen, 2009). However, this is not an ideal situation because good practical teaching should be inseparable from theory (Schön, 2003). Where this division of learning is enacted, student teachers often have difficulty translating educational theory into practice (Hammerness et al., 2005).

There are many examples of effective school-university partnerships which connect the disparate elements of student teachers' training experiences (Bates, 2002; Christie, Conlon, Gemmell and Long (2004); Sutherland, Scanlon and Sperring, 2005). The benefits accrue not just to student teachers (Fullan, 1993; Yan and He, 2010) but to university and school personnel as well (Smedley, 2001; Stephens and Boldt, 2004; Walkington, 2007). Weaknesses occur in such partnerships when communication between the partners lacks continuity or is not sustained by them (Allen, 2011; Taylor, 2008; Woods and Weasmer, 2003). This can lead to ineffectual arrangements between universities and schools (Johnston, 2010; White, Bloomfield and Le Cornu, 2010).

For schools to be effective providers of practicum experiences to student teachers they need to meet a number of criteria. One is how effective a practicum school is in giving emotional support to student teachers in a time of emotional stress and political ignorance (Pierce, 2007). Giving support helps them to adapt to the socio-cultural context of the school (Smith, 2007) and develop a professional or pedagogic identity quickly (Beijaard, et al., 2004). Another is how supervisory teachers undertake a range of functions from role model to advisor (Haigh and Ward, 2004), developing relationships with student teachers that range from the directive to the collaborative (McNay and Graham, 2007). A supportive supervisor is more likely to lead to a positive assessment of student teachers' work (Hobson, et al., 2006; Hudson, 2007).

Student teachers' perspectives on practicums and on partnerships between universities and schools are said to be under-researched (Allen, 2011; Meijer et al., 2011; Moody, 2009; Sivan and Chan, 2009). None the less, in some studies student teachers expressed views on organisational relationship between universities and schools. Some thought that holding the practicum towards the end of a teacher training course meant that it clashed with job hunting (Yan and He, 2011). Others thought the practicum too short (Kosnick and Beck, 2003; Taskin, 2006). Yet others, in China, regretted the lack of supervision by responsible school teachers and a lack of an agreed assessment system (Yan and He, 2011).

When asked about their experiences on practicums, student teachers thought that unsatisfactory experiences (Beck and Kosnick, 2002a; Yan and He, 2011) were caused by the negative aspects of the factors that make schools effective providers of practicums. Student teachers criticised schools for not having confidence in them as potential professionals (Yan and He, 2011; Taskin, 2006) treating them merely as subordinates (Laker et al., 2008) and teaching assistants who were expected just to copy their supervisory teachers (Moody, 2009). Many supervisors seemed unwilling to encourage independence in student teachers (Glenn,

2006). Student teachers thought this inhibited their professional development (Taskin, 2006) by preventing them creating their own teaching styles. However, student teachers' acknowledged that their prior experiences as learners and their personal histories were important in fashioning their views of their practicum (Hammerness et al., 2005; Kroll, 2004).

When asked how they liked to learn during practicums, some student teachers preferred to observe experienced teachers first, while others preferred immersion in their own hands-on experience (Pinder, 2008). The former strategy allowed student teachers to develop their knowledge by considering the practices of more experienced teachers, while the latter emphasised a trial-and-error or immersion approach to learning. Both strategies involve a process of assimilation (Beijaard et al., 2004) as student teachers (re) interpret their theoretical and practical knowledge of classrooms and schools in relation to the demands of significant others in schools, such as their school-based mentors, university tutors, and classroom students. However, critical incidents in the practicum also facilitate student teachers' learning, provoking crises that shift their cognitive and emotional understandings of the teacher's role (Illeris, 2002; Whitcomb, Borko and Liston, 2008).

Findings

After briefly noting the composition of the sample of student teachers in this study, the main findings are reported using subheadings derived from the main sections of the questionnaire: How institutional contexts affect student teachers' experiences of the practicum; what student teachers' perceived as more and less successful aspects of practicums; what part student teachers thought practicums played in developing their professional practices; student teachers' recommendations for developing successful practicums. Student teachers' responses to these questions are shown in the tables which follow, which also indicate the sources of the data presented. The percentages in the tables of qualitative data indicate the proportion of English (E) or Turkish (T) students who made statements that fitted into the different categories of their responses.

