

Participants' perceptions of pre-service teachers' experiences during school training placements (practicums) in Turkish and English policy contexts

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Abstract

This pilot study investigates how some pre-service teachers' and their university supervisors and school-based teacher mentors - view pre-service teachers' school-based training (practicums) in Turkey and England. In the liminal social spaces of practicums, pre-service teachers begin their transformation into serving teachers (Shields, 2003, 12–13) in particular policy and socio-cultural contexts. Practicums allow pre-service teachers to observe established teachers at work, prepare instructional materials adapted to the learning needs of particular students, teach groups of students, and begin to understand the complexities of working in schools. However, as their social knowledge of practice, power and culture in schools lacks sophistication (Pierce, 2007) this is challenging even with the help of school-based teacher mentors who are often reported as being crucial (Wilkins and Lall, 2010). School-based teacher mentors complement university-based tutors in helping pre-service teachers understand the practice of being a teacher in part by helping them to reflect on their experiences (Lucas, 1999 in Myles et al., 2006). Teacher educators need to understand how pre-service teachers experience the formal and informal processes of practicums to prepare them for that and how these can be ameliorated by the actions of their critical friends (Golby and Appleby, 1996).

Introduction

This paper discusses the initial outcomes of a study of the perceptions of some pre-service teachers', their university supervisors and their school-based teacher mentors of pre-service teachers' school-based training experiences (Practicums) in Turkey and England in particular institutional and educational policy contexts.

As the three universities involved in the project are based in Ankara, Turkey, and Leicester, England, the pre-service teachers were also placed in schools in those cities in during periods of the academic year 2010 - 2011. The universities involved in the project are Gazi University, Faculty of Education and Middle East Technical University (METU), Department of Foreign Language Education/Secondary Education in Turkey and Leicester University, School of Education in England.

Teacher education prepares pre-service teachers to practise competently and independently (Ten Dam & Blom, 2006). One aspect of that education is placing trainees in schools to gain understanding of the practice of teaching. Pre-service teachers and mentors consistently regard highly the value of school placement (practicum) to teacher education (Segall, 2002 in Schulz & Mandzuk, 2005).

Practicums are intended to help pre-service teachers begin to understand the perplexing experiences of teacher practice, developing complex professional knowledge to become successful teachers (Glazier, 2009). During practicums, pre-service teachers observe established teachers at work, preparing instructional materials adapted to the needs of the students whom they then teach with or without the help of a mentor. They are encouraged to consult with school and university colleagues, experiment with ideas and theories studied in university (Sim, 2006) and reflect on their practice experiences (Lucas, 1999 in Myles et al., 2006). Practicums often focus on technical skills: classroom management and effective instruction (Field and Latta 2001) rather than encourage pre-service teachers to reflect deeply on their professional values, identities and practice.

Performing in the liminal social spaces of their practicums allows pre-service teachers to begin their transformation to being serving teachers (Shields, 2003, 12–13). During this they interact with people of different status in a school, including teachers and students, playing a peripheral role with each of these communities of practice (Busher et al., 2007). This is particularly challenging as pre-service teachers' cultural knowledge of practice and power in schools lacks sophistication compared with other members (Pierce, 2007).

However, they are supported in their development by school-based teacher mentors, often reported by pre-service teachers as being crucial (Wilkins and Lall, 2010), and university based tutors. In part this is to help pre-service teachers reflect on their practice (Schon, 1987), a central aspect of learning to become successful teachers (Zeichner & Liston, 1987 in Harford & MacRuairc, 2008).

Teacher educators need to understand the problems that pre-service teachers experience during practicums, rather than questioning how to lessen the tension or bridge the gap between theory and practice (Beeth & Adadan, 2006). Part of this is to find ways to help pre-service teachers develop knowledge of teaching prior to their practicums (Trumbull & Fluet, 2008), as well as learning how to reflect on practice.

