The Practicum Evaluation Conundrum: Perceptions of Preservice English Language Teachers and Their Mentors

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Abstract: The evaluation conundrum during teaching practicum concerning the criteria used and perception of them by faculty mentors, school mentors, and preservice teachers remains a critical concern in language teacher education. This multi-perspective research quantitatively investigates the viewpoints of preservice English teachers and their school and faculty mentors regarding the significance of the evaluation criteria set by the Turkish Ministry of National Education for the evaluation of preservice teachers' teaching practices and performance in teaching practicum. While all three groups considered the evaluation criteria significant—although at varying degrees—the faculty mentors ascribed greater importance to the evaluation criteria, compared to school mentors and preservice teachers, for both the evaluation criteria used by faculty mentors and school mentors. The study highlights the key role of evaluations and feedback provided by school and faculty mentors during teaching practicum despite higher degrees of significance attached to the evaluation criteria used by school mentors. Specifically, our research reveals nuanced perspectives on evaluation criteria, shedding light on potential areas for refinement in mentorship and training programs. Tailored strategies are crucial to address varying stakeholder views and targeted training for faculty and school mentors can enhance preservice teacher support during practicum. The implications can inform policy and practice in language teacher education, promoting better outcomes for the preparation of future English language teachers in Türkiye.

Keywords: *mentors, preservice teachers, teaching practicum, teaching practicum evaluation criteria*

INTRODUCTION

The teaching practicum and supervision experience are critically important for the professional maturation of preservice English language teachers (Bailey, 2016; Bulut, 2016; Cakmak & Gunduz, 2019; Circoki et al., 2019; Cohen et al., 2010; Crookes, 2003; Farr & Farrell, 2023; Pu & Wright, 2022; Richards & Farrell, 2011). Throughout their initial years in a teacher education program, preservice English language teachers (hereafter PSTs) engage in a variety of coursework where they learn various educational theories, pedagogical approaches, and teaching methods and strategies. Teaching practicum, commonly referred to as field experience, provides them with a unique opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge acquired through coursework in genuine classroom settings. This bridges the gap between the academic foundations of teaching and the actual implementation in authentic contexts and highlights the significance of this practical component in their training on their path to becoming teachers.

During teaching practicum, PSTs gain firsthand experience in diverse classroom settings which enables them to further explore effective instructional strategies, learner characteristics, and instructional challenges enabling them to develop classroom management skills and modify their teaching strategies and resources to suit the requirements of a multifarious student population. The practicum phase, thus, offers PSTs an opportunity to engage in critical reflection and self-evaluation by analyzing their teaching practices, identifying potential areas for improvement, and devising strategies to enhance their instruction, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how they perceive their teaching abilities and the extent to which they invest in ongoing professional learning and growth. Consequently, this stage serves as a decisive juncture in the development of PSTs' professional identities, as they encounter the real challenges, rewards, and complexities of being a language teacher for the first time and begin to question, negotiate, and shape their beliefs, attitudes, and teaching philosophies.

Therefore, language teacher education programs and faculty should carefully consider how to effectively support and nurture the teaching practicum and supervision process to facilitate the preparation of future language teachers. One crucial aspect that needs dedicated attention in this complex, challenging, and often highly emotional process (Caires et al., 2010, 2012) of learning to teach is professional (mentor) feedback (e.g., Akcan & Tatar, 2010; Altınmakas, 2012; Anderson & Radencich, 2001; Bhatti et al., 2020; Le, 2007; Le & Vásquez, 2011; Martínez Agudo, 2016; Nguyen, 2022). During the teaching practicum, PSTs greatly benefit from receiving mentor feedback on their performance, as it serves as a valuable tool for their development and evolution as professionals. Through regular and systematic mentor feedback sessions, they gain insights into their teaching practices, allowing them to reflect on and identify their capabilities, strengths, and areas needing additional focus. This feedback also helps them establish benchmarks for self-improvement and pursue customized professional development activities as needed to enhance their instruction, ultimately preparing them for successful careers in teaching (e.g., Aydın, 2016; Aydın & Ok, 2020; Çelik & Zehir Topkaya, 2023; Farr & Farrell, 2023; Keiler et al., 2020).

It should be noted, however, that the feedback offered to PSTs during their practicum cannot be random. This has been the basis for the faculty-school cooperation model, which places strong emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved in PSTs' education in teaching practicum, as well as the evaluation criteria to be used in their assessment (see CoHE, 1998). In this regard, based on our experiences in teacher education and teaching practicum, we believe that having well-defined evaluation criteria in place is essential for providing effective feedback, as this ensures a clear framework for assessment, ultimately fostering consistency and accountability across various programs and practicum placements. Such standards and expectations for PSTs' performance and progress during their practicum pave the way not only for meaningful feedback to prompt their self-awareness and growth as reflective practitioners but also serve as a means of ensuring accountability and uniformity across diverse programs and teaching practicum placements (see Asregid et al., 2023; Martinez Agudo, 2016). Evaluating PSTs against predetermined indicators aligned with the specific program goals, objectives, and learning outcomes helps monitor and ensure the caliber of language teacher preparation programs, fulfilling educational and institutional requirements while safeguarding credibility. Therefore, facilitating a coherent and integrated approach to PSTs' education, including the delivery of productive and insightful feedback based on predetermined evaluation criteria, becomes possible only when the teaching practicum experience is directly linked to the teaching skills acquired during the program.

