

PROGRAM EVALUATION OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER
EDUCATION PRACTICUM: INSIGHTS FROM SUPERVISORS, STUDENT
TEACHERS, AND GRADUATES

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2016

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Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English Language Education

by
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Boğaziçi University

2016

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Kıymet Merve Celen, certify that

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ABSTRACT

Program Evaluation of an English Language Teacher Education Practicum: Insights from Supervisors, Student Teachers, and Graduates

This study aims to evaluate the practicum program offered at the Foreign Language Education Department (FLED) at an English-medium state university in Turkey to discover (1) the extent to which the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) English language teacher competencies were achieved, (2) its strengths and weaknesses, and (3) the reported needs and possible solutions. Participants of the study were university supervisors, student teachers, and program graduates. Data came from student teacher and program graduate surveys, focus group interviews with student teachers, and individual interviews with university supervisors. For MoNE competencies, the results pointed to an improvement for a better understanding and more use of assessment and evaluation in the classroom and use of activities appropriate for learners with special needs. Higher ratings were elicited for teaching practices and understanding oneself as a professional. Knowledge, skills, dispositions, field experiences and student teaching internship, and quality of instruction were found to be the strengths of the practicum experience in contrast to learner diversity and technology components of the teacher education program. Strengths of the program included experiences in classrooms at various grade levels, seminar discussions and peer feedback, good relationships with cooperating teachers, and involvement and guidance by university supervisors while suggestions pointed to an earlier or more practice or observation, different school contexts, cooperation with cooperating teachers, and improvement in assessment, observations, and technology use.

ÖZET

İngilizce Öğretmeni Eğitimi Öğretmenlik Uygulaması Programı Değerlendirmesi:

Uygulamadan Sorumlu Öğretim Elemanları, İngilizce Öğretmeni Adayları ve

Mezunlardan Görüşler

Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de İngilizce eğitim veren bir devlet üniversitesindeki Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü’nde verilmekte olan öğretmenlik uygulaması programını (1) Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB) İngilizce öğretmeni yeterliklerinin ne derecede karşılandığı, (2) güçlü ve zayıf yanlar ve (3) ihtiyaçlar ve olası çözümler açısından değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın katılımcıları uygulamadan sorumlu öğretim elemanları, öğretmen adayları ve program mezunlarıdır. Veriler, öğretmen adayları ve program mezunu anketleri, öğretmen adaylarıyla odak grup görüşmeleri ve uygulamadan sorumlu öğretim elemanlarıyla bireysel görüşmeler ile edilmiştir. MEB yeterlikleriyle ilgili sonuçlar, ölçme ve değerlendirmeyi daha iyi anlama ve sınıfta daha sık kullanma ve özel gereksinimli öğrencilere uygun etkinlikler kullanımında geliştirmeye işaret etmiştir. Öğretimi uygulama ve kendini mesleki açıdan anlama daha yüksek derecelendirme almıştır. Öğretmen eğitimi programının bireysel çeşitlilik ve teknoloji bileşenlerine karşıt olarak; bilgi, beceri, tutum, okul deneyimi ve program içindeki öğretim kalitesi programın güçlü tarafları olarak bulunmuştur. Güçlü yönler, okullarda ve çeşitli kademelerde deneyim, seminer tartışmaları ve akran dönütü, okullardaki uygulama öğretmeni ile iyi ilişkiler ve uygulama öğretim elemanının ilgisi ve rehberliğini içerirken, öneriler daha erken ya da fazla uygulama veya gözlem, daha farklı okul ortamları, okullardaki uygulama öğretmenleri ile işbirliği ve değerlendirmeler, gözlemler ve teknoloji kullanımında geliştirmeye işaret etmiştir.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my thesis advisor, Assoc. Prof. Sumru Akcan, for her support starting from the very beginning until the end. Her constructive feedback, constant guidance, and words of encouragement gave me the energy and motivation to complete this thesis. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Yasemin Bayyurt for her guiding feedback, support, and encouragement. I would also like to express how grateful I am to Prof. Yasemin Kırkgöz for sharing her invaluable comments with me, her support, and detailed feedback.

I would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Gülcan Erçetin for sparing time to answer my questions and sharing her comments with me about the statistical procedures I needed to use. I also would like to thank Assist. Prof. Sibel Tatar and Dr. Judy Monthie Doyum for making data collection possible. I am grateful to Filiz Rızaoğlu for helping me with the statistical analysis of the data.

I would also like to thank Assoc. Prof. Gülru Yüksel and Assist. Prof. Suzan Kavanoz for their support and Ferda İlerten and Burcu Varol for helping me reach their students for the piloting of the survey.

Many thanks go to my friends Duygu Oksal, Selahattin Yılmaz, Gülümser Şentürk, and Emrah Özcan for their help, support, and encouragement.

This study was made possible by the help of many individuals. I would like to thank each and every one of them for all the kind help and support. I would also like to thank all of my participants for their valuable contributions.

My final thanks go to my mom, Mukaddes, and my brother, Ali, for always being there for me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoHE: Council of Higher Education

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

FLED: Foreign Language Education Department

GR: Graduate

MoNE: Ministry of National Education

NCATE: National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education

ST: Student Teacher

STEP: Survey of Teacher Education Programs

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

US: University Supervisor

“We all recognize those teachers when we work with them.”

(Richards, 2010, p. 101)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Practicum programs offered at undergraduate teacher education programs constitute the first teaching experience for many student teachers and a successful completion of a carefully designed and implemented practicum program is one of the several crucial steps before student teachers can start their careers as teachers. Although teaching is a “highly personal and individual activity” (Richards, 1998, p. 2), it is the several remnants of one’s experience as an evolving teacher and a constant learner that build such personality and individuality. As an important constituent of teacher education programs, along with other theoretical components, practicum programs should be able to address their stakeholders’ needs and wants. One of the ways of determining to what extent a certain program does so is through program evaluation. Evaluation is an important part of teacher education programs (Ayers, Gephart, & Clark, 1989; Peacock, 2009) and teacher education programs at university level should be “revised and updated” (Kırkgöz, 2009, p. 680).

1.1 Statement of the problem

Despite the fact that practice teaching experience is an essential component of language teaching programs, it has not attracted due attention (Farrell, 2008; Grundnoff, 2011; Richards, 1998), nor has it been carefully investigated in the literature (Mattsson, Eilertsen, & Rorrison, 2011). In the existing research, only a limited number of contexts have been studied. According to Canh (2014), North

America and Singapore have been the dominant contexts where literature on the teaching English to speakers of other languages practicum has been focused on, and there is a need for studies in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts as well.

Further, it has usually been assumed that student teachers learn the target skills regarding the teaching profession during the practicum; however, the extent of learning requires a closer inspection. For instance, Canh (2014) claimed that “no deep learning took place during the practicum” and pointed to the necessity of socioconstructivist approaches in order to reform EFL teacher education practicum programs (p. 215). Similarly, by accepting that a practicum cannot capture all the realities of full-time teaching, Grudnoff (2011) claimed that “practicum roles, relationships, and sites should be re-examined” in order for student teachers to have “opportunities to come to grips with the demands, scope and complexity of being a teacher” (p. 231). Insufficient focus on standards has also been a challenge that teacher education programs face. For example, in his paper addressing the need for better professional standards for teacher educators in Turkey, Celik (2011) reflected on the current status of teacher education programs in the country as follows:

... with millions of students and an extreme shortage of teachers at all levels, it is not surprising that the emphasis on teacher education has shifted away from raising standards for teacher education programs in favor of training greater numbers of teachers in as quickly as possible. The unintentional effect is a decreased demand for well-organized teacher education programs and reduced expectations of teacher educators, just for the sake of a temporary solution, ignoring the foundations of teacher education and hoping that teachers will learn and improve as they teach. (p. 29)

In addition to the spatial, perceptual, and contextual limitations on teacher education program research, factors such as “lethargy, tradition, bureaucracy, and fear of change” have also challenged teacher reformation (Lange, 1990, p. 268). In other words, any program that is not updated based on feedback from its stakeholders

might indeed be running the risk of maintaining the status quo. While such a state is not always a negative one, evidence-based performance evaluation offers several benefits, no matter what the current state of affairs is. These benefits include the diagnosis of whether the current program is doing well and if not, what might be the reason behind the failure or malfunctioning. Given that the program in question here is specifically a teacher training program, the need seems to be evident because “[m]aximizing school-based training when student teachers learn through observation and practice is of central importance to teacher education” (Mau, 1997, p. 53).

Modifications to a program cannot be motivated solely by evaluations of students (Seferoğlu, 2006). However, it is important to acknowledge that student teachers constitute an important part of the practicum and their evaluative opinions, along with those of their university supervisors, could be dependable sources of insight for understanding how the program is working. In addition, they are the stakeholders who are both affected by and have a power to affect the quality of the program. Therefore, it is crucial that program coordinators learn their feedback and make their decisions accordingly. While it is obvious that pre-service teacher education programs cannot provide student teachers with truly identical conditions that they will find themselves in when they start their careers (Grudnoff, 2011; Loughran, Brown, & Doecke, 2001), efforts towards closing the gap surely have a lot to offer.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This study aims to evaluate the practicum program offered for Foreign Language Education Department (FLED) student teachers in order to discover (1) the extent to

which the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) English language teacher competencies were achieved, (2) strengths and weaknesses of the practicum program, and (3) the needs and difficulties and possible solutions for them. Findings of the study, with any possible result pointing to the strengths and the weaknesses of the program, will be discussed within the boundaries of the program under study and hopefully will serve as insight for suggestions.

1.3 Significance of the study

The practicum is an important phase in the teacher education process and it might have an effect on current belief systems (Gan, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2014) and future decisions or feelings of student teachers (Fuller, 1969; Mau, 1997; Merç, 2015; Yan & He, 2010). For teacher candidates, the practicum is also “the longest and most intensive exposure to the teaching profession” (Cohen, Hoz, & Kaplan, 2013, p. 345). In a study investigating the effects of such exposure on student teachers’ belief change, Kırkgöz (2016) concluded that student teachers’ involvement with collaborative action research during the practicum was instrumental in strengthening or validating their previously-held beliefs, including target language use in the classroom and classroom management issues. Similarly, since the teacher education process also constitutes an important period in establishing and reinforcing one’s professionalism as a teacher (Farrell, 2008; Kırkgöz, 2005), a careful analysis of such programs is of utmost importance. As Peacock (2009) states, foreign language teacher training program evaluation is an effort towards “the professionalization of the field of English-language teaching and making a useful contribution to the theory” (p. 262). To this end, this study attempts to discover the extent to which MoNE English language teacher competencies were achieved in the practicum

program offered at a state university, discover the various needs of student teachers, uncover the difficulties that student teachers face during the practicum experience and solutions to them, report the strengths and weaknesses of the practicum program, and suggest ideas for the improvement of the program based on the findings. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be disseminated to program coordinators as an aid in their efforts to understand the current status of the program and seek ways for improvement in areas where possible. Program evaluation research, standards for teacher competencies from different contexts as well as studies conducted in several teacher education programs with varying focus on practicum experience will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Program evaluation: Definition, motives, and criteria

Weir and Roberts (1994) define program as “any organized educational activity offered on a continuing basis” (p. 3). Such programs come at varying levels (i.e., mega, macro, and micro) and types, such as educational, advisory, regulatory, case management, product, or service provision programs (Owen, 2007).

When implemented, programs become subject to evaluative inquiry for various purposes. As Royse, Thyer, and Padgett (2010) suggest, the reason even already-settled services undergo evaluative inquiry is that “there are always alternative, and sometimes better, ways to solve problems” (p. 2). In this sense, evaluation is a means of deciding the worth of a program through a body of knowledge coming from systematic investigations, which in turn enables decision-makers to arrive at conclusions with regard to what steps should be taken (Owen, 2007; Weir & Roberts, 1994). Those who make such decisions might be insiders or outsiders of a program and while the former group aims to enhance the program, the latter group seeks ways for deciding on the policy and budget issues (Weir & Roberts, 1994). The present study aims to discover the qualities of a practicum program in order for the former group, namely insiders (i.e., program staff) to make decisions for the further uses of the program.

Weir and Roberts (1994) make a distinction between the two purposes of evaluation: accountability and development. Since this study does not aim to justify the various uses of the program components, accountability is not a concern.

What this study aims is the development of the program, for which an interpretation of the perceptions of various stakeholders of the program will be the starting point.

Usually, program evaluation is necessitated by the desire to know whether a program is a “good” one (Owen, 2007; Royse et al., 2010). According to Royse et al. (2010), “good” is a vague term and is open to subjective appraisal; therefore, it is important to set an operational definition of “good”. Basically, good programs work in accordance with their goals, serve their intended uses, and bring benefits for their users. However, this does not mean that all fully functioning programs are good. In some cases, “good” might not stand as an all-or-nothing criterion, but a continuum.

Owen (2007) exemplifies the typical program evaluation questions as “How good is this program?” and “Did the program work?” as well as other questions related to the needs of the program, the requirements to meet those needs, what is actually happening in the program itself, the ways for improvement, and the possible implementation of the success of the program in other contexts (p. 17). Such inquiries focus primarily on the program itself and the stakeholders of it.

Stakeholders can be defined as “those who make decisions and those who are affected by those decisions” (Rea-Dickins, 1997, p. 304). In this case, the stakeholders of the target practicum program for this study can be divided into two major groups; one being the university supervisors as those who make or apply the pre-determined decisions and the other being the student teachers and program graduates as those who are affected by these decisions.

In order to set up a list of criteria to be used for evaluative purposes of a given program, the following components are essential:

- the program objectives
- the needs of program clients, those for whom the program is intended

- the objectives of a policy within which the program is nested
- the preferences of one or more stakeholder groups;
- efficiency measures, such as return on investment

(Owen, 2007, pp. 11-12)

Similar to the above component list, Royse et al. (2010) recommend the construction of a “logic model” as a means for starting an evaluation process and identifying the potential components that the process might entail. In this regard, a logic model might serve as a useful instrument which can “visually depict the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of a program, thus providing a clear framework of the workings and functions of the program” (Torghele et al., 2007, p. 472). By mentioning that programs are usually far from being simplistic and the use of a single framework to combine all the components of a program would be an intimidating task, Savaya and Waysman (2005) argue that using the logic model would be helpful. They summarize the components of a basic logic model as shown in Figure 1:



Fig. 1 Basic logic model

Source: Savaya & Waysman, 2005, p. 87

According to this model, the first component, inputs, refers to the resources (e.g., personnel, funds, facilities) to be supplied for the program. Activities are about the purposeful actions (e.g., school visits, observations) the program officers take with the inputs. Outputs are what are obtained as a result of the activities and are usually measured in concrete terms such as the number of people contacted and amount of work achieved. Finally, outcomes are the positive contributions of the program to the

target group's status (e.g., learning a piece of information, mastering a certain skill).

An example of what each component of the basic logic model might include in a teacher education practicum program is given in Table 1:

Table 1. Basic Logic Model of a Teacher Education Practicum Program

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Undergraduate curriculum (CoHE), university supervisors, course syllabi, cooperating schools	Weekly discussions, observing cooperating teachers teach lessons, providing feedback to peers, collaborating with cooperating teachers to design a lesson plan, attending school meetings	The number of lessons observed, the amount of feedback received from cooperating teachers, the number of lesson plans designed, the number of school meetings attended	Completion of independent teaching practices, discovering the school system, learning about classrooms realities, improvement in teaching skills, improvement in lesson plan designs

W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2004) uses an additional component that follows the outcomes; namely impact, a step explained as the expected and unexpected changes that the program generates in seven to 10 years.

There are many types of logic models, with different designs and number of components (Royse et al., 2010). For the purposes of this study, the four-component model given above seems to be adequate for defining the borders between several program components very clearly while keeping these components in contact with each other at the same time. This might also be helpful for seeing the components in a progressive manner starting from the beginning of the program as input to the end as an outcome. Therefore, in order to classify the practicum program components according to their roles and functions in the entire undergraduate program and hence manage the evaluation process in a more structured way, the above model will be

used as a basis. Since this study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of a practicum program, which is an existing and highly settled one, with a focus on the extent to which the goals of the program have been achieved, the overall inquiry undertaken will follow the processes of what impact evaluation necessitates. Impact evaluation is one of Owen's (2007) five forms of evaluative inquiry, which are proactive, clarificative, interactive, monitoring, and impact evaluation. Therefore, this model will serve also as a content organizer for the impact evaluation processes. The research questions of this study also show overlap with some of Owen's (2007) list (below) of typical issues that an impact evaluation addresses, with a focus on program outcomes:

- the degree to which the implementation of the program was done as planned;
- whether the goals have been accomplished;
- whether the participants' needs have been met;
- possible undesired results of the program, if there is any;
- the effects of implementation differences on program outcomes; and
- whether differences exist between participants in terms of program effectiveness.

The aims of the evaluative attempt undertaken in this study also show similarities with the "improvement-focused approach", which centers on the improvement of the program by uncovering any mismatch between what was intended, applied, and required and what was performed (Posavac and Carey, 2007, p. 29).

2.2 Teacher education standards and teacher competencies

Different countries, councils, institutions, professionals, and responsible authorities have defined competencies for teachers on an individual level. Similarly, at an institutional level, standards for training teachers with such competencies have also been proposed, which has set the content and boundaries of the requirements for teacher training institutions in their journeys to become accredited.