In the study, part of which is reported here, the following research questions were investigated in Turkish and English education contexts:

1. What are pre-service teachers' perceptions of more and less successful practicums?
2. What part do pre-service teachers, their mentors, and their university supervisors think practicums play in developing pre-service teachers' practices?
3. What are school-based teaching staff perceptions of more and less successful pre-service teachers' practicums?
4. What are university teaching staff perceptions of more and less successful pre-service teachers' practicums?
5. What are pre-service teachers' recommendations for developing successful practicums and their practices?

This paper considers the views of pre-service teacher participants in Turkey and England expressed through quantitative and qualitative data on their practicums and those have helped to shape their learning. It will also present what these participants consider to be more and less successful practice in practicums.

Future papers from this project will present the views of:

- The school-based teacher mentors who support pre-service teachers
- The University teacher educators who support pre-service teachers

and consider how these perspectives interact with those of the pre-service teachers presented here.

Later papers will also consider how to develop ways in which pre-services teachers' learning about pedagogy and school life can be supported through their practicums and linked to other aspects of their teacher education courses, including the construction of reflective practice.

Literature review

A key dimension explored in the literature is the apparent separation of theory and practice by having a University-based segment and a school-based practicum, or, as Beck and Kosnick (2002b, p. 7) put it, 'two largely separate worlds exist(ing) side by side'. The assumption embedded in much of the literature is that the University deals with educational theory and then student teachers get down to the 'real' business of working out how to perform in the classroom when on their practicum. Indeed, regardless of the reality of the arrangements in school-university partnerships, student teachers themselves conceptualise university work as theory and work in schools as practice (Allen, 2009). As a consequence, they often have difficulty in putting the theory into practice (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). Schön (2003) argued that this is not an ideal situation because good practical teaching should be inseparable from theory. Much focus has therefore been on school-University partnerships and how they attempt to connect the disparate elements of the training experience (Bates, 2002).

One strand of thought argues that there is much to be gained from effective partnerships between HEIs and schools in the business of teacher training. This positive approach stems largely from Fullan (1993) who argued that the benefits of partnership accrued not just to student teachers (see Yan and He, 2010 for an account of the benefits to student teachers of the practicum), but to University and school personnel involved as well (see also Smedley, 2001; Stephens and Boldt, 2004; Walkington, 2007). However, other researchers have pointed out that there are ongoing weaknesses in such partnerships, in particular, where communication between the partners lacks continuity or is not sustained by the partners (Allen, 2011; Taylor, 2008; Woods and Weasmer, 2003), which leads to ineffectual arrangements between the two elements (Johnston, 2010; White, Bloomfield & Le Cornu, 2010).

A consistent theme in exploring the practicum is the absence of the 'student teacher voice' (Allen, 2011; Meijer, de Graff, & Merink, 2011; Moody, 2009; Sivan & Chan, 2009) in debates about the partnership between universities and schools, although this is slowly being remedied as researchers gather data about the reactions of student teachers to their practicum experience (Beck & Kosnick, 2002a). In the case of Chinese EFL student teachers, Yan & He (2011) found that a number of factors impacted upon an unsatisfactory experience from the student teachers' point of view. These included, inter alia, the timing and duration of the practicum (too short and towards the end of the course, which clashed with job hunting - see also Kosnick and Beck, 2003), the unwelcoming nature of the schools involved who perceived the student teachers as inexperienced, the lack of supervision by the responsible school tutors, who used the students teachers as assistants rather than potential professionals and the lack of an agreed assessment system. In Turkey, the lack of confidence in the ability of the student teachers by the mentor in the schools was cited by student teachers as a major issue in their practicum (Taskin, 2006). Earlier work on the tensions that student teachers endured in their practicum referred to a set of issues that impacted upon the student teacher experience (see Bullough, Young & Draper, 2004). One important dimension was the welcoming nature of the school, which gave emotional support in a time of emotional stress (Tickle, 2005) and helped student teachers to develop a professional or pedagogic identity quickly (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004), as they adapted to the socio-cultural context of the school practice (Smith, 2007). The prior experiences of the student teachers as learners also affect the way that student teachers perceive what it means to be a teacher, so that their personal histories are as important as theoretical

understandings in fashioning student teacher practice in their practicum (Hammerness et al., 2005; Kroll, 2004).