While the evaluation criteria used in teaching practicum and supervision have a vital role in forming the experiences and professional judgments of PSTs, it is similarly important to explore the knowledge and perceptions of both PSTs and their mentors regarding these evaluation criteria, particularly within the context of English language (EFL interchangeably) teacher education in Türkiye, where the teaching practicum course and the accompanying evaluation methods and criteria have undergone multiple and major changes in the last decade. Furthermore, lack of understanding due to lack of research in this specific area poses a potential challenge in ensuring the effectiveness and quality of the practicum experience, making it a must to investigate the perceptions of all stakeholders

involved to identify any discrepancies, challenges, and potential areas for improvement in the evaluation criteria. Accordingly, we examine the perceptions of preservice English language teachers and mentors from their school and faculty with regard to the significance of evaluation criteria used in teaching practicum within the Turkish EFL teacher education context.

By exploring these perceptions, we seek to acquire some insight into the experiences and expectations of various stakeholders, including PSTs, and school and faculty mentors regarding the evaluation criteria used in teaching practicum in the EFL language teacher education in Türkiye. The findings may offer valuable practical implications for teacher education programs, mentoring practices, and evaluation processes within the Turkish EFL context by enabling different parties to assess the extent to which the evaluation criteria successfully measure the desired learning outcomes (i.e., alignment between the evaluation criteria and the overall program objectives). Moreover, given that the existing evaluation criteria are rooted in the teacher competency framework (see CoHE, 1998; TED, 2009), this study may offer insights into which specific competency area(s) hold greater weight, particularly as perceived by mentors in the realization of the teaching profession within authentic classroom settings. Furthermore, the findings of this study will inform recommendations for improving evaluation criteria, thereby enriching the scholarly discourse on leveraging them for a comprehensive assessment of preservice language teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As mentioned earlier, the teaching practicum, referred to as field experience (Crandall, 2000) or school teaching (Farrell, 2008), is a crucial component of teacher education programs. Successful teaching practicum experiences and professional development of PSTs rely heavily on two key factors: strong collaboration and communication between school mentors and faculty mentors (SMs and FMs, hereafter) and the establishment of a shared understanding of evaluation (Bullock, 2017; Castaneda & Montenegro, 2015; Celen & Akcan, 2017; Karaman et al., 2019; Merç, 2015). In this regard, it is important to delve into the unique context of Türkiye and examine if and to what extent school and faculty mentors value the evaluation criteria used in PSTs' teaching practicum.

Teaching Practicum in Preservice English Teacher Education in Türkiye

In Türkiye, a practicum course entitled *Instructional Practices* was first incorporated into teacher education programs in 1982 when teacher training institutions were unified under universities (CoHE, 2007). The name was later changed to *Teaching Practice* in the 1997-1998 academic year within the framework of the World Bank-supported National Education Development Project aimed at, alongside other goals, enhancing the quality of teacher education (Koç et al., 1998). This change was brought about by the Faculty of Education-School Collaboration implemented by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) through a protocol signed on July 28, 1998 (CoHE, 2007). The order underwent an update in 2018 (MoNE, 2018) to require a minimum of 72 teaching hours (six hours per week over 12 weeks) for PSTs in one semester. Furthermore, changes were made to the implementation of the course, limiting the number of PSTs to a maximum of 6 per SM and 8 per FM (MoNE, 2018). Despite the changes, the teaching practicum course ultimately aims to provide preservice teachers with the skills, expertise, perspectives, and extensive capabilities required for the teaching profession. In addition, as MoNE (2021) reported, the teaching practicum aims to ensure that the "PSTs are better prepared for the teaching profession and gain the competence to utilize the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors related to general culture, pedagogical content, and the teaching profession acquired during their education" (p. 1). PSTs stand to benefit greatly from teaching practicum, as it allows them to receive feedback from their SMs and gain insight and understanding of the authentic classroom setting, ultimately helping them refine their skills and develop a professional identity (Celen & Akcan, 2017; Karaman et al., 2019; Merç, 2015; Serdar Tülüce & Çeçen, 2016).

Furthermore, acquiring professional knowledge requires understanding the criteria that define what is allowed, correct or incorrect, true or false, fitting or unfitting, and what is better and why (Richards, 2008). In other words, it requires knowing what is important in practice, which necessitates the identification of teacher competencies that will serve, in turn, as a guide to evaluating teacher performance during the practicum (Shalem & Slonimsky, 2010). By engaging in real classroom teaching and receiving constructive feedback from mentors, PSTs have the opportunity to apply and refine the competencies they have acquired through their faculty education. Although teacher competencies may vary across countries and institutions, they set the standards of teacher education and aim to ensure that PSTs are well-equipped to educate students effectively. They also establish the standards of PSTs' performance throughout the teaching practice process (Elliott, 2015).

