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## TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Student teaching from the perspectives of cooperating teachers and pupils

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**Abstract:** To facilitate student-teachers' transition from internship to permanent positions, they are advised to meticulously learn from real experiences of practicum process as it might form their future teaching practices. To help promote the effectiveness of this process, investigating student-teaching from stakeholder perspectives could be enriching. Research on the cooperating teacher has mainly dealt with the perspective of student-teachers; however, this study focuses on student teaching process from the perspective of both cooperating teachers and the pupils in student-teacher's classes of EFL in a Turkish teaching context. We administered open-ended questionnaires to 21 teachers and 114 pupils and carried out inductive qualitative content analysis to analyze the data. The study elaborates on the cooperating teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the student-teachers as well as the impact of their teaching. Results reveal that the arrival of student-teachers was highly welcomed by most of the students and some of the cooperating teachers even though some expectations from student-teachers were not met.

**Subjects:** Educational Research; Initial Teacher Training; Language Teaching & Learning

**Keywords:** teacher education; student teaching; perceptions of pupils; perceptions of cooperating teachers; student-teachers

### 1. Introduction

Traditionally there has been a long standing conflict between teacher education programs with their theoretical orientation and the public schools with their practical and real world hands-on orientation. Therefore, to solve the possible conflicts, effective early field experiences are necessary and require closer ties between schools and teacher education programs. Such partnerships are not new;

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### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Exploring the perspectives of pupils and cooperating teachers who are affected by student teaching helps better conceptualize the practicum process and provide insights into achieving more transparent, consistent, and sustainable training standards. This study argues that for a high-caliber student teaching process to occur, cooperating teachers', and pupils' perceptions should evolve in a positive direction. However, the data reveal that cooperating teachers and pupils exhibited various attitudes toward the student-teachers' initial experiences for several reasons.

precedents exist for other professions and occupations, such as for engineering, business, medicine and law. Early field experiences in teacher education are in a sense like the experiences provided to medical students in the active participatory roles of internships and residencies. Through field experiences, teacher candidates observe and work with real students, teachers, and curriculum in natural settings (Gebhard, 2009; Ewing & Le Cornu, 2010).

In the teaching profession, the student-teachers typically engage in early field experiences, such as seminars, workshops, career days, field observations, field orientations, explorations and inquiry into workplace to experience the job and finally in student-teaching prior to certification (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Huling, 1998). Student teaching experiences are usually accepted as the most influential components of a teacher education program, and have the power to shape student-teachers' development as novice teachers (Glenn, 2006; Leshem, 2012).

Any process to strengthen teacher education programs must include a careful study of student teaching because it is usually the final education course students take and the most influential field experience in a teacher education program. Therefore, many teacher education programs use student teaching as the primary evaluation of student competencies (Kirk, Macdonald, & O'Sullivan, 2006). Student-teaching serves as the culmination of the teacher education programs and provides student-teachers the opportunity to put all previous field experience and pedagogical instructions into practice (Huling, 1998). Providing student-teachers with a series of experiences such as student teaching, classroom observation, lesson planning, classroom management, student guidance, etc. would make them better prepared agents geared toward in-the-field practice, thereby making them potentially advantageous in becoming teaching professionals. Findings from studies reveal that teacher identities are constructed (Gu & Benson, 2015), teachers face a transition from the course content to real conditions (Tarone & Allwright, 2005), and they get a feel of classroom management (Wright, 2012).

Weighing multiple perspectives in terms of student teaching practices will help us capture the richness and complexity of the process student-teachers go through more precisely. Focusing on student-teachers' beliefs will be instrumental with respect to understanding the underlying decisions which shape student-teachers' classroom actions. This helps us go beyond the traditional notion of language teaching simply reduced to classroom behavior and have a broader understanding of cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions. This study incorporates the main premise of reflective practice (Schön, 1987) and the idea here is that what teachers do in the classroom is a representation of their beliefs. In Richards and Lockhart's (1996, p. 29) words, "It [The view of teaching that involves cognitive, affective and behavioral dimension] is based on the assumption that what teachers do is a reflection of what they know and believe, and that teacher knowledge and 'teacher thinking' provide the underlying framework or schema which guides the teacher's classroom actions". Understanding teacher cognition from different perspectives could be enriching because, in accordance with the premise of sociocultural tradition (see Vygotsky, 1978), learners need to negotiate or mediate the information they process for learning to take place. When the mediation in question is applied to the zone of proximal development, cognitive development of learners in the presence of more capable peers might be facilitated when they are provided scaffolding assistance (Vygotsky, 1978).