The student teacher participants

Of the student participants in this study whose views are discussed in this paper, there were 370 Turkish student teachers, of whom 71.4% were female and 28.6% were male. Of the 110 British student teachers 65.4% were female and 34.6% were male. Turkish student teachers studied a variety of subjects: Turkish language (25.7% of participants), Mathematics and Science (28.4%), English as a foreign language (34.6%), and Primary education (11.4%). English student teachers studied: English (36.3%), Mathematics (26.4%), Science (34.1%), and Social Science (12.1%).

How institutional contexts affect student teachers' experiences of the practicum

Closed questions 1 – 7 of the questionnaire investigated this topic. Turkish and British student teachers seemed strongly supportive of the importance of the practicum to their development as teachers – see Table 1 below.

Table 1: about here

When the mean and standard deviations were calculated for the Turkish student teachers' views in Table 1 the most important item seemed to be item 2 ($M=4.17$; $SD=0.91$). The least important item appeared to be item 4 ($M=3.65$; $SD=1.19$). British student teachers appeared to agree with the views of their Turkish counterparts.

Although the data from question eight (on the impact of policy contexts on student teachers' experiences of the practicum) is not reported here because only student teachers in University C in England were allowed to answer the question, it is in the detail from the open-ended questions (questions 9 and 10 of the version of the questionnaire used in England) that it becomes clearer which institutional practices from all three universities in the study student teachers preferred. These preferences seem to fall in to two categories: How the universities helped with their practicums; how university documents helped with their practicums. Student teachers' views of how university work helped with practicums (Table 2) can be subdivided into ten categories which emerged from their data. Some of these were strongly supported with many examples (Classroom management; Teaching resources/methods; Subject knowledge (particularly for students in England); Personal development (particularly for students in Turkey)), while others only had limited support.

Table 2: About here

The types of documents produced by universities which student teachers found helpful can be grouped into nine categories (Table 3). Some of these were strongly supported with many examples (Useful reference source (particularly for students in England); Subject knowledge; Professional development; Lesson planning) while others appeared to have limited support. One category (Classroom management) seemed to be linked to a strongly supported category in Table 2, strengthening the view of its importance to student teachers.

Table 3: about here

What student teachers' perceived as more and less successful aspects of practicums

Student teachers' views on the extent to which their expectations of their experiences during their practicums matched their actual experiences (question 11) are shown in Table 4. Their answers suggest a noticeable difference of view between student teachers in one university and those in the other two.

Table 4: About here

However, the detail from the open-ended question (question 12) shows that it is particular institutional practices that student teachers prefer (see Table 5). Some of the eight categories shown in this Table were very strongly supported (More stressful (particularly for students in England); It met expectations; Depended on quality of school support) while the others only had limited support. However, a noticeable proportion of English and Turkish students did not think their practicum experiences met their expectations for various reasons.

Table 5: About here

What part student teachers thought practicums played in developing their professional practice

Closed questions 13-21 of the questionnaire, shown in Table 6, investigated this topic. Turkish and British student teachers seemed to have considerable satisfaction with their experiences during their practicums.

Table 6: About here

When mean and standard deviations were calculated for the Turkish responses, student teachers thought item 13 (M=3.94; SD=0.91) and item 17 (M=3.94; SD=0.90) gave them most support. The least well supported item was item 15. On the contrary, British student teachers gave item 18 least support but did not really distinguish between the importance of items 13 – 16 to them.

In the detail from the open-ended question (question 22) it becomes clearer how well student teachers thought their practicums supported their professional development. The seven categories (see Table 7) which emerged from the data reflect this. Some had slightly more support than others (Classroom/ behaviour management; lesson planning; working with experienced teachers (particularly for students in England); Understanding school / classroom environment (particularly for students in Turkey), as the percentages in Table 7 indicate.