In the teacher education context in Türkiye, as part of the negotiations for integration into the EU, the general competencies of teachers were defined (see Türk Eğitim Derneği (TED), 2009). Additionally, domain-specific competencies for English language teachers were specified in 2008 by the MoNE's Directorate of Teacher Training and Development (MoNE, 2008). They serve as a comprehensive set of skills that outline the foundational knowledge, pedagogical skills, and professional dispositions that English teachers are required to possess. The competencies also guide standards for teacher education in higher education and define performance criteria in the teaching practice. In this regard, they provide a benchmark for evaluating and fostering teaching performance (Aguinis, 2009; Elliot, 2015).

Therefore, evaluation criteria informed by teacher competencies provide a structured framework to SMs and FMs in their evaluations of the PSTs' teaching performance during their teaching practicum. Using these criteria ensures standardization in all teacher education programs (Elliot, 2015; Merç, 2015) and identification of PSTs' strengths and areas of improvement becomes easier (Castaneda & Montenegro, 2015). Therefore, feedback based on evaluation criteria enables PSTs to reflect on their practice and develop action plans for further development (Merç, 2015; Serdar Tülüce & Çeçen, 2016).

Research on Mentors' Evaluations of PSTs' Performance in Teaching Practicum

Research shows that SMs and FMs have different approaches and opinions regarding providing feedback to PSTs in their teaching practicum (Aydın, 2016; İlya, 2022; Orsdemir & Yıldırım, 2020; Tüfekçi Can & Baştürk, 2018). A study by Aydın (2016) indicated that SMs often lack confidence in their ability to provide constructive feedback and identify weaknesses in PSTs. Therefore, they depend too much on numerical evaluations and positive feedback rather than providing detailed comments and explanations. Besides, PSTs felt that they were not receiving sufficient feedback from their SMs during teaching practice (see Tüfekçi Can & Baştürk, 2018). Examining PSTs' views on the accomplishment of mentoring roles and responsibilities, Aydın and Ok (2020) probed into SMs' mentoring practices. Data revealed that PSTs only tended to agree on the execution of observer-feedback provider and assessor-evaluator. Yaylı (2018) examined SMs' support for PSTs and the theory-practice gap in Türkiye and found that SMs in Türkiye were reluctant to mentor PSTs and considered it a secondary task. The research indicates that mentor roles should be clearly outlined and preservice teacher education in Türkiye should be rearranged to reinforce vulnerable links between faculties and schools. In line with this, Rakicioglu-Soylemez and Eroz-Tuga (2014) proposed that SMs should be made aware of how to properly carry out mentoring procedures to effectively meet PSTs' needs. Similarly, Orsdemir and Yıldırım (2020) found that PSTs identified feedback provision as the least observed behavior among mentors and considered it the most critical area for SMs to improve.

On the one hand, despite the scarcity of research, Merç (2015) reported that PSTs expressed greater confidence in their FMs' evaluation of their practicum performance compared to their SMs', albeit acknowledging a divergence between the theoretical evaluation criteria used by each supervisor. On the other hand, İlya (2022) highlighted the need for a standard protocol. However, knowing that

such protocols are already available and standards of PSTs' evaluation are already defined by the MoNE and CoHE, we, as the authors, want to underline the need for a closer examination of SMs' and FMs' evaluations of PSTs' teaching performance in their teaching practicum. For instance, Karaman et al. (2019), SMs often view filling out the required evaluation criteria as burdensome paperwork. Consequently, they tend to prioritize other aspects of PST evaluation and may inadvertently overlook or ignore the importance of those performance criteria. Regarding the evaluation forms, Ak Başoğul et al. (2023) found that those evaluation forms were inadequate and lacking in meeting the demands of 21st century teacher competencies. The study reveals that the existing evaluation forms did not adequately capture the diverse skills and dispositions required for effective teaching in the modern educational landscape. Kablan et al. (2015) analyzed the opinions of SMs, FMs, and PSTs about the practicum using the evaluation form. The findings revealed that the PSTs exhibited a higher level of agreement with the SMs, particularly in the aspect of the teaching process as a sub-domain of the whole teaching and learning process which begins with lesson planning and covers two other key skills as classroom management and communication. Additionally, significant correlations were observed between the FMs and the SMs in all three areas, namely content knowledge, teaching process, and classroom management.

Consequently, as research indicates, there is a need for improvement in several areas to enhance the development of PSTs, including the provision of quality feedback, the utilization of objective evaluation criteria by both SMs and FMs, and improved coordination between these two groups. Addressing these factors is crucial in ensuring the optimal growth and development of PSTs during their teaching practicum experiences (Celen & Akcan, 2017). However, given the discrepancies between mentors' understanding and utilization of the evaluation criteria in PSTs' teaching practicum, examining the degree of importance that PSTs, and their FMs and SMs attach to the evaluation criteria becomes even more critical to promote a more consistent and effective evaluation process. To the best of our knowledge, the current study is a pioneering attempt in this area.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, we carried out multi-perspective research (Paltridge, 2020) and elicited the perceptions held by multiple parties regarding the significance of the evaluation criteria set by the MoNE for the evaluation of preservice English teachers' teaching practice and performance at teaching practicum schools. With this in mind, we explored the perceptions of preservice teachers enrolled in an English language teaching (ELT) program at a state university in northeastern Türkiye, as well as the school and faculty mentors who supervised them during their teaching practicum at practicum schools. Approval from Trabzon University's Board of Research and Publication Ethics (Report no: 2022-3/1.10) was secured before commencing data collection.

