Pre-service English Language Teachers' State of Preparedness to Teach and its Sources in Field Experience

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Abstract

This study examined senior pre-service English language teachers' (PSTs) state of preparedness to teach and its sources during their field experience. In a longitudinal descriptive design, including school experience and teaching practicum phases, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 PSTs. Cross-sectional and retrospective data were collected and analyzed through constant comparison method. At the beginning of the entire process, the PSTs were observed to be either prepared or not prepared to teach. However, as the field experience continued, those who felt somehow prepared to teach emerged. Besides, despite obvious decrease in their number over the field experience, those who felt prepared to teach were more compared to those who were not or somehow prepared to teach. The PSTs attached their preparedness to teach to higher teaching efficacy perceptions and their unpreparedness to teach to untested teaching competencies before experiencing field experience. Having been through the process, they were observed to put strong emphasis on their professional and developmental needs fulfilled by their school-based mentors. Despite variations and fluctuations in the sources that the PSTs attached to their preparedness to teach, the findings revealed the pivotal role school-based mentoring played upon the development of PSTs' preparedness to teach.

Keywords: English language pre-service teachers, field experience, preparedness to teach, pre-service teacher education, school-based mentors.

Öğretmenlik Uygulamasında İngilizce Öğretmeni Adaylarının Öğretmeye Hazırbulunuşluk Durumları ve Onun Kaynakları
Öz

Bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmeni adaylarının uygulama okullarındaki öğretmenlik uygulaması sürecinde öğretmeye hazırbulunuşluk durumlarını ve onun kaynaklarını incelemiştir. Okul deneyimi ve öğretmenlik uygulaması fazlarını kapsayan boylamsal betimsel araştırma tasarımı içerisinde, 30 İngilizce öğretmeni adayı ile bire-bir, yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Kesitsel ve retrospektif veri toplanmış ve sürekli kıyaslama yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Tüm sürecin en başında, öğretmen adaylarının ya öğretmeye hazır ya da öğretmeye hazır olmadıkları gözlenmiştir. Ancak öğretmenlik uygulaması süreci devam ettikçe, öğretmeye kısmen hazır olanlar da ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca, süreç içerisinde sayılarında bariz bir düşüş olsa da öğretmeye hazır olanlar, öğretmeye hazır olmayanlar ve öğretmeye kısmen hazır olanlara göre sayıca daha fazladır. Öğretmen adayları, öğretmenlik uygulaması süreci öncesinde öğretmeye hazırbulunuşluklarını yüksek öğretmenlik yeterliği algılarına, öğretmeye hazır olmayışlarını test edilmemiş öğretmenlik yeterliklerine bağlamış olsalar da tüm süreci deneyimledikten sonra okul-tabanlı mentörleri tarafından karşılanan mesleki ve gelişimsel ihtiyaçlarına kuvvetli şekilde vurgu yaptıkları görülmüştür. Öğretmen adaylarının öğretmeye hazırbulunuşluklarını atfettikleri kaynaklardaki çeşitliliğe ve dalgalanmaya rağmen, bulgular okul-tabanlı mentörlüğün öğretmen adaylarının öğretmeye hazırbulunuşlukları üzerindeki esas ve önemli rolünü göstermiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: İngilizce öğretmen adayı, öğretmen adayı eğitimi, öğretmenlik uygulaması, öğretmeye hazırbulunuşluk, uygulama okulu öğretmenleri

INTRODUCTION

Field experience (hereafter FE) has been systematically integrated into teacher education programs as a key component over the last three decades (Biermann et al., 2015). Briefly, it aims "to support the development of teaching skills in prospective teachers" (Biermann et al., 2015, p. 79), and "offers [PSTs] a variety of experiences and opportunities for attaining professional growth through observation, practice, reflection, meetings, and interactions" (Mukeredzi & Manwa, 2019, p.32). Conversely, FE is also reported as the time when PSTs have difficulty in connecting theory with practice (Yin, 2019). Thus, as a complex transitional phase between faculty education and teaching career, FE has a critical significance in educating well-prepared teachers.

Many studies have revealed that there is a positive correlation between FE, the quality of mentoring pre-service teachers receive, and their sense of preparedness to teach (A. L. Brown et al., 2015; M. Öztürk & Yıldırım, 2014; Siwatu, 2011; Zientek, 2007). The two significant actors, faculty and school-based mentors, work together to help PSTs bridge faculty education with teaching in real classrooms. While the former ones work as liaisons between faculty program and school-based practices (Clark, 2009; Malderez, 2009; Pignatosi & Magill, 2012; Selvi, 2012), school-based mentors guide and train PSTs as they get to know their profession, future workplace, colleagues, and students. In this process, school-based mentors not only share their knowledge and experience with PSTs, but also support and empower them as they practice and build their teaching competencies and skills. In this sense, it is not the length of FE, but the quality of school-based and faculty-based mentors and their services having impact on the development of PSTs' professional knowledge and skills (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012).

Apart from FE and faculty and school-based mentors, several other factors have been found to be associated with PSTs' preparedness to teach. Teaching self-efficacy (Çelik, 2017; A. L. Brown et al., 2015, 2021; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002a), career motivation, commitment to teach (Çelik, 2017; Coladarci, 1992), teaching confidence (Meeks et al., 2016), instructional skills (İnceçay & Keşli Dollar, 2012), personality (Çelik, 2017) are some of them. It is important to note that almost all these factors are found to overlap and significantly be affected by the FE process (Alsaleh & Anthony, 2019; Karakaş & Erten, 2021) and effective mentoring (Ronfeldt et al., 2018, 2020) emphasizing the significant place of FE in PSTs' professional learning and development.

In theTurkish teacher education system, FE takes place in the senior year in two consecutive phases known as school experience (SE) and teaching practicum (TP). Despite limited number of studies on the positive correlation between FE and preparedness to teach in different teacher education programs such as pre- and primary school (Girgin & Akcanca, 2021; Stites et al., 2018), mathematics (Alsaleh & Anthony, 2019), science (Ramirez, 2020), to the researchers' best knowledge there is no study yet on senior pre-service English language teachers' sense of preparedness to teach and how it interacts with FE in the Turkish context. To address this research gap, this study set out to find answers to the following research questions:

1. How do pre-service English language teachers evaluate their preparedness to teach in relation to different phases of the field experience process?
2. What are the sources for pre-service English language teachers' perceived state of preparedness to teach?