Table 7: About here

Student teachers' recommendations for developing successful practicums

In the last question (question 23) student teachers were invited to look ahead at what might improve the quality of experience on practicums. Instead they indicated what they disliked about their practicums (see Table 8) suggesting what providers needed to avoid or reconstruct. Some categories that emerged from the data had very strong support from some student teachers (Professional development / practice activities; Curriculum methods/ planning assessment), suggesting practice by providers in these areas needed addressing urgently. Others (lack of practical relevance; weak (co)tutor/ school support; Lack of / limited practical experience; relationships with students; classroom management; no lack of benefits) had only limited support

Table 8: About here

Conclusions

This study shows the importance of asking key participants in the development of teachers, the student teachers themselves, for their views on the practicum. It begins to address the relative paucity of research which researchers such as Allen (2011) noted. It emphasises the importance of student voice as a vehicle for helping educational institutions create effective learning environments (Mujis et al, 2005; McIntyre et al., 2005). Student teachers benefit from teacher educators following their individual personal and professional

conceptualisations of professional learning (Poulou, 2007). An important element in this for participants in this study was the opportunity to reflect critically on their developing practices as teachers.

Student teachers in this study generally welcomed the opportunity that the practicum gave them to gain experience of being teachers and many seemed to think they were well-prepared for it by their universities, noting that their expectations of the practicum were matched by their experiences of it. Poulou (2007) also found, teaching practice offers student teachers growth-producing experiences while Allsopp et al. (2006) noted that student teachers were able to make concrete linkages between their course work and their field practicum experience. However, many student teachers noted ways in which their expectations of the practicum were not met, finding their experiences more challenging than they had expected either because they had had naïve expectations of the practice of teaching or because they did not feel adequately supported in their work in schools. Cheng, Cheng and Tang (2010) also noted that pre-training experience, teaching context and student needs are the main dimensions that contribute to inconsistencies in student teachers' conceptions of teaching.

Many pre-service teachers welcomed the support given them by their universities although they also acknowledged that support from teacher mentors and working with other experienced teachers was an important part of their development as teachers. Effective professional relationship between mentors and student teachers is important (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009). However, university teacher education programmes often struggle to attract appropriately experienced mentor teachers in schools. Sinclair, Dowson, and Thistleton-Martina (2006) report a profile of mentor teachers who agreed to work with student teachers but discovered that the actual experience of cooperating with student teachers can run counter mentor teachers' positive motivations to take practicum students. Teacher educators need to support pre-service teachers in developing their ability to think critically and thoughtfully (Stoughton, 2007). Li (2009) identified various roles for mentors while Smith & Avetisian (2011) highlighted ways of supporting student and cooperating teachers to develop shared understandings of the purposes of student teaching and mentoring.

Of considerable importance are the similarities and differences in view between Turkish and English student teachers as this is shown in qualitative and quantitative data. The different policy and education contexts of Turkey and England would lead observers to expect differences of view between British and Turkish student teachers but the quantitative data shows relatively slight differences. However, the qualitative data shows up considerable differences of view as well as similarities.

For example, Turkish students in particular welcomed the opportunity their practicums gave them to learn to develop positive relationships with school students and develop insights into school students' needs. On the other hand they regretted the lack of opportunities in schools given to them by their mentors to practice and develop innovative approaches to teaching and learning, echoing the views of Glenn (2006) about how mentors practice and what constitutes successful mentor practice (Hobson, et al., 2006; Hudson, 2007) by giving positive, trusting support to student teachers. Unsurprisingly, students from both countries regretted not being given adequate support by school-based mentors and recognised the centrality of the work of school teachers/ mentors to the success of their practicums.

British student teachers particularly welcomed working with experienced teachers but found their practicums at least as or more stressful than they had expected and regretted that

they were constrained in how they could practice teaching by the need to fit in with their host schools. These views reflect findings from other studies by Yan and He (2011) and Taskin (2006). However both sets of student teachers thought that learning about classroom or behaviour management was an essential part of their practicum and many student teachers in both countries thought they had had the opportunity to do that. They welcomed the support that schools and universities gave them with this aspect of their development.

Student teachers in both countries thought that learning to become familiar with the school environment and what it meant to be a teacher for real was central to their professional development, as it helped them to understand the workings of schools and classrooms, a view that Pierce (2007) also found. They valued opportunities to gain experience of what it meant to work with a class of school students on their own and to begin to discover effective approaches to managing students in classes. Chitpin et al. (2008) also found that the practicum can provide some alternative ways in solving classroom management problems. In this study this seems to have included developing and testing a range of resources with different school students. It also included, especially among British student teachers, the opportunity to engage with the practices of assessment and find out practically how to implement assessment policies that were required by central government of the school. Student teachers greatly regretted being deprived of these opportunities if they were not positively mentored in schools.