In the United States, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) served as a non-governmental organization with an official recognition by the U.S. Department of Education in accrediting organizations that train teachers and various staff to be employed at pre-school, elementary, and secondary level schools (P-12), with an emphasize on “accountability and improvement in teacher preparation” (NCATE, 2008, p. 1). NCATE’s unit accreditation standards undergo revision every seven years so that these standards can work in parallel with what current research in the field suggests, and its conceptual framework consists of a total of six standards which are (1) candidate knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions, (2) assessment system and unit evaluation, (3) field experiences and clinical practice, (4) diversity, (5) faculty qualifications, performance, and development, and (6) unit governance and resources (pp. 12-13). Each standard is further divided into various descriptors concerning the “unacceptable, acceptable, and target” teacher candidate behaviors (see NCATE, 2008). Later, NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council were unified as one body of accreditation, under the name of Council of Accreditation of Educator Preparation, which approved the standards that were proposed specifically for foreign language teacher preparation programs by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Foreign language teacher preparation program

standards by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2013) are as follows (p. 3):

Standard 1: Language proficiency: Interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational

Standard 2: Cultures, linguistics, and concepts from other disciplines

Standard 3: Language acquisition theories and knowledge of students and their needs

Standard 4: Integration of standards in planning, classroom practice, and use of instructional resources

Standard 5: Assessment of languages and cultures- Impact on student learning

Standard 6: Professional development, advocacy, and ethics

As for the European context, the European Commission (2005) devised the Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications in an effort to contribute to the effectiveness of the educational policies of the member countries.

The proposed teacher competencies in the report require teachers to (pp. 3-4):

- work with others
- work with knowledge, technology and information
- work with and in society

Newby et al. (2007), from the European Centre for Modern Languages, as part of the Council of Europe, introduced the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages for use in initial language teacher education, mainly for promoting reflection and self-assessment with regard to the competencies targeted for the profession. Indeed, a total of 193 descriptors given in the self-assessment component of the portfolio could be “regarded as a set of core competences which language teachers should strive to attain” (p. 5).

In the Turkish context, an earlier report published through a collaboration between the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) and the World Bank posited a total of seven standard domains, each of which were further divided into three standard groups (i.e. beginning standards, process standards, and product standards) (YÖK, 1999). The standard domains in the report were (1) planning, application, and evaluation of the curriculum, (2) teaching staff, (3) students, (4) faculty - school collaboration, (5) facilities, library and equipment, (6) administration, and (7) quality assurance. The MoNE has also attempted to describe generic and subject-specific teacher competencies for primary and secondary level teachers. Several years later than the CoHE and World Bank report, the MoNE (2006) defined Generic Teacher Competencies under the following areas (p. 3):

- Personal and professional values – Professional development
- Knowing the student
- Teaching and learning process
- Monitoring and evaluation of learning and development
- School, family and society relationships
- Knowledge of curriculum and content

When it comes to the subject-specific teacher competencies proposed for the English language teaching field, competencies for primary level education (see MEB, 2008) are currently in a finalized state. The report on secondary school level English language teacher competencies has not been completed yet; however, the responsible commission's second term report is publicly available (see MEB, 2009). It should be noted here that, contrary to work carried out at primary and higher education level, “no attention has been devoted to secondary level schools (formerly high schools) in Turkey in relation to curriculum revision, textbook updating, and training

opportunities for teachers of English language” (Kırkgöz, 2009, p. 680). Therefore, a finalized report might indeed be an important step towards making the EFL teacher training process more effective in the country.

On the whole, the two existing competence lists for English language teachers are almost the same in terms of the competence domains on which they are constructed. The five domains suggested in the lists (MEB, 2008; MEB, 2009) are:

- Planning, regulation (and application) of the English language teaching/learning process,
- Improving language skills,
- Monitoring and assessing language development,
- Cooperation (and interaction) with school, family, and society,
- Ensuring professional development in the field of English language.

In line with the standards and competencies mentioned so far, Richards (1998) claims that regardless of subject area, every teacher needs to possess a certain set of knowledge and skills such as “selecting learning activities, preparing students for new learning, presenting learning activities, asking questions, checking students’ understanding, providing opportunities for practice of new items, monitoring students’ learning, giving feedback on student learning, and reviewing and reteaching when necessary” (p. 4). In a later work, Richards (2010) lists the knowledge and actions that are necessary for language teaching: (1) language proficiency, (2) content knowledge, (3) teaching skills, (4) contextual knowledge, (5) language teacher identity, (6) learner-focused teaching, (7) pedagogical reasoning skills, (8) theorizing from practice, (9) involvement in a community of practice, and (10) professionalism, which might be instrumental in understanding “the nature of competence, expertise, and professionalism in language teaching” (p. 102).

2.3 Changes in practice and policy

What makes language teachers different from teachers of other subject areas is the very nature of the subject matter they teach: languages. Since the language-teaching process relies heavily on communicative activities, language teachers need to have additional knowledge and skills focusing on the development and teaching of such skills. To this end, language teacher education programs combine theoretical knowledge and practice of skills in their curricula, with varying levels of dependence on external systems to which they are attached. As an example of this kind, pre-service teacher education programs create their goals in accordance with their social roles and educational systems in which they are situated and more specifically, language teacher education programs within the state sector are “bound by government policy and a legally enforced framework of requirements” (Roberts, 1998, p. 128). In other words, programs are situated in bigger systems that have a profound effect on the formation, maintenance, and modification of them. For example, in 1981, when the new Higher Education Law (No. 2547) went into effect, the control of all higher education institutions in Turkey was centralized under the execution of the CoHE (CoHE, 2014). Teacher education practices in the country have witnessed three major revisions since then:

- the transfer of teacher education to universities (1982);
- a new regulation on teacher education (1997);
- the restructuring of the faculties of education (2006).

(YÖK, 2007)

According to the report, the reason behind the final revision was the “questionable” effectiveness of teacher education programs offered at the faculties of education in terms of their success in training teachers who possess the knowledge and skills that

the modern world requires. The 2006-2007 academic year was the starting point for the new curriculum, nationwide. Reflecting on the inadequacies in the implementation of the previous program, Ekmekçi (1992) states that it was not the needs of the students, but the professional knowledge of the faculty members that were used as basis while making changes to the curriculum designed by the CoHE. Similarly, Şallı-Çopur (2008) claims that the curriculum was targeted for prospective teachers of English who would work at primary and secondary school contexts despite the fact that graduates of foreign language teacher education programs also undertake jobs at pre-school and tertiary levels. While the latest curriculum is more inclusive and detailed than the previous one in many ways and it emphasizes teachers' role as a facilitator, which was also the case in the 1997 curriculum (Kırkgöz, 2007), it lacks one important feature of the target language, namely "the internationality of English" (Bayyurt, 2012, p. 306).

While the administration and content of teacher education practices were changing in Turkey, approaches to teacher education in general were also changing. Cochran-Smith (2004) uses the phrase "teacher education problem" and describes three major approaches to teacher education in the last six decades. According to Cochran-Smith (2004), in the first period between the 1950s and 1980s, teacher education was seen as a "training problem" since the aim was to train prospective teachers who possessed the qualities of "effective" [emphasis in original] teachers (p. 295). During the following period, between the early 1980s and the early 2000s, teacher education was seen as a "learning problem" and the ideal teacher was seen as a decision maker who also possessed subject matter and pedagogy knowledge, which was followed by a "policy problem" with a focus on teacher effectiveness as measured by learners' achievement scores motivated by the desire to direct policy

makers to invest wisely in human and non-human resources (Cochran-Smith, 2004, pp. 296-297).

Since higher education institutions in Turkey are subject to the policies regulated by the CoHE, basic sets of regulations that are in line with such policies are commonly used across the country. However, every institution has its own way of implementing these principles and it is both the differences in implementation and the regulations themselves that cause positive and negative outcomes during the practicum process. Therefore, a careful and regular evaluation of practicum programs is important for uncovering policy-induced, institutional, and personal shortages of such programs. Findings of these kinds of evaluation studies are crucial for an effective practicum experience, which in turn will make itself evident in the training of effective teachers who will be the transformers of the education in the country since “the most important determinant of high quality education is a well prepared teacher” (NCATE, 2008, p. 6).

Student teachers have continued to value the practicum experience (e.g., Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005; Grudnoff, 2011; Canh, 2014) despite the changes in the curricula of and approaches to teacher education. The practicum is usually considered as the connector between theory and practice, two essential terms which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Accepting the connecting function of the practicum, Smith and Lev-Ari (2005) also contend that a practicum itself is a context where student teachers improve their competencies in teaching. Similarly, Feiman-Nemser (2001) suggests that what and how teachers teach can be linked to knowledge, skills, and the dedication they possess as well as to learning opportunities “in and from their practice” (p. 1013). Keeping the opportunities and benefits that the practicum experience has to offer in mind, one should also be

conscious of the actual use of practicum, which is to enable student teachers to experiment with their skills under real classroom conditions. As Rorrison (2010) also states, a practicum is an important opportunity provided that it is envisioned as a learning experience, not as an opportunity to test the teachers of the future. Indeed, the primary objective of practicum experience is not to assess student teachers but to foster reflection and improvement (Yan & He, 2010).

2.4 Practicum program research

Research on teacher education program evaluation has seen a focus on overall program evaluation. Both the methodology and practice components of teacher education departments have been evaluated in different contexts with participants and designs. In the studies conducted on preservice teacher education practicum between 1996 and 2009, “descriptive-evaluative” type of research methodology was used more frequently than “descriptive-neutral” and “theoretical” methodology (Cohen et al., 2013, p. 349).

Although educational systems usually have distinctive practicum programs and these programs need to be discussed within their own systems (Mattsson et al., 2011), the implications that can be drawn from individual programs and contexts are of utmost importance for other programs, since such programs, in essence, are made up of similar components and aim to give preservice teachers opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in real classrooms in order to make them prepared for their future inservice practices.

It is one of the aims of this study to determine the needs and problems that are faced by student teachers who learn, reflect, teach, and share during the seminar hours on campus or as student teachers who observe and teach in their cooperating

schools. However, discovery of needs and problems is just one aspect of the evaluative effort undertaken in this study. How these needs can be mediated and decreased to a minimum to make student teachers' practicum journey a rewarding one is another issue which deserves consideration if one's evaluative inquiry is to be complete. In other words, it is important to be able to see and react to the "discrepancy between what teachers say they need and what is supplied them" (Fuller, 1969, p. 210) if a successful teacher training is to be achieved.

Practicum research on concerns, needs, and problems of student teachers can serve as a useful insight for understanding as well as finding ways for reducing any possible problems that can be experienced during the practicum experience. Since the practicum is one of the cornerstones of the teacher education process during which teacher candidates find themselves immersed in the responsibilities and conditions in their future workplaces for the first time, their concerns are legitimate and potentially supportive of their professional development provided that they are resolved effectively. In other words, the discovery and redress of student teachers' concerns is a must for a successful transition to their full-time careers. Teachers might quit the profession if they cannot overcome their initial concerns (Fuller, 1969); therefore, it is crucial that what preservice teachers consider as a concern be understood and changed into feelings that will result in positive behavioral outcomes. In a study attempting to investigate such concerns of teacher candidates and seek ways for conceptualizing the data coming from other studies, Fuller (1969) came up with a three-stage developmental classification of teacher concerns (pp. 218-221):

1. Pre-teaching phase: Non-Concern
2. Early teaching phase: Concern with self
 - a. Covert concerns: Where do I stand?

b. Overt concerns: How adequate am I?

3. Late concerns: Concern with pupils

Counseling sessions with student teachers in their early teaching phase showed that while student teachers were externally interested in teaching and classroom management, they were internally searching ways for learning the characteristics of the school context and such a lasting searching process rendered them ‘stuck’ [emphasis in original] resulting from “a state of uncertainty” (Fuller, 1969, p. 220). Similarly, Yan and He (2010) point to the fact that student teachers have a tendency to be concerned more about themselves than they are about the students due to the misconception that their students do not benefit from their teaching, an idea which is caused by their inadequate knowledge of the realities of the classrooms. To this end, one can argue that the initial concerns of preservice teachers, then, tend to be related to themselves as individuals who are under spotlight, despite being confused to varying degrees. Since this study focuses on insight from student teachers and graduates with a maximum of six years’ teaching experience, early teaching concerns will be more relevant in the discussions.

In one of such studies, with a pre- and post-test design study, Mau (1997) examined the concerns of first-year student teachers in differing areas of study in the Singaporean context. Even after a ten-week course on pedagogy as treatment, student teachers’ biggest concern remained the same: “maintaining appropriate class control” (p. 58) and other frequently reported concerns included “meeting pupil needs of unmotivated students and students with different levels of achievement” (p. 63). Moore (2003) found that the most frequently mentioned concerns for preservice teachers as stated by both mentor teachers and preservice teachers themselves were

procedural (e.g., time management and planning) which she considered an important but not the sole target skill in teacher training. In a study they conducted in the Chinese practicum context, Yan and He (2010) found that the most common problems that preservice teachers experienced were “tensions between vision and reality” (e.g., technical problems faced at practicum schools, the duties given apart from teaching), “unreasonable time and length of teaching practicum” (e.g., practicum time coinciding with student teachers’ preparations for certain tests or job applications, limited time when other requirements of the practicum are considered), the practicum school’s distrust (e.g., dissimilar understanding of the goals of the practicum experience by cooperating teachers and student teachers, an unfriendly atmosphere at practicum schools, doubts over student teachers’ teaching skills), “little supervision by the supervisor and cooperating teacher”, “students’ lack of effort in preparing lessons”, and “the lack of a sound assessment system” (pp. 62-66). In Gan’s (2013) study, the most frequently reported challenge by student teachers was classroom management, and other emergent challenges were related to student teachers’ target language (i.e., English) proficiency and their implementations of language teaching approaches which was associated with time and effort spent on creating tasks and materials that comply with the principles of task-based learning activities in the ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom and issues regarding the applicability of such lessons in classes due to classroom management issues and students’ low language proficiency levels. This study drew attention to one of the problems that some nonnative ESL student teachers face during the practicum: their speaking skills, lack of which might even “threaten their sense of self as a teacher” (Gan, 2013, p. 102). Cohen et al.’s (2013) review of the studies on the preservice teacher education practicum point to seven causes of strain

on the part of the triadic members of the practicum (i.e., student teachers, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers) which were time, power struggle, different obligations, mentors' mentoring efficacy, critical attitude of preservice teachers toward their mentors, the "dual" [emphasis in original] mentor role, and differences in educational perceptions (p. 365). In Peacock's (2009) evaluation of a foreign language teacher training program, students and program teachers agreed on the practice teaching opportunities as the weakness of the program and 35% of the students claimed that they would not consider themselves ready for teaching English by the time the program finished. Canh (2014) found that lack of cooperating teacher support and feedback was among the top three themes mentioned by student teachers in their diaries.

The affective aspect of the practicum also constitutes a significant facet of the practicum experience (Mau, 1997; Merç, 2010). How student teachers feel in their school environments is affected by various factors such as their relationship with their university supervisors, cooperating teachers, students, and other personnel. In a traditional practicum context, Moore (2003) found that preservice teachers made instructional or practical choices that they personally did not approve of "rather than risk disapproval of the mentor teacher" (p. 40). Yuan and Lee (2014) also point to the "subtle power relationship" between cooperating teachers and student teachers and recommend that it be approached with care so as not to impede student teachers' cognitive learning (p. 10). In the studies they reviewed, Cohen et al. (2013) identified power struggle as one of the causes of strain and claimed that it was caused by a conflict between "the mentor teacher's need to maintain territorial borderlines and control in the classroom, and the preservice teacher's desire for some degree of independence" (p. 364). Gan (2013) mentions the feelings of loneliness caused by an

inadequate amount of communication between a student teacher and a cooperating teacher at school.

The extent to which the practicum provides student teachers opportunities that are naturally present in authentic teaching settings has also been a subject of inquiry. According to Yan and He (2010), in order for student teachers to have a practicum experience that mirrors the real life conditions of teaching, teacher training programs should have firm connections with cooperating schools, which includes hosting teachers to give a talk on campus, having both parties pay visits to each other, and spreading the practicum experience over the whole program rather than the final year. Gurvitch and Metzler (2009) suggest the following on the authenticity of field experiences and teaching contexts:

Authentic field experiences are those that include most or all of the contextual characteristics found in P-12 schools. The authenticity of any teaching context may be placed on a continuum: on one end are contrived settings, which bear little or no resemblance to schools (e.g., mini-lessons taught to small groups of collegiate peers on campus); to fully authentic settings (e.g., full-length lessons taught to intact groups of diverse learners, in public schools). (p. 438)

Analyses of the aforementioned concerns, difficulties, problems, and issues have called for a certain set of suggestions so that the evaluative inquiries undertaken could meet their inherent goals. In other words, the detected shortcomings of a practicum are areas that need improvement. For instance, Yan and He (2010) point to five issues for improving the EFL practicum: more practicum chances, the duties of university personnel, cooperating schools' encouragement, an unbiased evaluation component, and the partnership between cooperating schools and universities. Liu (2000) explains the benefits of a "multiple-site practicum" offered at an MA program in teaching English to speakers of other languages where student teachers go to four different practicum settings, one of which is selected as their main setting (i.e.

student teachers spend four hours per week compared to a total of two hours in the remaining settings) depending on their preferences and future teaching orientations. According to Liu (2000), the benefits of teaching at such diverse settings include the discovery of the value of “needs analysis” of learners coming from various backgrounds, a realization that ESL teaching is “student- and context-dependent”, and a useful cultural learning (p. 19); however, the limitations of a multiple-site practicum were mainly about finding schools that might agree to cooperate, the issues of sending student teachers to multiple school contexts when they indeed have decided to work with a single school context, the possibility that a supplementary practicum setting would weaken the experience gained in the main practicum setting, and the extra time and effort required for initiating and conducting such a practicum arrangement. Similarly, in their summary of the literature on enhancing the practicum experience, Yan and He (2010) point to two major findings: (a) the importance of the encouragement from the practicum school and the responsibilities of cooperating teachers and (b) the emphasis on the engagement of university personnel and cooperation between practicum schools and universities.