Preparedness to Teach and its Sources

Dating back to the 1990s, preparedness to teach, also referred as readiness to teach, is a growing area of interest in pre-service teacher education. Given its positive correlation with perceptions of teaching ability, capacity, and high performance of teaching tasks (Faez, 2012; Housego, 1990), attaining preparedness to teach is a desired condition for PSTs.

As a multi-dimensional construct, preparedness to teach is hard to define. Rather than looking for a clear-cut definition for it, preparedness to teach is mostly explained in relation to other related constructs. For instance, Meeks et al. (2016) report that preparedness to teach is mainly determined by the degree of confidence that PSTs hold towards their ability to teach or not to teach. According to Abraham et al. (2021), it is the indicator of "… degree of readiness to engage with the profession and … greater sense of teaching self-efficacy" (p. 6-7). Along the same lines, several other studies report it as a predictor of teaching commitment (Coladarci, 1992), and teaching efficacy as its strongest indicator (Çelik, 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002a). Another comprehensive study shows that it is related to PSTs' teaching competencies, teaching efficacy, teaching commitment, and conscientiousness as a personality trait (Çelik, 2017).

Traditionally, research relates preparedness to teach to teacher education programs (Stites et al., 2018). It is reported that PSTs feel more and better prepared depending on the quality of their faculty education. In this

regard, the faculty curriculum and teaching practice are among the basic factors of pre-service teachers' preparedness to teach (Tasdemir et al., 2020). Experienced faculty providing teacher educators with professional development is also regarded as another key for effective teacher education (Muzaffar et al., 2011). Competency-based teacher education, strong relevance between theory and practice, and teacher educators who are competent to provide PSTs with high-quality supervision during FE as in the case of Finland are among other factors to sustain and maintain high-quality teacher education at teacher education faculties (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

More recent research, on the other hand, links preparedness to teach to FE (Alsaleh & Anthony, 2019) and affirms it as the most influential factor (Rao & Wu, 2021) on condition that it is supervised by experienced and effective school-based mentors (Ronfeldt et al., 2018). For instance, Alsaleh and Anthony (2019) and Ronfeldt et al. (2020) indicate the importance of quality mentor feedback for PSTs' professional development. Rao and Wu (2021) also reveal that FE makes greater contribution to PST's preparedness to teach than courses in teacher education curriculum. However, they underline the role of mentoring as a crucial factor to determine the quality of FE and the extent that PSTs feel prepared to teach. Similarly, several other studies show that explicit evaluation received from mentors makes PSTs feel more confident about their competencies which in turn increases their self-efficacy, motivation, and teaching commitment (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018; Pandee et al., 2020; Rots et al., 2007). Moreover, school-based mentoring has also been found to impact PSTs' career motivations and plans (Karakaş & Erten, 2021; Rao & Wu, 2021; Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012).

Teaching efficacy another construct which is known to be closely connected to PSTs' preparedness to teach (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002a) is developed as PSTs develop a sense of success based on the feedback and suggestions provided by mentors (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). In their study, Karakaş and Erten (2021) found a positive link between receiving feedback from school-based mentors before and after teaching practices and PSTs' perceived teaching efficacy, commitment, and overall performance in their FE. Similarly, faculty-based mentors' expertise, guidance, and experiences are reported to be a source for PSTs' professional learning (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018). In this vein, the success of FE is also regarded to depend on multiple roles i.e., advising, supervising, facilitating played by faculty-based mentors to "help … [PSTs] to reflect on their own practice, to know what they know, and to identify what they need to learn" (Freidus, 2002, p. 75).

As this brief literature review indicates, FE, as a complex learning environment with its significant actors, is a huge determiner for PSTs' preparation to the profession (Becker et al., 2019) and needs to be investigated in depth to reveal the underlying factors that interact with PSTs' professional competencies, perceptions, and emotions. Against this backdrop, this study sets out to explore and uncover these variables.

METHOD

Research design

As this study aims to explore PSTs' preparedness to teach and the potential changes in their perceptions in relation to the *SE* and *TP* phases of FE, a longitudinal qualitative descriptive research design was adopted. One-on-one, semi-structured interview method, as rich source of data (Trumbull, 2005), was selected to capture and examine the whole process from the lens of PSTs. To this end, two sets of interviews were conducted: one after the SE and one after the TP phases. In both interviews, the PSTs were firstly asked to reflect on their current state of preparedness to teach and the factors shaping their perceptions as they finished these phases. Secondly, they were asked to look back and report how prepared they felt at the beginning of the phases and what underlying factors were there to make them feel that way (see Figure 1 for the research design). Thus, both cross-sectional and retrospective data were collected.
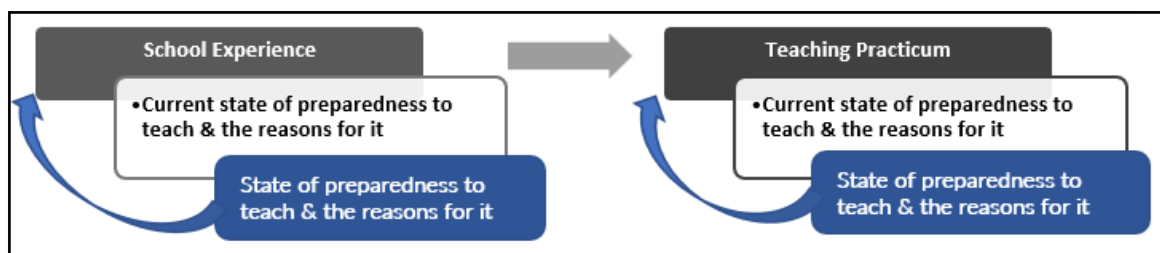

Figure 1. *Research design*

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at the Education Faculty of a public state university in a northwest province in Turkey. When the current study, which is a part of a larger study, was conducted, the PSTs were performing their FE in two courses, *SE and TP*, running consecutively in the last year of their faculty education. As the initial phase of the FE, the SE aims to familiarize the PSTs with the school context, students, and the professional community which they will become a part of soon besides giving them room for teaching practice. The TP aims to continuously engage the PSTS with both teaching-related tasks to improve and deepen their teaching competencies and the professional school community to assure and strengthen their preparation for the profession.

