The Views of Pre-service EFL Teachers on Teaching Assistant Practice in Language Teaching

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to analyze the views on Teaching Assistant Practice (TAP) gathered from five senior English Language Teaching (ELT) students. The primary aim is to investigate and reveal how TAP affects EFL pre-service teachers' teaching quality. The study was designed using a qualitative approach and a purposive sampling approach. The data was collected using open-ended questions and was analyzed using the qualitative content analysis approach. Based on the evidence, significant themes regarding the TAP were discovered. The following were the themes: excelling on pedagogical content knowledge and teaching quality, raising awareness, and improving teacher roles, the benefits of being professionally present as a teacher in the classroom, and the enhancement of multitasking. It was concluded that with the responses obtained from the prospective teachers, the themes mentioned create a positive atmosphere for them to sharpen their practical teaching skills in a professional sense.

Keywords: Teaching Assistance, Teaching Assistance Practice, Teaching Quality, Teaching Assistantship in EFL Practices, EFL Teacher Education

İngilizce Öğretmeni Adaylarının Dil Öğretiminde Asistanlık Uygulamasına İlişkin Görüşleri

Öz: Bu çalışmanın amacı İngilizce Öğretmenliği (ELT) son sınıf öğrencilerinden toplanan Öğretmen Asistanlığı Uygulaması (TAP) hakkındaki görüşlerini analiz etmektir. Temel amaç, TAP'ın yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının öğretim niteliklerini nasıl etkilediğini araştırmak ve ortaya çıkarmaktır. Araştırma nitel bir yaklaşım ve amaçlı örnekleme yaklaşımı kullanılarak tasarlanmıştır. Veriler açık uçlu sorular kullanılarak toplanmış ve nitel içerik analizi yaklaşımı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Kanıtlara dayanarak TAP'a ilişkin Pedagojik içerik bilgisi ve öğretme niteliklerinde mükemmelleşme, farkındalık yaratma ve öğretmen rollerinin iyileştirilmesi, sınıfta öğretmenlik mesleğini profesyonel olarak gerçekleştirmenin yararları ve çoklu görevlerin geliştirilmesi gibi önemli temalar ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Öğretmen adaylarından alınan yanıtlarla, bahsedilen temaların, öğretmenlik ve mesleki bağlamda pratik becerilerin geliştirilmesi için olumlu bir atmosfer oluşturduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Öğretim Asistanlığı, Öğretim Asistanlığı Uygulaması, Öğretim Kalitesi, Yabancı Dil Uygulaması, Yabancı Dilde Öğretmen Eğitimi

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Teaching quality is a complex term (Harvey, 1993; Popham, 1993; Sahney et al., 2004) even though professional qualities are classified in numerous ways in the related literature. In this regard, teaching quality can be defined as a multi-faceted phenomenon that includes a variety of aspects such as teachers' personal characteristics, teacher cognition, the quality of educational resources, classroom management, contextual factors, effective teaching, lesson preparation, and learning atmosphere management (Ho & Wearn, 1995). Besides contributing to the professional qualities of teachers, these may also influence the teaching process (i.e., the processes and techniques required for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of a lesson).

Beside the qualities above, English teachers' characteristics, according to Dincer et al. (2013), may be divided into four categories including socio-affective skills, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of the subject, and individual characteristics. Similarly, in the studies by Borg (2006) and Lee (2010), English teachers' qualities were professionally distinct in four categories: complexity of the subject matter, teaching content, teaching approach, and teacher personality. As a result, the quality criteria for English language teachers may differ from those from other fields.

First of all, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) plays a pivotal role in shaping effective teaching in any subject area, and its significance is particularly pronounced in the field of ELT. Strong PCK implies a deep understanding of how to convey linguistic concepts to learners in an accessible and meaningful way (Shulman, 1986). In the context of ELT, Harris and Hofer (2011) argue that teachers with a robust foundation in PCK can adeptly navigate the complexities of language instruction, making content more comprehensible for students. Emphasizing this theme involves exploring the ways in which language educators can continuously enhance their PCK through professional development, collaborative learning, and reflective practices. By excelling in PCK, teachers may contribute directly to the quality of instruction, fostering a more conducive learning environment for language learners.

Moreover, the theme of excelling on PCK is closely tied to broader discussions on teaching quality. As noted by Inbar-Lourie (2008), PCK is a crucial component of teacher knowledge, influencing instructional decisions, curriculum design, and classroom interactions. Understanding how PCK intersects with overall teaching quality sheds light on effective strategies for English language teachers to continually refine their skills and meet the diverse needs of their students.