According to a report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2005), obstacles to a powerful field experience for student teachers included the short duration of the experience, a lack of relevance between practice and coursework, emphasis on a small range of classroom-based tasks instead of exposing student teachers to all responsibilities of a full-time teacher, schools’ lack of opportunities to provide a longer practicum experience for larger student teacher populations, communication problems between university supervisors and cooperating teachers, and the future applicability of tasks that are given to student teachers.

Studies conducted in the Turkish context have had varying degrees of focus on the practicum (i.e., the whole teacher education program or only the practicum process) and several aspects of it such as reflection on the teaching experiences (e.g., Akcan, 2010), feedback received (e.g., Akcan & Tatar, 2010; Altınmakas, 2012), assessment (e.g., Merç, 2015), and difficulties. As one of the earliest examples, Ekmekçi's (1992) study with senior-year English language teacher trainees showed a need for improvement of several components of the English language teacher education program offered at a state university. Among the problems mentioned by teacher trainees were the limited duration of practice teaching at allocated schools, emerging inequalities in terms of experience gained due to a conflict between the practicum schools and teacher trainees' schedules, overcrowded classrooms, lack of guidance given by cooperating teachers, and insufficient classroom aids. Similarly, in a study which aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the methodology and practice components of a preservice teacher training program, Seferoğlu (2006) found that preservice teachers wanted to have more micro-teaching and practice teaching sessions and observe a larger number of teachers, student levels, and school settings. In Coşkun and Daloğlu's (2010) study that used Peacock's (2009) model in the Turkish context, when asked about their feedback on the practice component of the program, student teachers focused more on the weaknesses of the program than its strengths. One of such weaknesses, as reported by student teachers was related to the timing and content of such courses. The authors gave the below comment by one of the participants as a "typical" example:

"The School Experience course should be not only in the fourth year but also in the first year as it was in the old program (1998-1999). I know that student teachers used to attend these courses both in their first and last years in the past. There should also be a course to share our experiences in the schools with our friends and teachers to get feedback. In this course, we should deal with different cases that our classmates have come across." (p. 31)

In Coşkun and Daloğlu's (2010) interviews with university instructors, one of instructors reported that the mentoring teachers and school administrators viewed the school experience course in a very negative way and another instructor pointed to the weak bonds between the practicum schools and the university saying that "... schools receiving our student teachers are not willing to cooperate with them and us" (p. 34).

Koc's (2012) study concluded that Turkish preservice teachers' reflections regarding their practicum fell under the following categories: difficulties, achievements, encouragements, consciousness acquired, and barriers. The difficulties category included the highest number of issues which pertained to student teachers' grasp of the subject matter, lesson planning stage, the difficulty of the profession, cooperating teachers' reluctance, time and classroom management issues, learners with special needs, and assessment (Koc, 2012). Similarly, Merç's (2010) study showed that the student teachers' self-reported problems during the practicum were related to five main categories, which were (1) student teacher (2) student (3) cooperating teacher, (4) system/educational context, and (5) supervisor. Three most frequently-mentioned problems, in an order of frequency, related to each category were as follows:

- (1) student teacher-based problems: time management, classroom management, and anxiety;
- (2) student-based problems: motivation, familiarity with the new teacher and new classroom procedures, and participation;
- (3) cooperating teacher-based problems: lack of cooperation, absence, interference;

(4) system/educational context-based problems: technical problems, course material, and curriculum;

(5) supervisor-based problems: interference (only one problem reported for this category). (p. 208)

The majority (38.5%) of the problems mentioned in Merç's (2010) study occurred during the initial phases of the practicum when compared to the middle phases (34.5%) and end of the practicum (27%). Gürbüz (2006) investigated EFL student teachers' strengths and weaknesses in terms of teaching the target language in the practicum process, from the perspectives of university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and student teachers themselves. All triadic members considered that student teachers were successful at preparing materials and building rapport, but rated negatively the clarity of instructions. University supervisors and cooperating teachers also pointed to student teachers' time management and incorrect grammar and pronunciation, which were not expressed by student teachers at all.

Specific components of the practicum have also been investigated in the literature. In a study focusing on Turkish preservice EFL teachers' perceptions of the assessment of their practicum performance, Merç (2015) found that student teachers valued the assessment components which pertained to the "planning-preparation" of lesson plans, "general organization" of the program (i.e., compliance with the requirements of the practicum in a timely manner), and "assessment by university supervisors" more than those which focused on "assessment by cooperating teachers", "observation and reflection reports", and "assessment by their peer teachers" (p. 49). Despite some uneasiness they associated with being graded on a 40-minute teaching performance by their university supervisors and the discrepancy between the evaluation criteria in theory and what is actually followed in practice by

different university supervisors, all student teachers were confident about the soundness of their university supervisor's assessment (Merç, 2015). Student teachers reported that their peers were important for receiving feedback; however, they did not value their assessment and assessment by cooperating teachers was rated lower than those by university supervisors and peer teachers (Merç, 2015). Akcan and Tatar (2010) investigated the approaches to and content of feedback given by university supervisors and cooperating teachers in the form of post lesson conferences and written evaluations. The major difference between the two groups was related to the reflective nature of the feedback in that university supervisors were interested in giving opportunities for student teachers to "describe, question, and reflect on their teaching" (Akcan & Tatar, 2010, p. 158) with a view to making them more conscious of the pedagogy behind their actions, while feedback from cooperating teachers tended to center on particular classroom events, with specific suggestions given for improvement, which failed to encourage an "understanding of reasoning skills behind a particular teaching behavior" on the part of student teachers (p. 159). Also, both groups differed in the value that they gave to the various aspects of practice teaching experience. For example, while classroom management was considered to be an essential aspect of teaching by cooperating teachers, characteristics of the activities and the target language use were prominent aspects in university supervisors' feedback. In a study with a similar aim, but from the perspectives of student teachers, Altınmakas (2012) found that feedback from university supervisors was more theory-oriented, "evaluative, nondirective, and constructive" than feedback from cooperating teachers which focused primarily on the immediate behavior in a "pro-active, particularistic, and directive" way (p. 102). Therefore, student teachers valued their cooperating teachers' feedback more since it

was relevant in addressing their most urgent demands. Student teachers also reported that they benefited from the seminars where they had a chance to learn about school settings (i.e., state and private schools) that were different from their own (Altınmakas, 2012).

The above-mentioned studies show that various models, participant profiles, and foci have been used either to evaluate the effectiveness of practicum programs on their own or as components of bigger units (i.e., the entire undergraduate program). Challenges, difficulties, and problems that student teachers face during their practicum experience have shown similarities as well as differences. It is important to consider the teacher competencies required for effective learning and be able to notice the gap between what is targeted, what is provided, and what is gained during their practicum process which constitutes the first and the final teaching experience for many student teachers before they embark on their teaching careers. To this end, this study aims to investigate the extent to which MoNE English language teacher competencies were achieved in the program, the needs and problems faced by the student teachers during the practicum experience, the strengths and weaknesses of the several of practicum and teacher education program-related components and to discuss recommendations for improving the practicum experience.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of an English language teacher education practicum program, with a focus on its strengths and weaknesses as experienced by student teachers in the program, their university supervisors, and program graduates. To this end, this study will seek answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent were the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) English language teacher competencies achieved in the Foreign Language Education Department (FLED) practicum program?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the practicum program?
3. What are the needs and problems associated with the practicum experience?
What are the possible solutions?

3.1 Research context

As a part of a highly renowned higher education institution in the country, the department has been training preservice teachers of English at an undergraduate level since 1984 (see About the department). As shown in Figure 2, the total number of graduates of the undergraduate program reached 1,248 in 2014 (see Alumni list).

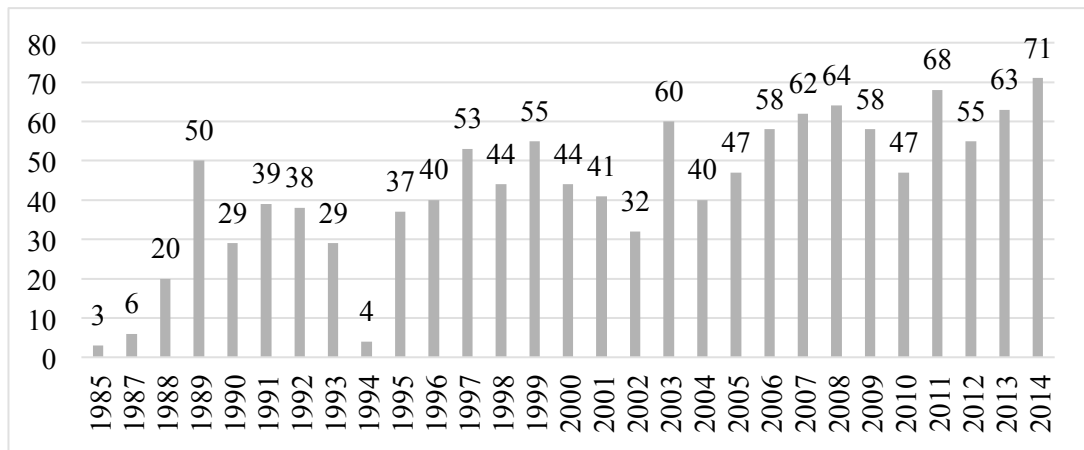


Fig. 2 Number of program graduates (1985-2014)

Candidates eligible for the undergraduate program are among those who score highest in the university entrance exam. The department, therefore, has continued to be one of the most preferred foreign language teacher education programs in the country. Figure 3 shows the highest and lowest entrance rankings of the department between 2010 and 2014 (see Entrance scores for departments):

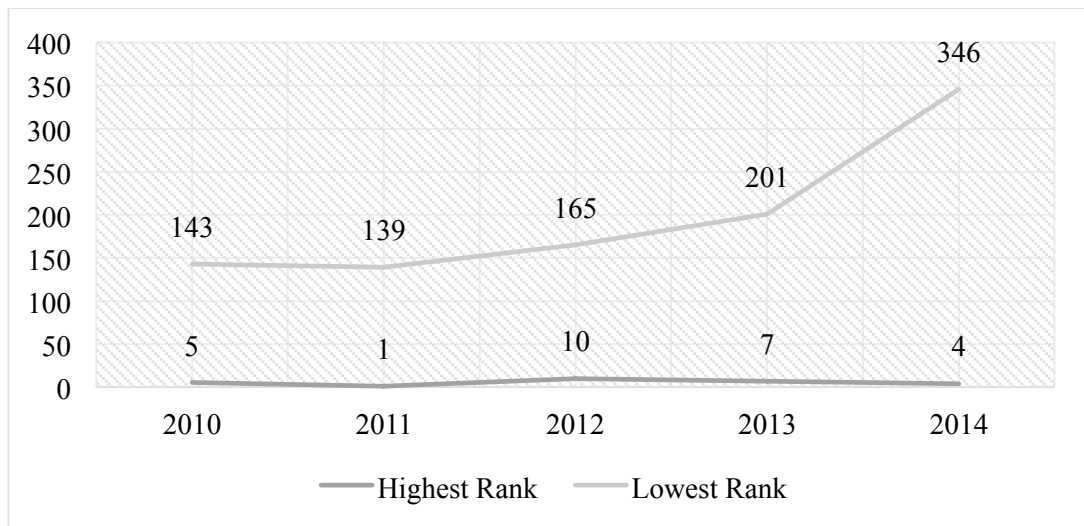


Fig. 3 Highest and lowest entrance rankings of the department (2010-2014)

The practicum offered at the foreign language education department consists of the following courses: School Experience in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), Practice Teaching in EFL, and Seminar on Practice Teaching in EFL courses and all the requirements appertaining to them.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Student teachers

A total of 55 senior students enrolled in the English Language Teaching program who were registered in the practicum program for the 2014-2105 academic year constituted the largest group from which data was collected. The participants took the School Experience in TEFL course in the 2014 fall semester and Practice Teaching in EFL and Seminar on Practice Teaching in EFL in the spring semester. Throughout the fall semester, participants were supposed to visit their cooperating schools one day a week and observe 30 to 35 EFL lessons. In the spring semester, the participants were required to do 10 to 15 observations and teach six lessons, which were classified as three official and three unofficial lesson teachings. Student teachers in the program may complete their practicum in private, state, or in both types of schools. Since some schools do not have all three levels (i.e., primary, secondary, and high school), some students are assigned to both a private and a public school so that they can compensate for the level that is missing in one school but present in the other. Table 2 shows the school types and number of students allocated to them.

Table 2. Practicum Schools and Number of Student Teachers Allocated for Each

School type	n	%
Private (K-12)	63	65.6
Public (K-12)	8	8.3
Private and Public	25	26

A total of 55 student teachers aged between 20 and 24 ($M = 22.27$, $SD = .93$) took the survey towards the end of their practicum experience in the spring semester. Nine percent of the sample were males ($n = 5$) while the remaining participants were females ($n = 50$) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Student Teacher Gender Information

Gender	n	%
Male	5	9.1
Female	50	90.9

The majority (61.8%) of participants indicated that they were planning to become teachers after graduation while 36.4% of the participants stated that they were not sure (see Table 4).

Table 4. Student Teachers' Plans for Becoming Teachers

Plans for becoming teachers	n	%
No	1	1.8
Yes	34	61.8
Not sure	20	36.4

When asked about which school level they would like to teach at after they graduated, the majority of the participants (28.3%) indicated that they planned to

work at primary or secondary level schools, which was followed by secondary (21.7%), and primary (17.4%) level schools, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. School Levels Where Student Teachers Plan to Work

School levels where student teachers plan to work	n	%
Pre-school	2	4.3
Primary	8	17.4
Secondary	10	21.7
Tertiary	1	2.2
Pre or primary	3	6.5
Pre or secondary	1	2.2
Primary or secondary	13	28.3
Secondary or tertiary	2	4.3
Pre, primary, or secondary	2	4.3
Primary, secondary, or tertiary	3	6.5
All levels	1	2.2

Since multiple selection was possible for this demographic question, school level-wise selections might also be useful (see Table 6).

Table 6. School Levels Where Student Teachers Plan to Work (school level-wise selections)

School level-wise selections	n
Pre-school	9
Primary	30
Secondary	32
Tertiary	7

Lastly, the participants' desired school contexts (i.e., private or state schools) did not deviate dramatically from each other. While 39.1% of the participants chose both private and state schools as their future school context preferences, 34.8% of them

opted for state schools and the remaining 26.1% of the participants indicated that they planned to become teachers at private schools (see Table 7).

Table 7. Student Teachers' Desired School Contexts

School context	n	%
Private	12	26.1
State	16	34.8
Private or state	18	39.1

School context-wise selections by student teachers are given in Table 8.

Table 8. Student Teachers' Desired School Contexts (school context-wise selections)

School context-wise selections	n
Private	30
State	34

3.2.2 University supervisors

Three full-time instructors supervised the practicum program and each instructor had been working with a set of schools for several years. Therefore, they knew most of the school contexts, facilities, and teacher and student profiles of the schools well. All of the university supervisors held a Ph.D. and offered several departmental courses in addition to the practicum-related courses.

Courses taught by the university supervisors in the undergraduate English language teacher education program on an individual level include but are not limited to Use of Drama in Foreign Language Education, Second Language Teaching Methods, Foreign Language Testing, the Use of Literary Texts in TEFL, Materials

Evaluation and Preparation in TEFL, TEFL: Listening and Speaking, and TEFL: Young Learners.

Individual interviews with all of the three university supervisors were made after the spring semester ended, in the summer of 2015.

3.2.3 Program graduates

Graduates who had worked or were working as English language teachers at the time of the study at various school types (i.e., state and private), levels (i.e., pre-, primary, secondary, and tertiary), and amount of teaching experience were considered the target population for the study.

A total of 33 program graduates with ages ranging between 24 and 28 ($M = 25.61$, $SD = 1.116$) took an online survey. As shown in Table 9, seven males (21.2%) and 26 females (78.8%) completed the survey.

Table 9. Program Graduate Gender Information

Gender	n	%
Male	7	21.2
Female	26	78.8

As for program graduates' teaching experience ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.219$), the majority (39.4%) of the graduates who participated in the study had three years' teaching experience, which was followed by graduates (21.2%) with four years' teaching experience (see Table 10).