The role of the supervisory teacher was also central to the success of the student teacher's practicum, as it encompassed a range of functions, from role model to advisor (Haigh and Ward, 2004) and with a supportive supervisor more likely to lead to successful assessment (Hobson, et al., 2006; Hudson, 2007). There have been a number of types of relationship between supervisory teacher and student teacher identified, ranging from the directive to the collaborative (McNay and Graham (2007). The fact that all these forms of relationship involve power, in which the student teacher is inevitably in the subordinate position led Laker, Laker and Lea (2008) to argue that pragmatism was the dominant characteristic of the practicum as the student teacher accommodated to the preferences of the supervisory teacher. Yet, student teachers are reported as desiring the opportunity on the practicum to develop their own teaching style and not just copy the strategies of their supervisory teacher (Moody, 2009), but the willingness of supervisors to encourage independence in their students teachers is varied (Glenn, 2006).

When some student teachers were asked *how* they learned during the practicum, a complex social pattern of learning emerged, in which student teachers employed a number of strategies to varying degrees to learn about the different aspects of teaching. Pinder (2008) found that there were two models of learning mainly deployed, with some students preferring to observe seasoned practitioners first and others preferring immersion in hands-on experience, but that these were not mutually exclusively deployed. The resultant learning emerged through either through making connections with previous knowledge or experiences in a trial-and-error setting (immersion) or through making comparisons with the observed practice of more experienced colleagues. Beijaard et al. (2004) argued that there was effectively an assimilation process going on in this learning, as student teachers (re) interpreted their experiences in the classroom, in relation to the theoretical underpinnings they adopted and the demands placed upon them by significant others, such as the school mentor and/or university tutor. In contrast, others have argued that there is a transformative process at work as critical incidents in the practicum provoke crises that shift the student teachers cognitive and emotional understandings of the teacher's role (Illeris, 2002; Whitcomb, Borko and Liston, 2008).

Another distinction made in the literature about the training year is between a technical emphasis on learning how to teach, with an emphasis on classroom management techniques, planning skills etc., and a more personal orientation towards how to become a 'teacher', which includes the development of values and dispositions that 'mark out' an individual as 'someone who teaches' (see Kelchtermans and Hamilton, 2004). While some research does focus on technical skills as the means of survival of teacher training (Conway and Clark 2003), others argued that student teachers believed they benefitted most from discussions about what it means to be a teacher in a more rounded sense (Rajun, 2008). However, the development of this teacher identity is subject to constant change and fluctuation and is a combination of both incremental developments in practice and more transformative episodes (Rodgers and Scott, 2008).

In considering the nature of reflection in the training process, researchers have often pointed to the importance of feedback from observations of lessons by more experienced teachers (either from the University or from the partnership school) in promoting the reflective teacher. Often located within discussions about the nature of mentoring of student teachers (Anderson, 2007), such feedback is seen as essential in developing both teaching skills and the wider dispositions for becoming a teacher, such as the ability to critically analyse one's own performance (Fletcher, 2000; Tang & Chow, 2007). The practices associated with the feedback component of teacher training are varied depending on cultural practices and curriculum frameworks (Wang, 2001), for example with some

researchers emphasising collaboration (Akcan and Tatar, 2010), others promoting the use of questioning at a deep level (Jyrhama, 2001) and still others focusing on the knowledge that mentors bring to bear in such feedback situations (Parker-Katz and Bay, 2008). The balance between developing the craft skills of teaching and encouraging a deeper level of critical reflection on performance is seen as difficult to get right (Koerner, Rust with Baumgartner, 2002). Some student teachers welcome such feedback as essential in developing their skills and identity as teachers, but others find it difficult to resolve the tension between the supportive and assessment purposes of observation in the classroom and subsequent feedback (Brandt, 2008, Holland, 2005).

