

March 2024

Pre-service teachers evaluate mentors and teaching practice schools using metaphors

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Recommended Citation

Canli, S., & Demirtas, H. (2024). Pre-service teachers evaluate mentors and teaching practice schools using metaphors. *Journal of Global Education and Research*, 8(1), 82-102. <https://www.doi.org/10.5038/2577-509X.8.1.1325>

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Abstract

The present study aimed to analyze the views of pre-service teachers, expressed through metaphors, about the adequacy of mentors and teaching practice schools and their recommendations for effective mentoring. A phenomenological design was adopted, and participants included 105 mentees. The current mentors and teaching practice schools had attributes that were not adequate for active mentoring. The mentor should be selected based on criteria such as professional competence, ability to perform mentoring roles, and positive interpersonal relationships. The teaching practice schools should be selected based on human relations, educational activities, the quality of education and instruction, and the physical conditions of the school.

Keywords

professional development, school-university partnership, practical education, teacher

Revisions

Submission date: Mar. 4, 2023; 1st Revision: Jun. 7, 2023; 2nd Revision: Oct. 29, 2023; 3rd Revision: Nov. 7, 2023; 4th Revision: Feb. 4, 2024; Acceptance: Feb. 5, 2024

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Pre-Service Teachers Evaluate Mentors and Teaching Practice Schools Using Metaphors

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Abstract

The present study aimed to analyze the views of pre-service teachers, expressed through metaphors, about the adequacy of mentors and teaching practice schools and their recommendations for effective mentoring. A phenomenological design was adopted, and participants included 105 mentees. The current mentors and teaching practice schools had attributes that were not adequate for active mentoring. The mentor should be selected based on criteria such as professional competence, ability to perform mentoring roles, and positive interpersonal relationships. The teaching practice schools should be selected based on human relations, educational activities, the quality of education and instruction, and the physical conditions of the school.

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Introduction

The failure to achieve the desired efficiency in student learning has drawn attention to the quality of teachers in schools and brought reform in teacher education to the agenda (Gürşimşek, 1999). In line with the need for higher-quality teacher education (Winitzky et al., 1992), the *professional development school* model was implemented in the United States (Bullough, Jr. et al., 1997). In the professional development school model, the aim is to provide mutual benefit by developing both school and teacher education through school-university collaboration (Devlin-Scherer et al., 1998). Professional development schools are clinical field sites that focus on improving teacher education, enabling the development of practicing teachers, increasing student success, and conducting research (Castle et al., 2006). In professional development schools, the responsibility for teaching and training pre-service teachers is shared through a school-university collaboration to increase the quality of education and collaborative research on educational practices is carried out to solve learning problems. In this way, teachers, school administrators, and university lecturers contribute to the development of the teaching profession and more realistic solutions to educational problems can be found (Gürşimşek, 1999).

Professional development schools provide a learning and teaching environment that enables pre-service teachers to practice and develop their pedagogical knowledge and skills by working with an experienced teacher (Mann et al., 2020). Thus, practical education that allows pre-service teachers to establish connections between theory and practice is carried out in professional development schools with the collaboration of public schools and universities (Winitzky et al., 1992). The practical education conducted with the partnership of universities and schools is considered a key component of pre-service teacher education. Practical curricula are based on the assumption that pre-service teachers can learn by experience (Zanting et al., 1998). In practical education, pre-service teachers are provided with the opportunity to experience a real school environment and experience instruction. The pre-service teacher learns how to practice the teaching profession by observing a qualified and experienced teacher (Maphosa et al., 2007). These teachers, who host the pre-service teacher in their classroom, are called mentors and contribute to both the personal and professional development of pre-service teachers (Jaipal, 2009). Thus, mentoring is significant in pre-service teacher training, and research has concentrated on the investigation of the skills, applications, and personal traits required for effective mentoring (Hall et al., 2008).

In the present study, teaching practice in pre-service teacher training in Turkiye was investigated within the scope of mentoring, and school practice teachers were considered mentors, whereas pre-service teachers were considered mentees. The practice schools were public or private schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education (2018) where practical education is carried out. We wanted to emphasize the components of mentoring such as the mentor and the environment for effective mentoring (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Thus, the present study aimed to analyze mentees' views, expressed through metaphors, about the adequacy of mentors and teaching practice schools, and ascertain their recommendations for effective mentoring. Metaphors produced by the mentees about current and ideal mentors and teaching practice schools were determined and compared.