Table 10. Program Graduate Teaching Experience¹ Information

Teaching experience (in years)	n	%
1	3	9.1
2	5	15.2
3	13	39.4
4	7	21.2
5	4	12.1
6	1	3.0

¹Teaching experiences given in months were rounded up to the nearest year.

3.3 Instrumentation

According to Weir and Roberts (1994), for the validity, reliability, and the credibility of an evaluation, it is essential to take into account a time span which can reflect the characteristics of what is being investigated. To this end, data for the present study were collected at different time periods which could allow for the practicum experience required to answer the questions. For example, the focus group interviews were conducted in the second semester of the practicum experience so that the participants could relate their answers to their actual practices. Similarly, the student teachers were given the survey, which was adapted from Williams-Pettway's (2005) Survey of Teacher Education Programs (STEP), during the final week of the spring semester, at a time when the participants had the maximum amount of practicum experience.

STEP was developed by Williams-Pettway (2005) for a doctoral thesis. The closed-ended items in the survey for different scales (1) knowledge, skills and dispositions, (2) field experiences and student teaching internship, (3) diversity, (4) technology, and (5) quality of instruction were drawn from the NCATE (as cited in Williams-Pettway, 2005) standards. The same author also developed open-ended questions. The original survey was adapted for this study by incorporating several teacher competencies defined by the MoNE (See MEB, 2008). A total of 13 items

(10 for the Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions scale and three for the Diversity scale), which were adapted from MoNE English language teacher competencies, were added to the original survey. A resulting 48 four-point Likert scale items, open-ended questions, rating and single choice (i.e. Yes/No) items were obtained. For some scales, the four-point Likert scale items judged degrees of agreement (i.e., 1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Agree, 4: Strongly Agree), for others, value judgments (i.e., 1: Needs Improvement, 2: Average, 3: Good, 4: Excellent) were elicited.

It should be noted here that subjectivity is usually present in evaluative work and how confident one can be of the findings of an evaluation study correlates positively with the number of participants included for various data collection processes (Royse et al., 2010). One of the ways to decrease the effect of subjectivity to a minimum is to employ multiple methods and sources. In other words, using qualitative as well as quantitative data collection tools is a good strategy for understanding the phenomenon under investigation (Royse et al., 2010). For this reason, the present study used data from both qualitative (e.g., focus group interviews, individual interviews, document analyses, open-ended survey items) and quantitative Likert-type survey items. It should also be acknowledged here that coding, as a meaning-making process, is not free of personal bias. As Sipe and Ghiso (2004) suggest, “the notion of an innocent eye is a shaky construct”, meaning that one’s attempts to code data will operate simultaneously with previous knowledge working somewhere in the brain, be it deliberate or not (p. 483). In his reaction against the objectivity concern, Saldaña (2013) claims that quantitative research cannot achieve objectivity, nor should qualitative research, since “the notion is false god” (p. 39). Therefore, I should emphasize here that the codes, patterns, themes, and

the resulting conclusions drawn from the data in this study are based on and limited to my own interpretation. What was excluded as well as included for analysis was limited to my own decisions regarding the aims and scope of this study.

3.3.1 Student teacher survey and focus groups interviews

3.3.1.1 Survey

For the pilot version of the survey, for validity, an expert opinion from two university professors working in the field of foreign language education was taken. The content was found to be appropriate. For reliability, a pilot study was conducted with respondents ($N = 9$) who had characteristics similar to those of the target participants. Cronbach's alpha scores were calculated for each scale. The results of the pilot study showed that all the scales in the questionnaire were reliable. For a more detailed analysis of individual items, item frequencies were calculated and it was seen that for each item, at least two options were chosen by the respondents. Corrected item-total correlations for items 7 and 31 were .051 and -.011 respectively, which showed that these items had low discrimination. A closer inspection of these items made it clear that the former (item 7) was actually measuring two constructs and the latter (item 31) included a word, namely "diversity", which might have been interpreted differently by the respondents. Therefore, item 7 was split into two separate items and item 31 was kept intact in wording but an asterisk was added to lead the respondents to an NCATE (2008) definition.

Almost a week before the spring semester ended, the final version of the survey was given to the student teachers (see Appendix A). A total of 48 students completed the survey. A few weeks later, an online version of the survey was sent to

those who did not participate in the first session. Seven student teachers answered the online survey, which brought the total number of participants to 55.

In terms of validity, apart from the rewording of a few items, item content remained the same after the piloting. The finalized survey consisted of a total of seven parts, which were (1) demographics, (2) knowledge, skills and dispositions, (3) field experiences and student teaching internship, (4) diversity, (5) technology, (6) quality of instruction, and (7) open-ended question, rating and yes/no items. Five of these parts (i.e., parts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) included Likert scale type items. As for reliability, Cronbach's alpha scores calculated for each scale were: knowledge, skills and dispositions (.877), field experiences and student teaching internship (.835), diversity (.820), technology (.879), and quality of instruction (.867).

3.3.1.2 Focus group interviews

As a type of in-depth interview, focus group interviews prove advantageous in that they increase participant numbers to a great extent and enable discovery of opinions which would not be generated otherwise (e.g., in face-to-face interviews) (Royse et al., 2010). To this end, six focus group interviews, (181 minutes, 11 seconds), were conducted with a total of 18 participants. The interviewer started the interviews in English, informing the participants beforehand that they could switch to Turkish whenever they wanted. Overall, the interviews were conducted primarily in English. Only a few Turkish insertions occurred. The interviews were expected to take a maximum of 20 minutes; however, most of the time they took longer. All of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

The focus group interviews (see Appendix B) centered on the overall organization of the program, weekly seminars and peers, university supervisors and

cooperating teachers, teacher trainees, and suggestions for improvement of the practicum program.

3.3.2 University supervisor interviews

After the data were collected from the student teachers, university supervisors were contacted for an individual interview. The individual interviews (see Appendix C) consisted of questions about university supervisors, cooperating teachers, teacher trainees, program and outcomes, specific focus questions, additional comments, and suggestions for the improvement of the program.

During one of the interviews no audio-recording was performed. The researcher took notes and sent the notes back to the interviewee for correction. The remaining two interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. One of the transcripts was sent to the interviewee for correction. The researcher translated two of the interviews from Turkish into English.

3.3.3 Graduate survey

Graduates were asked to complete the same closed-ended items as the student teachers. Differences in the graduate survey were different demographic information questions and an increased number of open-ended questions (see Appendix D).

3.3.4 Documents and artifacts

Document analysis is one of the most frequently used tools in practicum research. For instance, in their review of the empirical studies conducted between 1996 and 2009 on practicum in preservice teacher education, Cohen et al. (2013) reported that

document analysis had the highest rate of usage, leaving behind interviews, questionnaires, and observations.

In this study, practicum is referred to as a combination of the senior year practicum-related courses (i.e., courses that require the student teachers to observe and teach English lessons) and all the requirements appertaining to them. One course pack is used for both the Practice Teaching in EFL and the Seminar on Practice Teaching course. The course pack includes (a) a syllabus, (b) a letter which explains the roles and responsibilities of both student teachers and cooperating teachers and a timeline of the practicum, (c) a set of principles that govern the practicum, with detailed depictions of the responsibilities of the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher, (d) a summary of course requirements along with brief explanations, (e) a list of course requirements with percentage weights of each, (f) a portfolio checklist, (g) a short reminder for the collaborating schools and student teachers about collaboration in accordance with the given plan, (h) a general information about the university's teacher training program, (i) a practice teaching evaluation sheet for cooperating teachers, (j) an end-of-semester assessment sheet for cooperating teachers, and (k) end-of-program confirmation sheet for the head of the department.

Table 11 summarizes the data sources and analysis for each research question.

Table 11. Research Questions, Data Collection, and Analysis Summary

Research Questions	Data Collection	Data Analysis
1. To what extent were the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) English language teacher competencies achieved in the Foreign Language Education Department (FLED) practicum program?	Survey	Quantitative analysis (agreement/disagreement and merged “needs improvement-average” and “good-excellent” percentages for individual items) of the specific survey items which reflect the teacher competencies defined by MoNE.
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the practicum program?	Survey, interviews	Quantitative analysis (scale means and standard deviations, and agreement/disagreement and merged “needs improvement-average” and “good-excellent” percentages for individual items) of the survey items. Qualitative analysis of the open-ended survey items and interview transcriptions
3. What are the reported needs and problems associated with the practicum experience? What are the possible solutions?	Survey, interviews	Qualitative analysis of the open-ended survey items and interview transcriptions

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Student teacher and graduate survey closed-ended items

The findings section will first present the data from student teacher and graduate responses to the closed-ended survey items. A scale-level analysis of the survey will be discussed and an item-level analysis will follow.

4.1.1 Scale-level analysis

To start with, in order to give a general picture of the student teacher and graduate answers to the survey, scale-level ratings were calculated in percentages in order to make the scales comparable to each other because some of the scales had a different numbers of items. As can be seen in Table 12, “quality of instruction” had the highest rate ($M = 78.45$, $SD = 17.89$), followed by “knowledge, skills, and dispositions” ($M = 75.85$, $SD = 10.56$) and “field experiences and student teaching internship” ($M = 74.68$, $SD = 13.44$) in student teachers’ responses to the survey.

Table 12. Student Teacher Survey: Scale-level Analysis

Scales	M	%	SD	%
Scale 1: Knowledge, skills, and dispositions	54.61	75.85	7.60	10.56
Scale 2: Field experiences and student teaching internship	29.87	74.68	5.37	13.44
Scale 3: Diversity	23.80	59.50	5.63	14.07
Scale 4: Technology	14.30	71.54	3.65	18.27
Scale 5: Quality of Instruction	15.69	78.45	3.57	17.89

With a slight change in the order, in graduate student data “field experiences and student teaching internship” ($M = 78.10$, $SD = 9.60$) had the highest rating followed by “quality of instruction” ($M = 78.03$, $SD = 11.10$) and “knowledge, skills and dispositions” ($M = 75.75$, $SD = 12.37$) (see table 13).

Table 13. Graduate Survey: Scale-level Analysis

Scales	M	%	SD	%
Scale 1: Knowledge, skills, and dispositions	54.54	75.75	8.91	12.37
Scale 2: Field experiences and student teaching internship	31.24	78.10	3.84	9.60
Scale 3: Diversity	23.06	57.66	5.45	13.62
Scale 4: Technology	13.20	66.00	4.23	21.18
Scale 5: Quality of Instruction	15.60	78.03	2.22	11.10

The “technology” scale in both groups, although higher in student teacher responses ($M = 71.54$, $SD = 18.27$) than in graduate responses ($M = 66.00$, $SD = 21.18$) was one of the lowest two scales, along with “diversity”. Lowest scores were calculated for diversity in both student teacher responses ($M = 59.50$, $SD = 14.07$) and graduate responses ($M = 57.66$, $SD = 13.62$).

A mixed (2x5) ANOVA analysis with participant status (student teacher, graduate) as the between subjects factor and scale (5 types) as within subjects variable showed no significant difference between groups, $F(1, 83) = .318$, $p = .574$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$, o. power= 0.86. This finding indicates that student teacher responses to the survey were not significantly different from the responses of graduates across all scales. There was no significant scale by group interaction either, $F(3.003, 249.214) = .318$, $p = .307$, $\eta_p^2 = .014$, o. power= .323, suggesting that group responses did not depend on the type of scale.

The only significant effect was the main effect of scale, $F(3.003, 249.214) = 36.061, p = .00, \eta_p^2 = .303$ (Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied). Pairwise comparisons revealed that scores for scale 3 (diversity) and 4 (technology) were significantly different from all other scales (see Table 14).

Table 14. Pairwise Comparisons

Scale	Field experiences and student teaching internship	Diversity	Technology	Quality of instruction
Knowledge, skills, and dispositions	1.00	.000*	.008*	1.00
Field experiences and student teaching internship		.000*	.007*	1.00
Diversity			.000*	.000*
Technology				.006*

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

**Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

4.1.2 Item-level analysis for each scale

The remainder of the report will focus on some of the individual items in each scale. Mean scores and standard deviations for each item were calculated. Later, “strongly disagree” and “disagree” choices were combined, likewise “strongly agree” and “agree” choices. “Needs improvement-average” and “good-excellent” choices were also calculated together. Student teacher and program graduate responses for each item will be given in percentages, which indicate either their agreement or disagreement or value judgment percentages for these items.

4.1.2.1 Knowledge, skills, and dispositions

Items in this scale included the various knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to the teaching profession (see Table 15). NCATE definition for dispositions (as cited in Williams-Pettway, 2005, p.117) was given as a footnote in the original survey:

Dispositions: The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development, as well as the educator's own professional growth. Also, dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice.

With student teacher ($M = 75.85$, $SD = 10.56$) and graduate ($M = 75.75$, $SD = 12.37$) mean scores, this scale was the second and third highest-rated scale in the groups respectively.

Table 15. Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions Items

Items	Student teacher responses %		Graduate responses %	
	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
1. The practicum provided me with a good foundation in my subject area.	10.91	89.09	15.15	84.85
5. The practicum provided me with a good background of general knowledge outside my subject area.	40.00	60.00	42.42	57.58
6. The practicum provided me with substantial knowledge related to professional education.	18.18	81.82	24.24	75.76
7. The practicum prepared me to understand student levels of readiness.	18.18	81.82	27.27	72.73
8. The practicum prepared me to understand students' different learning styles.	29.09	70.91	21.21	78.79
10. The practicum stimulated critical thinking and problem solving.	20.00	80.00	24.24	75.76
11. The practicum provided me with substantial knowledge of using various teaching strategies to adjust lessons.	16.36	83.64	21.21	78.79
18. The practicum equipped me to assess the effectiveness of my own teaching.	9.09	90.91	12.12	87.88

A closer look at the knowledge, skills, and disposition items, with teacher competencies adapted from the MoNE excluded, with reference to specific items displaying similarities between the groups showed that both groups had the lowest agreement for getting a solid general background outside of their subject area, which might be explained with the time-related limitations of the practicum experience. The highest agreement rates from both of the groups were for assessing the effectiveness of their own teaching, which might show that through the experience gained during the practicum, student teachers found ways to reflect on their teaching practices; however, what they took as a reference for this reflection and resulting decisions is a potential area for further inquiry. All in all, awareness of one's own teaching effectiveness at the preservice level seems to be an important step.

One of the aims of this study was to find the extent to which the MoNE English language teacher competencies were achieved in the FLED practicum program. To this end, items taken from the MoNE English language teacher competencies were integrated into two different scales in STEP (Pettway-Williams, 2005); these were knowledge, skills, and dispositions and diversity.

To start with, the MoNE items with the lowest agreement rates in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions scale were related to assessment and evaluation (see Table 16).

Table 16. Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions-related MoNE Items

Items	Student teacher responses %		Graduate responses %	
	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
2. The practicum enabled me to use materials and resources suitable for learners.	10.91	89.09	9.09	90.91
3. The practicum enabled me to help learners use English accurately and intelligibly.	18.52	81.48	28.13	71.88
4. The practicum equipped me with effective teaching strategies for improving learners' four language skills.	16.67	83.33	18.18	81.82
9. The practicum enabled me to plan English lessons suitable for learners' language proficiency.	1.82	98.18	18.18	81.82
12. The practicum enabled me to make effective physical adjustments and create a positive environment in the classroom suitable for language learning.	12.73	87.27	21.21	78.79
13. The practicum enabled me to use methods and techniques suitable for learners.	9.09	90.91	12.12	87.88
14. The practicum enabled me to determine the aims of the uses of assessment and evaluation in English language teaching.	50.91	49.09	57.58	42.42
15. The practicum enabled me to use assessment and evaluation tools and methods for English classes.	62.96	37.04	62.50	37.50
16. The practicum enabled me to understand my own professional competencies.	7.41	92.59	6.06	93.94
17. The practicum encouraged me to learn about and engage in professional development activities.	23.64	76.36	9.09	90.91

Student teachers' and graduates' agreement rates for determining the aims of uses of assessment and evaluation and using them in their classrooms were the lowest.

Therefore, it can be inferred that the opportunities the practicum program gave to student teachers could be extended both for a better grasp of as well as more chances for using assessment and evaluation related activities. One of the reasons behind allowing relatively less time for assessment and evaluation could be time-related

limitations, which is one the frequently-reported concerns regarding the whole practicum experience; this is discussed in the literature as well. Under the conditions available, it seems that it is student teachers' individual teaching practices at their cooperating schools that receive more time, effort, and attention. Student teachers' highest agreement rates were given for planning lessons suitable for learners' language proficiency, which is remarkable because this is an extremely important English language teacher competence, which requires both theoretical as well as practical knowledge, including classroom dynamics in a given language teaching environment. Program graduates' highest agreement rates were given for understanding their own professional competencies. This finding seems to be in line with the highly-rated item on assessing the effectiveness of one's own teaching in that understanding one's competencies can work as a trigger for self-assessment or vice versa.

4.1.2.2 Field experiences and the student teaching internship

As the scale with the highest mean scores in graduate responses ($M = 78.10$, $SD = 9.60$) and third highest in student teacher responses ($M = 74.68$, $SD = 13.44$), this scale incorporated the field experiences themselves as well as cooperating teacher, university supervisor, and schools related items (see Table 17).