The PSTs were part of a larger study which is out of the scope of the current study (Çelik, 2017). Of the 145 PSTs participating in the initial survey, 18 PSTs (eight males and 10 females) volunteered for the first round of interviews that took place towards the end of the SE and 12 other PSTs (eight males and four females) for the second ones that took place towards the end of the TP. They were assigned to 10 different practicum schools for their FE. All were Turkish citizens. Their ages ranged between 21 and 33 with an average of 24. Most reported to have previous teaching experience mainly through voluntary teaching or one-on-one private tutorials.

Instrumentation

The data were gathered through two interview protocols designed for the two interviews. To ensure their content validity, the researchers conducted literature review, devised the initial drafts of the interview protocols for both phases, and discussed their content in relation to the research purposes (Zohrabi, 2013). Having several rounds of negotiations and online debriefing sessions (Shenton, 2004), they revised and refined the questions for both effectiveness and validity. As a result, the final versions of the interview protocols were created (Appendix).

Research ethics

Ethical guidelines were carefully considered before the data collection. First, research permission was elicited from the faculty. Then, an informed consent form was prepared to inform the PSTs about the research design, its purpose, and data collection procedures. Lastly, the e-mail addresses of the volunteering ones were requested for further contact.

Data collection and analysis procedures

The volunteered participants (*N*=18) were e-mailed to make appointments towards the end of the fall term as they were about to complete the SE phase, and the first round of interviews was done accordingly. The PSTs continued with the TP in the spring term and were fully involved in the FE and its teaching tasks and gaining more experience. Both interviews were guided by the interview protocols and followed the same set of questions in the same order. They were conducted in Turkish to prevent data loss and make the participants feel more comfortable. The responses were audio-recorded and supported by field notes. Open-ended discussions were encouraged letting the interviewees say more rather than accepting their first answers as the final and complete responses to avoid the likely threats to validity such as halo-effect (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The SE interviews generated almost a 7-hour data set, and the TP ones a 6-hour data set.

The initial step for data analysis was to organize the data resulting in voluminous notes. Then, each interview was transcribed. Considering the suggestion of Creswell (2009), the transcriptions were read several times to get a complete sense of them and then analyzed through the constant comparison method in which concepts are called as basic units of analysis, while categories, which are generated through the same analytic process of making comparisons to highlight similarities and differences, are explained as "higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p.7). Inductive, open coding were used for data analysis and the steps by Corbin and Strauss (1990) were followed;

- Identification of concepts in the raw data

- Open coding to develop concepts from the first round of data reduction

- Searching for evidence or disevidence for further recoding within the interview itself and the interviews in the group

- Grouping concepts pertaining to the same phenomenon to form categories

- Identification of categories to allow possible core categories to emerge

- Integrating categories (if necessary)

Thus, through comparing both within a single interview and between other interviews, the data were refined and analyzed. Making comparisons assisted the researchers to guard against bias and achieve greater precision and consistency as the concepts were challenged with fresh data. All the data likely to identify the participants were removed from the transcriptions and codes such as PST1, PST2 were used to preserve their anonymity while reporting the findings.

FINDINGS

Research Question1: Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Preparedness to Teach in Relation to Different Phases of the Field Experience Process

In both interviews, the participants were asked to report their current perceived state of preparedness to teach and how they felt at the beginning of that particular phase. The distribution of the PSTs according to their state of preparedness to teach is given in Figure 2.
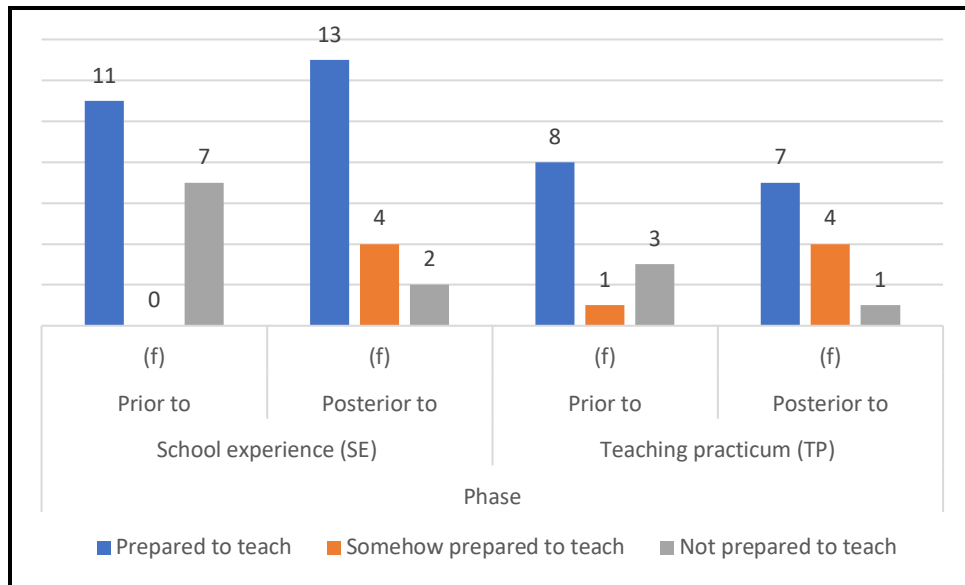

Figure 2. *PSTs' state of preparedness to teach throughout the FE process*

At the beginning of the SE, the PSTs reported to be either prepared or not prepared to teach and those who felt prepared were more than who did not (*n*=11, *n*= 7 respectively). At the end, more PSTs reported to feel prepared, and the number of the PSTs who stated to feel unprepared to teach decreased. Some PSTs were observed to feel somehow prepared (*n*=4). As for the TP, while most PSTs (*n*=8) stated to feel prepared to teach at the beginning, a slight decrease is observed at the end of the process (*n*=7). The number of the PSTs who reported to feel somehow unprepared to teach increased (*n*=4).

Research Question 2: Sources for Pre-Service English Teachers' Perceived State of Preparedness to Teach

As the PSTs' preparedness to teach was examined in a longitudinal fashion, the findings related to their explanations about the sources for their perceived state of preparedness to teach before and after the SE and TP phases of the FE process are presented separately below.