Methodology

The study uses a mixed methods approach to investigate the views of the main groups of adult participants in pre-service teachers' practicums. The triangulation of these views, as well as the use of purposeful sampling when selecting participants, help to construct trustworthiness of the outcomes of the study. Participants were drawn from pre-service teachers, their teacher mentors and their university teacher educators from the three universities taking part in this study. Pre-service teachers were preparing for Primary and Secondary school teaching in a variety of subjects. Participants were asked to complete an ethical consent form after having had the project explained to them. No major ethical issues were envisaged.

Towards the end of the practicums in 2011 a survey, using closed and open-ended questions, was administered (in English in Leicester; in Turkish in Ankara) to pre-service teachers to investigate their views of their experiences. To generate more in-depth data some pre-service teachers, teacher mentors and teacher educators were selected purposefully and interviewed about their views of practicums. Teacher mentors and university teacher educators were interviewed with individual semi-structured interviews. In the case of the pre-service teachers focus groups were used. Interviews were recorded in English in Leicester; in Turkish in Ankara. The Turkish qualitative data was translated into English after being transcribed. The qualitative interview data was analysed thematically, by site initially, before cross site comparisons were made. The quantitative data was analysed by site with descriptive statistics.

Findings

The participants

In this paper only the findings collected in the questionnaire from pre-service teachers are reported. The numbers of participants involved are shown in Tables 1 and 2 below

Table 1: The distribution of participants according to the universities

University	N	%
Gazi University	239	64,6
METU	131	35,4
Total	370	100,0
Leicester University	110	100.0

Table 2: The distribution of participants according to gender

Turkish participants	Leicester participants
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Gender	N	%	N	%
Female	264	71,4	72	65.4
Male	106	28,6	38	34.5
Total	370	100,0	110	99.9

Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution of participants by their subject specialism

Table 3: The distribution of participants according to departments (Turkish Universities)

Departments	N	%
VERBAL : (Turkish Language Teaching, Social Science Education)	95	25,7
NUMERICAL: (primary mathematics teaching (Year 6-7-8) and secondary mathematics teaching, chemistry teaching, physics teaching, science education, biology teaching)	105	28,4
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT)	128	34,6
PRIMARY EDUCATION	42	11,4
Total	370	100,0

Table 4: The distribution of Leicester participants (School of Education) according to subject areas

Subject area	Total participants (%)	Men	women
Citizenship	7* (*1 Gender not given)	1	5
English	33 (36.3)	7	26
Maths	24 (26.4)	14	10
Science (general)	13 All Sciences (34.1)	5	8
Biology	7	1	6
Chemistry	7	4	3
Physics	4	3	1
Social Science	11 (12.1)	2	9
Unnamed responses	3	0	3
TOTAL	110*	37	71

The Questionnaire was divided into four sections, reflecting the main research questions of the project. Responses from the participants are structured by these in the following sections.

A. How do institutional and policy contexts affect your experience of the practicum?

Pre-service teachers in Turkey and England presented different perspectives on their views of the extent to which institutional and policy contexts shaped their learning experiences. The views of pre-service teachers about the extent to which they thought their universities supported their development for their practicum are shown in their answers to questions 1 –9. Turkish and English students both seemed to be strongly supportive of the importance of the practicum to their development as teachers. The responses of pre-service teachers at Leicester University to closed questions 1-7 are shown in Table 5, while those for Turkish pre-service teachers are shown in Table 6. In most cases there were some respondents who did not give an answer (NG) to a question. However it is in the detail from the open-ended questions, (questions 9 and 10 of the questionnaire), shown in Tables 7 and 8 for Leicester pre-service teachers that it becomes clearer what institutional practices pre-service teachers prefer and which they would like changed, or at least modified. The data from the Turkish pre-service teachers for these questions was not available in translation at the time of writing.