Exploring the perspectives of pupils and cooperating teachers who are affected by student-teaching would help us better conceptualize the practicum process and provide insights into achieving more transparent, consistent and sustainable training standards. The cooperating teachers' perspectives could prove to be instrumental to help teachers make the transition between the work in faculty classrooms and work as a full-fledged, independent teacher. Student-teaching is a highly regarded activity in teacher education, and there exists today considerable support for the assertion that the quality of the student-teaching experience depends largely on the professional abilities and attitudes of the cooperating teacher<sup>1</sup> who has a day to day working relationship with the student-teacher (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini, & Isken, 2003; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001). To put it differently,

cooperating teachers have great influence, positive or negative, on student-teachers' attitudes, teaching and growth. Moreover, an analysis of pupils' aspirations will enable us to define their expectations better and enhance the likelihood of more informed decisions by going beyond the sheer reliance on student-teachers' perspectives.

### **1.1. Cooperating teachers**

Cooperating teachers may influence student-teachers' profession-related socialization, career satisfaction, perceptions of the professional role, philosophies of teaching, instructional practices, and perhaps even their decision to stay in the profession (Britzman, 2000; Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005). Despite the strength of such views and supporting evidence of the power of cooperating teachers, there has been a strong debate about the selection of cooperating teachers. Previous studies point to the arbitrary selection of cooperating teachers as well as their inadequate preparation for their work as supervisors (Knowles & Cole, 1996; Yavuz, 2011). For example, Yavuz's study (2011) revealed that the selection of cooperating teachers should be carried out through the cooperation of faculties and schools and a selection and evaluation criteria could be instrumental so as to minimize, if not totally eliminate, the problematic aspects of mentoring. Therefore, it appears that the selection of cooperating teachers is not duly systematic.

Research results also demonstrates that many student-teachers believe cooperating teachers disapprove of ideas and methods advocated by the teacher education programs or unable or unwilling to support the needs of a student-teacher in the context of learning to teach (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). These results confirm our informal communications with student-teachers throughout the years. Payant and Murphy (2012) studied 11 cooperating teachers' perceptions of their roles in guiding the student-teachers of English and their study showed that the communication between the cooperating teachers and practicum course instructors was poor. Despite the potential outcome of mediation and negotiation which Vygotsky (1978) referred to his concept of zone of proximal development, the poor collaboration between the student-teacher and cooperating teachers, and cooperating teachers' lack of precision in terms of their roles and responsibilities were noted.

As a result, nearly every year, quality-focused teacher education programs invest considerable time and energy in selecting and supporting cooperating teachers who will serve their student-teachers (Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006). The professional qualities of a cooperating teacher include the ability to give constructive feedback and having effective communication skills (Birrell & Bullough, 2005; Glenn, 2006; Killian & Wilkins, 2009), accept differences (Glenn, 2006), teach both technical and managerial skills of teaching (Graham, 2006), nurture student-teachers' professional development and think about teaching (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Wang & Odell, 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), and provide student-teachers the freedom to explore new teaching styles or instructional approaches (Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner, 2002). Moreover, being accountable for the instructional outcomes in the classroom and placing more pressure on the student-teacher to teach in the same manner and style in order to ensure similar outcomes (Cochran-Smith, 2005), and including the student-teacher in all aspects of the professional life of a teacher (meetings, professional development, extracurricular involvements, etc.) (Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012) are some other concerns.

Since the role of the cooperating teacher is complex and highly important, many different roles have been found in different studies. The cooperating teacher is assigned the role of coach and feedback provider (Broad & Tessaro, 2010; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Clarke, 2006); observer, recorder and reporter (Borko & Mayfield, 1995); teacher educator (Book, 1996; Knowles & Cole, 1996); coaching (Russell, 1997); evaluator (Crookes, 2003); reflector (Crasborn, Hennissen, Brouwer, Korthagen, & Bergen, 2011; Schön, 1987); facilitator (Crasborn et al., 2011; White, Deegan, & Allexsaht-Snider, 1997); socializer (Anderson, 2007; Zeichner & Gore, 1990); mentor (Coulter et al., 2007; Edwards &

Protheroe, 2004); relation-setter (Glenn, 2006; Latour, 2005); knowledge seeker (Clarke, 2006); regular classroom teacher (Goodfellow, 2000; Kent, 2001; Rajuan, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2007); and tolerator of difficulties (Phelan et al., 2006; Smith, 2007).

### **1.2. Student-teachers**

Student teaching is for student-teachers. The problems experienced during student teaching may influence the development and professional qualifications of student-teachers and as a result the overall success of student teaching. Therefore, it is not surprising to notice that research related to student teaching focus largely on the possible problems student-teachers encounter and perceptions of student-teachers on the process (Al-magableh, 2010; Almikhailafi, 2005; Coşkun, 2013; Hamaidi, Al-Shara, Arouri, & Abu Awwad, 2014; Izadinia, 2013; Perry, 2004; Pinder, 2008; Richardson-Koehler, 1988; Smith, 1990).