The study also casts light on different views of the importance of the practicum to teacher development. One dimension of this argument contrasts the importance of honing classroom management techniques and lesson planning skills with the development of student teachers' values and dispositions that indicate someone who is a teacher (Kelchtermans and Hamilton, 2004). Although, it is argued, technical skills are necessary for successful teaching (Conway and Clark, 2003), in one study, student teachers believed they benefited most from more rounded discussions that allowed them to reflect on what it means to be a teacher (Rajun, 2008). Tin (2006) suggested that the most important roles of the practicum are to raise awareness and develop pre-service teachers' experiences through activities in the classroom to achieve deeper teaching competencies.

Evidence from this study suggests that the contrasting perspectives sketched in the previous paragraph risk developing a false dichotomy between practical experience and reflection on practice as vehicles for developing student teachers' understandings about the practices of teaching and learning in school environments. While student teachers in both countries emphasised the importance of learning the practices of being a teacher in the classroom by teaching and not just observing, they also emphasised the need to have the opportunity to think about their practices in order to learn from their experiences. For them processes of assimilation (Beijaard et al., 2004), reflecting on practice, were important to their professional development.

Another dimension raises questions about the competing or shared roles of universities and schools in developing new teachers. The student teachers in this study seemed to understand the relationship between schools and universities as one of partnership. When they complained about weaknesses in their practicums it seems to have been related to a failure in this partnership, for example, schools not providing adequate opportunities for practice in classrooms or supportive mentoring to complement the subject knowledge and knowledge of pedagogy developed in the universities. Student teachers welcomed the range of resources provided by their universities as a starting point for their professional thinking

and as a reference point for their further professional development. Such materials helped them to develop their practice in classrooms and to reflect on and build up their practical knowledge of being teacher.

Although only on a relatively small scale, this study points out the importance of listening to student teachers' voices in developing the practicum as a central aspect of teacher professional development. At the centre of this practicum is an intersection of theory and practice that allows student teachers to develop their practical knowledge of what it means to be a teacher working with school students in schools and reflecting on that to hone their skills and knowledge further as part of their continuing professional development. In this process schools and universities seem to be important partners in nurturing the development of new teachers. However far more research needs to be done across a variety of different countries to find out to what extent different cultural and policy contexts affect the ways that student teachers are able to learn during their practicum.

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Table 1: Student teachers' perspectives on institutional support for their practicums

Items	British student teachers			Turkish student teachers		
	N = 110 Agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Don't agree (%)	N = 370 Agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Don't agree (%)
To what extent does the practicum allow me to ...						
1. put the theory I learned in the University into practice in the classroom	96 (87)	10 (9)	4 (4)	252 (68)	48 (13)	69 (19)
2. understand the overall context of the school	100 (91)	6 (5)	4 (4)	316 (85)	30 (8)	23 (6)
3. develop my understanding of what happens in a classroom	99 (90)	8 (7)	3 (3)	316 (85)	38 (10)	14 (4)
4. develop appropriate resources for teaching	91 (83)	11 (10)	8 (7)	233 (63)	75 (20)	54 (15)
5. develop effective classroom management strategies	91 (83)	14 (12.2)	5 (4)	252 (68)	77 (21)	39 (10)
6. learn from my mentor(s) in the school	92 (84)	11 (10)	7 (6)	254 (69)	57 (15)	57 (15)
7. have the opportunity to work with experienced teachers	97 (88)	7 (6)	6 (5)	251 (68)	54 (15)	63 (17)