Table 17. Field Experiences and Student Teaching Internship Items

Items	Student teacher responses %		Graduate responses %	
	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
19. My field experiences provided me opportunities to apply knowledge, skills, and dispositions in various settings appropriate to content and grade level.	9.09	90.91	6.06	93.94
20. My field experiences helped me to develop competencies necessary for a career in teaching.	16.36	83.64	6.06	93.94
21. My field experiences provided a variety of school-based opportunities in which I observed, tutored, instructed, or conducted action research.	24.07	75.93	24.24	75.76
22. My field experiences provided opportunities to use technology to support my teaching and learning.	21.82	78.18	24.24	75.76
23. My practicum placement was in a supportive school environment.	14.55	85.45	12.12	87.88
24. My cooperating teacher (mentor) was involved in developing my career as a teacher.	30.91	69.09	30.30	69.70
25. My cooperating teacher (mentor) modeled best practices.	43.40	56.60	33.33	66.67
26. My university supervisor outlined clear objectives for improving my teaching.	32.73	67.27	12.12	87.88
27. My university supervisor had realistic expectations of me as a student intern.	20.00	80.00	18.18	81.82
28. My cooperating teachers (mentors) and university supervisor collaborated with me to assess my teaching methodologies during the practicum experience.	34.55	65.45	21.21	78.79

Opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills that address differing student levels had the highest agreement rates from both of the groups. Since one of the most important aims of a practicum experience is to give student teachers opportunities to experiment with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions gained in their teacher education programs, the higher agreement rate for this item is remarkable. The lowest agreement rates were given to the cooperating teachers' modeling of best

practices, which might signal a desire for seeing better teaching practices from cooperating teachers. Given that cooperating teachers have the potential to affect student teachers' attitudes towards and endorsement of various teaching practices, ensuring a better modeling by cooperating teachers is a potential area for focus and this could have a place in the initial phases of cooperating teacher selection.

4.1.2.3 Diversity

The term “diversity” in the survey was defined as differences among learners in terms of “ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area” (NCATE, 2008, p. 86).

The diversity scale had the lowest mean scores as shown by the ratings of both student teachers ($M = 59.50$, $SD = 14.07$) and program graduates ($M = 57.66$, $SD = 13.62$). Individual items with highest ratings in both of the groups in this section were related to understanding the school culture and classroom environment (see Table 18). This finding might be attributed to some of the practical ideas learnt in the teacher education program, during which student teachers take theory as well as practice-oriented courses (e.g., Educational Psychology, Classroom Management, Special Education, Young Learners) with varying degrees of focus on the dynamics of individual students, classrooms, and schools. With the practicum experience giving them chances to locate themselves inside the physical borders of schools, an understanding of school culture and classroom environment seems to be fostered in the teacher education program. The remaining items in this scale required a relatively deeper understanding of and more familiarization with individual learners coming from different backgrounds and ratings for these items were lower. For instance, the lowest ratings by both groups were for understanding the impact of inclusion on

learning. This finding might point to a need for promoting an understanding of the effects of inclusion in educational contexts in the teacher education program and working with cooperating schools where student teachers can have chances to link what they learned in the courses with regards to inclusion, or other diversity-related concepts, to their actual observations and practices.

Table 18. Diversity Items

Items	Student teacher responses %		Graduate responses %	
	Needs Improvement & Average	Good & Excellent	Needs Improvement & Average	Good & Excellent
29. Understanding the school culture.	25.45	74.55	36.67	63.33
30. Acquiring the ability to develop meaningful learning experiences for diverse students.	41.82	58.18	56.67	43.33
31. Understanding the classroom environment.	16.36	83.64	20.00	80.00
32. Working with students from diverse backgrounds.	52.73	47.27	63.33	36.67
34. Understanding the impact of inclusion (=kaynařtırma eğitimi) on learning.	81.82	18.18	76.67	23.33
35. Understanding gender differences in teaching and learning.	52.73	47.27	56.67	43.33
36. Teaching, modeling, and integrating multicultural awareness, acceptance and appreciation.	40.00	60.00	50.00	50.00

For the MoNE items relating to diversity, shown in Table 19, low ratings are noteworthy, as was the case with the other diversity items discussed previously.

Table 19. Diversity-related MoNE Items

Items	Student teacher responses %		Graduate responses %	
	Needs Improvement & Average	Good & Excellent	Needs Improvement & Average	Good & Excellent
33. Doing activities which are suitable for learners with special needs.	79.63	20.37	66.67	33.33
37. Cooperating with families to increase the quality of the learning process.	75.93	24.07	70.00	30.00
38. Helping learners realize the importance of national festivals and ceremonies and encourage their active participation.	54.55	45.45	53.33	46.67

Student teachers and graduates gave their highest ratings for the item related to helping learners realize the importance of national festivals and ceremonies and encouraging their active participation. Despite being reported as the highest rated MoNE diversity item when compared to others, this item was rated either good or excellent by fewer than half of the participants. Therefore, this item can also be considered one of the areas that can be improved in the teacher education program, along with the other MoNE diversity items, namely, cooperation with families and doing activities suitable for learners with special needs, which were rated lowest despite showing slight differences in their ratings by both groups. Overall, the need for a better understanding and use of instructional practices that can address learners with special needs as a student-related and a relatively more immediate concern seems to be evident. Similarly, cooperation with families as well as nationwide traditions-related improvements in the teacher education program could be useful, especially for student teachers who aim to teach young learners when they become teachers.

4.1.2.4 Technology

The technology items in the survey basically included knowledge and skills related to the use of technology for instructional purposes such as the identification and evaluation of technology sources and using technology for the development of lesson plans. The scale had the second lowest scale mean after the diversity scale, with student teacher mean scores ($M = 71.54$, $SD = 18.27$) higher than graduate mean scores ($M = 66.00$, $SD = 21.18$). Student teachers' agreement percentages for each item in this scale were higher than those of graduate students' (see Table 20).

Table 20. Technology Items

Items	Student teacher responses %		Graduate responses %	
	Needs Improvement & Average	Good & Excellent	Needs Improvement & Average	Good & Excellent
39. Developing strategies to identify and evaluate technology resources.	32.73	67.27	46.67	53.33
40. Managing instruction using technology resources.	27.27	72.73	43.33	56.67
41. Locating and using online resources (i.e. electronic database and/or web sites).	41.82	58.18	43.33	56.67
42. Using technology to support the development of lesson plans.	25.45	74.55	36.67	63.33
43. Using appropriate technology skills in your instructional methodologies.	20.00	80.00	43.33	56.67

The items related to the use of technology for developing lesson plans and use of appropriate technology skills for instructional methodologies had relatively higher ratings by student teachers. This seems to be important because these skills constitute an important part of becoming a teacher who uses sound technology tools both in the lesson design and teaching process. Overall, however, technology training seems to

be one of the areas needing more attention. Higher ratings for technology-related competencies, if coupled with abundant opportunities for further practice during the practicum experience could be instrumental in training teachers who can effectively use and integrate technology into their lessons, thereby staying prepared for the application of the future innovations in the field. Graduate responses seem to be quite similar for items across the scale. A slightly higher rating for the use of technology as a support for designing a lesson plan, which was also discussed with the student teacher data, is noteworthy. Still, the ratings remain relatively low.

4.1.2.5 Quality of instruction

This scale aimed to measure the extent to which participants agreed with several university supervisor activities in the program with reference to their academic as well as personal qualities including material use, teaching, enthusiasm, respect, and communication skills (see Table 21).

The quality of instruction scale had the highest mean in the student teacher survey ($M = 78.45$, $SD = 17.89$) and the second highest ($M = 78.03$, $SD = 11.10$) in the graduate survey. The item with the highest agreement rate from both groups was the university supervisor's modeling of good oral and written communication skills. The lowest agreement rates from both of the groups were for university supervisors' modeling of good teaching and helping student teachers to develop multiple learning strategies to help all students learn. Since this item was also related to different learning strategies and student diversity, lower agreement percentages when compared to other items in the scale, as was the prevalent case in most of the diversity items in the survey, seems to be congruent. In line with several suggestions made for diversity-related items, the modeling of various teaching strategies that can

be used with all students might be considered one of the aspects of the practicum program that has potential for improvement.

Table 21. Quality of Instruction Items

Items	Student teacher responses %		Graduate responses %	
	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
44. The university supervisor in my practicum program used appropriate instructional materials.	21.82	78.18	12.12	87.88
45. The university supervisor in my practicum program modeled good teaching and helped me to develop multiple teaching strategies to help all students learn.	30.91	69.09	24.24	75.76
46. The university supervisor in my practicum program showed enthusiasm in his/her presentation of course content.	15.09	84.91	6.06	93.94
47. The university supervisor in my practicum program showed respect for students' opinions.	14.55	85.45	15.15	84.85
48. The university supervisor in my practicum program modeled good oral and written communication skills.	10.91	89.09	6.06	93.94

When asked to rate their overall satisfaction levels with their teacher education program, the majority of the student teachers (44.4%) and graduates (70%) reported an above-average level of satisfaction and no participants rated a poor level of satisfaction (see Figure 4). Student teachers' satisfaction levels were more dispersed, ranging from below average to excellent when compared to graduate ratings, which ranged from average to excellent.

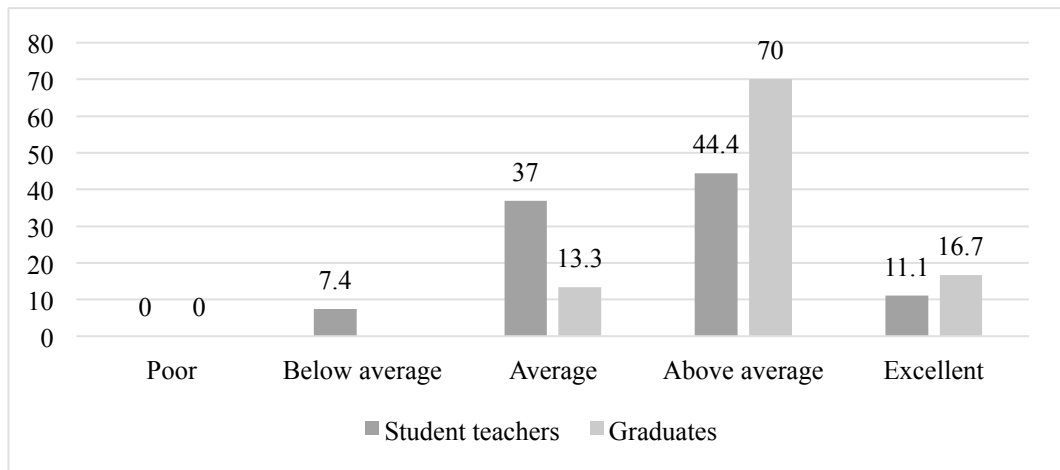


Fig. 4 Overall satisfaction levels with the teacher education program

The majority of the student teachers (61.8%) and graduates (69.7%) reported that they would choose teaching if they were to restart their undergraduate major at the university, as shown in Figure 5.

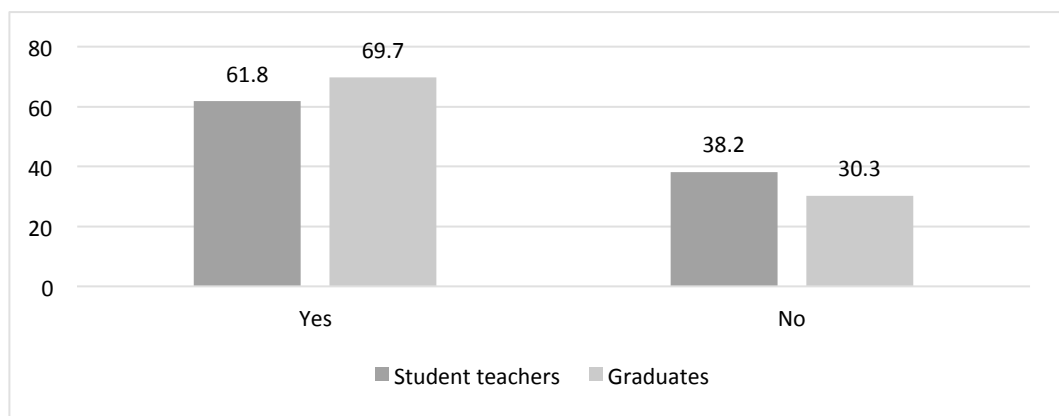


Fig. 5 Participants who would or would not choose teaching

4.2 Student teacher focus group interviews, university supervisor interviews, and open-ended survey items

A qualitative analysis of the focus group interviews with student teachers (ST) and their answers to open-ended survey items, individual interviews with university supervisors (US), and program graduates (GR) answers to open-ended survey items will be documented under various categories, as discussed by the three groups of participants. NVivo 8 was used for the analysis of the qualitative data. Results of the analysis will be discussed under the following categories, with data coming from each group of participants where relevant.

Since needs, problems, and suggestions reported by participants were highly interrelated and often implied the existence of one another, these were coded together. Similarly, benefits and highlights of the program were included in the strengths category, thereby making the second category a compilation of the three. In other words, the data were divided into two basic units: (1) the needs, problems, and suggestions and (2) benefits, highlights, and strengths of the practicum program. These layers of analysis will mainly refer to the following four subcategories, which were in common in all three participant groups' data:

- Cooperating teachers
- University supervisors
- Schools and students
- Courses and the practicum program components

Data were analyzed under different themes regarding the above-mentioned four different categories and recurrent themes were found for each group of participants. Sometimes, these themes were identical; however, group-specific themes were highly frequent. Therefore, in the reporting section of the analysis, themes that were

common to student teacher and graduate data as well as themes that were reported only by one of the groups but with a high frequency of reference were taken into consideration. University supervisor comments as well as answers to additional questions asked of university supervisors and program graduates will be discussed where relevant (e.g., advantages or disadvantages of completing the practicum experience in state or private schools, comments on an earlier practicum experience).

4.2.1 Problems, needs, and suggestions

4.2.1.1 Curriculum and program-related problems, needs, and suggestions

Most frequently occurring student teacher and graduate discussions related to problems, needs, and suggestions for curriculum and program will be discussed and conjoined with each other on common topics in this section of the analysis.

Earlier or more practicum or observation

Current practicum processes decided by CoHE such as the beginning of the experience (seventh semester) and taking other departmental courses simultaneously with the practicum courses were among the topics discussed. Although individual departments themselves have neither the power nor initiative to address these concerns, the need for starting the practicum earlier, doing more observations, and having more teaching practice had high number of reference counts in the data:

S1: First of all, as I said before I think we need to see the real classroom setting earlier than the fourth year because it's too late I think. Maybe in the second or third grade we can do some observation maybe not teaching but only observation and then in the third grade maybe we can focus on more teaching because six is not enough I think (ST Interview F)

A late start to the practicum experience brought together its effects on the number of teaching practices that the student teachers undertook or the time they spent on observation before they graduated as teachers from the department and in parallel with the idea of earlier practicum or observation, a desire for more teaching or practice was also reported:

S2: going back to what we said, err.... I still think that... I still think that we should have observed more and do more presentations. Because I don't think that three unofficial presentations will really help us to again to do our officials. ... I feel that "OK, I'm not gonna be able to handle the class. I can't manage the class." And this just six presentations will not be enough for me to be a good teacher you know. (ST Interview K)

Inadequate observation hours. (ST open-ended survey item 49, participant #19)

The practicum should be at least two years. (GR open-ended survey item 50, participant #20)

However, I believe teaching 6 hours (which was the case in my time anyway) is not enough and students need more practice. (GR open-ended survey item 52, participant #28)

Observations should be more than 3 hours a week (GR open-ended survey item 50, participant #2)

Several suggestions were made, including the idea of spreading the practicum experience throughout the whole program, such as doing only observations in the first year, or even in the third year:

S1: ... It could have been longer as I said it should have been spread through the whole department. (ST Interview D)

S2: maybe we should like... we might not teach at the first year but like we could really do the observation part in the first two years or first three let's say and in the last year we could just do unofficial and official presentations (ST Interview K)

S2: Yeah in the third grade it can be done something like maybe an observation in the third grade (ST Interview T)

In addition to preparedness for teaching, an earlier practicum experience would indeed have an effect on student teachers' decisions of becoming a teacher, as suggested by one of the student teachers. Especially, if the decision is a positive one, the possible results of such a decision could have a lot of advantages for endorsing the profession with its many facets:

S1: and for example, I kind of like... I deci... I've decided to be a teacher this year. ... after practicum. But I think it's too late, right? If we had another practicum experience in previous year, maybe I would have decided to become a teacher earlier or I'd have decided not to become a teacher. And we can choose our tendency. For example, do we want to be a primary school teacher or do we want to be a high school teacher or do we want to be an instructor at university. So, it's too late to decide on those things in the last year practicum experience. (ST Interview Y)

A resulting desire to have a mostly or only practicum process, without having to spend time and effort for any other courses was another issue discussed by the student teachers. The difficulty of studying for other courses and planning their graduations simultaneously with their practicum experience also found a place in the discussions:

S4: ... I think we need more focus on the practicum schools and practicum issues because err... like my other friends we are taking lots of different courses and I really experience difficulty in just focusing on my practicum school. Because I also need to think about the other courses. (ST Interview Y)