Despite this quantitative advantage, still more research is needed to explore the ideas, values, expectations, and understanding shaping the relationship between cooperating teachers and student-teachers since available research suggests that dispute on role expectations or lack of clarity of such roles might cause unsuccessful supervising relationships (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Martin, Snow, & Franklin Torrez, 2011; Patrick, 2013; Rajuan et al., 2007).

### **1.3. Pupils' perceptions of student teaching**

As far as we were able to discern from the available literature, not much, except from Arnold (2002), has been available on the perceptions of pupils related to student teaching. In fact, this reality was one of the reasons of including pupils' perceptions related to student teaching in this study. More research is needed to explore the process of student teaching from the perspectives of pupils in the classrooms and we hope that our study can initiate this awareness.

## **2. Methodology**

Research about the cooperating teacher has much been investigated from the perspective of the student-teacher (Smith, 1990). However, it is important that research should move to more detailed and different perspectives on how the work of cooperating teachers is carried out (Rakicioglu-Soylemez & Eroztuga, 2014). Therefore, this study focuses on student teaching process from the perspective of both cooperating teachers and the pupils in student-teacher's classes of EFL teaching in Turkey.

The study aims to determine how cooperating teachers and student-teachers perceived the process of student teaching and changes if occurred as a result of the student-teachers' presence in their classrooms. Interview questions used for cooperating teachers and pupils are provided below.

Two types of open-ended questionnaires were distributed to cooperating teachers and pupils, respectively, in order to gather the data during the spring semester of 2013 academic year. Both the cooperating teachers and pupils were chosen from Kayseri, a province in central Anatolia, Turkey, where student-teachers were undertaking teacher education program, including student teaching. Due to both high number of pre-service teachers and limited budget allocation made by the offices of revolving funds at universities, it is impossible to place each student-teacher to a classroom to work with a cooperating teacher. Therefore, groups of student-teachers, usually three to five, were put together, and they were assigned to a practice teaching class under the supervision of a cooperating teacher.

In Turkey, as part of the curriculum, student-teachers have two tasks as their practicum component in the senior year. The first one is school experience which takes place in the fall semester for 14 weeks where student-teachers are required to observe the teaching practices of the cooperative teacher, learn school policies and procedures at a cooperating primary and/or secondary school. The student-teachers also expected to meet with their university supervisors for two contact hours to reflect on their observations and turn in their field notes and assignments.

In the spring semester of the senior year, the student-teachers are assigned for their practice teaching, where each student-teacher is engaged in full-time teaching responsibilities under the supervision of a cooperating teacher for 14 weeks attending at least 6 class hours for a week. Again, each week for two contact hours, student-teachers meet with their university supervisor to reflect on their experiences. Student-teachers practice a couple of sample teaching sessions under the guidance of a cooperating teacher before they perform a final teaching under the observation of the university supervisor. Cooperating teachers' assessment is used as the student-teacher's mid-term grade where university supervisor's assessment is used for the final grade. The passing grade is 50.

Twenty-one cooperating teachers of English language in six different state schools completed the questionnaire. The teachers were those serving as cooperating teachers for the student-teachers who took the Practicum Course the same semester. All of the teachers were paid by the Faculty of Education and each cooperating teacher had a minimum of three years of teaching experience. Inductive qualitative content analysis has been carried out to determine how 21 cooperating teachers and their pupils perceived changes in teaching practice as a result of the student-teachers' presence. The questionnaire used for cooperating teachers was adapted from Arnold (2002), and it consists of six open-ended questions:

- What is your understanding of the role of the cooperating teacher?
- What is your understanding of the role of the student-teacher?
- How has your class been affected by the presence of a student-teacher?
- What effect, if any, has the experience of being a cooperating teacher had on your own practice?
- What do you like about having the student-teacher?
- What do you dislike about having the student-teacher?

As for the reason of using Arnold's (2002) study, we found the study and the format very useful and unique in nature as it focuses on student teaching process from the perspective of cooperating teachers and the pupils in student-teacher's classes. It also helped us to compare a study from the USA with one from our context.

The following steps were taken to ensure consistency and trustworthiness. In order to increase the credibility, we reviewed the related literature and this helped us better conceptualize the research and interview questions. The respondents were assured that the findings would be used for research purposes only and their names would be kept confidential. Therefore, no names were assigned for the respondents and each respondent is indicated with a number sign (#). To avoid the use of gender-biased pronouns, we provided the pronouns for both genders together, such as s/he, and his/her. So as to increase the internal consistency, we asked another faculty experienced in qualitative inquiry to develop codes from the transcripts. When compared with that of the researchers, the consistency was calculated to be 90%, which meant that a considerable number of the codes developed were consistent.