Table 2: The institutional experiences student teachers preferred

Categories in order of support	Example quotations
Classroom/behaviour management (E= 23.6%; T= 22%)	Gave me strategies [for] behaviour management [and] classroom differentiation (<i>English</i>); I learned how to respond to misbehaved students in the classroom (<i>Turkish</i>); experience how to manage the classroom (<i>Turkish</i>)
Teaching resources/ techniques/ methods (E= 26.3%; T= 23%)	Good resources and strategies for teaching (<i>English</i>); ‘Teaching Methods’ was very helpful (<i>Turkish</i>); gained new skills and delivered my lessons successfully (<i>Turkish</i>)
Subject knowledge and lesson planning (E= 54%; T= 15%)	Subject sessions were more useful (<i>English</i>); showed me various interesting teaching strategies (<i>English</i>); learned to prepare lesson plans (<i>Turkish</i>); Science and Technology lesson at university made a huge contribution (<i>Turkish</i>)
Personal development (E= 10%; T= 21%)	Recognise my own strengths and weaknesses(<i>English</i>); More confidence conducting practicals (<i>English</i>); It helped me greatly to manage my anxiety (<i>Turkish</i>); I learned to overcome my mistakes (<i>Turkish</i>); Feedbacks from university tutors and classmates helped me to evaluate and improve myself (<i>Turkish</i>)
Communicating positively with students (E= 0%; T= 13%)	Helped me to communicate with students (<i>Turkish</i>); facilitated my response to students questions (<i>Turkish</i>)
Micro Teaching (E= 0%; T= 13%)	We had the opportunity to practice what we learned in theory(<i>Turkish</i>)
Familiarisation with schools (E= 7.2%; T= 6%)	Aware of school protocols and general routine and the opportunity to discuss with people in the same situation (<i>English</i>); Made me aware of the challenges of being a teacher while I was a trainee (<i>Turkish</i>); it allowed me to know more about schools and to communicate with teachers (<i>Turkish</i>)
Practicum did not help (E= 6.3%; T= 7%)	All the theory goes out of your head when you are in the classroom (<i>English</i>); What you learn in theory cannot be applied to practice sometimes (<i>Turkish</i>)
Learning difficulties / SEN (E= 2.7%; T= 4%)	Enhance student’s learning –especially students with learning difficulties (<i>Turkish</i>)
Understanding assessment (E= 6.4%; T= 1%)	Assessment for Learning [AFL] useful in designing assessment activities; test preparation (<i>English</i>)

Table 3: Student teachers' views of the relevance of university-provided documents

Categories in order of support	Example quotations
Professional development (E= 25.4%; T= 18%)	Activities helped [me] to be part of the school (<i>English</i>); it allowed me to improve myself (<i>Turkish</i>); academical articles that we analysed at university helped us to view things from different perspectives (<i>Turkish</i>); it helped to up to date my theoretical knowledge (<i>Turkish</i>); the observation task documents helped me to pay attention to detail (<i>Turkish</i>)
Subject knowledge/ activities / methods (E= 27.3%; T= 13%)	Subject directed tasks were very good (<i>English</i>); the resources to be used in reading and writing were very useful (<i>Turkish</i>); helped me to have a good understanding about teaching methods (<i>Turkish</i>)
Lesson planning (E= 10%; T= 22%)	Sheets on planning learning objectives (<i>English</i>); teaching style and lesson planning (<i>Turkish</i>); developing [classroom] materials (<i>Turkish</i>)
Management of classroom / self in school (E= 10%; T=12%)	Evaluations, target setting (<i>English</i>); Behaviour management idea (<i>English</i>); how to conduct myself in classrooms (<i>Turkish</i>); increased the enthusiasm and efficiency of lessons (<i>Turkish</i>); doing practice in effective classroom management (<i>Turkish</i>); allowed us to do our teaching in an organised way (<i>Turkish</i>)
Useful reference source (E= 32.7%; T= 6%)	Good overview of resources for reference (<i>English</i>); useful in terms of explaining some subjects more clearly (<i>Turkish</i>)
Too much information (E= 10%; T= 1%)	Some of it was too wordy to read (<i>English</i>); there were far too many procedural work (<i>Turkish</i>)
Documents little or no use (E= 7.3%; T= 6%)	I rarely referred to them (<i>English</i>); University tutors' instructions were more helpful than the course documents(<i>Turkish</i>)
University expectations (E=0.9%; T= 2%)	I know what the University expected (<i>English</i>); helpful, knowledge about teaching training (<i>Turkish</i>)
National professional standards (E= 0.9%; T= 0%)	Guidance on Standards were useful and good (<i>English</i>)