Table 5: Leicester pre-service teachers' perspectives on institutional support for their practicums

items	Total = 110	Strongly agree	agree	(%)	Not sure (%)	Don't agree	Strongly don't agree	(%)
To what extent does the practicum allow me to ...								
1. put the theory I learned in the University into practice in the classroom	N (%)	18	78	(87.2)	10 (9)	2	1	(3)
2. understand the overall context of the school	N (%) [2 NG]	16	84	(91)	6 (5)	1	1	(2)
3. develop my understanding of what happens in a classroom	N (%) [3 NG]	38	61	(90)	8 (7)	0	0	(0)
4. develop appropriate resources for teaching	N (%) [2NG]	40	51	(83)	11 (10)	6	0	(5.4)
5. develop effective classroom management strategies	N (%) [3NG]	40	50	(83)	14 (12.2)	1	2	(3)
6. learn from my mentor(s) in the school	N (%) [1NG]	36	56	(84)	11 (10)	5	1	(5.4)
7. have the opportunity to work with experienced teachers	N (%) [3NG]	43	54	(88)	7 (6)	3	0	(3)

Table 6: Turkish pre-service teachers' perspectives on institutional support for their practicums

items	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree		N/A		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
To what extent does the practicum allow me to ...														
1. put the theory I learned in the University into practice in the classroom	91	24,6	161	43,5	48	13,0	48	13,0	21	5,7	1	,3	370	100,0
2. understand the overall context of the school	152	41,1	164	44,3	30	8,1	17	4,6	6	1,6	1	,3	370	100,0
3. develop my understanding of what happens in a classroom	138	37,3	178	48,1	38	10,3	9	2,4	5	1,4	2	,5	370	100,0
4. develop appropriate resources for teaching	98	26,5	135	36,5	75	20,3	43	11,6	11	3,0	8	2,2	370	100,0
5. develop effective classroom management strategies	84	22,7	168	45,4	77	20,8	30	8,1	9	2,4	2	,5	370	100,0
6. learn from my mentor(s) in the school	88	23,8	166	44,9	57	15,4	38	10,3	19	5,1	2	,5	370	100,0
7. have the opportunity to cooperate and collaborate with experienced teachers.	97	26,2	154	41,6	54	14,6	39	10,5	24	6,5	2	,5	370	100,0

When the mean and standard deviations were calculated for the Turkish pre-service teachers' perspectives (Table 6) the item that was most strongly thought to support their practicum was item 2 (The teaching practicum experience helped me to understand the overall context of the school) ($M=4,17$; $SD=0,91$). The least agreed item was item 4 (The teaching practicum experience helped me to develop appropriate resources for teaching) ($M=3,65$; $SD=1,19$). None the less even for item 4 pre-service teachers showed very strong support for their institution with over 60% agreed or strongly agreed that this aspect of the universities' work helped them with their practicum.

In Tables 7 and 8 Leicester pre-service teachers' views of the support given to them by their university in preparing for their practicums is presented. The examples are only a purposeful selection from a much greater number provided by participants.

Table 7: Leicester participants' views of how their work in the university helped their practicums

how University work helped practicums	N = 110* (%)	Examples
No answer given	6 (5.4)	
preferred school experience / co-tutor support	8 (7.2)	It didn't [help]. All the theory goes out of your head when you are in the classroom. I feel more inspired by experience in schools than lectures.
Classroom/behaviour management	24 (21.8)	behaviour management (sessions) helped classroom practice; SEN and inclusion; It gave structure to my classroom management
teaching resources/ techniques	27 (24.5)	Understanding of teaching strategies theory and practice; learnt how to reflect,
subject knowledge & lesson planning	51 (46.3)	Lesson planning resource and poetry resources; Learning theories are useful in planning lessons
understand assessment	7 (6)	AFL useful in designing assessment activities.