We sought answers to the following main and sub-research questions:

1.   What are the perceptions of preservice English language teachers, school mentors, and faculty mentors regarding the significance of evaluation criteria used in teaching practicum?

      a.   Do the degrees of significance attributed to the evaluation criteria align or differ among the preservice English language teachers, school mentors, and faculty mentors?

Data Collection and Instrumentation

To answer the questions above, we used the evaluation criteria that the MoNE officially requires faculty and school mentors to use in their evaluations of preservice teachers after each of their teaching practices. The evaluation criteria can be accessed by faculty and school mentors at

https://uod.meb.gov.tr/. The guidelines for PSTs' evaluation were published by the MoNE in 2021 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Evaluation criteria used by school mentors and faculty mentors

Evaluation criteria	Party of evaluation	Sub-criteria	Number of items
Content and pedagogical content knowledge	School and Faculty mentors	Content knowledge	4
		Pedagogical content knowledge	5
Teaching and learning process	School mentors	Teaching process	11
		Classroom management	At the start of the lesson: 2 items
			Throughout the lesson: 4 items
			At the end of the lesson: 3 items
		Communication	6
	Faculty mentors	Planning	6

There are 35 evaluation items under two main domains and five sub-evaluation domains to be used by SMs. The items are put on a 3-point rubric as *not adequately developed, acceptable,* and *well-developed*. The FMs are given 15 items under three sub-evaluation criteria. To gather the perceptions of all parties involved, namely PSTs, SMs, and FMs, regarding the importance attributed to each evaluation criterion, a 5-point Likert scale was utilized. The scale ranged from *"very insignificant" (1)* to *"very significant" (5)*. The intermediate options were defined as follows: *"insignificant" (2)*, *"neither significant nor insignificant" (3)*, and *"significant" (4)*.

We also developed a demographic information form for each party. The demographic questions for the PSTs included age, gender, perceived language competence, perceived level of preparedness to teach, whether they received feedback from their school mentors and faculty mentors, and the frequency and means of receiving such feedback. As for the mentors, in addition to basic demographic information such as age and gender, we included additional items to elicit more detailed information about their professional profiles. The questions included the length of their teaching experience, education, whether they had master's and/or doctoral degrees, and their majors for all the degrees held. The length of experience in supervising PSTs was another question. Some other questions directly addressing their feedback practices included whether they provided the PSTs with any feedback, as well as the frequency and means of delivering feedback.

Before collecting data, we conducted a pre-piloting of the questionnaire for PSTs with five PSTs in their 3rd year of studies. We asked them to read each item carefully and evaluate their comprehensibility. As for the questionnaire form targeting mentors, we sought feedback on its comprehensibility from two departmental members who were not involved in the data collection process since they did not hold any mentoring roles or responsibilities. For the piloting, we contacted the PSTs (*N*=62) studying at a nearby university. During the pilot analysis, we tested the reliability of items that were turned into a scale format. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency score for the 15 items used by FMs' was found to be .94, while it was .98 for the 35 items used by SMs, both indicating excellent reliability.

The data collection took place in the fall semester of 2022 from the PSTs enrolled in an English language teacher education program and from their FMs and SMs mentoring and supervising them during their practicum. This study attempts to offer a unique perspective on evaluation and feedback practices during the teaching practicum within an ELT program in Türkiye, making it a

noteworthy case. Ethical consent for conducting the study was obtained from the authors' university's Ethics Committee under reference number E-81614018-000-2200011460, granted on 14th March 2022.

Participants

The participants included the senior PSTs (*N*=25) studying at the ELT program at a state university in northeastern Türkiye and the SMs (*N*=11) and FMs (*N*=7) supervising the PSTs as they were doing their teaching practicum at schools in center city schools.

The great majority of the PSTs were females (*n*=20), while the rest were males (*n*=5). Their ages ranged from 21 to 25 with an average of 22. They perceived their language competences as competent and themselves as almost prepared to teach (*M*=3.92). The great majority (*n*=23) reported that they received feedback from their SMs, while two said they did not receive feedback or any regular evaluation. Some of those (*n*=13) who said they received feedback reported receiving it after each teaching practice, while some others (*n*=10) reported receiving occasional feedback. As for how they received the feedback, some reported that their SMs used the checklist (*n*=6) while a great majority (*n*=27) reported that their SMs provided written and spoken feedback without a checklist. Regarding if, how, and how often they received feedback from their SMs, 12 PSTs who reported that they received feedback from their mentors reported receiving feedback after each of their teaching practices (*n*=12), while the other 12 received feedback occasionally either through a checklist (*n*=7) or written and spoken feedback without the checklist (*n*=17). One PST reported never receiving feedback, a circumstance that deviated from the established roles and responsibilities expected of both parties of mentors.

Four FMs were females, while the rest were males. The ages of the participants ranged between 32 and 43, with a mean of 37. Their teaching experience ranged from 10 to 22 with an average of 14. On average, they have been supervising PSTs for a period ranging between two to seven years, with an average of four years. Out of the seven, five had earned doctoral degrees in ELT, one had a master's in applied linguistics and one was in the process of obtaining her doctoral in a non-language related field. All reported providing the PSTs with feedback after each of their teaching practices using the checklist (*n*=2), written notes without the checklist (n=3), and verbal feedback without notes and the checklist (*n*=1).