Literature Review

The literature review addresses the complex role of mentoring in pre-service teacher training, underscoring its varied interpretations and key impact on shaping teacher development.

Mentoring in Pre-Service Teacher Training

Mentoring in pre-service teacher education, which involves experienced teachers giving one-to-one support to help trainees learn teaching methods (Hennissen et al., 2011), is defined in a variety of ways, leading to different interpretations among readers (Zanting et al., 1998). Thus, the definitions of mentoring, how to mentor, and who the mentor is in pre-service teacher training are not clear (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). This lack of clarity could be due to the complex nature of mentoring in teacher training due to its holistic nature, reflective properties, the requirement for individualization, and the impact of the personal traits of the participants in the mentoring process on the success of mentoring (Ambrosetti, 2014). Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010) criticized definitions of mentoring for excluding the relationships, processes, and contexts of mentoring; therefore, their definition included these components. They claimed mentoring is a non-hierarchical mutual relationship between the mentor and mentee that allows the mentee to accomplish specific professional and personal achievements. Thus, the professional and personal

development of a pre-service teacher by learning from a mentor was emphasized. Mentors contribute to the development of the teaching competencies and socialization of pre-service teachers and provide emotional and psychological support (Liu, 2014). Mentoring is a reciprocal process that contributes to the mentor as well as the mentee. In this process, a learning partnership is established between the mentor and the mentee, whereby mentors can learn innovative ideas and strategies from mentees (Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005).

The Mentor in Pre-Service Teacher Training

Mentoring is a journey and a collaborative process in teacher training. Thus, mentoring includes the strongly associated dimensions of relationship and process (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). For beneficial mentoring, an effective mentoring relationship should be established. The lack of such a relationship can harm both the mentee and the mentor. An effective mentoring relationship may not be established due to poor mentor selection and inadequate mentor training (Dziczkowski, 2013). When mentors are not selected appropriately, they may lack mentoring traits and might not perform their mentoring roles adequately. The roles and strategies adopted by the mentor to support the learning of the mentee should be adequate for the developmental requirements of the mentee (Hennissen et al., 2011). Thus, mentors should determine their roles and behaviors based on the requirements of the mentees. Otherwise, mentors may exert little influence on mentee development (Izadinia, 2015).

Mentoring is not a simple task (Maphosa et al., 2007). The multidimensional and complex nature of the mentor roles, the requirement to work directly with the mentee (Hobbs & Stovall, 2015), and the versatility of the mentor roles during the mentoring process (Ambrosetti, 2014) all attest to the complexity of mentoring. The mentor plays the roles of observer, feedback provider, role model, counselor, critical friend, instructor, manager, assessor, quality controller, and equal partner during mentoring. When playing the role of observer, the mentor observes the mentee's instruction, preparation for the class, professional attitudes, and behaviors. As a feedback provider, the mentor provides feedback about the instructional performance of the mentee. The professional attitudes and behavior of the mentor provide a role model for the mentee. In the role of counselor, the mentor assists mentees when they experience personal and professional problems. As a critical friend, the mentor offers constructive criticism about the instructional practices of the mentee. As an instructor, the mentor provides instructional knowledge for the mentee; as a manager, the mentor allows the mentee to observe the routines at the school; as an assessor, the mentor assesses the mentee's performance; as a quality controller, the mentor ensures that students receive adequate instruction; and, finally, in the role of an equal partner, the mentor and the mentee mutually support and learn from each other (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005).

For mentors to fulfill these tasks effectively, they should have certain traits: adequate topic knowledge, professional experience, and communication skills (Cothran et al., 2008). Mentors should maintain interpersonal relationships and motivate mentees to achieve planned goals (Nyanjom, 2020). Mentoring should not be perceived as an obligation but as an internal motivation (Izadinia, 2015). Furthermore, since mentor self-efficacy is another trait of an effective mentor, they should trust themselves and believe in their skills to positively affect the development of the mentees (Hall et al., 2008).