*some people gave more than one answer

Table 8: Leicester participants' views of University's guidance documents for their practicums

Usefulness of University documents to practicums	N= 110* (%)	Examples
No answer given	18 (16.3)	
Not much /too much information	16 (14.5)	I rarely referred to them on a regular basis. Some of it was too wordy to read and could be streamlined.
Useful reference source	17 (15.4)	Good overview of teaching and learning resources for reference;
Subject info/ reading lists	10 (9)	Standards were useful and the guidance of them were good. Subject directed tasks were very good, got us VLE and using assessment techniques.
Professional development	32 (29)	I know what the Uni expected of me when. Activities helped to achieve the things I needed and be part of the school.
Lesson planning	20 (18)	Sheets on planning learning objectives; Differentiation and AFL

*some people gave more than one answer

This awareness of how teachers' work is affected by the systems in which teachers have to work is clearly shown in the responses of Leicester University students about the impact of government policy on their work, shown in Table 9. The examples presented here are only a purposeful selection from a much greater number of examples provided.

Table 9: Leicester participants' views of the Impact of government policy on practicum

Impact of government policy on practicum	N = 110* (%)	Examples
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No answer given	35 (31.8)	
Not aware/ no impact	10 (9)	
ECM / child at centre of learning	14 (12.7)	Yes I really did think about Every Child Matters.
frames curriculum / Inspection	31 (28)	Recent curriculum changes, ISA exams to replace coursework; SEN, OFSTED and National Curriculum change.
target driven exam centred / GCSE	20 (18)	No coursework now, New assessment criteria, English BAC; League tables force low ability students to take BTEC, they learn nothing other than how to copy.

*some people gave more than one answer

It was not possible to ask a similar question to Turkish pre-service teachers.

B. What are your perceptions of more and less successful practicums?

Pre-service teachers' views on this were investigated through asking them about the extent to which their expectations of their experiences during their practicums matched their actual experiences. Table 10 shows the views of Leicester participants and Turkish pre-service teachers. Their answers suggest that a large majority of Leicester participants were satisfied that their expectations matched their experiences. However, only just over half the Turkish participants had such a positive view.

Table 10: The extent to which experiences on teaching practice matched expectations

	Total	Strongly agree	agree	(%)	Not sure (%)	Don't agree	Strongly don't agree	(%)
Leicester University participants' views	N = 110 [3 NG] (%)	21	65	(78)	15 (14)	5	1	(5.4)
Turkish Universities participants' views	N = 370 [2 NG] (%)	25 (6,8)	173 (46,8)	(53,6)	60 (16,2)	86 (23,2)	24 (6,5)	

However it was the detail provided through the open-ended question about examples of how they thought their experience matched the expectations during the practicum that gave real insight into pre-service teachers' experiences. Table 11 shows Leicester participants' perspectives, but the examples are only a purposeful selection from a much greater number of examples provided.

Table 11: Leicester participants' examples of how the practicum experience matched their expectations

How the experience matched expectation	N= 110* (%)	Examples
No answer given	18 (16.3)	
more stressful / busier than expected	46 (41.8)	Nobody can prepare you for the workload; It was more challenging than I had anticipated. The time and effort I had to put in was slightly overwhelming at times.
need to fit in to school/ dept systems	8 (7.2)	I felt my teaching experience was shunted as I was limited to follow the lessons and teaching styles of the classroom teachers.
limited support by teachers / tutors	12 (10.9)	Little support from the school; Not much liaison with ITT coordinator
good support tutor/ co-tutor	6 (5.4)	Was very dependent on school tutor; Schools provided both formal and informal guidance.
good experience	23 (20.9)	It matched in terms of the extent dealing with behaviour management in

		younger years; Expected it to be challenging and enjoyable
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*some people gave more than one answer