Similar to the FMS, the great majority of the SMs were females (*n*=9), while the rest (*n*=2) were males. The participants varied in age from 33 to 54, with an average of 41. They have been teaching for 14 years on average and have been supervising PSTs for six years on average with the most experienced one having 20 and the least experienced one with one year experience. The majority (*n*=9) were graduates of English language teaching programs and two were graduates of English Language and Literature. Very few of them (*n*=3) had MA degrees in education-related programs other than English language teaching. All reported giving feedback to PSTs after each of their teaching practices using the checklist (*n*=5), or written notes without the checklist (*n*=6).

Data analysis

The data were initially analyzed through descriptive statistics. To find the significance attached to each evaluation criterion by each party, we first ran an item-based analysis and then analyzed each subdomain and the overall domain. To further examine the likely differences between the levels of significance they attached to the evaluation criteria, we also ran inferential statistics. Before this, we ran a normality test for each of the subdomains and the overall evaluation domains. The results showed that the data were non-normally distributed in all sets (*p*<.05). Therefore, we employed the Kruskal-Wallis test, the non-parametric version of the ANOVA test (see Lalanne & Mesbah, 2016) to compare the independent scores (Field, 2018). For the evaluation subdomains in which the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated statistically significant differences, we carried out the Mann-

Whitney U test which is a non-parametric test to compare unrelated samples to find out which one of the parties differ statistically significantly from each other in their perceptions of the evaluation criteria.

FINDINGS

In the table below, we provide a comprehensive overview of PSTs', SMs', and FMs' perceptions regarding the significance of evaluation criteria, encompassing a total of 35 items utilized by SMs. We bring all parties to the same table (Table 2) for an easier interpretation of the findings and the likely comparisons that the readers will make.

Table 2. Parties' perceptions of the significance of the evaluation criteria used by SMs

Domains & Subdomains of Evaluation		No	Item	PSTs		SMs		FMs	
				M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Content and pedagogical content knowledge	**Content knowledge**	1	Knowing the basic principles and concepts related to the subject	4.40	.58	4.64	.67	4.86	.38
		2	Being able to relate the basic principles and concepts in the subject with a logical consistency	4.24	.60	4.36	.67	5.00	.00
		3	Being able to use verbal and visual language (figures, diagrams, graphics, formulas, etc.) appropriately	4.44	.51	4.45	.69	5.00	.00
		4	Being able to associate the subject with other subjects in the field	4.20	.58	4.45	.69	4.57	.53
	Pedagogical content knowledge	5	Knowing special teaching approaches, methods, and techniques	4.12	.73	4.36	.67	4.86	.38
		6	Being able to utilize instructional technologies	4.60	.58	4.73	.47	4.86	.38

		7	Being able to identify incorrectly-developed concepts in students	4.24	.88	4.64	.50	4.86	.38
		8	Being able to give appropriate and adequate responses to student questions	4.68	.48	4.73	.47	5.00	.00
		9	Being able to ensure the safety of the learning environment	4.24	.88	4.64	.50	5.00	.00
Teaching and learning process	**Teaching process**	10	Being able to relate the subject to previous and subsequent lessons	4.24	.66	4.73	.47	4.86	.38
		11	Being able to determine methods and techniques appropriate for achieving the learning outcomes	4.44	.71	4.64	.50	4.86	.38
		12	Being able to use time effectively	4.52	.59	4.73	.47	5.00	.00
		13	Being able to design activities for students' active participation	4.48	.71	4.73	.65	5.00	.00
		14	Being able to continue teaching according to individual differences	4.32	.85	4.45	.69	4.86	.38
		15	Being able to select and prepare appropriate tools and materials	4.48	.71	4.45	.52	4.86	.38
		16	Being able to use teaching tools and materials in accordance with the class level	4.56	.58	4.55	.52	5.00	.00

	17	Being able to summarize during the lesson	3.68	.85	4.36	.67	4.29	.95
	18	Being able to give feedback according to students' level of understanding	4.56	.58	4.73	.47	4.86	.38
	19	Being able to relate the subject to life	4.40	.87	4.36	.50	4.71	.76
	20	Being able to use evaluation techniques in accordance with the learning outcomes	4.32	.85	4.55	.52	4.71	.76
Classroom management	21	Being able to make an appropriate introduction to the lesson	4.48	.71	4.45	.52	4.86	.38
	22	Being able to attract student interest and attention to the lesson	4.52	.71	4.64	.67	5.00	.00
	23	Being able to provide a democratic learning environment	4.52	.59	4.45	.69	4.71	.76
	24	Being able to ensure the continuity of interest and motivation in the lesson	4.56	.77	4.36	.67	4.86	.38
	25	Being able to take appropriate precautions against interruptions and blockages	4.28	.79	4.45	.69	4.86	.38
	26	Being able to benefit from praise and sanctions	4.08	.81	4.27	.79	4.86	.38
	27	Being able to summarize the lesson	4.44	.51	4.36	.67	5.00	.00