The Teaching Practice School in Pre-Service Teacher Training

Interpersonal relationships are determined by both individual needs and the organizational environment. Thus, the establishment of an effective mentoring relationship can be affected by the traits of both the mentor and mentee and the conditions in the organization. Therefore, the organizational environmental conditions that may support or hinder the establishment of an effective mentoring relationship should be identified (Kram, 1983). However, the properties of the teaching practice school have been neglected in previous studies. The teaching practice school is an actual school where mentees are allowed to employ their instructional knowledge and skills. The mentor hosts the mentee in the class and mentors the latter in the teaching practice school. The mentor interacts with the mentee the most. However, the mentee also interacts with other teachers, administrators, and students in the teaching practice school. In other words, the mentee experiences a complex interaction network and these individuals can contribute to the professional experience of the mentee (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016). For instance, mentees observe and communicate with other teachers in the teacher lounge and learn about the relationships among colleagues such as their rituals, routines, jargon, and so on. They recognize the way things work at school. Also, acceptance by other teachers allows mentees to feel like a teacher, while non-acceptance may lead to feelings of exclusion (Maynard, 2000). This exclusion can affect mentee professional development and attitudes. When mentees instruct the class, they interact with students. Factors such as the acceptance of and respect for mentees as teachers by the students, the participation of mentees in educational activities, and satisfactory student feedback may affect mentees' professional development and attitudes. Furthermore, school principals play a key role in mentoring programs, and they should be involved in the mentoring process for the success of these programs. School principals play a vital role in the establishment and development of the mentor-mentee relationship while the relationship between the principal and mentee is also important (Vierstraete, 2005). The school principal's attitudes and behavior towards mentees may affect their professional development and attitudes. Furthermore, the physical conditions of the teaching practice school may also affect the professional development and attitudes of the mentee since these factors could affect the emergence of the mentee's professional potential.

Mentoring in Pre-Service Teacher Training in Turkiye

Formal mentoring has been adopted in pre-service teacher training in Turkiye. The mentoring process is conducted within the *teaching practice* course in collaboration with schools. The aim of the teaching practice course is to ensure the preparation of pre-service teachers for the teaching profession via the acquisition of competence to employ their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior related to general culture, the personal field, and the teaching profession they have acquired as undergraduate students. The teaching practice course is delivered in two undergraduate terms (28 weeks) and includes two hours of theoretical (28 weeks) and six hours of practical (24 weeks) classes per week in each semester. The two theoretical hours of teaching practice are taught by the university faculty. Teaching practice classes are conducted under the guidance of an experienced teacher at the school. The colleges and the Provincial Directorate of National Education collaborate to assign the teaching practice instructor, the pre-service teacher, and the lecturer. The teaching practice instructor is selected based on certain criteria such as the *Teaching Practice Training Certificate* awarded by the Ministry of National Education. The teaching practice schools are selected from public and private schools in the same province or district as the college. The pre-service teacher and teaching practice instructor are matched based on their

professional field. Each teaching practice instructor is paired with up to four pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers attend the classes at the teaching practice school in pairs. The pre-service teachers teach at least four hours each semester under the supervision of the teaching practice instructor in different weeks. After the instruction, the teaching practice instructor provides feedback. The pre-service teacher is assisted on various topics such as the development of a course outline, instruction of the class based on that outline, classroom management, evaluation of student success, and participation in administrative and educational activities. In short, the teaching practice course is organized to include all duties and responsibilities of the teacher. Pre-service teachers are expected to actively participate in the education and instruction processes. The performance of the pre-service teacher is evaluated separately by the teaching practice instructor and the lecturer. The achievement of the pre-service teacher is determined by combining the evaluations of the practice instructor and the lecturer based on the *Education-Instruction and Examination Regulations*. Furthermore, the teaching practice instructor and lecturer submit daily (at least four times) and general evaluations about the pre-service teachers via the Practice Student Evaluation System (Ministry of National Education, 2018).

Methods

This section outlines the study's approach, detailing the phenomenological design, participant selection, data collection, and analysis methods.

Empirical Model

The study employed a phenomenological design which focused on the meaning of individuals' lived experiences of a phenomenon and described the common meaning for all participants (Creswell, 2007).

Participants

Participants were assigned with a maximum variation sampling method. In this method, similar and different cases are determined for the research problem. The main purpose was to describe the problem within a broad framework via the determination of similarities and differences between the cases associated with the problem (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). Participants included 105 senior pre-service teachers (mentees) attending the Faculty of Education in a Turkish university. Participant demographics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Variable	N	Variable	N
<u>Gender</u>		<u>Age</u>	
Female	82	20	1
Male	23	21	11
<u>Department</u>		22	51
Classroom Teaching	15	23	26
Turkish Language Teaching	9	24	7
Preschool Teaching	41	26	4
Primary Mathematics Teaching	10	28	3
English Language Teaching	12	29	1
Special Education Teaching	4	30	1
Science Teaching	14		
Total	105	Total	105