Table 4: Student teachers' views on expectations and experience of practicums

University	Agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Do not agree (%)
University C (England) participants' views (N = 110)	86 (78)	15 (14)	6 (5.4)
Universities A and B (Turkey) participants' views (N = 370)	198 (54)	60 (16)	110 (30)

Table 5: Student teachers' views on aspects of their practicums

Categories in order of support	Example quotations
Depended on school/ quality of teacher tutors (E= 21.8%; T= 21%)	Amount of time for planning greater than expected (<i>English</i>); we had plenty of time to observe the lessons but we did not have enough opportunity to do teaching practice (<i>Turkish</i>) Support was sometimes great and sometimes poor (<i>English</i>); it depends how the classroom teacher approaches to the trainees (<i>Turkish</i>); it depended on the schools (<i>Turkish</i>)
It met expectations (E= 18.2%; T= 17%)	Expected it to be challenging and enjoyable (<i>English</i>); I gained knowledge and experience (<i>Turkish</i>); teaching practice has fulfilled my expectations (<i>Turkish</i>)
More stressful (E= 28.2%; T= 4%)	Nobody can prepare you for the workload (<i>English</i>); training allowed me to learn how to learn to take measures for difficult challenges (<i>Turkish</i>); the main reason was the students did not perceived us as 'real' teachers (<i>Turkish</i>)
Did not meet expectations (E= 15.4%; T= 13%)	I was surprised at how difficult some departments make it to integrate and how you can be belittled by experienced teachers (<i>English</i>); we did not find the opportunity to practice our learnings (<i>Turkish</i>)
Good practical experience in classrooms (E= 10.9%; T= 14%)	being in the real [classroom] environment and delivering the lessons helped us to develop [the right] classroom behaviour (<i>Turkish</i>); allowed us to see what to expect in classroom environment (<i>Turkish</i>); I expected to have a mixture of lessons (<i>English</i>)
Need to fit in to school/ department systems (E= 8.2%; T= 0%)	Felt my teaching experience was shunted as I was limited to follow the lessons and teaching styles of the classroom teachers (<i>English</i>)
Good support teacher tutor (E= 6.4%; T= 4%)	Schools provided both formal and informal guidance (<i>English</i>); the classroom teacher was an excellent ... role model (<i>Turkish</i>); working with experienced teachers and having their advice on students' behaviours were really beneficial (<i>Turkish</i>)
Developed relationships with students (E= 1.8%; T= 8%)	I was surprised at the extremes of pupil ability (<i>English</i>); I discovered the way I should treat students (<i>Turkish</i>); it helped me to know about students (<i>Turkish</i>)

Table 6: Student teachers' views on practicums developing professional practices

Items	British student teachers			Turkish student teachers		
	Total = 110 Agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Don't agree (%)	Total = 370 Agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Don't agree (%)
To what extent does the practicum allow me to ...						
13. identify my weaknesses	101 (92)	4 (4)	1 (1)	297 (80)	39 (10)	33 (9)
14. improve my practice in areas that needed development	101 (92)	5 (5)	0	273 (74)	58 (15)	38 (10)
15. extend the range of teaching strategies I used in the classroom	100 (91)	5 (5)	0	243 (66)	79 (21)	45 (12)
16. be more reflective about my teaching skills	102 (93)	4 (4)	1 (1)	264 (71)	72 (19)	33 (9)
17. focus on school students' learning	92 (84)	12 (11)	2 (2)	284 (77)	61 (16)	22 (6)
18. choose and use appropriate technologies for students to use	81 (74)	23 (21)	1 (1)	252 (68)	65 (18)	49 (13)
19. prepare lesson plans according to students' needs	92 (84)	10 (9)	2 (2)	260 (70)	64 (17)	44 (12)
20. apt teaching methods, approaches & techniques for particular students	101 (92)	4 (4)	0	255 (69)	73 (20)	41 (11)
21. use a number of assessment techniques, including assess for learning	98 (89)	6 (5)	1 (1)	235 (64)	62 (17)	72 (19)

Table 7: Student teachers' views on practicums supporting professional development