Initially, the PSTs were asked to look back at the beginning of the SE, consider how they felt there in regard to their preparedness to teach, and explain the reasons for their state of preparedness to teach prior to the SE. The data analysis yielded eight sources which were then grouped under five categories (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sources for pre-service English language teachers' perceived state of preparedness to teach prior to SE

State of preparedness to teach	Categories	Sources	PST Codes
Prepared to teach	Higher teaching efficacy perceptions	*Prior teaching experience (teaching friends, family members, voluntary teaching etc.)	PST3, PST4, PST6, PST7, PST8, PST9, PST17
	Intrinsic and altruistic career motivation	*Motivation and enthusiasm to teach	PST1, PST6, PST9, PST17, PST18
	Faculty education	*Teaching knowledge and skills *Knowledge of resources for teaching *Self-confidence	PST5, PST7, PST15
Not prepared to teach	Untested teaching competencies/efficacy	*Lack of confidence in teaching (due to lack of teaching practice) *Teaching anxiety	PST2, PST10, PST11, PST12, PST14, PST16
	Lack of teaching commitment	*Insufficient engagement in teaching	PST2, PST13

For those PSTs who reported to be prepared to teach (*n*=7), the primary source was *higher teaching efficacy perceptions* developed through teaching family members, friends, one-on-one private tutorials, or voluntary teaching. Besides, *intrinsic or altruistic motivation* enabled some (*n*=5) to have *enthusiasm to teach*. For PST9, *"Teaching was a childhood dream."* Similarly, PST17 *has always wanted to become a teacher. Faculty education* (*n*=3) emerged as a source of their teaching knowledge and skills, knowledge of resources for language teaching, and teaching confidence.

In line with the findings above, majority of those who were not prepared to teach (*n*=6) attributed this perception to *untested teaching competencies/efficacy,* while others *(n*=2*)* did to *lack of teaching commitment* as they were uncertain if they would teach upon graduating. For instance, PST2 who acknowledged that they learnt a lot at faculty had concerns regarding how to teach and considered that they would teach like their teachers. Similarly, PST16 felt anxious in the beginning due to inadequate teaching practice despite strong faculty education.

The PSTs were also asked to consider how they felt regarding their preparedness to teach at the end of the SE and explain the sources for it. The analysis of the data yielded 19 sources grouped under 10 categories. Table 2 provides the details.

Table 2. Sources for pre-service English language teachers' perceived state of preparedness to teach posterior to SE

State of preparedness to teach	Categories	Sources	PST Codes
Prepared to teach	Sense of fulfilled professional & developmental needs	*Getting guidance, advice, help, feedback, and support from the mentor *Mentors' skills to communicate, empathize, role-model, and build rapport with PST	PST3, PST6, PST7, PST10, PST14, PST16, PST17
	Higher teaching efficacy perceptions	*Prior teaching experience (teaching friends, family members, voluntary teaching etc.)	PST4, PST6, PST8
	Increased awareness regarding teaching	*Observing the mentor teacher and peers in action *Evaluating and reflecting	PST9, PST16, PST18
	Emotional attachment to teaching	*Adequate contextual mentoring *Positive workplace culture	PST2, PST13

		*Situational features of the mentoring site *Communicating with students and future colleagues	
Not prepared to teach	Decreased sense of fulfilled professional & developmental needs	*No guidance, advice, support, supervision, negotiation, feedback *Inadequate developmental mentoring *Lack of consolidation of teaching knowledge and skills	PST1, PST5
	Emotional setback in career motivation	*Mismatch between expectation from an "idealized" teacher and experiences *Unprofessional behavior(s) of school-based mentors	PST1
Somehow prepared to teach	Lower teaching efficacy perceptions	*Reflection on quality teaching *Increased awareness on teaching knowledge and skills	PST12, PST15
	Sustained career motivation	*Faculty education *Personality	PST11
	Increased sense of engagement in teaching	*Lack of knowledge upon teaching roles and responsibilities	PST13
	Increased teacher knowledge	*Contributory teaching practice	PST13

Majority (*n*=7) of the PSTs feeling prepared to teach thought their *professional and developmental needs were fulfilled* as they received adequate feedback, supervision, guidance, and support from their school-based mentors who were good role-models both professionally and personally. For some (PST3, PST10), the school-based mentors were helpful, supportive, caring, collaborative, tolerant, and approachable as they established good communication which made the SE experience positive. For some others (*n*=3), similar to what they stated regarding their state of preparedness to teach prior to the SE, *prior teaching experience* was a source as it increased their *teaching efficacy perceptions*. Although the SE was to give the PSTs the opportunity to carry out observations at practicum schools to observe the school-based mentors' teaching practices, the PSTs were offered the chance to practice teaching in this phase. Therefore, they spent a lot of time observing their mentors and peers in action. Particularly when they observed their peers, they made notes to give feedback to them. In this regard, having the chance to evaluate their peers' teaching practices and drawing implications for their own teaching increased their preparedness to teach. Besides, for some (*n*=3), *increased awareness regarding teaching* was another source. Two PSTs attached their preparedness to teach to the *emotional attachment to teaching* due to positive workplace culture in the practicum school providing good communication with future colleagues and adequate mentoring. For instance, being offered to use the teachers' room at the school helped the PSTs observe how teachers communicated in a typical day (PST2). Thus, workplace culture and friendly mentors appeared to have a critical role on PSTs' preparedness to teach.

Those who were *not prepared to teach (n=2)* thought their *sense of fulfilled professional and developmental needs decreased* due to lack of guidance and support from their school-based mentors. They also stated that observing *...mentors who display unprofessional behavior such as getting angry with students or yelling at them ... (PSTS1)* created an emotional setback.

Lower teaching efficacy perceptions (*n*=2)*, sustained career motivation* (*n*=1)*, increased sense of engagement in teaching* (*n*=1)*,* and *increased teacher knowledge* (*n*=1) were the sources for those PSTs feeling *somehow prepared* to teach (*n*=4). Having developed knowledge about and awareness of quality teaching and teaching knowledge and skills, some (PST12, PST15) perceived *less efficacious*. For instance, upon observing a mentor who was not putting a lot of effort into her teaching, PST12 started questioning her understanding of quality teaching, teaching skills, and faculty education. She stated:

I saw how not to be a teacher. The mentor seemed to be traditional and did not even seem to be prepared for the classes. She used no extra materials, only the coursebook. Now I ask; Theory-practice gap? Will I be able to use what I've learned at the faculty?