Data Collection

The study data include metaphors. Metaphors are associated with an individual's emotions and behaviors and are more than similes (Ganser, 1994). Metaphors allow the determination of an individual's perceptions about the subject of analysis (Cerit, 2008). Thus, metaphors are important tools to determine the attitudes, perceptions, and understanding of individuals about scholarly concepts (Aydin & Pehlivan, 2010). The investigation of various aspects of current cases based on metaphors entails the reflection on facts via analogies (Balci, 2003). Metaphors are a product of creativity and help one recognize new similarities and correlations beyond the known correlations and similarities. They aid in the acquisition of new meanings different from previous ones and expand the horizon of the concept (Lakoff & Johnson, 2010). Thus, metaphors allow the establishment of a correlation between two phenomena and the observation of a phenomenon as a different phenomenon (Saban, 2008). Metaphors make the topic of research more interesting, significant, and comprehensible (Low, 2008).

A semi-structured interview form with two sections was developed to collect data. The first section included demographic questions (e.g., gender, age, department). The second section included four statements, namely, *My mentor is like ..., because ...*, *An ideal mentor should be like ..., because ...*, *My teaching practice school is like ..., because ...*, and *An ideal teaching practice school should be like ..., because...* to determine the perceptions of the participants of their current mentor, the ideal mentor, their current teaching practice school, and the ideal teaching practice school through metaphors.

Data Analysis

The form was completed by 116 mentees. However, certain mentees wrote metaphors in the interview form but did not write logical justifications, certain mentees wrote logical justifications but did not write metaphors, and certain mentees included concepts that were not actually metaphors about the four concepts. Thus, 11 such interview forms were excluded from the analysis. The interview forms that included both metaphors and logical justifications even for a single concept were included in the analysis. Thus, the data collected from 105 interview forms were analyzed employing content analysis. Initially, each interview form was coded (i.e., S1, S2, S3,...) Then, the statements from each interview form were read and the metaphors were grouped into categories based on similarities and logical justifications. Frequencies of the categories and metaphors were calculated.

Validity and Reliability

The following procedures ensure the validity and reliability of the study. First, a literature review was conducted on studies that incorporated metaphors to inform the development of the interview form. The draft form underwent a review by two faculty members in Educational Administration. Following revisions, a pilot study was conducted with six mentees to assess the clarity and comprehensibility of the interview items. In the analysis, the metaphors extracted from the interviews were organized into categories by the first author, who sent them to the second author for independent classification of the metaphors and categories. The agreement rate between the two authors was high at 90.87%. Interview forms were reviewed for alternative metaphor

categories, and the final categorization was established through consensus between the authors. Direct quotes are presented for each category in the findings section.

Findings

This section presents the results of the study, focusing on the metaphors used by mentees to describe their current mentors. It begins by exploring the various categories derived from these metaphors, offering insights into the mentees' perceptions and experiences.

Current Mentors

The mentees' metaphors about their current mentors and the associated categories are presented in Table 2. The categories *sympathetic*, *caring*, and *lovable* reflected the current mentors displayed sympathetic and caring behavior towards the students and mentees and were well-liked. Some of the mentees' opinions include: "My mentor is like candy, because (s)he treats all children well. My mentor is a very sympathetic individual; (s)he takes care of children like a mother. When we have a problem, (s)he tries to help" (S3). "My mentor is like a mother, because (s)he takes care of children, and (s)he is loved by children" (S37). "My mentor is like an angel, because (s)he protects and looks after the interns. (S)he always respects our decisions" (S67).

Table 2. Metaphors for Current Mentors

Category	Metaphor	<i>N</i>	<i>f</i>
Sympathetic, caring, and lovable	Mother (8), candy (4), cotton candy (3), elder brother (2), angel (2), friend (2), Pollyanna (2), father (2), pretty infant (1), sun (1), dove (1), spring (1), turtle (1), cat (1), innocent cat (1), merciful father (1), candle (1), perfume (1), hot chocolate (1), milk chocolate (1), <i>teacher Afet</i> (1)	21	38
Inefficient and indifferent	Ice (1), freezer (1), wall (1), microwave food (1), crescent (1), turtle (1), koala (1), as if doped (1), candle (1), snake who looks like cotton candy (1), fake god (1), hidden box (1), flowerpot (1), chair (1), cold as ice (1), merchant (1), slowed down pendulum (1)	17	17
Professional	Wise bird (1), scientist (1), busy bee (1), flower (1), rainbow (1), beautiful and industrious robot (1), wolf (1), machine (1), mixer (1), river (1), educational toy (1), guide (1), robot (1), Tarkan (1), experience itself (1)	15	15
Authoritarian	Elder sister (1), repo officer (1), black box (1), lion king of the jungle (1), Pavlov (1), nervous soccer manager (1), Superman (1), snake (1)	8	8
Just	Scale (1), kite (1)	2	2
Emphasizing competition	Competition leader (1), clock (1)	2	2