As another point, raising awareness about various aspects of language teaching and concurrently improving teacher roles are essential themes that contribute significantly to the professional development of English language educators. This involves creating a conscious understanding of language diversity, cultural nuances, and effective teaching strategies. By raising awareness, teachers can better address the diverse needs of their students, fostering an inclusive learning environment. Cummins (2001) highlights the importance of linguistic awareness in supporting language learners, emphasizing the need for teachers to recognize and leverage the linguistic resources students bring to the classroom. This theme also extends to the role of teachers as cultural mediators, facilitating cross-cultural understanding and communication (Byram, 1997).

Improving teacher roles, within the context of this theme, involves an exploration of evolving responsibilities and expectations. Shulman (1986) argues that effective teaching requires a combination of pedagogical skill, subject matter expertise, and understanding of the learners. Addressing this theme entails examining how teachers can adopt versatile roles, such as facilitators, mentors, and assessors, to meet the diverse needs of language learners. It also involves understanding the impact of teacher roles on student motivation, engagement, and language proficiency. As teachers become more aware of their roles and responsibilities, they contribute to a more dynamic and effective language learning experience for their students.

Even if a teacher has the qualities above, being able to be present in the classroom is also a valuable and crucial part of teaching. Being professionally present in the classroom is a theme that underscores the profound impact of a teacher's active and engaged presence on the overall learning experience. When teachers are fully present, it goes beyond physical presence; it encompasses a commitment to the teaching profession, students, and the learning process. According to research by Stronge (2007) emphasizes that professionally present

teachers actively engage with students, create a positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrate enthusiasm for the subject matter. Such presence fosters a sense of connection and trust, creating an environment conducive to effective language learning. Additionally, the benefits extend to the teacher-student relationship, influencing student motivation, participation, and overall academic achievement (Wang et al., 1993). Therefore, excelling in the benefits of being professionally present involves understanding and leveraging the positive outcomes associated with active teacher presence in the language classroom.

Furthermore, the theme encourages exploration into strategies and practices that enhance professional presence. For example, effective communication, approachability, and responsiveness to student needs are identified as key components of professional presence (Stearns, 2010). Additionally, building rapport and demonstrating genuine interest in students' progress contributes to the creation of a positive and inclusive learning environment. As teachers excel in these aspects, they enhance the benefits associated with their professional presence, fostering a more engaging and enriching language learning experience for their students.

Engaging with these aspects prompts educators to develop quicker cognitive abilities, leading to the adoption of multitasking skills—an essential attribute in language teaching. As teachers navigate the complexities of language instruction, they find themselves requiring swift cognitive responses to manage various aspects simultaneously. The ability to multitask becomes a natural and crucial element in the effective execution of language education. Multitasking has become increasingly relevant in the dynamic and fast-paced environment of language teaching. The theme of enhancing multitasking explores the ability of language educators to manage multiple aspects of teaching simultaneously, ensuring a comprehensive and efficient instructional approach. Freeman (2002) notes that language teachers often navigate various responsibilities, such as lesson planning, student assessment, and classroom management, concurrently. Excelling in multitasking involves understanding the demands of language teaching and adopting strategies to effectively balance these demands. This subject encourages an examination of time management approaches, the ability to organize, and the use of modern technology to simplify activities and increase performance.

Moreover, the enhancement of multitasking aligns with the evolving role of language teachers in integrating diverse teaching methodologies and technologies into their instructional practices. For instance, leveraging multimedia resources, incorporating language technology tools, and implementing interactive activities concurrently require effective multitasking skills (Datnow & Hubbard, 2016). The theme invites language educators to reflect on their multitasking abilities, explore innovative approaches, and consider professional development opportunities that contribute to more efficient and impactful language teaching practices. As teachers adeptly manage multiple facets of language instruction, they contribute to a dynamic and engaging learning environment, ultimately benefiting their students' language proficiency and overall educational experience.

Taking all these aspects into consideration, it is essential to train well-qualified pre-service teachers and it is one of the responsibilities of educational institutions. TAP can be an authentic way to apply and display pre-service English teacher competencies. TAP is a scheme designed to supplement English Preparatory Class (EPC) students who will study in English-medium programs and in need of academic support with tutorial sessions. EPC students are assessed based on their performance during the preparatory year, and attendance/participation and English Proficiency Exam (EPE). All these assessment tools have different weightings. However, students' overall performance in the assessment affects their success. Therefore, their academic performance should be sustainable to get the grades needed for their ultimate success level. For these students, tutorials are planned.