On the other hand, some (PST11, PST13) perceived faculty education, their personality, and contributions of their student teaching practices in SE as sources strengthening their *career motivation* and *teacher knowledge* and thus making them feel somehow prepared to teach.

After the SE phase, the PSTs continued with the TP. Having completed it, they were asked to evaluate their preparedness to teach. Similar to the SE, the PSTs were firstly asked to reflect on their state of preparedness to teach prior to the TP phase and explain the sources of it. The findings are as follows (see Table 3).

Table 3. Sources for pre-service English language teachers' perceived state of preparedness to teach prior to TP

State of preparedness to teach prior to TP	Categories	Sources	PST Codes
Prepared to teach	Teaching commitment	*Career motivation *Satisfaction *Enthusiasm *Regular attendance *Getting prepared *Devoting time *Passion for teaching	PST5, PST6, PST10, PST12
	Higher perceptions of teaching efficacy	*Prior teaching experience	PST7, PST8
	Personality	*Personal characteristics (responsible, hardworking, caring etc.)	PST2
	Faculty education	*Teaching competencies *Feeling efficacious	PST3
Not prepared to teach	Lack of confidence in teaching	*Teaching anxiety *Inadequate teaching knowledge and skills *Un/underdeveloped teaching competencies *Lack of teaching practice	PST1, PST4, PST11
Somehow prepared to teach	Lower perceptions of teaching efficacy	*Un/under-developed teaching competencies *Lack of teaching practice	PST9

As already indicated, the PSTs reported different perceptions regarding their state of preparedness prior to the TP. Most were *prepared* (*n*=8), some were *not prepared* (*n*=3), and one was *somehow prepared to teach.* For most PSTs feeling prepared to teach (*n*=4), *teaching commitment* was the predominant reason within which sources like career motivation, enthusiasm, and passion for teaching existed. Some thought "*becoming a teacher was the right decision"* (PST10) due to sustained teaching commitment. Those having prior teaching experience (*n*=2) reported *higher teaching efficacy perceptions* as the source for their preparedness to teach. Besides, for PST2 *personality characteristics* such as being responsible and caring were the sources. However, PST3 who thought teaching was an easy job drew on *faculty education* which strengthened his teaching efficacy perceptions.

The PSTs who were *not prepared to teach* (*n*=3) had *lack of confidence in teaching*. For instance, PST1 stated that *"Prior to TP, I was easily getting anxious when I was to teach, and I wondered if I could teach at all."* The analysis revealed that teaching anxiety, inadequate or underdeveloped knowledge and skills seemed to be closely connected to lack of teaching practice causing lack of confidence in teaching. Similarly, classroom management skill such as not being able to keep the class silent or not being able to give simple classroom instructions lowered PST11's teaching confidence making her feel not prepared to teach.

Besides, PST9 was *somehow prepared to teach* due to her lower teaching efficacy perceptions. She said *"Yes, I was prepared, but I wondered what I was going to do when I would be with real students in a real class. I calmed down in time."* As seen, her concerns stem from considering if she would be able to teach in a real classroom which could suggest that un- or underdeveloped teaching competencies could have triggered such a thought.

As the whole FE was over, the PSTs were also asked to evaluate how they felt regarding their state of preparedness to teach at the end of the TP and what sources made them prepared or not prepared to teach. The analysis revealed 16 sources under five categories (see Table 4).

Table 4. Sources for pre-service English language teachers' perceived state of preparedness to teach posterior to TP

State of Preparedness to teach after TP	Categories	Sources	Participant Codes
Prepared to teach	Increased sense of fulfilled professional & developmental needs	*Collaborative, supportive school-based mentors *Adequate developmental mentoring, i.e., guidance and feedback *Frequent teaching practice *Mentors' skills in role modelling	PST7, PST8, PST10, PST12
	Increased confidence in professional self	*Tested teaching competencies *Feeling efficacious or somehow efficacious	PST1, PST9
	Decreased sense of teaching anxiety	*Emotional control; less anxiety and hesitation	PST1, PST4
Not prepared to teach	Lack of teaching commitment	*Inadequate teaching practice *Un or underdeveloped teaching competencies (such as time management) *Inadequate emotional attachment to teaching	PST6
Somehow prepared to teach	Sense of inadequate preparedness (caused by mentors' lack of know-how to communicate their teaching knowledge and experiences to PSTs)	*Inadequate engagement in professional learning *Limited interaction/dialogue with students *Limited supervision, guidance, feedback *Limited teaching practice *Limited satisfaction of teaching efficacy *Mismatch between faculty training and teaching in schools	PST2, PST3, PST5, PST11

Firstly, at the end of the TP, most PSTs (*n*=7) reported to feel prepared to teach, while some (*n*=4) somehow prepared to teach, and only one not prepared to teach. PST7, PST8, PST10, and PST12 felt prepared to teach as they perceived an increase in their *fulfilled professional and developmental needs* since they worked with collaborative and supportive school-based mentors and received adequate mentoring. For PST10:

The mentor was very collaborative, humanistic, and easy to communicate. She continuously gave feedback, helped with lesson planning, and provided us with teaching materials. She also had good communication with the students. She taught in English; almost used no Turkish. Therefore, my TP experience made a difference.

Moreover, some (PSTs 1, 4, 9) tested their teaching competencies through frequent teaching practices and learned to control their emotions which increased their teaching confidence and decreased their teaching anxiety. This is significant to highlight the role of testing teaching competencies both on cognitive and emotional level.