C. What part do pre-service teachers think practicums play in developing their professional practices?

This section of the questionnaire asked pre-service teachers to reflect on the ways and the extent to which the practicum helped them to develop their professional practice. Closed questions 13-21 investigated participants' perspectives on different aspects of this. Table 12 shows the views of Leicester participants and Table 13 those of Turkish participants. The superficial view is of considerable satisfaction by participants with their experiences during their practicums. However, this is somewhat contradicted in Section D when participants gave detailed views on their experiences through two open-ended questions

Table 12: Leicester participants' views on the impact practicums had on developing professional practices

items	Total = 110	Strongly agree	agree	(%)	Not sure (%)	Don't agree	Strongly don't agree	(%)
The practicum allowed me to ...								
13. identify my weaknesses	N (%) [4 NG]	48	53	(91.8)	4 (3.6)	1	0	(1)
14. improve my practice in areas that needed development	N (%) [4 NG]	49	52	(91.8)	5 (4.5)	0	0	
15. extend the range of teaching strategies I used in the classroom	N (%) [5 NG]	54	46	(90.9)	5 (4.5)	0	0	
16. be more reflective about my teaching skills	N (%) [3 NG]	45	57	(92.7)	4 (3.6)	0	1	(1)
17. focus on school students' learning	N (%) [4 NG]	38	54	(83.6)	12 (10.9)	1	1	(1.8)
18. choose and use appropriate technologies for students to use	N (%) [5 NG]	26	55	(73.6)	23 (20.9)	1	0	(1)
19. prepare lesson plans according to students' needs	N (%) [6 NG]	40	52	(83.6)	10 (91.)	2	0	(1.8)
20. apt teaching methods, approaches & techniques for particular students	N (%) [5 NG]	43	58	(91.8)	4 (3.6)	0	0	
21. use a number of assessment techniques, including assess for learning	N (%) [5 NG]	52	46	(89.1)	6 (5.4)	1	0	(1)

Table 13: Turkish participants' views on the impact practicums had on developing professional practices

items The practicum allowed me to ...	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree		N/A		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
13. identify my weaknesses	95	25,7	202	54,6	39	10,5	27	7,3	6	1,6	1	,3	370	100,0
14. improve my practice in areas that needed development	83	22,4	190	51,4	58	15,7	29	7,8	9	2,4	1	,3	370	100,0
15. extend the range of teaching strategies I used in the classroom	81	21,9	162	43,8	79	21,4	39	10,5	6	1,6	3	,8	370	100,0
16. be more reflective about my teaching skills	92	24,9	172	46,5	72	19,5	30	8,1	3	,8	1	,3	370	100,0
17. focus on school students' learning	98	26,5	186	50,3	61	16,5	20	5,4	2	,5	3	,8	370	100,0
18. choose and use appropriate technologies for students to use	98	26,5	154	41,6	65	17,6	37	10,0	12	3,2	4	1,1	370	100,0
19. prepare lesson plans according to students' needs	100	27,0	160	43,2	64	17,3	34	9,2	10	2,7	2	,5	370	100,0
20. decide on appropriate teaching methods, approaches and techniques to use with particular students	94	25,4	161	43,5	73	19,7	32	8,6	9	2,4	1	,3	370	100,0
21. use a number of assessment techniques, including assessment for learning	82	22,2	153	41,4	62	16,8	56	15,1	16	4,3	1	,3	370	100,0

When mean and standard deviations were calculated for the Turkish responses, the items that had most support were item 13 (The teaching practicum experience helped me to identify my weaknesses) ($M=3,94$; $SD=0,91$) and item 17 (The teaching practicum experience helped me to focus on school students' learning) ($M=3,94$; $SD=0,90$) whereas the least agreed item was item 21 (The teaching practicum experience helped me to use a number of assessment techniques, including assessment for learning) ($M=3,61$; $SD=1,13$).