### 3. Findings and discussions

#### 3.1. *The perceived role of the cooperating teachers*

All of the cooperating teachers shared their feelings of responsibility to support, help, and guide their student-teachers. When asked about their perceived role of the cooperating teachers, they used the words guide, role model, mentor, facilitator, planner, teacher educator, resource developer, knowledge transmitter, and master. These affirmed roles by the participants are in line with the aforementioned literature results.

The teachers' accounts indicate that even if they perform the role of a "guide", or "role model", a one-way flow of transmission of knowledge or experiences was evident in some teachers' speech:

I think we [cooperating teachers] should be good role models as the cooperating teachers to our student-teachers. We must encourage them and create a positive atmosphere in the classroom for them. (#4)

I think our [cooperating teachers'] role is to show student-teachers how things are going on in real practice in every side of school atmosphere. (#1)

“Giving” (9), “sharing” (9), “showing” (5), and “providing” (5) were the most frequently used verbs followed by “cooperating” (4) to indicate their roles as cooperating teachers.

### 3.2. Cooperating teachers' perceptions of the role of the student-teachers

The cooperating teachers in general seem to view the practicum process as a warm-up or transition to something “real”. This orientation is explicitly stated by several cooperating teachers (see Table 1).

The data reveal that a transition from “learning teaching” to “doing teaching” might test the student-teachers' preparedness. Moreover, considering the implied discrepancy of school and professional life which is frequently referred to as a transformation to “real”, it would be reasonable to argue that cooperating teachers perceive their teaching contexts somehow detached from university community. This implication is made explicit in #11, who called for the need to expose student-teachers to “authentic classroom atmosphere”. Moreover, the practicum process is also considered as a move from the “theoretical knowledge” to practical applications. The underlying assumption behind all these concerns seem to be rooted to the image of university which is usually associated with a place helping learners gain sheer theoretical knowledge.

**Table 1. Perceptions of changes in teaching practice**

	Technical practice	Teachers' affect	Impact on pupils
Teachers' positive responses	Preparation for “real” contexts (8) New activities, ideas, approaches (2) Time management (1) Observation (6) Exchange of ideas (10) Acting unusually carefully (1) Reflective practice (2)	Collaboration (4) Promotion of risk-taking (1) Motivation (8) Satisfaction of helping-out (1) More reflective (2)	Exposure to new teaching styles (3) Opportunity to observe pupils (7) Communication (1) Increased comprehension (2)
Teachers' negative responses	Poor classroom management (3)	Avoidance of role taking (1) Increased nervousness of pupils (2)	Naughty classes (3)
Teachers' neutral responses	The same practices (2)	Not affected much (3)	No difference (2)
Pupils' positive responses	Help (7) New words (3) Teaching style (8) Discipline (4) Reduced noise (10) Increased productivity (4) Activity variety (11) Group work (1) Classroom management (3)	Motivation (7) Increased self-esteem (1)	Enjoyable lessons (38) Increased participation (13) Better comprehension (11)
Pupils' negative responses	Turn-giving (4) Not active enough (4) Curriculum mismatch (1) Poor classroom management (4) Poor technical practice (4)	Change of atmosphere (3) Undue responsibilities (2) Student-teachers' anxiety (7) Boring classes (3) Slow pace (2)	Increased noise (4) Concentration problems (2)
Pupils' neutral responses	The same practices (9)	—	No difference (9)

Note: Teachers' and pupils' responses are categorized in positive, negative, and neutral terms. These changes are further categorized into practical and affective aspects and the impact on pupils both from the teachers' and pupils' perspectives is provided.

Besides, several other roles such as observation, collaboration, time management, and communication were also mentioned. The cooperating teachers used the words “observation”, “observe”, and “observer” (#5; #10; #13; #16; #20) repeatedly to point to the implied role of the student-teachers. Here, the implication is that student-teachers are given a detached role and they are not participatory enough to contribute to the existing situation. This takes us to consider that the role assigned to student-teachers is to “imitate” rather than expand on the existing practices.

### **3.3. Cooperating teachers’ perceptions of student-teachers’ impact on student teaching classrooms**

A considerable number of teachers, 13 out of 21, agreed that the student-teachers had a positive impact on students. The reasons they provided ranged from activity variety to motivation and from classroom management to resourcefulness. However, in line with the cooperating teachers’ accounts, this positive impact on students seems to change according to the grades. The cooperating teacher #13 aptly points this out when s/he wrote:

The student-teachers, whom I was responsible for, attended different levels of classes. These classes were 4th, 5th, 6th and 8th grades. As a result of their ages, the reaction of my students showed variance. The 4th and 5th graders were the most impressed ones as they are enthusiastic about learning a foreign language and putting other teachers up in their classes. 6th graders also took benefit of their guest teachers. However, the 8th grade students didn’t show a noteworthy reaction to the student-teachers.