S3: ... So it's not a good time as well. And of course there is a stress of you know being graduated, many exams, everything. And you are not that focused on your practicum schools and officials. (ST Interview H)

We shouldn't have taken so many courses along with the practicum in the senior year so that we can attend more to the practicum school. (ST open-ended survey item 50, participant #23)

The university supervisors were cautious about the timing of an earlier practicum experience, as reflected in the comments below:

... From the beginning of the junior year. Freshmen and sophomore years might be early. From the junior year. (US X)

Senior year is the time when teacher trainees are most serious, aware of the profession and competent. (US Y)

By referring to the earlier practicum system, which was in use before the undergraduate curriculum changed, one of the supervisors made the following comment on the early practicum experience of students with reference to maturational difficulties:

It was just too early. It was the second semester of the freshman year. Without understanding themselves, getting accustomed to living in Istanbul and also the department, students went to the schools and they may not have benefited enough. Sophomore year might be a better time. Freshman year was too early. (US Z)

In addition to the time-related concerns, the availability of resources such as schools and instructors was raised as a feasibility concern:

In principle, I support it, but when it comes to resources, resources do not support it. Both cooperating school resources and inadequate number of academic staff unfortunately do not support an earlier practicum. (US X)

Assessment

One of the frequently mentioned themes regarding the practicum courses and components was a concern with assessment procedures, such as subjectivity and lack of care associated with the grading of performances. Differing criteria as well as highly holistic approaches used were among the major concerns related to the assessment during the practicum experience:

S2: you know there are officials and unofficials and some of the students are going to state schools and some of the students are going to err... public.... private schools and some of the mentors are really you know yani elaborative. And they... they... they grade everything and for example, you get sixty from a... a very you know... men... one of the mentors and in a private school. But some... some of the students may get very high grades (ST Interview Y)

Receiving a high grade was also reported to be problematic, as in the case of a student teacher whose cooperating teacher and peer had differences in their evaluations of his/her teaching. The importance of receiving valid feedback rather than having the top score seems to be evident in the following student teacher comment:

S2: our mentors do not really care about the evaluation worksheet. They just check it and give us for example 100 grade. But no I did not... I could not catch the time for example but she gives...gave me “yes she did it quite well” but my friend caught... caught my mistake and evaluated me according to that criterion (ST Interview F)

Pointing to the fact that the course affects their grade point averages considerably, one suggestion proposed was the use of a pass-fail system:

S2: ... So, I think that it's not really fair. And I think it should be four credits but it must be pa...fail and pass (ST Interview Y)

It should still have four credits and criteria for passing the course should be more strict but it should be pass/fail. (ST open-ended survey item 50, participant #26)

Observations

As one of the very important components of the practicum process, observations were also discussed in many aspects. Student teachers also speculated on the application of small activities or tasks in the classroom rather than purely observing the classes:

S3: because there is a really harsh transition you are observing then you are in front of the class (ST Interview H)

S2: And I... I... maybe it's interesting but I... I sometimes I feel like I'm a... one of the students there. Like because but it was the case. I... I just went there and sit there and observe the class and taking notes. I don't know (ST Interview T)

Related to the first semester observations, the use of an observational guideline was also discussed:

S3: then... we should something very specific to observe. Except... except for knowing the... knowing the... understanding the class because sometimes I feel ??? I feel meaningless there (ST Interview K)

It should have more specific guidelines in terms of what we will observe. (ST open-ended survey item 50, participant #27)

We should have more structured observation plan for us. (ST open-ended survey item 50, participant #33)

Technology

Focusing more on technology was one of the common aspects discussed by both student teachers and graduates. As can be seen in the comments below, technology-focused sessions, use of e-lessons, learning about new technologies as well as practical ideas about using technology in the classrooms found a place in the technology related discussions:

There can be some sessions which focus on technology in teaching and these sessions can be special for student teachers. (ST open-ended survey item, participant #5)

Live e-lessons would be better. I think internship program should start to be technology oriented. (GR open-ended survey item 49, participant #5)

A more practical technology course can be added to the program, where we can learn recent technologies that we can use in our classes (GR open-ended survey item 50, participant #4)

4.2.1.2 Schools and students-related problems, needs, and suggestions

Seeing different school contexts

Closely linked to the practicum program philosophy and traditions retained in the department, cooperating schools included in the program are mostly private K-12 schools. For instance, in the academic year when the data were collected, the majority of the student teachers (65.6%) were matched with private schools while the rest were allocated to both private and state schools (26%) or to state schools only (8.3%).

A desire to see both private and state school contexts, especially to see state school examples by those who were doing their practicum at private schools, was highly recurrent. One of the reasons behind this desire was to see and be able to evaluate the conditions between the two school contexts, which would have an effect on their future work setting choices:

S1: but err... if we did one term practicum in a private school and the other in a state school, it would be good in comparing the conditions and we would decide better (ST Interview H)

... and I wish I could have experienced teaching at a state school. I believe it will also affect students' future decisions as to working at a state school or not. (GR open-ended survey item 51, participant #28)

Among other reasons behind seeing other school contexts was the prevalence of state schools all over the country compared to private schools, and student teachers' perceived low chances of starting a teaching job at a private school as a new graduate:

But I had a chance to observe a state school and things are very different there. A more balanced experience could be more realistic given the Turkish context, where most students are in state schools. (GR open-ended survey item 51, participant #14)

S1: ... And I will be working in other schools, maybe in state schools, but I don't know anything about those schools, those state schools. (ST Interview Y)

no chance to observe state schools, so it does not prepare us to teach in state schools (ST open-ended survey item 49, participant #2)

In addition to the different school context suggestions for the program, a tertiary level practice experience was also mentioned by some of the program graduates who worked at tertiary level institutions:

focusing mainly on kids and teens (however, a number of us are working at SoFL at universities) (GR open-ended survey item 49, participant #8)

What I have been doing is totally different from what I observed and experienced in my practicum. I have been teaching to adults. (GR open-ended survey item 52, participant #10)

The university supervisors who agreed with the idea that the student teachers should see both private and state school contexts explained why the program has private schools as partners in addition to state schools, or mentioned the inability to send student teachers to both types of schools as follows:

Maybe if each group gets two schools one private, one state... This is ideal. They see both of them. Both private and state schools... because seeing only state schools is not enough. It would be limited because we want them to see good models. (US X)

Yes, I support the idea of students seeing both private and state schools during the practicum, before they graduate. Students should go to both schools. We should indeed be able to send all students to both private and state schools, but we cannot do so. Some of them go to both private and state schools, others go to private schools only. (US Z)

In the discussions of the negative aspects associated with each school context, among the points that the university supervisors discussed were the existence of a limited number of teachers per school and the inadequate use of current methodologies at some of the state schools in contrast to the busy-scheduled cooperating teachers and

too much control on student teachers' teaching practices mentioned for some of the private schools.

Unrealistic school contexts and student profiles

In parallel with the private and state school contexts discussion, unrealistic school contexts and student profiles were other topics that were raised by student teachers and graduates. What is called unrealistic here was sometimes referred to as ideal or utopic, which was maybe appreciated but unrepresentative of their expectations about the contexts in which they might find themselves in the future. Student teachers' reactions to the tasks undertaken by students, their feelings about teaching English to these students, and the discrepancy between their experiences at their schools and their imagined workplaces were reported as follows:

S1: my just one my problem is the level of the high... the level of the high school students is quite high and I feel a bit uncomfortable with them. Because they... they already speak very fluently. They already use very... a high range of... variety of words (ST Interview D)

S2: ... Because we have to teach to students who are less qualified than these ones next year. So for example I don't know how to teach grammar to high school students (ST Interview D)

S2: and also for example in my practicum schools, third graders are doing research on the Internet and they are learning giving references. (ST Interview Y)

Similarly, graduates referred to the student backgrounds and school facilities in their discussions of the realities of the schools in the country:

However, I always felt the need of being educated more on how to deal with students in poor conditions in terms of family, school and environment, who

we are more probably to come across with while exercising our job. I think it would be better to prepare university students in education departments for the reality of Turkey and her education and social conditions. (GR open-ended survey item 49, participant #24)

One of the weaknesses is that all the lesson plans, activities, materials are designed according to private schools, small classes. Most of them are not realistic. (GR open-ended survey item 49, participant #15)

In our teacher education program, mostly private schools are taken into consideration. Most lesson plans are developed according to private schools, small classes; however, real life is not like that. (GR open-ended survey item 53, participant #15)

School placements

The following problem area was related to the school placement. Student teacher comments point to a need to know the criteria used for placing student teachers at schools:

S2: concerning the placement process of the schools and the teacher candidates, I can say that we don't really know how the process goes and the teachers... they don't really inform us about how place us. So, maybe we could be informed way before we were placed so that we could try our best to go to better or say... let's say more prestigious schools you know. So, maybe more information about the placement system could be given. (ST Interview K)

Practicum schools may be a problem, we should have the opportunity to change or decide on the school we are supposed to do our practicum. (ST open-ended survey item 49, participant #48)

4.2.1.3 Cooperating teachers-related problems, needs, and suggestions

Lack of cooperation with cooperating teachers

The majority of the problems that fit in this category were related to the relationship

and cooperation with cooperating teachers and student teachers assigned to them. Lack of cooperation with cooperating teachers was one of the recurring themes, which caused the student teachers to receive little constructive feedback and to question their perceived status as student teachers:

S1: because I was like “OK, I’m gonna present next week my unofficial. İşte Mr./Ms. (cooperating teacher’s surname) what do you suggest?” And he/she was like “OK, I’ll do present perfect, uhm... you can start”. I was like... “OK” (ST Interview T)

S3: I don’t... I don’t know he/she... he/she is so quiet. He/she doesn’t say anything. For example, I did some kind of unofficials and officials. But he/she says only some... one or two sentences about my presentation and that’s all (ST Interview Y)

The teacher was not comfortable having me in the class and I could feel that. (GR open-ended survey item 49, participant #18)

Practicum mentors must be more interested with the students' developments. (GR open-ended survey item 50, participant #29)

Related to the idea of cooperation, willingness was indeed a common quality that cooperating teachers should possess, as proposed by all of the participating university supervisors:

In addition to experience, how willingly is he/she doing this job? Does he/she have time to give to student teachers? Because the student teacher will model him/her. Therefore, willingness for collaboration with student teacher (US X)

Not being too authoritarian and being willing to counsel the trainee (US Y)

I think the first quality is willingness because if there is voluntariness, or desire, teachers will want to develop themselves more in this matter. (US Z)

In a discussion of the unwilling cooperating teachers, one of the university supervisors pointed to the lack of defined professional standards for cooperating teachers' involvement in the practicum experience and a need for incentives or rewards for undertaking the responsibility of being a cooperating teacher:

This duty is imposed on teachers. There is no material or emotional compensation in return. Only some teachers are doing this as a duty, but this is not very healthy. (US Z)

There should be compensation in return because they are giving their lessons, getting their lessons spent in order for student teachers to teach. And then they need some time to make up. Without understanding all of these, the practicum programs are directly given to teachers. In this sense, I can empathize with them. They are doing a really difficult job. But in this system, they are doing what they can do. A system problem (US Z)

Another concern raised was related to cooperating teacher's young age or little teaching experience:

S3: I think there should be a limit to be a mentor ... (ST Interview F)

There should be a limit of experience to be a mentor. (ST open-ended survey item 50, participant #44)

Similarly, according to the university supervisors, teaching experience and subject area knowledge were also qualities that cooperating teachers should possess:

Should be competent in the field and have experience (US X)

Knowledge of how to use current ELT [English Language Teaching] methodology (US Y)

Normally, of course, those who have teaching experience should do this. In addition, a teacher with the knowledge of assessment techniques... In other words, when he/she observes a student teacher, he/she should know how to give feedback... a teacher who have had training for this (US Z)

Considering that an important aspect of being a cooperating teacher is to provide student teachers with chances to observe and apply effective teaching practices, experienced and competent cooperating teachers can have a lot of influence on student teachers with the methodologies they use and how they use them. Therefore, experience and subject matter knowledge seem to be important qualities for cooperating teachers.

In sum, as can be understood by the participants' comments, lack of cooperation with cooperating teachers in this section seemed to have an effect on the feedback received by student teachers during the practicum experience, implying a need for more willing cooperating teachers with whom stronger bonds can be formed and maintained. Adequate amounts of teaching experience, subject matter knowledge, and eagerness to support student teachers academically and emotionally seem to constitute a portion of what is expected of cooperating teachers.

4.2.1.4 University supervisor-related problems, needs, and suggestions

Student teacher responses for this component of the problems, needs, and suggestions category included the mechanical and emotional aspects of the practicum experience, such as solving school arrangement problems, maintaining communication with cooperating teachers, and support. Program graduates mentioned a need for a stronger collaboration or communication with cooperating teachers and more support or familiarity with student teachers. Discussions of these aspects were too infrequent to be meaningful. However, university supervisor-related discussions can also be investigated and extracted in courses and program-related discussion above (e.g., assessment and requirements, observational guidance) because regardless of the definite procedures set by the CoHE and the program

philosophy maintained in the department, university supervisors are the ones who can make changes and improvements to the extent the boundaries of the bigger system permits them to do so.

As for university supervisor insights regarding their role in the practicum experience, they discussed several qualities that university supervisors should possess, which included good communication with cooperating schools and students, as well as empathy and motivation:

... at the same time his/her relationships with the schools should be good. Links between teachers, head of the departments and principals at the primary, secondary, private, state, and university level should be strong because he/she is the connection. He/she functions as connection between student teachers, university, and schools. His/her relationships should be strong, trustable, and solid. (US X)

Having a positive relationship and being in close contact with the cooperating school and the faculty there. It's important to visit the cooperating schools and talk to cooperating teachers, coordinators and head of the department at least once both semesters and more, if possible. This helps to prevent problems beforehand and to manage any problems that do occur during the year. (US Y)

Both high motivation and ability to understand problems (US X)

I think, of course, it is important for an instructor giving university level practicum course to have the skills of empathizing with students. (US Z)

Another university supervisor quality mentioned was having teaching experience and expertise in teacher education:

Competence in the field is important. In other words, he/she should be specialized in teacher training. Teaching experience would surely be very good. (US Z)

University supervisor discussions of the limitations of the practicum experience regarding their own part was related to the limited number of supervisors and the resulting high numbers of student teachers whom they supervised. This was discussed as a resource problem, which would have effects on the quality of feedback and the time spent with student teachers at cooperating schools.

Improvement... of course employing more staff working in the field because if I had ten students... with ten students, communication would be different. (US X)

If we had ten students, we would all do it in detail, but there are thirty students per section. We cannot do it anymore. All of these are caused by the system as I said. All through the second semester, all Mondays and Fridays are empty. All days are spent at the schools. I am not sure if this is a sustainable system. We used to go to observations three times. When the student numbers increased, we decreased it to two, and finally to one. (US Z)

To sum up, university supervisor-related discussions included a wide range of academic, organizational as well as communicative responsibilities and several supervisory roles were likened to that of a bridge, connecting the university to schools as well as student teachers to cooperating teachers. One possible inference that can be drawn from this part of the discussion is that an increase in the number of university supervisors, which would reduce the number of student teachers per university supervisor, would mean an increase in the time that the university supervisors spend with and for student teachers as well as cooperating teachers.

4.2.2 Strengths, benefits, and highlights

4.2.2.1 Course- and program-related strengths, benefits, and highlights

Seeing or having the chance to teach at real classrooms

In this section of the discussion, student teachers' appreciation of the practicum experience in a general sense was prevalent. In other words, seeing and having the chance to teach in real classrooms was a recurring topic:

We have opportunities to teach English in a real class. (ST open-ended survey item 49, participant #1)

Observing a real classroom environment helped me to shape my views towards teaching. (ST open-ended survey item 49, participant #6)

It's really good to know the school system, how the teachers work their program. (ST open-ended survey item 49, participant #16)

One point worth attention here is related to the real classrooms, schools, or student profiles. It seems that the student teachers' discussions of real comes with two levels: physical and socioeconomic. While the former refers to having a chance to leave the university campus and to enter the physical borders of schools or classrooms, the latter refers to a more advanced grasp of the real which feeds from the sociological and economic realities of the immediate environment. Further, it seems that experiencing the physical reality is a prerequisite for evaluating the socioeconomic reality. Therefore, some of the student teachers in the practicum program, while appreciating their experiences in real classrooms and schools, might have remained skeptical about their preparedness for the socioeconomically real settings.