Tutorial is a meeting held during periods scheduled by the tutor (teacher assistant or TA) in communication with one or more students for revising the topics in which the students need academic support. A tutor is the teacher assistant who holds meetings with students to revise the topics for which they need academic support. A TA is a senior student registered in the Department of English Language Teaching

(ELT) giving academic support to EPC students.

Tutors are selected in a formal process. An advertisement is published by the ELT department in communication with the EPC administration, then an interview session is held for each applicant and successful candidates to work in the TAP are announced in transparency. This process is applied in order to make the TAs become aware of the stages of an actual employment process. As soon as the employment process is completed, the Human Resources of the university is also notified regarding the names of the students and for their bureaucratic transactions. TAP may enable pre-service teachers to apply the theories they have learned and the professional qualities that they have acquired into practice. For example, in a study conducted by McKeegan (1998) about TAP that reflects on course preparation, course instruction, and private tutorial assistance showed that most tutors considered that practice as an excellent learning experience. Also, Odom et al. (2014) revealed that TAP enables pre-service teachers to see different teaching settings, experiential learning and teaching and design lesson plans. According to Boei et al. (2015), planning and executing such programs, as well as striving to teach various lessons, help boost their professional competencies, allowing them to graduate as professional instructors.

Studies on TAP practice in higher education context in Turkish and international literature are very limited or even non-existent. Therefore, the primary aim is to investigate and reveal how TAP affects EFL pre-service teachers' teaching quality. Also, the study identifies the views of senior ELT students who work as pre-service teachers towards the practice and whether it contributes to their professional competencies.

Method

Research Design

Research technique, according to Buckley and Chiang (1976), is "a strategy or conceptual design through which the investigator draws out an approach to issue or concern." According to Crotty (1998), research methodology is a holistic plan "that shapes our decision and use of different procedures while linking them to the expected outcomes", however, the choice of research methodology depends on the type and specific elements of the research subject.

The current study holds a qualitative approach as it is thought to be appropriate when the researcher or investigator is exploring a new area of study or seeks to verify and hypothesize significant concerns (Creswell, 2009, 2014; Hammarberg et al., 2016). According to Dörnyei (2007), a qualitative approach involves the exploration and understanding of the subjective aspects of language learning and teaching. He also mentions that this approach emphasizes the significance of context, individual experiences, and the social and cultural factors that influence language acquisition. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research focuses on gaining insights into the complexities of language learning through methods such as interviews, observations, case studies, and analysis of written or spoken discourse. Therefore, the aim of the use of qualitative approach in this study is to robust justification for emphasizing its suitability for exploring new areas, verifying hypotheses, and gaining a deeper understanding of the subjective aspects of language learning and teaching.

The adoption of purposive sampling aligns with the objective of capturing diverse perspectives and essential aspects to comprehend the broader image. Cresswell (2009) emphasizes the strategic nature of purposive sampling in qualitative data collection, where participants are deliberately selected due to their direct exposure to key phenomena. This targeted approach ensures that the sample is specifically tailored to the research focus, facilitating a more comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon under investigation.

Furthermore, Campbell et al. (2020) contribute to the rationale by highlighting that purposive sampling enhances the alignment between the selected sample and the research goals. By intentionally selecting participants who have witnessed the key phenomena, the study aims to deepen its exploration and strengthen the relevance of the data collected. This strategic sampling method not only contributes to the rigor of the study but also enhances the reliability of both the data and the subsequent outcomes.

Participants

Given the purposive sampling is extensively employed in qualitative research to identify and choose relevant data cases linked to the phenomena (Palinkas et al., 2015) while making best use of finite resources (Patton, 2002). The method's advantages are widely acknowledged to include the effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002), accessibility and desire to engage, and the capacity to convey experiences and viewpoints in a clear, expressive, and thoughtful manner (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979). In the present study, participants from the ELT program were purposively selected, specifically targeting senior-year students within the same university. Conversely, participants from the EPC program were chosen through a random sampling approach.

This research was carried out with five senior ELT students and eight EPC students. The interviews took eight weeks in total.