Cooperating teacher #6 and #21 argued that student-teachers’ impact on the pupils were negative as pupils became noisier and behaved badly more than usual in the presence of the student-teachers. Three teachers indicated that there was not much difference (#5, #9, and #12) while some cooperating teachers (#2, #4, #14) reported that the pupils were not comfortable when they met the student-teachers. Some teacher accounts could be given to validate this assertion:

At the beginning they were shy and tried to understand the reason why a student-teacher was there. Presence of a student-teacher makes the environment positive and funny. (#4)

Firstly, they [pupils] haven’t taken them [student-teachers] into consideration. They have neglected them but after a while they have learnt to be with them, to spend time with them. (#14)

### **3.4. The impact of being a cooperating teacher on one’s own practice**

The question “What effect, if any, has the experience of being a cooperating teacher had on your own practice?” was asked to gather information about cooperating teachers’ opinions on the impact of student teaching process on their own practice.

Seventeen out of twenty were positive, three were neutral and one was negative in their reflections, which suggests that there was a two way exchange of information with cooperating teachers despite the way they describe the relationship (see Table 2).

#### **3.4.1. Positive changes**

From the cooperating teachers’ accounts, it is logical to deduce that they extend a welcoming hand to student-teachers as they helped the cooperating teachers increase their motivation in the classroom, develop empathy, engage in reflective practice, brush up on the methodological aspects, and advance professionally.

**Table 2. Cooperating teachers’ perceived changes after the arrival of student-teachers**

Positive reactions	Negative reactions	Neutral reactions	Total
17 (85%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	20 (100%)

*3.4.1.1. Increased motivation.* Teachers' accounts reveal that they are moved or pushed by the student-teachers' presence. The following accounts are taken as examples:

We [cooperating teachers] co-operated together with them [student-teachers] and that caused an extra motivation on me [cooperating teacher]. (#4)

They had a great effect on me. I [cooperating teacher] felt younger and more energetic when they [student-teachers] were in class (#9)

The transcriptions above seem to create a favorable image of the student teaching on the grounds that an energizing power is supplied to cooperating teachers. That the cooperating teacher felt younger is a sentence which is open to various interpretations, but we took it as the dynamism the student-teachers bring into the classes.

*3.4.1.2. Nurturing empathy.* With reference to empathy, #2 and #9 said that the student-teachers reminded them of their student days and, reported that they were able to understand how the student-teachers felt:

I remember my old days, how I was feeling at that time. I think it is a beneficial experience for both the cooperating teacher and the student-teacher. I am an old [a former] student of you. I think it is very effective having the experience of being a student-teacher. I can remember lots of things you talked about in the class. I compare what I learnt from you and what I did in the class. (#2)

... they reminded me of the old university days. As a confession, they made me think again the approaches and techniques. (#9)

*3.4.1.3. Opportunity for reflective practice.* When teaching, developing a deeper understanding of the issues or events happening in the classroom is essential to feel the pulse of emerging situations or respond to the immediate needs of the students. As Richards and Lockhart (1996) point out, failure to attend to events happening in a timely manner may mean teachers lose touch with what is actually going on in the classroom. Thus, there is a need to enable teachers to keep track of their development. To this end, one of the cooperating teachers' explanations in favor of the impact of the student-teachers sounds as an opportunity for reflective practice:

All my student-teachers were a mirror for me. I could see myself in this mirror. (#7)

*3.4.1.4. Brushing up language teaching methods and techniques.* The following excerpts indicate impact on methods and techniques. They suggest that the introduction of student-teachers leads to a corresponding awareness of the language teaching methods and techniques because student-teachers triggered the coordinating teachers to become familiar with new ways.

I have tried to improve the methods, activities and skills in language teaching and process more than I have done before. (#9)

As a graduate of English literature, I think I have a chance to get some new language teaching techniques during their teaching process in class. (#14)

As illustrated above, the cooperating teachers benefitted from the student teaching practice, particularly in terms of language teaching methods and techniques. Judging from the participant #14's words, this situation is attributable to discrepancy of the curriculum offered in education faculties and faculties of letters. In Turkey, the graduates of the faculties of letters or some other faculties can also get a teaching job on condition that they get pedagogic formation. This makes those graduates who graduated from a department which is not particularly geared to language teaching disadvantaged due to the limited number of courses on language learning and teaching.

#### 3.4.2. Neutral (no change)

Several cooperating teachers stated that arrival of the student-teachers was not influential in their teaching practices. The cooperating teachers' (#6; #12; #20) argument for their neutral stance in general, as the following accounts suggest, was that their actions did not differ because of the student-teachers' presence.