Seminar discussions, peer experience and feedback

Receiving feedback in general was one of the opportunities appreciated by the student teachers and graduates:

S1: ... they were really sincere comments and they were helpful for the next err... next presentations. For example I was nervous and I didn't smile in one of my lessons and my friend in the class... she was looking at me and laughing. She was saying.... And it was good she directed me. It was good because when I become a teacher there will be nobody. Yeah, it was helpful. (ST Interview H)

S2: It can be helpful I think because you are at the same situation you know. You... it's somehow you are like (ST Interview K)

Especially, the blog to which we uploaded our practice teaching classes and get feedback from our peers was used very efficiently and improved our understanding. (GR open-ended survey item 52, participant #22)

Seminar discussions and peer experience and feedback were reported to be beneficial in several respects such as learning from peer experiences without personally having to undergo a certain classroom situation:

S1: Yeah. It's... it is a... I mean it's precious. Because you never learn this but by your peers' experiences, you learn, you hear, you learn, you try to comment on their experiences. (ST Interview D)

S2: we are going over the officials or unofficials. And you know We... we can you know see the strengths and weaknesses of our classes ... I don't know I get prepared for the possible reactions from the students when I heard from my peers' experiences. You know ... get prepared "this can be..." ... so it's helpful (ST Interview H)

Learning from peers also seems to serve as a tool for affirming solidarity and empathy with peers. Seeing a peer also experiencing a certain difficulty seems to provide relief and a further step for normalization after stressful experiences:

S1: and in the class... when I experienced a difficulty in my practicum school I... I was thinking that “Am I unsuccessful about this thing?” “What about the other friends?” And when I come and when I see that they have also similar problems, I say that “it’s not about me it’s the process.” And this was good. I think even we become a... become teachers, doing some discussions like this with colleagues would be really helpful because you can recognize the problems better and you can find the reason of it more ... (ST Interview H)

Course content and institution profile

University supervisors’ discussions of program strengths centered on the up-to-date content including syllabi, activities, readings, and technology integration:

Curriculum, syllabi are changing continuously. The structure is the same. Syllabi are changing, activities are changing, blogs are opened, and technology is used more frequently. I think these kinds of innovations are also made. (US X)

Our readings are very up-to-date. We try to renew the practicum syllabus every year. (US Z)

The university’s strong reputation was also mentioned as a strength, especially with regard to communication with schools:

Since it is (university name), schools see us differently. The (university name) students and also us. (US X)

The university’s reputation (making it easier to be accepted by the cooperating schools) (US Y)

4.2.2.2 Schools and student-related strengths, benefits, and highlights

Despite qualifying as a separate discussion category in the strengths, benefits, and highlights of the practicum program section, the positive aspects of schools were often associated with negative hypotheses. Student teachers and graduates in their

appreciation of good practicum schools had a tendency to refer to the reality that awaited them in their future work environments. Therefore, this tendency caused the reported good qualities of schools to be overshadowed by reality concerns, thereby finding a place for themselves in the problems, need, and suggestions section of the discussion. What remained as the strengths of practicum schools in common for both student teachers and graduates, although fewer in occurrence, were related to seeing various grade levels:

It was good for me seeing public schools both in high school and secondary level. (ST open ended survey item 49, participant #24)

I observed different levels of English classrooms and that provided me a good idea for which level to work in the future. (GR open ended survey item 49, participant #16)

In a further question on the advantages and disadvantages of doing their practicum at private or state schools, the graduates mentioned the real-life preparing functions state schools. As for private schools, the most frequently-mentioned themes were good teaching practices, qualified and enthusiastic cooperating teachers, and the resources available. All these might point to a practical concern, which is to have an experience in an environment that is more likely to become their future workplace, behind the desire for also seeing state schools rather than a discontent with the private schools.

Similarly, according the university supervisors, working with three different school levels (i.e., elementary to high school) was a strong feature of the practicum program:

For example, at elementary, middle, and high school, every student teacher will observe three times... three levels (US X)

Three different levels included (US Y)

The positive aspects of working with state schools included the relatively less busy schedule of cooperating teachers, flexibility, and more autonomy for student teachers while private schools were associated with effectiveness and larger numbers of cooperating teachers.

4.2.2.3 Cooperating teacher-related strengths, benefits, and highlights

Student teachers' accounts of good relationships or cooperation with their cooperating teachers were in line with the supportive or effective cooperating teachers mentioned by the graduates:

S1: ... Except that teachers were very helpful. We could get in any classes, we could observe anything yeah we didn't have to send email before and they didn't make a problem. And all of the teachers except one or two accepted us to the courses to observe them and they were helpful. They were always suggesting us something. They were talking about their practicum times. (ST Interview H)

S3: ... and with my mentors. They are so helpful to me whatev... whatever I wanted to... whenever I wanted to talk I'd just go and we drink a cup of tea speak so much. I like my school (ST Interview K)

One of the most delicate aspects of the initial phases of the practicum experience, meeting with the students for the first time seems to have been managed well with the guidance of a cooperating teacher, as mentioned by one of the student teachers (see below). Further positive comments regarding the relationship with cooperating teachers by graduates were as follows:

S4: for me, the initial meeting err... couldn't have been better because when i... when we went there, I immediately meet... met with my mentor. And he/she is really very kind person. He/She clearly explained me the process and we arranged the time at that day. And then err.. when I went to the class, he/she introduced me again in a very nice way she said "OK, he/she is my lovely assistant and he/she will try to help us and he/she will also observe our class. And please be respectful to him/her as you do to me." And he/she said "sometimes he/she needs to give you a lecture, and please listen to him/her. And he/she is free to choose any material that he/she wants". And it was really good for me. (ST Interview Y)

I worked with really qualified mentors I could model (GR open-ended survey item 49, participant #16)

Mentors really care about us, help us improve ourselves. (GR open-ended survey item 49, participant #15)

Feedback and cooperation seem to be closely related to each other, as was the case with a lack of feedback reported, along with a lack of cooperation with cooperating teachers. Forming good relationships with cooperating teachers was also related to receiving feedback and help:

S4: Actually I'm very happy with my cooperating teacher in high school. After my unofficals, he/she asks me "OK what do you think?" "How was it?", "What did it err... what err... Did it go well?" and "What it... what didn't it go so well?" And I think it is a good kind of a reflection. He/she... at the first ti... at the very first beginning he/she wants to take my opinion. Then elicit my responses ... and then we always after the class, we always meet and talk about the students and talk about the class... classroom atmosphere. And it is a ... really really good for me. I really learned a lot from him/her. (ST Interview Y)

4.2.2.4 University supervisor-related strengths, benefits, and highlights

Involvement and guidance by university supervisors was a recurring strength discussed by some of the student teachers, including a joint initial school visit experience and guidance and help in a general sense:

S1: our supervisor definitely values us. And in (school name) at least, she ... here our supervisor comes with us for the first time. She came, right? She came and met the school's headmasters and the teachers ... and it was very nice for me because I felt err ... belongingness. Right? I felt importance (ST Interview D)

S3: ... university supervisor because she is doing what she is supposed to do ... she is helping us a lot. (ST Interview H)

Our university supervisor's guidance is important in my teaching. (ST open-ended survey item 49, participant #1)

University supervisors' reports of their own strengths were related to the experience in the field (i.e., each supervisor having 13 years of experience) and seriousness, professionalism, and dedication.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to (1) discover the extent to which the MoNE English language teacher competencies were achieved at a FLED practicum program, (2) report the strengths and weaknesses of the program and (3) discuss the needs and problems experienced during the practicum experience and possible solutions for them, based on data coming from student teachers, program graduates, and university supervisors. To start with the first research aim, it was found that for knowledge, skills, and dispositions items incorporated into the survey from the MoNE English language teacher competencies, assessment and evaluation related considerations are more noticeable. More chances for getting familiar with assessment and evaluation tools as well as having opportunities to use them during the practicum experience can be one point of consideration. The rest of the items pertaining to teaching practices (e.g. using suitable materials and resources as well as methods and techniques, planning lessons appropriate for learner proficiency) and understanding oneself as a professional (e.g. understanding one's own professional competencies and engagement in professional development) seemed to reflect a better functioning when compared to assessment and evaluation-related components. The other MoNE English language teacher competencies-related category included in the study as a component of the teacher education program, namely diversity, pointed to a need for improvement. Effective teaching practices for learners with special needs, collaboration with families as well as promoting an appreciation of and participation in nationwide festivals seem to be areas that require more emphasis in classrooms that are becoming more and more diverse in the country.

The MoNE English language teacher competencies-related items in this study were discussed separately from other survey items. In line with the second research aim, which was to report the strengths and weaknesses of the program, an analysis of the survey in its entirety showed that student teachers and program graduates were not different in their ratings of the specific components of the practicum experience as they related to the practicum experience itself and the teacher education program as a whole. With the higher overall mean scores given by student teachers and program graduates, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions, field experiences and student teaching internship, and quality of instruction aspects of the program seemed to constitute the strengths of the practicum experience. In other words, the knowledge and skills required for the teaching profession, the instructional practices through which these were conveyed to student teachers, and how these knowledge and skills were used in the field seem to be working efficiently in the program, with neither component having mean scores lower than 74 (out of 100). In contrast to the high ratings gathered by these components, the diversity and technology components of the teacher education program had lower ratings from both groups. For diversity, this finding was actually expected since inclusion, gender differences in teaching and learning, or multicultural awareness, acceptance, and appreciation, and many other related current educational trends are not emphasized adequately in the national education system. Understanding the school culture and the classroom environment were found to be two of the rare areas where participants' higher ratings seemed to converge where diversity was concerned. However, in today's rapidly changing world where the borders between countries are becoming more and more obscure, more focus on teaching skills is needed for diverse classrooms.

A decade ago, Gollnick and Chinn (2006) claimed that training diverse students was a major problem faced by those who taught and they predicted that diversity in schools would gradually increase in the future. The realities of the classrooms in Turkey today, with students coming from various cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, seem to prove this prediction. A further increase in diversity is quite possible, which necessitates a need for bridging the gap between what is available and what is necessary for addressing diverse student profiles. Hopefully, given that the language and culture-related considerations caused by “cultural globalization” have led to attempts for “a meaningful shift in policies and programs, and methods and materials governing English language teaching and teacher education” (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 7), chances for amelioration may still be relevant. A reform in curriculum, which entails “active inquiry to discover and include knowledge and perspectives that have previously been ignored or suppressed” (Bennett, 2001, p. 176) might be one way to realize such a change in a more standard way nationwide. To this end, policy-level suggestions for training diversity-informed preservice teachers would include encouraging teacher education faculties to offer more courses on diversity that can both promote a better understanding of the concept and emphasize the need for it by presenting up-to-date factual information coming from classrooms across the country. Training and familiarization in this aspect might be instrumental, as was the case in Sifakis and Bayyurt’s (2015) English as a lingua franca and world Englishes-aware teacher education project, which showed that when convinced of the use of a particular integration, inservice teachers could indeed be willing to adopt new practices for their lessons. Considering that inservice teachers’ beliefs and practices are open to change, starting this process even earlier in the preservice phase can have a lot to

offer. According to Gay (2002), information with regard to multicultural education is not lacking, but it “has to be located, learned, and woven into the preparation programs of teachers and classroom instruction” (p. 108). Therefore, what remains is to make use of the current body of research and adapt existing curricula or course content. In addition to course-level improvements, practice-related changes can be made. For instance, during the practicum, a certain quota can be allocated to schools or classrooms where student teachers can work with learners with special needs or diverse backgrounds. This could also work on a voluntary basis. In other words, student teachers who aim to work with specific groups of students in their future careers as teachers could be matched with cooperating schools that can provide such opportunities.

As for technology, more integration ideas might be necessary, which was also found in the suggestions of some participants in their answers to the open-ended survey items. Paralleling with preservice level, problems related to technology use could also be encountered at the inservice level. For instance, Aydın’s (2013) study showed that Turkish inservice EFL teachers’ perceived software knowledge was “limited to using the Internet, email, word processing, and presentation software” (p. 229). However, what is observed in terms of instructional technology-related limitations at the inservice level could be prevented or reduced to a minimum with adequate training at the preservice level. When compared to the training of inservice teachers, computer-assisted language learning teacher education at the preservice level can be more controllable because these programs can set learning goals irrespective of student background (Hubbard, 2008). Still, just bringing technology to instructional practices is inadequate (Koehler & Mishra, 2005; Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Promoting a combination of knowledge and skills pertaining to the

technology (T) tool itself, the content (C) that will be taught, and pedagogy knowledge (P), which makes up the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (Koehler & Mishra, 2005), in the training of preservice teachers could be considered as a suggestion for improvement. Further, more practice with content and pedagogically sound technology integration into practice teaching and lesson plan designs might be effective. Given that is not an easy task to acquire the skills necessary for teaching simultaneously with those for technology use (Schaffer & Richardson, 2004), good background knowledge gained in a preservice teacher education program, which can later be strengthened by good practices observed during the practicum experience, might be beneficial. Besides, “more opportunities to apply IT [information technology] during field experiences under qualified supervision” would be useful (Moursund & Bielefeldt, 1999, p. 24) as an extension of the observation of good examples of technology use in the classroom. Furthermore, a wide range of issues and practices can be discussed during the teacher education program as a preparation for schools with rich technological resources as well as those with fewer opportunities so that student teachers learn to manage with what is available to them and find ways for maximizing learning, regardless of the circumstances in their future workplaces.

Keeping in mind that a greater number of graduate participants might have produced different results, the similarity found between student teacher and graduate responses to the survey is one of the points worth considering. Similarities in their ratings of the scales (i.e., diversity as the lowest and technology as the second lowest) as well as individual items in these scales seem to strengthen the several inferences and resulting suggestions for several aspects of the practicum and the teacher education program. Given that the graduate group had an average of

approximately three years' teaching experience ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.219$), one hypothesis would be that the insights from an undergraduate might be maintained even after spending a couple of years at the inservice level. At this point, further research might investigate the correlation between the participant ratings of practicum experience and amount of teaching experience in order to gain insight into any possible effect of a longer exposure to the profession on attitudes towards previous experiences.

In the qualitative side of the study, more detailed and various aspects of the practicum experience were targeted. Still, in accordance with the second research question, the benefits, strengths, and highlights of the practicum experience were found to include seeing or having the chance to teach in real classrooms, seminar discussions and peer feedback, seeing various grade levels, good relationship with cooperating teachers, and involvement and guidance by university supervisors.

In line with the third research aim, focusing on the needs, problems, and solutions, several aspects of the practicum experience were discussed. Needs, problems, and suggestions found in this study were concerned mainly with a desire for an earlier start or more practice or observation, seeing different and more realistic school contexts, more cooperation with cooperating teachers, improvement of the assessment procedures, observations, and technology use. Some of these issues such as the time available for the practice (e.g., Ekmekçi, 1992; Yan & He, 2010), assessment-related concerns (e.g., Merç, 2015), cooperating teacher selection by school administrations (e.g., Akcan & Tatar, 2010), communication between the triadic members (e.g., Alptekin & Tatar, 2011; Altınmakas, 2012), and the status of the student teacher (e.g., Merç, 2010) also found a place in several studies.

A greater frequency and variety of problems, needs, and suggestions reported and analyzed for the data discussed in the findings section of this study does not mean that the program has fewer strengths or benefits when compared to weaknesses or needs, because higher reference counts found for these aspects might as well have been caused by an emphasis on discovering the weaknesses of the program and problems faced by the student teachers, which had a recurring role in the interview questions and open-ended survey items. In addition, the strengths and weaknesses of several components were simultaneously targeted for documentation. Therefore, instead of arriving at either positive or negative conclusions with regard to several components discussed in the study, what made each one of these components desirable or improvable was considered the main concern. For instance, a good relationship and a lack of cooperation from cooperating teachers was discussed under different sections for a better understanding of the cooperating teacher qualities and responsibilities, without any concerns for making generalizations about the qualities of the majority of the cooperating teachers.

For a more effective practicum experience, it is important to clarify what is required of university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and student teachers themselves (Alptekin & Tatar, 2011). This way, both irrelevant expectations from student teachers and miscommunication might be reduced to a minimum. School and university collaboration for cooperating teacher selection (Yan & He, 2010) as well as more attentive teacher allocations by school administrations (Akcan & Tatar, 2010) can work as solutions to lack of cooperation from cooperating teachers. In line with what one of the university supervisors suggested, cooperating teachers can be supported with incentives such as having a lower course load so that they can support the student teachers assigned to them in a more effective way. Similarly, a greater

amount of “field practice prior to student-teaching” (Moore, 2003, p. 41) would prove useful for student teachers to experiment with their teaching skills in a timely manner before they embark on their full-time professional careers. Guidance and various activities for first-semester observations could also be useful for student teachers to pay attention to certain events in the classroom which otherwise may go unnoticed. Good schools discussed in this study, which were sometimes referred to as unrealistic settings compared to the conditions and resources existent in the majority of the schools in the country, are essential for student teachers to see good models and teaching practices. However, authentic field experiences in contexts with bigger classes and fewer available resources (Gurvitch & Metzler, 2009) can also find a place in the program, or at least awareness-raising examples and experiences can be shared with student teachers. As pointed out by one of the university supervisors, student teachers can also be familiarized with the several non-instructional duties of a teacher by inviting inservice teachers to campus for information sessions.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study came from the low number of graduate participants ($N = 33$) compared to the number of student teachers ($N = 55$). One of the reasons for the low response rate might be related to the limited number of graduates contacted in order to include participants whose experiences would be as recent as possible. (The earliest graduation year included in the study was 2009.) In addition, a greater number of open-ended survey items might have caused unwillingness on the part of the participants. The resulting low response rate might have affected the results drawn from this study.

Another limitation might be related to the small number of university supervisors who participated. Since this study focused on a specific practicum program, the number of university supervisors was limited to the totality of the university supervisors of the program, which was three. However, with a larger number of university supervisors as participants, more detailed and more varied responses that address the issues faced in other practicum programs could be presented so as to elaborate on or support the findings of this study.