On the other hand, mentors' lack of know-how to communicate their teaching knowledge and experiences was stated as the main source for feeling somehow prepared to teach (*n*=4), which created a *sense of inadequate preparedness* for these PSTs. This was the opposite of the feeling experienced by those who felt prepared to teach

as their professional and developmental needs were fulfilled through adequate mentoring provided by collaborative and supportive mentors. PST3 stated:

> *I only taught once, saw what was missing, learnt how to approach students, and became more aware of their individual differences. Although I had previous teaching experience, I didn't feel completely satisfied. I think there is still a lot to learn. There needs to be more time for practice. The mentors did not allow us to practice, and I experienced the shock 'Weren't we going to teach?' Mentors need to provide more effective supervision.*

As it was the end of the entire FE process, there was only one (PST6) who felt not prepared to teach because of *lack of teaching commitment*. Thus, being equipped with teaching knowledge and skills does not guarantee preparedness to teach. PSTs should also possess teaching commitment to be emotionally attached to the profession and to stay in it.

Discussion & Conclusion

Following a longitudinal qualitative research design, this study explored senior pre-service English teachers' state of preparedness to teach and the perceived sources behind it covering the SE and TP phases during their FE. To this aim, two in-depth interviews were conducted with a group of volunteering participants at the end of these phases. Their current state of preparedness to teach as well as retrospective data on how they felt at the beginning of each phase along with the reasons were elicited.

To start with, the findings revealed that most English PSTs felt prepared to teach as they started both SE and TP. This result is congruent with the studies which also found relatively high preparedness levels for English PSTs in Turkish context. Since at the time of the data collection phase of this study there was a uniform teacher education program implemented in all the departments of education faculties in Turkey, this result could be interpreted as a sign of the effectiveness of teacher education programs (Selçuk & Genç Yöntem, 2019). Despite the studies with conflicting results (G. Öztürk & Aydın, 2019; Uzun, 2016), there is ample evidence in the literature that Turkish English language teacher education programs indeed provide quality education to their students (Varol, 2018). Yet, the results of the current study also showed that some students felt unprepared or somehow prepared to teach at the beginning of each phase. This finding, on the other hand, clearly calls for a more in-depth analysis of English language teacher education programs. Lastly, the current study found that the number of the ones feeling unprepared to teach decreased at the end of the phases underpinning the importance of the entire FE process as a factor impacting the perceived state of preparedness to teach, which is already well documented in the existing literature (Karakaş & Erten, 2021; Selçuk & Genç Yöntem, 2019).

A significant contribution of this study to the related literature is its endeavor to shed light on the perceived reasons underlying the senior English language PSTs' self-reported state of preparedness to teach. Accordingly, they were asked to explain the sources behind their preparedness to teach with reference to different time points in SE and TP. The following part discusses the findings in relation to these time points.

As for the sources affecting their state of preparedness to teach at the beginning of the SE, the findings revealed three major sources as positively contributing to their sense of preparedness to teach: *higher teaching efficacy perceptions, intrinsic and altruistic career motivation, and faculty education*. Higher teaching efficacy perceptions are related to pedagogical knowledge, skills, and competencies gained through faculty education, which is a frequently cited reason for high level of perceived preparedness to teach in the related literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002a; Housego, 1990). Recent studies in the English language teacher education context in Turkey also show that PSTs perceive faculty education and pedagogical skills as empowering them to be prepared to teach (Kılıc, 2020) and conceive faculty education as a time where they relate theory with practice (Selçuk & Genç Yöntem, 2019). Without a doubt, faculty education is the stage where initial professional knowledge and skills are acquired (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002a, 2002b). Thus, quality of education received in pre-service teacher education is a prerequisite for educating effective teachers.

Career motivation emerged as another positive factor impacting preparedness to teach in this study. Different studies also documented similar results (Tanjung et al., 2020; Yüksel & Kavanoz, 2015). For instance, a very recent study reports that PSTs "displayed high levels of motivation for studying and teaching languages which they felt gave them a sense of purpose and meaning" (Mairitsch et al., 2021, p.5). Similarly, the PSTs in the current study, since some were teaching voluntarily at the pre-school of the University, reported helping individuals and society as a driving force behind their career motivation which is, by extension, linked to their state of preparedness. This result emphasizes the importance of integrating courses such as Community Service

Practices in all teacher education programs, where PSTs experience voluntary work in their subject areas and appreciate their profession's contribution to individuals and society.

On the other hand, *untested teaching competencies* and *lack of teaching commitment* were reported as the two reasons for perceived unpreparedness to teach before the SE, which are the exact opposite of those given for feeling prepared to teach. While prior teaching experiences with family members or friends were given as reasons for higher teaching efficacy perceptions, it was found that lack of similar experiences debilitated PSTs' sense of preparedness to teach. In a study on belief changes before and after TP, Qiu et al. (2021) also report that PSTs' teaching competencies increase significantly after they test them. This result points out the critical need to provide PSTs with teaching experiences as early as possible in their teacher education. In Turkey, FE is placed in the last year of faculty education which may be considered late given the fact that most PSTs in the current study reported not to have any prior teaching experience. Therefore, it would not be wrong to suggest that integrating different school experiences into different stages of faculty education would help PSTs build different teaching competencies gradually developing their preparedness to teach.

Closely linked to lack of teaching experience, the next reason, *lack of teaching commitment* was also found to be related to the PSTs' state of unpreparedness to teach. A recent study in a very similar context investigating how emotions are experienced by pre-service English teachers during their FE and how emotions affected their instructional skills showed that the PSTs' perceptions regarding their undeveloped teaching skills such as teaching and testing diverse students at different levels were linked to their lack of teaching commitment (Méndez López, 2020). This could mean that PSTs' lack of teaching commitment could result from not having taught yet and not having tested their teaching competencies.

10 underlying sources emerged for the PSTs' perceived preparedness to teach at the end of SE. *Sense of fulfilled professional and developmental needs* was the major positive one which was reported to result from guidance, feedback, and support the PSTs received from their school-based mentors. Building rapport and being good role-models were mentioned as facilitative aspects of school-based mentoring. Parallel to this finding, the PSTs indicated inadequate mentoring resulting from almost no guidance and supervision as a reason for their unpreparedness to teach. This finding once again puts emphasis on the connection between quality-mentoring and preparedness to teach during FE. The literature is replete with studies revealing the importance of high-quality mentor feedback, their professional knowledge, language skills and teaching competencies as pivotal in preparing qualified PSTs (Kourieos, 2019; Orsdemir & Yıldırım, 2020; Tüfekçi Can & Baştürk, 2018; Yaylı, 2018). In addition, in this study, *emotional setback* was found to be a mentor-related reason underlying sense of unpreparedness to teach. Several studies also maintain that PSTs' wellbeing is significantly positively related to quality mentoring (Kourieous, 2019; Mairitsch et al., 2021; Mukeredzi & Manwa, 2019). As this study and supporting findings from the related literature clearly show, quality mentoring needs to address not only PSTs' professional but also emotional developmental needs (Ambrosetti, 2012, 2014; Grossman, 2010; Scott et al., 2014) which have a direct impact on their state of preparedness to teach (Alsaleh & Anthony, 2019).