The researchers planned, designed, and applied TAP to their participants and then conducted interviews with them. Every week the process continued as follows:

1. An EPC student chooses a subject at the beginning of the week.

2. A TA plans to conduct the tutorial session in the same week.

3. A tutorial session takes place in the classroom.

4. Interviews are conducted with both TAs and EPC students biweekly.

Table 1. *Demographic Variables of Participants*

Codes	Age	Educational Level	Teaching Experience	Department
TA 1	22	BA	Junior levels	ELT
TA 2	22	BA	Junior levels	ELT
TA 3	23	BA	Junior levels	ELT
TA 4	22	BA	Junior levels	ELT
TA 5	23	BA	Junior levels	ELT

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The data collection instrument of this study was designed with the nature of the research design in mind, as well as which data - analysis procedures were relevant. The participants were asked questions regarding their personal and professional beliefs before, during, and after their TA practice using an interview form designed specifically for the purpose of the study. Additionally, expert comments were employed to validate the content validity of the interview forms adopted. Two academics, who are experts in this field, contributed to the content validity of the interview questions.

The interview questions were meticulously crafted, aligning with the overarching goals and objectives of the research. The process involved a comprehensive consideration of the research aims, ensuring that the questions effectively captured the necessary information to address the study's research questions. The design of the interview questions was guided by a thorough review of relevant literature, consultation with experts in the field, and careful consideration of potential biases or confounding factors that could impact the validity of the data collected. The participants were interviewed about their thoughts, experiences, and views on TAP, as well as if it is useful in improving their professional characteristics. As interview questions, eight EPC students' perspectives, opinions, and experiences were also asked. The data gathering process involves four interviews that involve the same questions about the progress, approximately 55 minutes and a total of 220 minutes. The interviews were recorded with the permission of all the participants.

The transcription process was independently conducted by each researcher, involving iterative analyses. Within the framework of this study, content analysis was employed, incorporating specific procedures that entailed the individual coding of themes by researchers, followed by the comparison of their respective decisions. The final agreement among researchers was reached through a systematic process of comparing and reconciling their independent coding outcomes. Moreover, the current study makes use of

qualitative content analysis, which provides an experimental and organized way of identifying and assessing phenomena (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Schreier, 2012). According to Elo and Kyngäs (2008), evidence may be reduced to find out the phenomena by forming categories, concepts, modelling, or a conceptual framework for the efficacy of qualitative content analyses.

Ethic

Both authors were working in the same university and ethical permission form number 2022/14 was signed by the ethics committee of the university. In addition, informed consent forms were collected from the participants.

Findings

Excelling on Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Teaching Competencies

Being a senior ELT student at university and a TA at the same time is both beneficial and challenging academically, professionally and socially. It can be inferred from the TAs' statements that lesson planning, material development, classroom management, self-reflection were the main themes, and the related processes were dominant in their experiences. TAs had the opportunity to use their teaching skills/qualities at tertiary level, which was very engaging since they have to complete their internship in their last year of education yet not at tertiary level. According to the rules and regulations for teaching internship documents of the Ministry of Education, they are assigned to primary, secondary or high school. However, TAP at tertiary level is a precious chance for them to test their teaching skills/qualities at all educational levels.

It can be understood from the statements of the TAs that they had teaching experience at lower age levels, so they had concerns about teaching at tertiary level. They had to develop their skills especially in terms of material development and teaching methodology since students were demanding academically and they had the obligation to adapt their materials according to the needs of the student at the time of the lesson, which was considered beneficial by the TAs because this made them more flexible in the way they teach.

> I was very worried when I first started. We had a meeting with the director and he asked us to use as up-to-date materials as possible in that meeting. Since I normally work with a small age group, I feel very confident about preparing materials on that subject. I worked with the children at the middle school level but at the university with that age group, I did not know much about it and which of the materials would catch their attention. I was not very competent at that. I was very afraid at first. I was feeling a little inadequate about how much English I could speak and teach an adult with a lower English level because I didn't know where I was regarding my teaching skills. After experiencing the process, I have developed an awareness that I need to use my teaching skills in all aspects, which I have eventually done. (TA 1)

Material development was one of the prominent skills for the TAs to sharpen. It can be understood from the statements of the TAs that creating authentic materials for their lessons was both challenging and yet nourishing academically since they spent hours and hours in creating authentic materials, which gave the motivation and determination to work more, yet a feeling of inefficacy in some cases. Nevertheless, this feeling gave them the courage and will to do better next time.