The category *inefficient and indifferent* reflected the current mentors were not effective for neither students nor mentees and exhibited indifferent behavior. For example, mentee S18 emphasized the inefficiency of the mentor: "My mentor acts as if doped, because although (s)he could retire, (s)he still works and does not do anything for the students. (S)he walks around the school in a trance, you know." S4 emphasized the mentor's inability to assist and communicate with the mentees and stated that the mentor never helped them and was not productive:

My mentor is cold as ice, because (s)he never chats with us; (s)he never helps me. The students help me more about my activities and practice. My teacher is really cold, (s)he did not even speak five words during my internship.

In the *professional* category, the current mentors demonstrated adequate field and vocational knowledge. Mentee S30 emphasized the competence of the mentor in the field and teaching profession knowledge:

My mentor is like a wise bird, because (s)he responds to all student questions with adequate answers and raises their awareness. (S)he is equipped with skills that can transform every problem into an educational activity. (S)he communicates well with children.

The *authoritarian* category reflected current mentors yelled at students, treated them harshly, threatened them, humiliated mentees, overreacted to students, employed rewards and punishments to establish order, and tried to control everything. For example, mentee S45 discussed the overreacting mentor: “My mentor is like a nervous coach, because when students are unsuccessful and make a wrong move, (s)he overreacts.” S33 stated that the mentor humiliated (her)him: “My mentor is like a snake, because (s)he prefers to humiliate me instead of correcting my mistakes.”

Comments in the *just* category emphasized that the current mentors did not discriminate among students and treated everyone equally. Mentee S15 stated, “My mentor is like a scale, because (s)he does not discriminate among students.” The category of *emphasizing competition* reflected the current mentors promoted competitive relations and a competitive environment among the students, and constantly warned the students to prepare for exams. Mentee S1 indicated the mentor’s emphasis on competitiveness: “My mentor is like a competition leader, because every time (s)he asks a question, (s)he grades the answers, and asks the class to applaud the student with the highest grade.” S85 stated the mentor constantly warned the students to prepare for exams: “My mentor is like a clock, because (s)he alerts the students about the time spent and warns them to prepare for exams.”

Ideal Mentor

The metaphors produced by the mentees about the ideal mentor and associated categories are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Metaphors for the Ideal Mentor

Category	Metaphor	N	f
Professional	Lion (4), ant (2), bee (1), father (1), knowledgeable (1), bitter chocolate (1), jinn (1), wave (1), democratic mother (1), well equipped computer (1), Fatih Terim (1), the colors of the rainbow (1), sky (1), sun (1), candy that does not melt easily (1), cellular membrane (1), teaching-man (1), stainless steel (1), teddy bear (1), warm home (1), chicken breast pudding (1), vigilant cat (1), vigilant fox (1), star (1), time (1)	25	29
Sympathetic, caring, and lovable	Mother (5), Aamir Khan (1), friend (1), pocketbook (1), ice cream (1), bird (1), angel (1), candle (1), paper towel (1), soil (1)	10	14
Developing	Sun (3), tree (2), spring rain (1), one who teaches how to fish (1), ice box (1), butterfly (1), painter (1)	7	10
Guiding	Guide (2), brain (1), sun (1), light (1), station master (1)	5	6
Empathetic	Child (1), chameleon (1), flower (1), diamond (1)	4	4
Influencer	Flower (1), 3D book (1), role model (1), sunflower seed (1)	4	4
Source of knowledge	Book (2), star (1)	2	3
Just	Scale (1)	1	1

The *professional* category reflected that the ideal mentor should have adequate field and vocational knowledge. Mentee S65 emphasized the competence of the ideal mentor in field knowledge: “The ideal mentor should be like a warm home because the teacher is the mother, the father. (S)he should be the pillar of the environment. (S)he should have the knowledge and experience to train students well in every aspect.” S58 emphasized that the ideal mentor should have professional knowledge:

The ideal mentor should be like a lion because the teacher should know what the class needs and be able to convey the associated knowledge based on the development of the children. The mentor should have the skills to keep the class organized and in harmony and should be consistent.