	28	Being able to give information about assignments for the next lesson	4.16	.75	4.09	.30	4.57	.53
	29	Being able to prepare the students to leave the classroom	3.80	.76	4.00	.45	4.29	1.11
Communication	30	Being able to communicate effectively with students	4.72	.54	4.82	.40	5.00	.00
	31	Being able to give clear explanations and instructions	4.80	.41	4.82	.40	5.00	.00
	32	Being able to ask thought-provoking questions in accordance with the topic	4.44	.58	4.64	.50	4.86	.38
	33	Being able to use the voice effectively	4.60	.71	4.64	.67	5.00	.00
	34	Being able to listen to the students with care	4.68	.48	4.45	.69	4.57	.79
	35	Being able to use verbal and non-verbal language effectively	4.64	.70	4.82	.40	4.86	.38

A closer look at the PSTs' evaluation of each evaluation criterion shows that except for item 17 (Being able to summarize during the lesson) and item 29 (Being able to prepare the students to leave the class) that they perceived neither significant nor insignificant (*M*=3.68), they considered all other items significant with varying degrees. *Being able to give clear explanations and instructions* was the item to which they attached the highest degree of significance (*M*=4.80). They also attached a similar degree of significance to *being able to communicate effectively with students* (*M*=4.72), which was followed by *being able to give appropriate and adequate responses to student questions* and *being able to listen to the students with care*.

The SMs perceived the entire evaluation criteria as significant with varying degrees. Some of the items were attached with greater significance, but three of the six communication items were given the greatest importance. They perceived *being able to communicate effectively with students*, *being able to give clear explanations and instructio*n, and *being able to use verbal and non-verbal language effectively* as the most significant teacher skills and competencies to be performed by PSTs. Similar to the PSTs, the SMs perceived *being able to prepare students to leave the class* as the relatively least significant skill. There are some items (#19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, and 34) that the SMs attached relatively lower levels of significance compared to the PSTs. SMs and PSTs seemed to almost agree

on the significance of *being able to use teaching tools and materials in accordance with the class level*. For the rest of the items, the SMs attached higher degrees of significance.

The FMs, compared to the PSTs and SMs, attached higher degrees of significance to all evaluation criteria, except for item 17 where they were found to perceive *being able to summarize the lesson* as less important compared to the SMs, but not the PSTs. There are some items (#2, 3, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 22, 27, 30, 31, and 33) that they perceived as very significant, although such a degree of significance was not observed in the PSTs' and SMs' responses.

We also examined how each of these parties perceived the overall significance of each of the subdomains of evaluation criteria besides the whole set of evaluation criteria (see Table 3).

Table 3. Parties' perceptions of the significance of subdomains of the evaluation criteria used by SMs

Subdomain	PSTs		SMs		FMs	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Content knowledge	4.32	.42	4.50	.62	4.86	.20
Pedagogical content knowledge	4.38	.55	4.62	.34	4.91	.11
Teaching process	4.36	.51	4.57	.42	4.82	.37
Classroom management	4.32	.53	4.34	.47	4.78	.29
Communication	4.65	.44	4.67	.43	4.88	.25
Overall	**4.40**	**.43**	**4.53**	**.42**	**4.84**	**.25**

As seen, all perceived the whole set of evaluation criteria used by the SMs as significant. FMs reported an evidently higher level of significance for all the subdomains of evaluation. The overall level of significance that they attached to the evaluation criteria was higher compared to PSTs and who were found to attach higher levels of significance to both sub and overall criteria compared to PSTs. The PSTs evaluated *communication* as the most significant domain, while the other domains revealed almost equal degrees of significance. The SMs also perceived *communication* as the most significant domain of the evaluation, while *classroom management* revealed the lowest level of significance. The FMs, on the other hand, were found to perceive *pedagogical content knowledge* as the most significant domain, followed by *communication* and *content knowledge*.

We ran the Kruskal-Wallis test to examine any likely statistically significant differences between their evaluations of the overall evaluation criteria and subdomains. Based on the differences between the rank totals of the PSTs (17.84), SMs (24.82), and FMs (32.43), there was a statistically significant difference $H(2, n=43)=8.52$, $p= .014$ between their perceptions of the significance of *content knowledge*. Therefore, we conducted post hoc comparisons using the Mann-Whitney U test which showed that the difference between PSTs and FMs was statistically significant ($p=.000$). Besides, the differences between the rank totals of the PSTs (18.24), SMs (23.09), and FMs (33.71) revealed that the level of significance that they attached to the evaluation of PSTs' *pedagogical content knowledge* was statistically significant $H(2, n=43)=8.71$, $p= .013$. The Mann-Whitney U post hoc comparison revealed that the SMs and FMs ($p=.019$) and PSTs and FMs hold statistically significant levels of perceptions ($p=.000$). Additionally, their (PSTs=18.40, SMs=24.18, FMs=31.43) perceived level of significance regarding the evaluation of *teaching process* was also found as statistically significant $H(2, n=43)=6.47$, $p= .039$. The post hoc comparisons showed that the PSTs and FMs hold statistically significant levels of perceptions ($p=.020$). Moreover, the differences between the total ranks of PSTs (19.80), SMs (20.27), and FMs (32.57) also revealed statistically significant differences in their evaluations of *classroom management* $H(2, n=43)=6.02$, $p= .049$. The post hoc comparisons showed that the SMs and FMs statistically significantly differed ($p=.027$). The difference between PSTs and the FMs was also statistically significant ($p=.007$).