My practice didn't change drastically. I was teaching as I did normally so that student-teachers could see a natural setting of education. (#6)

#### 3.4.3. Negative change (Behavioral change)

The student-teachers' arrival was not always welcomed. One teacher indicated the negative impact of a student-teacher's presence. Teaching, even if properly managed, sometimes turns out to be a child-raising experience for teachers as student misbehavior might be disruptive. This might, as (#21) maintains, make it difficult for teachers to cope with:

The pupils became naughty due to their [student-teachers] presence in the classroom.

### 3.5. Cooperating teachers' perceptions of the student-teachers' strengths and weaknesses

Exchange of ideas and experiences, increase in motivation, satisfaction of helping out and fostering reflective practice were cited to be the influential factors by the cooperating teachers. Exchange of ideas and experiences were the most recurring theme (10) followed by motivation. However, even though the word "exchange" refers to reciprocal acts or benefits, this did not seem to be in several cases—although the cooperating teachers reported that they benefitted from the exchange of ideas and experiences, some of the explanations they gave point to a one-way flow. The following excerpts could reasonably be interpreted in this light:

I told my pupils that the student-teacher will be a teacher in the future so please help them and study harder. I try to share my experiences about classroom management, the activities which can be used in the 7th and 8th grades. (#2)

I was happy that I got to share my experience with young people who were willing to work hard for their profession. (#6)

As for the student-teachers' reported weaknesses, pupils' classroom misbehavior, student-teachers' classroom management, personal problems, fear of falling behind the curriculum requirements were mentioned to be the undesirable outcomes. Pupils' noise or the class size usually matter and these problems might become more evident, if not severe, when student-teachers take responsibility. This could also result in classroom management problems. Moreover, letting student-teachers take control of the lessons, as one of the cooperating teachers argues, could jeopardize the teachers' chances of catching up with the curriculum:

I like having student-teachers in my classes, but to be honest I have had some questions in my mind before. Such as, will it be possible to finish the chapters in my schedule on time or not? Sometimes, activities take much more time than we expect. Luckily I have had no problems about what I have thought before. (#14)

### 3.6. Pupil questionnaires

In addition to the cooperating teacher questionnaire, a questionnaire was distributed to the pupils in 21 classes where there had been a cooperating and a student-teacher. One hundred and fourteen pupils fully completed and returned the questionnaires fully. Again, the questionnaire used for pupils was adapted from Arnold (2002). Considering the English language proficiency of the pupils, the questions were in Turkish language and included two open-ended questions, namely:

- (1) Have you noticed any changes/differences after the arrival of student-teachers?
- (2) What did you like/dislike about having a student-teacher in your classroom?

**Table 3. Pupils’ perceived changes after the student-teachers’ arrival**

Positive reactions	Negative reactions	Positive and negative reactions	Neutral reactions	Total
91 (80%)	4 (0.03%)	10 (0.83%)	9 (0.78%)	114

We categorized the respondents’ answers to the differences after the arrival of the student-teacher into three broad themes, namely *positive changes*, *negative changes*, and *no change*. First of all, all the students’ responses were written verbatim. Then the preliminary jottings were made. Next, the codes were developed and then the recurring ideas were grouped into categories/themes. Of one hundred and fourteen respondents, ninety-one pupils indicated a positive change whereas nine pupils took a neutral stance suggesting that there was not much difference after the arrival of student-teachers. Four pupils indicated a negative attitude whereas six respondents reported both negative and positive perceptions (see Table 3).

### 3.6.1. Positive changes

With respect to the positive changes, “enjoyable lessons” were the most recurring theme (see Table 1). One third (38) of the participants used the word enjoyable lessons to indicate the positive change after the student-teachers’ arrival. The following pupil comments illustrate this:

We liked the games. The classes got more enjoyable. (#37)

Lessons got more enjoyable; they are good at teaching; they make some applications without making us bored. (#51)

Lessons got more enjoyable; the trainee had a nice voice. (#105)

What made the lessons enjoyable was the activities such as games or other techniques used in the classroom, particular characteristics and teaching style of the new trainees (e.g. voice, use of songs, videos), the pace of the lesson, entertaining nature of the lessons, and student-teachers’ facilitative communication with the pupils. Moreover, the turn-soliciting behavior of the student-teachers was reported to aid class participation. The technical practices of student-teachers received the most varied comments from both cooperating teachers’ and pupils’ perspectives. The pupils mentioned activity variety as the greatest form of change (10%) whereas the exchange of ideas was the most noted issue valued by the cooperating teachers (50%).

Enjoyable lessons were followed by increased participation (11%) and better comprehension (10%). The following comment is an example of the increased eagerness to participate:

Everyone watches their behavior when the term “discipline” is pronounced. Participation increased and the classes got better. (#6)

In a similar vein, 11 pupils reported an improved comprehension in the student-teachers’ presence. Here is an example:

I began to understand the lessons better because the trainees are the teachers specialized in their field. (#31)

The pupils wrote down what they liked about the student-teachers in particular and we developed several themes from their answers—student-teachers’ help, class management that resulted in discipline and reduced noise, teaching style, activity variety, group work and productivity, motivation, increased self-esteem were deemed to be the desirable aspects of pupils’ encounter with student-teachers.