The *sympathetic, caring, and lovable* category reflected that the ideal mentor should exhibit sympathetic and caring behavior toward the students and should be loved by the students as indicated by S15: “The ideal mentor should be like ice cream because if you are recognized and liked by the students, they will be more interested.” Mentee S62 stated that the ideal mentor should be sympathetic: “The ideal mentor should be like soil, because (s)he should accept whatever comes from the students with humility, instead of shouting at them.” S64 emphasized that the ideal mentor should be interested in students: “The ideal mentor should be like a mother, because, as mothers protect their children and provide great strength, teachers should also strengthen their students and protect them by supporting them in any event.”

The *developing* category reflected that the ideal mentor should contribute to the development of students and mentees. Mentee S7 emphasized that the ideal mentor should contribute to the development of the students: “The ideal mentor should be like a butterfly, because independent of the time we spend with the teacher, this can provide a necessary and sufficient contribution to the students.” S24 stated the ideal mentor should contribute to the development of the mentee: “The ideal mentor should be like a freezer, because (s)he should give feedback to a statement or a question by including something personal or an experience. It should be like getting ice from water.”

The *guiding* category emphasized that the ideal mentor should guide the students and mentees. Mentee S92 indicated that the ideal mentor should guide the professional development of the mentee: “The ideal mentor should be like a guide, because (s)he should instruct us how to develop ourselves in teaching, not just the rules of the teaching profession.” Mentee S13 stated the ideal mentor should guide students: “The ideal mentor should be like the sun, because (s)he should always enlighten the students on everything and teach them to distinguish between good and bad.”

The *empathetic* category reflected that the ideal mentor should empathize with the students. Mentee S4 emphasized that an ideal mentor should empathize to understand and communicate with the students:

The ideal mentor should be like a child because they should feel like children and think like children so as to reach children easily, understand them better, think like them, and act like them. Only those who think and feel like a child can reach children and touch their hearts.

The *influencer* category reflected that the ideal mentor should influence mentees and others, and exhibit model behavior. Mentee S25 emphasized that the ideal mentor should influence people around (her) him: “The ideal mentor should be like a flower, because (s)he should affect the people around. (S)he should be equipped not only in appearance but also in nature.” Mentee S21 emphasized that the ideal mentor should influence the mentee and exhibit model behavior:

The ideal mentor should be like a sunflower seed because when you eat, you want to eat more. You know, once you start eating sunflower seed, you cannot stop, or when you get the taste, you cannot stop. In fact, over time, you envy and emulate it and become like it.

The ideal mentor in the *source of knowledge* category was depicted as the provider of knowledge for the students and mentees. Mentee S45 stated that the ideal mentor should constantly provide new information: “The ideal mentor should be like a book, because (s)he should be like a book that we want to read more, and which can teach us different and new information every time we read it.” Mentee S23 stated the ideal mentor should be a provider of knowledge: “The ideal mentor should be like a star, because the stars shine when the sky is dark, and the teacher shines in an unknown dark world for the children and transforms the unknown into the known.”

The *just* category reflected that the ideal mentor should not discriminate among students and should be egalitarian and fair. Mentee S59 stated the ideal mentor should be egalitarian and just: “The ideal mentor should be like a scale, because (s)he should always love all children without discriminating among them and include each student in the future. (S)he should be egalitarian and just.”

Current Teaching Practice School

The metaphors produced by the mentees about the current teaching practice school and associated categories are presented in Table 4.

The *relaxing and pleasing* category reflected that the employees were sincere and understanding; they did their jobs with love; the students felt comfortable, happy, and had fun; the teachers and administrators approached students with compassion; the employees were friendly; the teachers were sincere and friendly towards the students; the administrators helped the mentees; the mentees loved the students; the employees felt comfortable; and the teachers were happy. Mentee S11 emphasized that the students felt comfortable in the teaching practice school: “My teaching practice school is like a playhouse because many children live and spend their time there, they feel comfortable like at home.” Mentee S91 focused on the sincere relationships among the employees at the teaching practice school: “My teaching practice school is like a neighborhood because everyone has good, friendly relations with one another. The relations between the teachers and the assistant principals are very friendly.” S76 stated the administrators at the teaching practice school helped (her)him and that (s)he liked the students:

My teaching practice school is like a nursery, because it was located in a very central quarter, and the students were not afraid of the school and did not think about skipping school. The principal and the vice principal were helpful in all matters. I felt like I was reunited with my children during my internship.