On the other hand, the PSTs (19.70), SMs (22.91), and FMs (28.79) did not differ significantly in the level of significance that they attached to communication $H(2, n=43)=3.21$, $p= .201$. However, the PSTs (18.38), SMs (23.18), and FMs (33.07) were found to differ statistically significantly from each other in their overall evaluations of the whole set of evaluation criteria used by the SMs $H(2, n=43)=7.64$, $p= 022$. The post hoc comparison also confirmed that the overall level of significance that the FMs attached to the evaluation criteria used by the SMs was higher than those of the PSTs.

Table 4. Parties' perceptions of the significance of the evaluation criteria used by FMs

Domains & Subdomains of Evaluation		No	Item	PSTs		SMs		FMs	
				M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Content and pedagogical content knowledge	**Content knowledge**	1	Knowing the basic principles and concepts related to the subject	4.56	.58	4.45	.93	4.71	.49
		2	Being able to relate the basic principles and concepts in the subject with a logical consistency	4.28	.74	4.36	.92	4.86	.38
		3	Being able to use verbal and visual language (figures, diagrams, graphics, formulas, etc.) appropriately	4.40	.58	4.63	.67	4.86	.38
		4	Being able to associate the subject with other subjects in the field	4.24	.88	4.54	.69	4.58	.53
	Pedagogical content knowledge	5	Knowing special teaching approaches, methods, and techniques	4.20	.87	4.64	.67	4.71	.76
		6	Being able to utilize instructional technologies	4.68	.69	4.64	.67	5.00	.00
		7	Being able to identify incorrectly-developed concepts in students	4.32	.95	4.64	.67	4.71	.49
		8	Being able to give appropriate and adequate responses to student questions	4.60	.71	4.55	.93	4.86	.38
		9	Being able to ensure the safety of the learning environment	4.32	1.0	4.45	.93	4.86	.38
Teaching and learning process	**Planning**	10	Being able to devise clear, comprehensible, and well-organized lesson plans	4.36	.91	4.45	.93	4.71	.76

11	Being able to write clear aims and learning outcomes	4.36	.70	4.55	.69	5.00	.00
12	Being able to determine methods and techniques appropriate for achieving the learning outcomes	4.44	.71	4.64	.67	4.86	.38
13	Being able to select and prepare appropriate tools and materials	4.68	.56	4.55	.69	5.00	.00
14	Being able to determine evaluation methods appropriate for learning outcomes	4.40	.76	4.55	.69	4.71	.76
15	Being able to relate the topic to preceding and proceeding ones	4.56	.71	4.55	.69	4.86	.38

Compared to the PSTs and SMs, the FMs have reported a clearly higher level of significance of the evaluation criteria in their own evaluations of the PSTs at teaching practicum schools. All parties were found to perceive the evaluation criteria as significant (item means are over 4.00 for each).

A closer look into each party's perceived significance of the evaluation criteria reveals the details and differences. For instance, the PSTs attached the highest degree of significance to being evaluated on their *being able to select and prepare appropriate tools and materials* and *being able to utilize instructional technologies* (*M*=4.68 for both). *Being able to give appropriate and adequate responses to student questions* was perceived as almost equally significant (*M*=4.60). *Knowing the basic principles and concepts related to the subjec*t, and *being able to relate the topic to preceding and proceeding topics* (*M*= 4.56 for both) were also perceived among other significant evaluation criteria. *Knowing special teaching approaches, methods, and technique*s, which was considered the least important evaluation criterion for the PSTs (*M*=4.20), was, in fact, perceived as more important by the SMs and FMs. Some other items such as *being able to associate the subject with other subjects in the field* (*M*=4.24) and *being able to relate the basic principles and concepts in the subject with a logical consistency* (*M*=4.28) were also perceived as relatively less significant by the PSTs. Similar to the PSTs, the SMs attached higher levels of significance to the utilization of instructional technologies (*M*=4.64) but with slightly less significance. *Being able to identify incorrectly developed concepts in students* and *being able to determine methods and techniques appropriate for achieving the learning outcomes* (*M*=4.64 for both) were also perceived as significant by the SMs. However, compared to the PSTs, the SMs were found to hold lower levels of significance attached to some other items (#1, 6, 8, 13, and 15). As for the FMs, some items (#6, 11, and 13) were revealed to be perceived as very significant, while the rest were also perceived to be significant with relatively lower levels of significance.

To make a clearer interpretation of the levels of significance that the PSTs, SMs, and FMs attached to the sub-evaluation criteria besides the whole set of criteria used by the SMs, we calculated the means and standard deviations (see Table 5).

Table 5. Parties' perceptions of the significance of subdomains of the evaluation criteria used by FMs

Subdomain	PSTs		SMs		FMs	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*

Content knowledge	4.37	.42	4.50	.77	4.75	.38
Pedagogical content knowledge	4.42	.55	4.58	.73	4.83	.29
Planning	4.47	.51	4.55	.68	4.86	.38
Overall	**4.43**	**.62**	**4.55**	**.71**	**4.82**	**.34**

As seen, the SMs attach a distinctively higher level of significance to all the sub-evaluation criteria; thus the whole set of criteria. *Planning was* the most significantly perceived evaluation criterion by the PSTs and FMs which was *pedagogical content knowledge* for the SMs. *Content knowledge* was the least significant evaluation criterion for all parties. To determine the extent of the differences in the levels of significance attached by all parties, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted. The results did not indicate any statistically significant differences in the overall evaluation of the entire set of criteria, as well as in any of the sub-evaluation criteria ($p > .05$).