At this stage, *increased awareness regarding teaching* was reported as another source for preparedness to teach. This aligns with previous research with pre-service English language teachers in the Turkish context reporting that after FE, the PSTs developed increased understanding regarding schools and its etiquettes (Hos et al., 2019) and their own and others' teaching which help them learn to make informed decisions (Gebhard, 2009). Besides, during FE, PSTs shadow their mentors and practice teaching skills, design and implement curricular activities, and establish relationships with students (A. L. Brown et al., 2015). Thus, FE as a central process for PSTs' professional and social growth (Selvi, 2012) can be concluded to have a key function for the acquisition and development of PSTs' teaching awareness, preparedness to teach, and their identity building.

Teaching commitment, *high perception of teaching efficacy*, *faculty education* were found to be persistent sources to facilitate the PSTs' preparedness to teach at the beginning of the TP phase. This finding is particularly significant as the PSTs in the TP phase were not the ones responding to the SE phase interviews. Therefore, these sources are pervasive for both the PSTs in SE and TP phase. This supports previous research reporting increase in teaching efficacy perceptions and willingness to teach during TP (Selçuk & Genç Yöntem, 2019). *Personality* which emerged as a new source facilitating the PSTs' preparedness to teach during FE deserves attention. Despite lack of research, this is in line with another study reporting that PSTs developed personality traits which they needed such as being caring, tolerant, friendly, and confident during TP (Buendía-Arias et al., 2020). On the other hand, similar to the findings of the SE phase, *lack of confidence in teaching* and *lower teaching efficacy perceptions* were also found to be two debilitative sources making the PSTs either unprepared or somehow prepared to teach

at the beginning of TP. In their study on English language PSTs in Turkey, Han and Takkaç Tulgar (2019) observed that the PSTs felt anxious due to gaps in their teaching knowledge and skills during the FE concluding that more teaching opportunities needed to prepare students for in-call teaching. As a final remark, it should be noted that different participants responded to the SE and TP interviews in this study. Thus, the similarities between the perceived sources for unpreparedness to teach across SE and the beginning of TP need to be closely analyzed since they seem to indicate large, pervasive, systemic problems regarding teacher education.

As for the PSTs' preparedness to teach after TP, which also marked the end of the entire FE process, *increased sense of fulfilled professional and developmental needs* was the source for the majority of those who felt prepared to teach. They mainly attached the increase in their state of preparedness to teach to their school-based mentors' collaboration and support providing them with adequate and frequent teaching practice rather than their faculty-based mentors. In their study on the effect of mentor-mentee meetings on PSTs' knowledge gains and improvements in TP, Mukeredzi and Manwa (2019) report that having good relationships and communication with mentors via frequent and formal meetings enabled PSTs to broaden their knowledge on various levels regarding knowledge about general pedagogy, content pedagogy, curriculum, learners, and educational contexts. In the same study, some students who were ineffectively mentored were reported to have limited gains from their TP experience. Therefore, both the current study and the literature underscore the critical role played by mentoring and mentors' skills for effective professional development.

Similarly, *decreased sense of teaching anxiety* emerged as another source of their preparedness to teach. This overlaps with some other studies reporting that PSTs gained experience in classroom management (Selçuk & Genç Yöntem, 2019), developed their teaching skills (Méndez López, 2020), and experienced lower teaching anxiety as they gained more confidence, got used to being assessed by supervisors, and became more competent in resolving classroom management-related problems (Akınsola, 2014), and even found their own strategies to cope with anxiety-provoking factors (Han & Takkaç Tulgar, 2019). Similarly, the PSTs in the current study reported that their teaching anxiety decreased, and confidence increased due to observing mentors' teaching, practicing teaching, and reflecting on it. Research in different areas of teacher education report that pre-service mathematics teachers' teaching anxiety reduced as they observed mentor teachers, practiced teaching, and reflected on it (see A. Brown et al., 2012). Ultimately, the PSTs' anxiety decreased since they continued testing their teaching competencies which also strengthened their confidence in their professional selves. Additionally, the strong reference that the PSTs in the current study made to their school-based mentors for fulfilling the PSTs' professional and developmental needs through the quality mentoring they provided also has a role on how the PSTs' teaching anxiety decreased.

On the other hand, *mentors' lack of know-how to share their experiences and expertise with the PSTs* was the source for others who felt somehow prepared to teach. The PSTs generally attached their inadequate preparedness to teach to such issues as limited communication with students, inadequate teaching practice, limited supervision, resulting in inadequate engagement in professional and developmental learning. Without a doubt, mentors are expected to establish and maintain effective and continuous communication with PSTs to meet their developmental needs. However, research still reveals mentor-related problems such as poor communication (Yaylı, 2018) or inadequate support and feedback despite variations across mentors (Vasquez Carrosa et al., 2019). Hence, mentor quality appears to be one of the determining factors for adequate PST preparation.

Conclusion and Implications

In light of the findings and discussion, this study makes the following conclusions:

- Preparedness to teach is not a linear phenomenon, but rather continuous, fluctuating, complex, and multifaceted as observed in the changing perceived states of the PSTs participating in the current study across different time points during the FE.
- Preparedness to teach is determined by various factors i.e., internal ones such as personality, teaching motivation, confidence, and commitment or external ones such as faculty education, teaching knowledge and skills, and mentoring. In this regard, the availability of various sources encourages the realization and development of preparedness to teach, while lack of any of them causes fluctuation in PSTs' states of preparedness to teach.
- Preparedness to teach includes several actors and is co-constructed by PSTs and other significant stakeholders, in particular their mentors who are responsible for their school-based teacher education.