Categories in order of support	Example quotations
Lesson planning / curriculum development (E= 25.3%; T= 17%)	Sharing ideas with peers on activities which were most beneficial to practice (<i>English</i>); better knowledge of National Curriculum (<i>English</i>); allowed us to develop and use relevant lesson tools (<i>Turkish</i>); learned about different methods and techniques (<i>Turkish</i>); realised lesson plans need to be flexible (<i>Turkish</i>)
Classroom / behaviour management (E= 14.5%; T= 18%)	Practicing behaviour management working collaboratively with other teachers (<i>English</i>); practising effective teaching techniques (<i>Turkish</i>); it helped in terms of observing students' behaviour (<i>Turkish</i>)
Working with experienced teachers (E= 28.2%; T=2%)	Feedback from experienced teachers was invaluable (<i>English</i>); work[ing] with experienced teachers was alot more than training in schools and classrooms (<i>Turkish</i>)
Understanding school / classroom environment (E= 8.1%; T= 23%)	gave me the chance to connect theory to the classroom (<i>English</i>); seeing more than one school gave a different experience (<i>English</i>); know more about the students and school environment (<i>Turkish</i>); how the system runs in its real settings (<i>Turkish</i>)
Being a teacher for 'real' (E= 18.1%; T= 12%)	I felt the work experience element being in school was very beneficial (<i>English</i>); made me confident about being a teacher (<i>Turkish</i>); I saw the real working conditions (<i>Turkish</i>); I observed and evaluated things literally through the eyes of a teacher (<i>Turkish</i>)
Reflection on practice (E= 16.3%; T= 9%)	Reflections and confidence in the classroom (<i>English</i>); finding weaknesses and planning how to develop these (<i>English</i>); observed by other teachers to receive feedback (<i>English</i>); my practical thinking and decision making skills improved (<i>Turkish</i>); [helped] me to assess myself ... think of 'how to teach better' (<i>Turkish</i>)
Understanding students' needs (E= 14%; T= 12%)	Working with low attainers helped my behaviour skills [and] helped my differentiation and being more creative in the classroom (<i>English</i>); how to approach the students who have different abilities (<i>Turkish</i>); it enabled me to be relax in front of students (<i>Turkish</i>); it contributed to establish healthy and genuine teacher student relationship (<i>Turkish</i>)

Table 8: What student teachers disliked about practicums

Categories in order of support	Example quotations
Professional development / practice activities (E= 51%; T= 11%)	Some of the professional foci tasks were a little repetitive (<i>English</i>); sometimes seemed to be paperwork to tick a box (<i>English</i>); some of the observation task documents seemed to be identical (<i>Turkish</i>); observing lessons is not helping after a while (<i>Turkish</i>)
Curriculum methods/ planning assessment (E= 0%; T= 18%)	We did not learn a lot about using the innovative methods and techniques (<i>Turkish</i>); it did not help much in lesson planning (<i>Turkish</i>); I did not have enough experience in [student] assessment (<i>Turkish</i>)
lack of practical relevance (E= 13.6%; T= 7%)	University sessions were ... quite far removed from teaching process (<i>English</i>); Lack of practicality of theoretical knowledge (<i>Turkish</i>); too much theory and not enough practice (<i>Turkish</i>)
weak (Co)tutor/ school support (E= 10.9%; T= 6%)	Little help from school on one placement (<i>English</i>); send to a better nurturing school (<i>Turkish</i>); In terms of not being given feedback (<i>Turkish</i>); mentor teacher did not meet my expectations (<i>Turkish</i>)
Lack of / limited practical experience (E= 5.4%; T= 7%)	Observation for every lesson makes relationships with students more difficult (<i>English</i>); I did not teach in many classrooms (<i>Turkish</i>); lack of classroom experience (<i>Turkish</i>)
relationships with students (E= 0.9%; T= 5%)	Teaching a particular class who were entirely unresponsive did not help my behaviour skills (<i>English</i>); being trainee teachers did not help us in terms of having students' full respect (<i>Turkish</i>); I was not able to communicate with students due to the limited time to get to know them properly (<i>Turkish</i>)
classroom management (E= 0%; T= 8%)	It did not contribute to classroom management skills (<i>Turkish</i>)
No lack of benefits (E= 2.7%; T= 8%)	I find the majority of the course very useful and beneficial (<i>English</i>); it helped us in every way (<i>Turkish</i>)