DISCUSSION

As per our information, this study is the first to examine the degree of significance attributed to the evaluation criteria established by the MoNE for assessing PSTs' teaching practice and performance during their practicum by their school and faculty mentors in the Turkish context. This study has revealed several key issues. First and foremost, despite the scarcity of research examining the evaluation criteria used in the teaching practicum, the findings confirm the critical role that mentors and their feedback play in PSTs' education as depicted by many other studies focusing on mentors' evaluation in the teaching practicum (see Aydın, 2016; İlya, 2022; Kablan et al., 2015; Karaman et al., 2019; Orsdemir & Yıldırım, 2020; Rakicioglu-Soylemez & Eroz-Tuga, 2014; Tüfekçi Can & Baştürk, 2018).

The findings highlight the importance attributed to the different evaluation criteria, subdomains, and overall assessments by each group. All parties acknowledged the value of the evaluation criteria, yet their views on the significance of each criterion varied. For instance, while the PSTs and SMs attached greater importance to more practical skills of teaching such as communication in the teaching and learning process as the sub-evaluation domain used by the SMs, the FMs regarded pedagogical content knowledge as the most significant skill which they expect PSTs to perform and SMs to evaluate. As for the evaluation criteria used by FMs, PSTs and FMs attributed greater significance to planning, while SMs valued the evaluation of PSTs' pedagogical content knowledge by their FMs. Such disparities between PSTs and mentors regarding EFL teaching have been reported in the international context (Li et al., 2023).

These findings demonstrate that all parties have distinct perceptions, priorities, and ideas regarding the value of diverse evaluation criteria which may lead to greater attention to the different dimensions of the implementation while neglecting others, and, in such a context, there may be deficiencies in the advancement of teachers' skills and competencies and the development of their professional identities. The result of the study aligns closely with the findings of Merç's (2015) research which also concluded that variations in the significance attached to different dimensions of assessment by assessors lead to diverse outcomes in grading. This suggests that there exists a disparity in the evaluation of PSTs indicating a lack of understanding in well-prepared teachers.

Moreover, considering the sub-categories of the assessment criteria, each party recognized their importance. Significant differences were observed in their approach to subject matter knowledge, teaching process, and classroom management. This underscores the necessity for tailored evaluation criteria that align with the desires and expectations of all stakeholders. It further emphasizes the importance of involving all parties in the development of these criteria to ensure they accurately reflect the needs and perspectives of everyone involved. This finding supports the results of Ak Başoğul's (2023) study that teacher training and evaluation procedures must be enhanced in faculty-school cooperation, and the evaluation forms should be adjusted accordingly.

Lastly, one of the most important findings of the study is the statistical significance in PSTs', SMs', and FMs' perceptions regarding the importance of the criteria used by SMs. Such sub-evaluation domains as content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, teaching process, and classroom management were attached to greater degrees of importance. This suggests the key role that all parties attributed to SMs' role in teaching practicum as such a statistical significance was not found in the evaluation criteria used by FMs. A recent study in the same context also revealed that PSTs put more emphasis on SMs and their mentoring for their preparedness to teach compared to FMs (Çelik & Zehir Topkaya, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Consequently, this study provides valuable insights into how PSTs, SMs, and FMS, as key parties in PSTs' teaching practicum, perceive the significance of the evaluation criteria used by SMs and FMs to evaluate PSTs' teaching performance in teaching practicum. First and foremost, the findings highlight the complexity and intricacy of PSTs' evaluation when they are closest to the profession and where the feedback and evaluation they receive from their mentors play an important role in their preparedness for the profession.

As we delve deeper into the findings, it becomes evident that the perspectives of PSTs, FMs, and SMs offer a unique lens into the complexities of practicum evaluation. Despite the availability of standardized sets of criteria for FMs and SMs, the findings highlight the disparities in evaluation criteria between them and emphasize the need for alignment, as effective dissemination of standardized criteria is seen as key to establishing a common ground. This not only fosters consistency and fairness in evaluations but also ensures the readiness of PSTs as they near the completion of their preservice education. Moreover, while cooperation between faculty and school is frequently cited, the practicum phase—where the two parties come together and work closely the most—necessitates specific initiatives to enhance collaboration between FMs and SMs in understanding and applying these evaluation criteria.

Accordingly, conducting research in various English language teaching program contexts in Türkiye would help mitigate the potential limitations associated with examining a single case as a sample. Exploring additional factors such as feedback provision, mentoring approaches, and the role of self-assessment can significantly enrich our understanding of the evaluation process in teaching practicum. This study makes a substantial contribution to the ongoing discourse on practicum evaluation practices in preservice English language teacher education, offering valuable insights to enhance the quality of teaching practicum experiences for PSTs. It is worth noting, however, that given the exclusive use of quantitative data in this study, research employing qualitative and/or mixed methods designs could provide further nuanced insights.

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