With these in mind, there are some implications to be drawn. First and foremost, the strong emphasis put on school-based mentoring highlights the role played by mentors in practicum schools. In this regard, the study shows that teacher education and education of well-prepared teachers is not a one-sided task within the sole responsibility of faculty; rather it is a collaborative task which necessitates quality school-based teacher education in practicum schools during PSTs' FE. Therefore, selection and training of mentors stands as a cornerstone in PST education as any teacher who is successful as a teacher cannot be assumed to be a successful mentor (Chien, 2014). This calls for action for Education Faculties and the Ministry of National Education to select and train mentors who have the willingness to supervise. Besides, the current study also showed the importance of mentors' skills in communicating their knowledge and experience to PSTs. In this regard, mentors need training not only in terms of the acquisition and development of their mentoring roles and responsibilities, but also for the improvement and realization of interpersonal, communication, and cooperation skills. Only then can mentors and school-based mentoring become effective as needed.

Additionally, the study also showed the critical and undeniable role played by faculty education as it is seen to relate to teaching efficacy as a prerequisite for preparedness to teach. This suggests that faculty education and teacher education curricula act as the backbone in teacher education. In this regard, high-quality faculty education is a must. This means that courses must be tutored by faculty teachers who are experts in the related subject matter, who also have the commitment and awareness regarding the task that they perform. As the study showed the PSTs did not put primary emphasis on their faculty-based mentors as sources to their preparedness to teach. This might make sense as faculty-based mentors are known to spend limited time in practicum schools and supervise fewer teaching tasks in practicum classrooms. However, with the recent changes made in field experience guidelines in teacher education system in Turkey (MEB [Ministry of National Education], 2021), they are expected to spend time to observe each PST at least twice in practicum schools. In this regard, further studies could examine what makes PSTs to attach a lesser emphasis on the mentoring they receive from their faculty-based mentors.

Moreover, the study shows the need for more and continuous teaching practice during PST education since the PSTs attached their unpreparedness to teach to lack of teaching practice and untested teaching competencies, which also caused teaching anxiety. Without a doubt, as the amount and frequency of teaching practice increases, teaching anxiety decreases. Thus, teacher education programs could lengthen the duration of FE or could increase the time that PSTs need to spend in practicum schools. This also requires cooperation between policy makers from Education Faculties, Higher Education Council, and the Ministry of National Education in Turkey.

Statements of publication ethics

This study is a part of the first author's Doctoral Dissertation completed in 2017.

Researchers' contribution rate

Both researchers worked on every stage of the study. The first author carried out the interviews.

Conflict of interest

We have no conflict of interest to report.

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Appendix

    Interview Protocol (School Experience Phase)

1. Over the course of school experience, have you had any information about students?

       Yes ( )   No ( )

       If Yes, please specify

       Follow-up;

       Among what you have learned about students, are there any thoughts which you regard as positive?

       Yes ( )   No ( )

       If Yes, please specify

       Among what you have learned about students, are there any thoughts which you regard as negative?

       Yes ( )   No ( )

       If Yes, please specify

2. Over the course of school experience, have you had any information about your (future) colleagues?

       Yes ( )   No ( )

       If Yes, please specify

       Follow-up;

       Among what you have learned about your future colleagues, are there any thoughts which you regard as positive?

       Yes ( )   No ( )

       If Yes, please specify

       Among what you have learned about your future colleagues, are there any thoughts which you regard as negative?

       Yes ( )   No ( )

       If Yes, please specify

3. Over the course of school experience, have you had any information about your (future) workplace?

       Yes ( )   No ( )

       If Yes, please specify

       Follow-up;

       Among what you have learned about your future workplace, are there any thoughts which you regard as positive?

       Yes ( )   No ( )

       If Yes, please specify

       Among what you have learned about your future workplace, are there any thoughts which you regard as negative?

       Yes ( )   No ( )

       If Yes, please specify

4. When you relate your thoughts regarding all these issues to your preparedness to teach, (students, colleagues, workplace), do you think that school experience process made any difference?

       Yes ( )   No ( )

       If Yes; please specify the extent for the following issues

To;	Little	Partly	Quite
Students			
Teaching			
Workplace			

       Follow up;

       Can you open your evaluations? What makes you feel so?

5. If you make an evaluation regarding the beginning of school experience process, what did you feel at the very beginning? What do you think about your preparedness to teach at that time and now?

Follow-up;
     If you felt prepared to teach, what do you think made you feel so? Please explain.
If you did not feel adequately prepared to teach or even if you felt completely unprepared to teach, what do you think made you feel so? Please explain.

6. Would you like to add anything besides what you have mentioned so far? If Yes, please specify.

Interview Protocol (Teaching Practicum Phase)

1. You are about to complete the teaching practicum phase. Through this process, you have had the opportunity to get closer to the school system which you will become a member of shortly. Considering what you have learned about the students in the process, has anything changed in your initial thoughts of students? If Yes, what?

2. With the teaching practicum phase, you have had the opportunity to get closer to the colleagues teaching in the school system which you will also become a member of shortly. Has anything changed in your initial thoughts about your future colleagues? If Yes, what?

3. With the teaching practicum phase, you have also had the chance to learn more about the workplace which you will shortly be a part of. Has anything, either positively or negatively, changed in your initial thoughts about the workplace? If Yes, what?

4. When you relate your insights and evaluations regarding all these issues to your preparedness to teach, do you think that school experience and teaching practicum processes had any impact on your preparedness to teach?
Yes ( )   No ( )
If Yes; please specify the extent for the following issues;

To;	Little	Partly	Quite
Students			
Teaching			
Workplace			

Follow up;
Can you open your evaluations? What makes you feel so?

5. Considering the school experience and teaching practicum processes, do you think if they had any influence on your preparedness to teach?
     Follow-up
     What are the issues that the processes contributed on your preparedness to teach? How do you know that and why?
     What are the issues that you could not gain that much development? If there are any, what could be done to encourage development?

6. Considering what you have learned about students, colleagues, and workplace, are you planning to teach?

7. Besides the issues mentioned above, is there anything else that you would like to add regarding the link between school experience and teaching practicum processes and your preparedness to teach? If Yes, please specify.