The *inadequate physical conditions* category reflected that the teaching practice schools were inadequate in terms of cleanliness and very crowded; the classes were crowded; the schools were far away; the environmental conditions were poor; there was no adequate playground space for the children; green spaces were insufficient; the schools were not suitable for the development of children; there were transportation problems, heating problems, and material scarcity; and the buildings were old and ignored the individual differences of the students. Mentee S14 emphasized that the number of students in the teaching practice school was high and the classes were crowded: “My school is like a cellular colony, because it is very crowded, and there are too many students in the classrooms.” Mentee S35 stated the teaching practice school was very far away: “My teaching practice school is like a distant island because it is so far away and there is nothing around.” Mentee S94 indicated that the teaching practice school building was old and educational

materials were insufficient: “My teaching practice school is like a museum because the materials are very old. Educational materials are insufficient.”

Table 4. Metaphors for the Current Teaching Practice School

Category	Metaphor	N	f
Relaxing and pleasing	Home (2), amusement park (2), mother’s bosom (1), bee (1), playhouse (1), house (1), coop (1), neighborhood (1), book of fairy tales (1), tiny doll house (1), picture book (1), warm home (1), warm nest (1), condensed amusement park (1), holiday resort (1), bulgur salad party-assigned dormitory (1), ‘gold day’ host (1)	17	19
Inadequate physical conditions	Concrete jungle (1), iceberg (1), ugly cat (1), junk shop (1), hospital on Everest (1), rose (1), cellular colony (1), anthill (1), shed (1), museum (1), cold and inanimate place (1), burned-out candle (1), Syria (1), train station (1), distant island (1), half-constructed building (1), easter egg (1)	17	17
Unproductive	Factory (3), general store (1), stray train (1), entertainment venue (1), puzzle with missing pieces (1), pomegranate (1), teatime for teachers (1), the color black (1), withering flower (1)	9	11
Limiting and oppressive	Penitentiary (2), neurosis block in an asylum (1), open mouth of a dinosaur (1), concentration camp (1), grumpy and shrewd lion (1), high security prison (1), running track (1), my grandpa with whom I have a generational conflict (1), wildlife (1)	9	10
Disorganized and confusing	Garden with different flowers (1), slum (1), labyrinth (1), refugee camp (1), bus (1), concentration camp (1), broken xerox machine (1)	7	7
Insincere relationships	Cold mansion (1), crowded street in an upscale neighborhood (1), nursery (1), special notebook (1), pile of stones (1)	5	5
Adequate physical conditions	Newly cleaned home (1), manor (1), perfect pile of concrete (1), brick pile (1)	4	4
Orderly operations	Ferris wheel (1), factory (1)	2	2
Developer	Mushroom with red spots (1), soil (1)	2	2

The *unproductive* category reflected that the students were not well educated in the teaching practice schools, the teachers were incompetent, the parents were disinterested, the administrators were inadequate, student care was poor, student interest was low in classes, and the teachers and administrators did not provide adequate training for the mentees. Mentee S32 emphasized that the students in the teaching practice school were not well-educated, and the parents were disinterested: “My teaching practice school is like a withering flower because the school looks like a nursing home. Parents are disinterested. The teacher is perceived as the caregiver. When the teacher is lazy, the children cannot exhibit any development.”

The *limiting and oppressive* category reflected that teaching practice schools kept the students indoors all the time, employees were harsh towards the students and exerted psychological pressure (towards the students and mentees), students could not socialize and were under constant academic pressure, the environment was rigid and disciplinary, students were shouted at and scolded, and the schools did not promote critical and creative thinking and were not open to innovation. Mentee S22 emphasized that the students were constantly kept indoors: “My teaching practice school is like a high-security prison because children are officially placed in separate prison wards and sentenced to spend half a day there. Children are not allowed to spend time outdoors.” Mentee S29 indicated that the students and mentees in the teaching practice school experienced psychological pressure: “My teaching practice school is like a penitentiary because all employees behave like guards. Students and mentees are constantly under psychological pressure and the interesting thing is that they do this behind very friendly masks.” Mentee S89 emphasized the oppressive environment which was closed to innovation at the teaching practice

school: “My teaching practice school is like my grandfather with whom I experience a generational conflict because it is not open to innovation and is oppressive.”