D. What are pre-service teachers' recommendations for developing successful practicums and their practices?

This section of the Questionnaire invited participants to look ahead to help providers of teaching experiences (practicums) for pre-service teachers to improve the quality of opportunity which future pre-service teachers would experience. Tables 14 and 15 show the views of Leicester participants. Table 15 in particular shows those aspects of the practicum that recent pre-service teachers think need changing to make them more useful to developing professional practice. The examples presented here are only a purposeful selection from a much greater number of examples provided.

Table 14: Leicester participants' views on which aspects of their practicum were most beneficial to their development as a teacher

	N = 110* (%)	Examples
No answer given	17 (15.4)	

behaviour management	11 (10)	Classroom management; Classroom time with a variety of classes
reflection on practice	10 (9.1)	Practising behaviour management working collaboratively with other teachers; Reflections and confidence in the classroom
supportive feedback from other teachers	24 (21.8)	Co-tutor communication and reflection; feedback from experienced teachers was invaluable
being a teacher for real	21 (19.1)	better knowledge of National Curriculum; Classroom teaching actually doing it,
practicing assessment	11 (10)	AFL and differentiation
lesson planning/ curriculum development	16 (14.5)	Subject session group work, sharing ideas with peers on activities which were most beneficial to practice.

*some people gave more than one answer

Table 15: Leicester participants' views on which aspects of their practicum were least beneficial to their development as a teacher

	N= 110* (%)	Examples
No answer given	28 (25.4)	
Professional foci work	32 (29.1)	Some of the professional foci tasks were a little repetitive
some TDC sessions	18 (16.3)	Some TDC sessions need to be improved to be beneficial ask student teachers which session they would find most useful.
too much 'paperwork'	8 (7.2)	Directed tasks and skills audits; The professional foci were sometimes seeming to be paperwork to tick a box but I could not see how much it actually helped my development as a teacher.
Theory/ assignments lacked practical relevance	11 (10)	The university sessions were less beneficial and I found they were quite far removed from teaching process.
weak (Co)tutor/ school support	11 (10)	Little help from school on one placement.

*some people gave more than one answer

Conclusions

This study shows the importance of asking key participants in the development of teachers, the pre-service teachers themselves, for their views on the practicum. It begins to address the relative paucity of research with such people that Allen (2011) noted.

From the pre-service teachers views reported in this paper come perceived tensions between the practice of teaching and the theory of education and possibly a limited understanding of how the two interact and support each other. However, generally pre-service teachers welcomed the opportunity that the practicum gave them to gain experience of being teachers and many seemed to think they were well-prepared for it by their universities, noting that their expectations of the practicum were matched by their experiences of it. However, a notable proportion of PSTs noted ways in which their expectations of the practicum were not met, often finding their experiences more challenging than they had expected.

Many pre-service teachers welcomed the support given them by their universities although they also acknowledged that support from teacher mentors and working with other experienced teachers was an important part of their development as teachers. An important element in this was the opportunity their discussions gave them to reflect critically on their developing practices as teachers. They also valued the opportunity to gain experience of what it meant to work with a class of school

students on their own and to begin to discover effective approaches to managing students in classes. This seems to have included having the opportunity to develop a range of resources and finding out what resources worked successfully with which school students. It also included, at least among Leicester PSTs, the opportunity to engage with the practices of assessment and find out practically how to implement assessment policies that were required by central government of the school.

Although the open-ended questions in the questionnaire have begun to give some detail to add to the limited data that comes from the closed questions in the questionnaire, it will only be when we have transcribed and translated the interviews by the pre-service teachers that we will begin to have a detailed view of their perspectives on their practicums, and possibly how the processes of the practicum can be modified to enhance the quality of its contribution to the preparation of pre-service teachers for work in schools. The subsequent comparison of PSTs views with those of teacher mentors and university education tutors will give a more complete picture of the practicum as a zone of transition, a liminal space in which pre-service teachers develop their identities and practices through their interactions with other teachers and school students within the particular social and policy context of a particular school to prepare themselves for their future work as teachers.

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