### 3.6.2. Neutral (no change)

The pupils who appeared to take a neutral position were usually of the opinion that there was not any change after the arrival of the student-teachers.

Nothing has changed. The same class ... (#57)

### 3.6.3. Negative changes

The pupils whose reaction toward the changes was negative complained about the uneven turn-giving behavior through which only some pupils are advantaged while others are victimized, passive role of the student-teachers, teachers', and their curriculum mismatch, teachers' poor classroom management and applications regarding technical practice. These negative aspects are grouped in students' negative responses with reference to technical practice. Change of atmosphere, undue responsibilities, student-teachers' anxiety, boring classes, and slow pace were found to be the negative aspects regarding the student-teachers' affect. Moreover, mismatch with the curriculum, classroom management problems due to the pace of the lessons, increased noise, and concentration problems were reportedly prevalent. For instance, one of the pupils (#90) claimed that change of the instructor affected them negatively: *Some people, not everyone, got interested in the lesson. A lot of people complained about "skipping" the lesson because the lessons were always taught by different people.* Another pupil pointed to the classroom management failure after the student-teachers' arrival: *The lessons were slower. Because of the new teachers, some of my friends became naughty* (#92).

Another pupil comment provided evidence of the anxiety-provoking nature of the change of voice:

We were anxious as we feared that they would not like us at first but we established rapport soon. My classmates studied more. (#114)

According to the pupils and the cooperating teachers, the least contributors of change were related to the student-teachers' communication with pupils. However, this does not necessarily mean that pupils were not affected by the feelings or emotions of the teachers. A considerable number of pupils did not hesitate to write their student-teacher's name as the main reason for the change which could be indicative the effect of student-teachers. The following a pupil's comments in which the name of the student-teacher was highlighted:

With the arrival of xxx teacher, we began to like English. Some of my classmates got naughty. We sang songs together and we really loved her. I think she will be a sweet teacher. (#17)

Even though almost all students (95) had a high opinion of the prospective teachers, some held a neutral (9) or negative (10) view of them. Anxiety, which we categorized under teachers' affect in this study, was found to be the most provoking factor for their negative orientations. Although the student-teachers' affect was not considered to be particularly influential in students' reasoning for a change, anxiety as an affective factor played a significant role in creating a negative or distorted perception.

## 4. Discussion

The data suggest that student teaching can provide a meaningful opportunity for growth and learning both for cooperating teachers and for pupils. It is clear from the responses to the questionnaires that both cooperating teachers and pupils are aware of some growth as a result of student teaching process. The growth becomes clearer with some cooperating teachers' and pupils' reflections. Even though a great number state that they have benefitted from the exchange of ideas and experience of sharing, some of the arguments provided are usually categorized as a one-way flow of exchange. That is to say, the flow of exchange is usually cooperating teacher-based, giving little room for reciprocity. This finding is similar to findings from Kızıldağ (2011) in that the student-teachers failed to provide the required competences due partly to teacher-centered flow of classes. This might be

enriching for the student-teachers as they are subject to this flow; however, ensuring the integration of student-teachers' ideas would be more desirable as new perspectives could widen the horizon. One of the conventional notions of mentoring implies a hierarchy of power relations where the mentee, usually the less-experienced person, is positioned in a "subservient status" (Kochan & Trimble, 2000). In accordance with this view of student teaching, it is not surprising that a one-way relationship could prevail in situations where the traditional wisdom still holds true.

The results also indicate that cooperating teachers' focus is more on their pupils rather than student-teachers and this focus sometimes may reduce their mentoring possibilities. When judging the impact of the student-teachers, cooperating teachers constantly refer to the pupils and they fail to provide an account of their own mentoring responsibility.

When specifying the merits of the practicum process, a considerable number of cooperating teachers refer to either getting familiar with or recollecting some teaching methods and techniques. However, they are not clear about how they benefitted from the methods and techniques in question or whether they exercise the same methods or techniques. Thus, the impressions of method or technique familiarization are superficial in nature.

The data reveal that cooperating teachers lack specific preparation to give quality and professionally appropriate support for student-teachers as emphasized in the literature. For instance, provision of constructive feedback is considered to be a significant characteristic of the cooperating teachers (e.g. Anderson, 2007; Russell & Russell, 2011; Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012; Yavuz, 2011). However, the cooperating teachers in the study did not reveal anything specific about the feedback they provided and the word "feedback" was uttered by only one teacher, which suggests that feedback provision does not gain the emphasis it deserves. For this study, the support does not go beyond the exchange of ideas, as many comments indicate a one-way flow. In addition, the roles assigned to cooperating teachers appear to support the one-way flow in question.