> Trying to remember where I had difficulties myself, I got prepared for the lessons and I prepared the materials accordingly. I was trying to find videos on the internet, I was also trying to use online tools to involve the students in the lesson as much as possible. For example, if I teach the present perfect tense, I wonder if the student knows the 3rd form of the verbs. I printed out the 3rd form of the verbs, so that the students can look it during the lesson and at home. I gave them additional materials. Sometimes I felt inadequate. I thought that I could be better prepared, and sometimes I felt that I was doing my teaching job incompletely. I went to the lesson by preparing to make up for it a little more in the next lesson. (TA 3)

Another significant experience for the TAs regarding material development was learning about the interest areas of the students they teach and adapt their materials or create new ones from scratch. In addition to this, lesson planning skills of TAs improved with this experience according to their statements since they simulate their lessons and predict possible challenges and come up with solutions for the challenges.

> First of all, while I was preparing for my duty here, I thought about my own role models and my previous teachers and took them as an example. Then, if we talk specifically about the lesson, I made sure that I had mastered the subjects, for example, if the subject of modals came, I prepared enriched materials. I mostly prepared and created all my materials myself, from reading passages to worksheets, from videos to songs. I also got positive feedback from students. Generally, I can say that our lessons were completely

enjoyable, these are the ones that come to my mind right now, if I need to give examples. For example, when a student takes a lesson more than once, our communication with the student gets stronger. We talk and share their interests and topics in class. For example, when the student talked about an article he liked very much, I used that content as material while teaching that student again. This is what the student liked very much; these are the ones that come to mind. (TA 4)

Raising Awareness and Improving Teacher Roles

In addition to the teaching skills/qualities, TAs state that they had the opportunity to develop and perhaps adopt motivational skills during their experience because the learners were students at a preparatory class at university and they had to pass the preparatory year to continue their studies in their English-medium departments, which required a minimum B1+ English proficiency and this sometimes resulted in concerns about passing and failing rather than concerns about acquiring the language. In such cases, when students expressed their fear of being unsuccessful in the preparatory year and restudy the same year, TAs gave them short motivational sessions not as teachers but peers, which they thought was very effective since they went through the same preparatory year experience and were highly aware of the challenges.

I saw that students sometimes lack motivation and focus only on passing the exam rather than speaking English. In this regard, I felt the need to be a coach or a motivator, a person who would teach the value of English, rather than being a teacher. (TA 2)

Teachers put on many different roles inside and outside the classroom. Educator, assessor (evaluator), facilitator, informer, language model, planner and monitor. In different contexts, unique roles can also be observed. In addition to all these, being a motivator, which includes a wide range of factors from pairing students to sequencing activities and the amount of correction, is highly valued.

It can be inferred from the TAs' statements that providing and sustaining student motivation was very challenging since students had the tendency to speak in their mother tongue in lessons and continuously ask for exam strategies rather than focusing on developing their language skills. Yet, again, the students' need for motivation became apparent during and specifically after the lessons. Although the TAs are trained to teach with the guidance of theoretical background and teaching practices, it can be understood from their statements that motivation is significantly necessary in this context because it is not only teaching but also experience-sharing. Thus, this context gave them the opportunity to do self-reflection and focus on their to-be-developed qualities.

I tried to use the English language completely in my lessons and I wanted them to try not to use their mother tongue because our main goal is to make them use English a lot. I had a hard time in this matter because the students insistently speak in the mother tongue. As they spoke in the mother tongue, I said "English, please speak English." They returned to English sometimes I don't think I am fully motivated about it. I want to make a self-criticism here, actually, I think I need to find a method for this. (TA 1)

The Benefits of Being Professionally Present as Teacher in The Classroom

Being professionally present as a teacher in the classroom and adopting an appropriate professional attitude were significant points that TAs have mentioned as a gain in this experience. Being punctual, establishing rapport with students, developing positive communication with the instructors and more importantly acquiring problem solving skills was utterly valuable for the TAs. Another issue regarding the professional presence of the teacher was getting feedback from students and getting lessons from the mistakes and amending the teaching styles and approaches.

My biggest advantage was that I taught to different groups. I learned to modify my work according to the student. I received feedback from all the students at the end of the lesson. If the student's level is low, if he is afraid to speak English, I talked about how the lesson went, how I should have done and asked them if they enjoyed the lesson, felt comfortable by speaking in the mother tongue after I finished the lesson so that the students could express themselves. I think it's beneficial for my development. It is very important that they are happy in the lesson and not feel uncomfortable. In the long run, I will benefit from what I have done. It is important to me whether the student leaves satisfied at the end of the session. (TA 5)

It can be understood from the TAs statements that they had intensive peer-learning experiences from each other by sharing the challenges they have faced and solutions they have created, which was invaluable both academically and professionally.