APPENDIX A
STUDENT TEACHER SURVEY

May 7, 2015

Dear Participant,

I am an MA student at Foreign Language Education Department (FLED) at Boğaziçi University and I am conducting research as part of my thesis entitled *“Program Evaluation of a Foreign Language Teacher Education Practicum: Insights From Supervisors, Student Teachers, and Graduates”*.

The purpose of this master’s thesis study is to evaluate the practicum program offered at a Turkish state university. The planned participants of the study are student teachers enrolled in the practicum program, university supervisors, and program graduates.

As students who are about to complete the practicum program, you constitute an important group which can give a lot of useful insight. Therefore, your responses to this survey will be of great importance for understanding how the practicum program is working.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time. The results of this study may be published and used for research purposes. You will complete the survey anonymously. Therefore, your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the discovery of the impact of the practicum program and ways for improving it.

Thank you for taking your time and participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Kıymet Merve Celen

MA Student, FLED, Boğaziçi University

E-mail: kmerve.celen@gmail.com

Survey of Teacher Education Programs (STEP) and Ministry of National Education (MoNE) Teacher Competencies

Part I. Demographics:

- Your gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male
- Your age: ____
- Are you planning to become a teacher after you graduate?
 - ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
 - If yes, what level? (You can choose more than one.)
 - ☐ Pre-school ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary/High school ☐ Tertiary
 - What context? (You can choose more than one.)
 - ☐ Private ☐ State

Part II. Knowledge, Skills, and *Dispositions: Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following:

	1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	2 <i>Disagree</i>	3 <i>Agree</i>	4 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
* Dispositions: The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development, as well as the educator's own professional growth. Also, dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. (NCATE, 2002).				
1. The practicum provided me with a good foundation in my subject area.	1	2	3	4
2. The practicum enabled me to use materials and resources suitable for learners.	1	2	3	4
3. The practicum enabled me to help learners use English accurately and intelligibly.	1	2	3	4
4. The practicum equipped me with effective teaching strategies for improving learners' four language skills.	1	2	3	4
5. The practicum provided me with a good background of general knowledge outside my subject area.	1	2	3	4
6. The practicum provided me with substantial knowledge related to professional education.	1	2	3	4
7. The practicum prepared me to understand student levels of readiness.	1	2	3	4
8. The practicum prepared me to understand students' different learning styles.	1	2	3	4
9. The practicum enabled me to plan English lessons suitable for learners' language proficiency.	1	2	3	4
10. The practicum stimulated critical thinking and problem solving.	1	2	3	4
11. The practicum provided me with substantial knowledge of using various teaching strategies to adjust lessons.	1	2	3	4
12. The practicum enabled me to make effective physical adjustments and create a positive environment in the classroom suitable for language learning.	1	2	3	4
13. The practicum enabled me to use methods and techniques suitable for learners.	1	2	3	4
14. The practicum enabled me to determine the aims of the uses of assessment and evaluation in English language teaching.	1	2	3	4

15. The practicum enabled me to use assessment and evaluation tools and methods for English classes.	1	2	3	4
16. The practicum enabled me to understand my own professional competencies.	1	2	3	4
17. The practicum encouraged me to learn about and engage in professional development activities.	1	2	3	4
18. The practicum equipped me to assess the effectiveness of my own teaching.	1	2	3	4

Part III. Field Experiences and Student Teaching Internship: Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following aspects of your field experiences and student teaching internship.					Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4					
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>					
19. My field experiences provided me opportunities to apply knowledge, skills, and dispositions in various settings appropriate to content and grade level.					1	2	3	4
20. My field experiences helped me to develop competencies necessary for a career in teaching.					1	2	3	4
21. My field experiences provided a variety of school-based opportunities in which I observed, tutored, instructed, or conducted action research.					1	2	3	4
22. My field experiences provided opportunities to use technology to support my teaching and learning.					1	2	3	4
23. My practicum placement was in a supportive school environment.					1	2	3	4
24. My cooperating teacher (mentor) was involved in developing my career as a teacher.					1	2	3	4
25. My cooperating teacher (mentor) modeled best practices.					1	2	3	4
26. My university supervisor outlined clear objectives for improving my teaching.					1	2	3	4
27. My university supervisor had realistic expectations of me as a student intern.					1	2	3	4
28. My cooperating teachers (mentors) and university supervisor collaborated with me to assess my teaching methodologies during the practicum experience.					1	2	3	4

Part IV. Diversity: Please express your judgment on how well your experience in your teacher education program contributed to your effectiveness in the following areas:					Needs Improvement	Average	Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4					
<i>Needs Improvement</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>					
29. Understanding the school culture.					1	2	3	4
30. Acquiring the ability to develop meaningful learning experiences for **diverse students.					1	2	3	4
31. Understanding the classroom environment.					1	2	3	4
32. Working with students from **diverse backgrounds.					1	2	3	4

33. Doing activities which are suitable for learners with special needs.	1	2	3	4
34. Understanding the impact of <i>inclusion</i> (=kaynaştırma eğitimi) on learning.	1	2	3	4
35. Understanding gender differences in teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4
36. Teaching, modeling, and integrating multicultural awareness, acceptance and appreciation.	1	2	3	4
37. Cooperating with families to increase the quality of the learning process.	1	2	3	4
38. Helping learners realize the importance of national festivals and ceremonies and encourage their active participation.	1	2	3	4

****Diverse:** In terms of “ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area” (NCATE).

Part V. Technology: Please express your judgment on how well your experience in your teacher education program contributed to your effectiveness in the following areas:	Needs improvement	Average	Good	Excellent
1 <i>Needs Improvement</i>				
2 <i>Average</i>				
3 <i>Good</i>				
4 <i>Excellent</i>				
39. Developing strategies to identify and evaluate technology resources.	1	2	3	4
40. Managing instruction using technology resources.	1	2	3	4
41. Locating and using online resources (i.e. electronic database and/or web sites).	1	2	3	4
42. Using technology to support the development of lesson plans.	1	2	3	4
43. Using appropriate technology skills in your instructional methodologies.	1	2	3	4

Part VI. Quality of Instruction: Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>				
2 <i>Disagree</i>				
3 <i>Agree</i>				
4 <i>Strongly Agree</i>				
44. The university supervisor in my practicum program used appropriate instructional materials.	1	2	3	4
45. The university supervisor in my practicum program modeled good teaching and helped me to develop multiple teaching strategies to help all students learn.	1	2	3	4
46. The university supervisor in my practicum program showed enthusiasm in his/her presentation of course content.	1	2	3	4
47. The university supervisor in my practicum program showed respect for students' opinions.	1	2	3	4
48. The university supervisor in my practicum program modeled good oral and written communication skills.	1	2	3	4

Part VII. Please respond to the following open-ended questions. Your comments are appreciated.

49. Identify three major strengths and/or weaknesses of your teacher education program.

50. Suggest two or more ways to strengthen your teacher education program.

51. If you could restart your undergraduate major at the university, would teaching be your choice? Check the appropriate response.

☐ Yes ☐ No

52. Describe your overall satisfaction with your teacher education program. Check the appropriate response.

☐ Excellent ☐ Above Average ☐ Average ☐ Below Average ☐ Poor

END OF SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

APPENDIX B

STUDENT TEACHER FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Study: Program Evaluation of a Foreign Language Teacher Education Practicum: Insights from Supervisors, Student Teachers, and Graduates

Time of Interview: 15-20 mins.

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Kıymet Merve Celen

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

[This interview is conducted as a part of a master's thesis evaluating the practicum program offered at a Turkish state university. The planned participants of the study are student teachers enrolled in the practicum program, university supervisors, and program graduates. Interviews and surveys will be used for data collection. The results of this research may appear in publications but participants' individual names will not be identified. This interview will take 15 minutes.]

[Please read and sign the consent form.]

Questions:

1. Overall Organization of the Program

- Starting from your placement at your cooperating schools, what difficulties have you experienced in the program?
 - Placement, initial encounters with the school, personnel, and students, observation, practice teaching
- How is the workload of Practice Teaching course?
 - Course requirements
- Do you think the practicum program prepare you for actual teaching after you graduate?

2. Weekly Seminars & Peers

- Are you content with how the “Seminar on Practice Teaching in EFL” course is conducted? Do you find the discussions helpful?
- What do you think about your peers' involvement in the process?
 - Their presence during your teaching, their feedback

3. University Supervisors & Cooperating Teachers

- Are you pleased with your relationship with your university supervisor and cooperating teachers?
 - Cooperation, guidance, and rapport

4. Teacher Trainee
 - What are your current needs as teacher candidates at this stage of the practicum?
5. Closure: Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the practicum program? If you were to restart the program, what changes would you like to see?

[Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this interview. Your responses will be kept anonymous.]

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Study: Program Evaluation of a Foreign Language Teacher Education Practicum:
Insights from Supervisors, Student Teachers, and Graduates

Time of Interview: 30-45 mins.

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Kıymet Merve Celen

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

[This interview is conducted as a part of a master's thesis evaluating the practicum program offered at a Turkish state university. The planned participants of the study are student teachers enrolled in the practicum program, university supervisors, and program graduates. Interviews and surveys will be used for data collection. The results of this research may appear in publications but participants' individual names will not be identified. This interview will take 30-45 minutes.]

[Please read and sign the consent form.]

Topics:

- University Supervisors & Cooperating Teachers & Teacher Trainees
 - What qualities do you think university supervisors should possess?
 - What qualities do you think cooperating teachers should possess?
 - What do you think about the teacher trainees' involvement and performance during the practicum process?
- Program & Outcomes
 - What do you think are the strengths of the practicum program offered at this department?
 - What components of the practicum program do you think can be improved?
 - Observations, (Un)official Presentations, Weekly Seminars, Portfolios
 - What professional competencies are teacher trainees expected to possess by the time they finish the practicum program?
 - What do you think are the challenges that the teacher trainees might experience in their first year in teaching? Can these be eliminated during the practicum program?
- Specific focus
 - What do you think about the idea of teacher trainees starting

observation and teaching in their practicum schools earlier than the senior year?

- Feasibility, Advantages, Disadvantages
- What do you think about the role of private and state schools in the practicum program?
 - School types preferred after graduation, Effectiveness, Success, Being a good role model
- Are there any comments that you would like to add?
- Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the practicum program?

[Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this interview. Your responses will be kept anonymous.]

APPENDIX D
ONLINE GRADUATE SURVEY

Survey of Teacher Education Programs (STEP) and Ministry of National Education
(MoNE) Teacher Competencies

Dear Participant,

I am an MA student at Foreign Language Education Department (FLED) at Boğaziçi University and I am conducting research as part of my thesis entitled “Program Evaluation of a Foreign Language Teacher Education Practicum: Insights From Supervisors, Student Teachers, and Graduates”.

The purpose of this master’s thesis study is to evaluate the practicum program offered at a Turkish state university. The planned participants of the study are student teachers enrolled in the practicum program, university supervisors, and program graduates.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time. The results of this study may be published and used for research purposes. You will complete the survey anonymously. Therefore, your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the discovery of the impact of the practicum program and ways for improving it.

Thank you for taking your time and participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Kıymet Merve Celen

MA Student, FLED, Boğaziçi University

E-mail: kmerve.celen@gmail.com / kiymet.celen@boun.edu.tr

Part I. Demographics

A. Your gender

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

B. Your age

C. Are you a graduate of Boğaziçi University Foreign Language Education Department?*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

* Year of graduation

D. Have you worked / Are you working as an English language teacher? **

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

** How long have you worked as an English language teacher? (X months / years)

E. Which school context are you currently teaching at?

- ☐ Private
- ☐ State

F. Which level are you currently teaching at?

- ☐ Pre-school
- ☐ Primary
- ☐ Secondary/High School
- ☐ Tertiary

Part II. Knowledge, Skills, and *Dispositions

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following:

(* Dispositions: The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development, as well as the educator's own professional growth. Also, dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. (NCATE, 2002).)

1. The practicum provided me with a good foundation in my subject area.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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2. The practicum enabled me to use materials and resources suitable for learners.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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3. The practicum enabled me to help learners use English accurately and intelligibly.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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4. The practicum equipped me with effective teaching strategies for improving learners' four language skills.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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5. The practicum provided me with a good background of general knowledge outside my subject area.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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6. The practicum provided me with substantial knowledge related to professional education.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
-------------------------	-------------	----------	----------------------

7. The practicum prepared me to understand student levels of readiness.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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8. The practicum prepared me to understand students' different learning styles.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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9. The practicum enabled me to plan English lessons suitable for learners' language proficiency.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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10. The practicum stimulated critical thinking and problem solving.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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11. The practicum provided me with substantial knowledge of using various teaching strategies to adjust lessons.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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12. The practicum enabled me to make effective physical adjustments and create a positive environment in the classroom suitable for language learning.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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13. The practicum enabled me to use methods and techniques suitable for learners.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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14. The practicum enabled me to determine the aims of the uses of assessment and evaluation in English language teaching.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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15. The practicum enabled me to use assessment and evaluation tools and methods for English classes.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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16. The practicum enabled me to understand my own professional competencies.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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17. The practicum encouraged me to learn about and engage in professional development activities.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
-------------------------	-------------	----------	----------------------

18. The practicum equipped me to assess the effectiveness of my own teaching.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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Part III. Field Experiences and Student Teaching Internship

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following aspects of your field experiences and student teaching internship.

19. My field experiences provided me opportunities to apply knowledge, skills, and dispositions in various settings appropriate to content and grade level.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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20. My field experiences helped me to develop competencies necessary for a career in teaching.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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21. My field experiences provided a variety of school-based opportunities in which I observed, tutored, instructed, or conducted action research.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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22. My field experiences provided opportunities to use technology to support my teaching and learning.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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23. My practicum placement was in a supportive school environment.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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24. My cooperating teacher (mentor) was involved in developing my career as a teacher.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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25. My cooperating teacher (mentor) modeled best practices.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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26. My university supervisor outlined clear objectives for improving my teaching.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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27. My university supervisor had realistic expectations of me as a student intern.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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28. My cooperating teachers (mentors) and university supervisor collaborated with me to assess my teaching methodologies during the practicum experience.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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Part IV. ***Diversity

Please express your judgment on how well your experience in your teacher education program contributed to your effectiveness in the following areas:
***Diverse: In terms of “ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area” (NCATE).

29. Understanding the school culture.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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30. Acquiring the ability to develop meaningful learning experiences for ***diverse students.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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31. Understanding the classroom environment.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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32. Working with students from ***diverse backgrounds.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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33. Doing activities which are suitable for learners with special needs.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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34. Understanding the impact of inclusion (=kaynaştırma eğitimi) on learning.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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35. Understanding gender differences in teaching and learning.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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36. Teaching, modeling, and integrating multicultural awareness, acceptance and appreciation.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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37. Cooperating with families to increase the quality of the learning process.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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38. Helping learners realize the importance of national festivals and ceremonies and encourage their active participation.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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Part V. Technology

Please express your judgment on how well your experience in your teacher education program contributed to your effectiveness in the following areas:

39. Developing strategies to identify and evaluate technology resources.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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40. Managing instruction using technology resources.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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41. Locating and using online resources (i.e. electronic database and/or websites).

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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42. Using technology to support the development of lesson plans.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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43. Using appropriate technology skills in your instructional methodologies.

1. Needs Improvement	2. Average	3. Good	4. Excellent
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Part VI. Quality of Instruction

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following:

44. The university supervisor in my practicum program used appropriate instructional materials.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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45. The university supervisor in my practicum program modeled good teaching and helped me to develop multiple teaching strategies to help all students learn.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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46. The university supervisor in my practicum program showed enthusiasm in his/her presentation of course content.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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47. The university supervisor in my practicum program showed respect for students' opinions.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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48. The university supervisor in my practicum program modeled good oral and written communication skills.

1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Agree	4. Strongly Agree
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Part VII. Please respond to the following open-ended questions. Your comments are appreciated.

49. Identify three major strengths and/or weaknesses of your teacher education program.

50. Suggest two or more ways to strengthen your teacher education program.

51. What were the advantages and/ or disadvantages of doing your practicum at a state/ private school?

52. To what extent do you think your practicum experience prepared you for a full-time teaching position?

53. What challenges did you experience in your first-year teaching? What changes in the practicum program might be useful for eliminating these?

54. If you could restart your undergraduate major at the university, would teaching be your choice? Check the appropriate response.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

55. Describe your overall satisfaction with your teacher education program. Check the appropriate response.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Abover Average
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Below Average
- ☐ Poor

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FOR FOCUS GROUP

AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Informed Consent

Title: Program Evaluation of a Foreign Language Teacher Education
Practicum: Insights from Supervisors, Student Teachers, and Graduates

The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time.

The purpose of this master's thesis study is to evaluate the practicum program offered at a Turkish state university. The planned participants of the study are student teachers enrolled in the practicum program, university supervisors, and program graduates. Focus group interviews and surveys will be used for data collection. If all participants agree, the discussions will be tape recorded in the focus group interviews.

Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating or during the study. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the discovery of the impact of the practicum program and ways for improving it. The results of this study may be published and used for research purposes.

Please sign this consent form. You are signing it with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures.

Signature

Date

Investigator: Kıymet Merve Celen, e-mail: kmerve.celen@gmail.com

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