The data also point out that pupils usually credited the student-teachers' impact on themselves whereas the cooperating teachers usually credited technical practice of the trainees as the source of change. It is worth noting that there were teachers who provided reference to the two-way nature of the practice teaching arguing that the process was mutually fruitful. Cooperating teachers' inspiration, especially by the techniques used by the student-teachers takes us to consider the benefits of the process on the part of the cooperating teachers. When these benefits are compared with pupils' accounts, similarities become more visible (see Table 4). This could partly be attributed to the

**Table 4. Similarities between the perceptions of pupils and cooperating teachers about the student-teachers' activities**

Pupils' accounts	Teachers' accounts
After the arrival of trainees we were exposed to new teaching styles and this improved our productivity. Through various activities we made a lot of practice. (#109)	I like learning new techniques and methods from student-teachers. (#3)
I like it in this way. We like all games. (#39)	I have eight years of experience on being an English teacher and this is the first time that I have worked as a cooperating teacher. This year was such a year that I felt as I burnout on my occupation. Working with university students brought me new blood and I summoned up my energy as I learned some new and valuable ideas from them. (#13)
Lessons got more enjoyable after meeting new trainees; there were many activities and we understood the lessons better. (#87)	That's a useful experience for me. I got the chance of learning their ideas about teaching and learning profession. (#17)

achievement of the desired outcomes of “Teaching English to Young Learners” course recently introduced in English language teaching programs in Turkey. Through the course, student-teachers are given further opportunities to feel the pulse of the students and make their lessons more engaging.

## 5. Conclusion

Wide range support in the community and its popularity with student-teachers puts some important burdens and emphasis on the process of practice teaching. Therefore, practice teaching is a high impact experience and a period of intense learning and growth if it is done professionally. However, if it is done at a superficial level and it is imprecise, student teaching becomes a real source of deep dissatisfaction for many parties included in the process (e.g. student-teachers, cooperative teachers, teacher educators).

When student-teachers face the realities of classroom life, they need immediate help. And at this highly critical period, the person or the source of information ready to provide the necessary help and guidance is the cooperating teacher. Therefore, the effective availability of the cooperating teacher in the transformation process of the student-teacher into the teaching profession is pivotal.

The unavailability of cooperating teachers to help the student-teachers in time of need is an important concern of the student teaching process. The data reveal that, though not questioned directly, many of the cooperating teachers have no proper training to guide student-teachers. This tendency becomes evident when the cooperating teachers preferred to jump into the teaching methods and techniques when judging the student-teachers’ efforts rather than provide something specific regarding the fulfillment of their own and student-teachers’ responsibilities. Sometimes teachers accept the supervision of student-teachers not because they are committed to the practicum task, but basically for the additional payment. The task of a cooperating teacher is not as simple as it looks since “mentoring is not a straightforward extension of being a school teacher” (Arnold, 2006, p. 117).

The selection of cooperating teachers must meet two important criteria; effective classroom teaching skills and effective supervision skills. Teachers should have positive attitudes toward guiding and helping students in order to establish a sound supervisory contact. It should be noted that having effective classroom teaching skills does not always result in having effective supervisory skills.

Although much has been written about student teaching, we really have very little systematic or empirical knowledge about it. On the one hand, by examining the data of both the cooperating teachers and the pupils in student teaching classrooms, this study contributes to our understanding of what cooperating teachers and pupils feel about this important process. On the other hand, the findings from the study should be interpreted with caution as this is a qualitative research which relied heavily on individual’s perspectives; the quest for generalizability is not applicable to this study.

An investigation of the nature and effectiveness of cooperating teachers’ supervision, as perceived by both student-teachers and cooperating teachers themselves could be very useful to find out some interesting results about their perceptions and expectations in order to complete the whole picture of student teaching. Although the selection of the cooperating teachers was not subject to a methodological treatment in this study, the selection of cooperative teachers should be carried out with caution in order to guarantee the quality of the supervision given to the student-teachers. Further studies could be carried out to specify and find out the selection process and the criteria of cooperating teachers. Although there are a lot of number of student-teachers and rather limited budget for cooperative teachers which make it difficult to assign one student-teacher to one cooperative teacher. Still faculties of education should be more selective of both the schools and the cooperative teachers they send their students to. There should be certain criteria for both choices in order to ensure that students who undergo their practice teaching process will be able to make the most out of this very important part of their professional life (Duquette, 1994; Sayeski & Paulsen, 2012).

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### Note

1. Although different terms have been used for the role of cooperating teacher, such as, school advisor, school-based teacher educator, mentor, etc. the most commonly used term in the literature is cooperating teacher and therefore this term will be used throughout the article.

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