When I feel that students do not understand me, the material or my language, instead of giving a direct explanation or repeating myself over and over, I divided what I told into parts and gave examples from life. I also gave examples from their own context. Besides, I gave references to them and gave examples. I wanted them to understand the necessary word or the necessary phrase. I wanted them

to make inferences and I attached great importance to the students' finding their own answers with clues by using visual materials and by using a lot of body language. This really helped the students to understand what they didn't understand at first. *(TA 2)*

The Enhancement of Multitasking

Being more practical in preparing lesson plans, authentic materials, improvement in problem solving skills, thinking more flexibly, taking faster yet effective decisions, adapting materials on-the-spot when students do not comprehend the topic at hand with the pre-prepared material, being more effective and interactive in communication with students and among peer TAs, choosing the most appropriate material, determining students' levels more accurately, preparing the most efficient lesson plan were the most frequently mentioned teacher qualities claimed to be acquired by the TAs.

What can be inferred from the TAs' statements is that the TAP supported them in being more developed professionally. It was understood that they felt theoretically adequate and skilled for such a practice although none of the TAs had had any teaching experience at tertiary level.

Besides their improvement in the aforementioned qualities, there is specific emphasis on a specific role, teacher as a motivator, and how it contributed to the teaching. The motivator role was the consolidating component which seemed to be missing in their previous teaching practices.

On the instructors' side of the preparatory class, according to the TAs' statements they acted as "mentors". Mentors or specifically qualified mentors work with their mentees in cooperation and collaboration both at tertiary level and below. Qualified mentors are expected to be experienced and able in some key areas such as creating an appropriate learning atmosphere, managing and organising classrooms, planning and managing practical work when the atmosphere is appropriate (Brooks & Sikes, 1997).

As stated in Dale's Cone of Experience (Dale, 1969), which is known as experiential learning or action learning, the further you go down the cone, the more information and learning is possible to be retained. When students are involved in the process and/or have hands-on or in other words field experience.

Lenkauskaitė's study (2020) proves that classroom environment, namely the real situations and circumstances make teachers be more open and readier for the challenges they will be facing in the future. Therefore, student teachers have an invaluable medium to be prepared for prospective situations and become equipped against most cases.

With the guidance of the prep class instructors, they had the opportunity to develop their teaching.

All the lecturers were very helpful to us. They gave us ideas while planning the lesson, searching for materials, adapting the materials we found, telling us how to communicate with the students, making photocopies, how we should distribute the materials, how and when we should give the instruction. We have theoretical knowledge, yes, but you cannot learn without doing it. This was very valuable. (TA 3)

What consolidates all the components regarding the TAP is the student teachers' becoming critical-thinkers and problem-solvers (Abrami et al., 2015). Once they become aware of the fact that thinking critically and being a problem-solver, with their theoretical background and other related skills, they benefit from the TAP and from their statements it is apparent that this specific experience supported them in this manner.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study is to investigate and reveal how TAP affects EFL pre-service teachers' teaching qualities and how it contributes to their professional qualities.

This study was conducted with five senior ELT students and eight EPC students to analyze their views on a TAP from which both parties have benefitted. On students' side, the benefits were mostly related to academic support with which they had the opportunity to recycle the course contents and review the parts and points in their knowledge that required to be aided.

On the TAs' side, the benefits were mostly professional. They had the opportunity to sharpen their teaching skills and competencies by experiencing real-life situations both inside and outside the classroom.

Theory and practice are both sides of the coin that supplement, amend, and facilitate each other.

However, without hands-on experience, it is hardly possible especially in a highly interactive context of language teaching. Mimics, gestures, sounds, overall, the entire body language, course contents, lesson plans, materials, timing, motivation, and infinite other components matter throughout the whole process, which gives the final impression of teaching quality and distinguishes the teachers in all aspects. Therefore, TAP is an invaluable experience for TAs seeking readiness for professional life.

Declarations

Authors' contributions: Both authors have an equal contribution.

Competing interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Ethics approval and consent to participate: The ethical permission form number is 2022/15 and was signed by the chair of the ethics committee of the Istanbul Kültür University.

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