The *disorganized and confusing* category reflected that the teaching practice schools were disorganized, included students from various income levels and with different personalities, included different individuals, and the school structure was confusing. Mentee S56 emphasized that the teaching practice school was disorganized: “My teaching practice school is like a slum because there is no order. Everything is piecemeal.” Mentee S96 indicated the presence of students with different traits in the teaching practice school: “My teaching practice school is like a concentration camp because there are all types of students.”

The *insincere relations* category reflected that the individuals in teaching practice schools behaved formally with each other and were not sincere. Mentees S34 and S60 emphasized the lack of sincere relations between the stakeholders in the teaching practice school: “My teaching practice school is like a cold mansion because there are formal relationships between the school employees and the staff. The facilities are OK, but the relationships that create a home and communications are not there” (S34), and “My teaching practice school is like a nursery because the administrators and teachers cannot establish sincere relationships with students and act only as educators who teach in return for money” (S60).

The *adequate physical conditions* category reflected that the cleanliness, equipment, personnel, and physical equipment were adequate and new in teaching practice schools. Mentee S46 stated, “My teaching practice school is like a manor, because it is a big building, without any problems, and a lot of people clean it or meet the needs.” The *orderly operations* category reflected that everything was conducted based on the rules and a certain systematic order in teaching practice schools. Mentees S90 and S95 stated the operations were orderly in the schools: “My teaching practice school is like a Ferris wheel. It constantly turns at the same speed, like a wheel with consequent relations, all based on a set of rules” (S90). “My teaching practice school is like a factory, because everything proceeds systematically, and all rules are followed in an orderly fashion” (S95).

The *developer* category reflected that several educational opportunities were offered for the students in teaching practice schools, leading to student development. Mentee S50 produced a metaphor in this category: “My teaching practice school is like a red-spotted mushroom because it collects children and hosts many students and competent teachers. Its quality and discipline offer good services to staff and students. Its rich library offers great opportunities for children.”

Ideal Teaching Practice School

The metaphors produced by the mentees about the ideal teaching practice school and associated categories are presented in Table 5. The *relaxing and pleasing* category reflected that students should feel free, happy, safe, comfortable, peaceful, and have a sense of belonging in the ideal teaching practice school and that people should come willingly and have fun in a sincere environment in an ideal school. Mentee S70 emphasized that students should have fun in the ideal teaching practice school: “The ideal teaching practice school should be like a holiday resort because the students should have fun and enjoy themselves while learning.” Mentee S92 indicated

that the ideal teaching practice school should have an environment where students feel comfortable, safe, and have a sense of belonging:

The ideal teaching practice school should be like home because people should feel comfortable, they should meet their security needs, and feel that they belong to the place before fulfilling their learning requirements. If these are not available, complete learning will not be possible.

Table 5. Metaphors for the Ideal Teaching Practice School

Category	Metaphors	<i>N</i>	<i>f</i>
Relaxing and pleasing	Home (3), holiday resort (2), nursery (2), family (1), father (1), garden (1), Charlie's Chocolate Factory (1), plane tree (1), student's home (1), ship at sea (1), entertainment center(1), home environment (1), the color blue (1), fruit salad (1), detached house (1), antique (1), cheerful forest (1), log house in the forest (1), hotel (1), game (1), play garden (1), playground (1), warm home (1), Smurfs' home (1), Tarzan's home (1), homeland (1)	26	30
Developer	Laboratory (3), mother (1), elevator (1), cloud (1), heaven (1), lighthouse (1), physician (1), entertaining library (1), intellectual (1), factory (1), humic soil (1), attentive physician (1), anthill (1), book (1), college (1), sheep farm (1), village institutes (1), bird nest (1), small university (1), library (1), Montessori school (1), candle (1), hot pita bread (1), milk (1), space (1), lifelong education center (1), living organism (1), tree on land (1)	28	30
Prioritizing individual differences	Rainbow (2), garden (1), request box (1), bus station (1), Rumi (1), forest (1)	6	7
Solidarity	Family (2), factory (1), house with three columns (1), family home (1), land of white lilies (1), industrial corporation (1)	6	7
Orderly operations	Parents who support a family (1), AI robot (1), circulatory system (1)	3	3

The *developer* category reflected that the ideal teaching practice school should allow the development of both students and mentees. This category included statements such as the lack of knowledge should be eliminated among students, students should develop their skills, educational activities should be provided for students, students should be prepared for life, versatile organization and opportunities that would improve students should be provided, facilities should be available for scientific studies, additional activities should be available, a learning-by-doing approach should be adopted, facilities should be available that allow the self-improvement of mentees and where they can implement theoretical knowledge and assist the students and staff in solving their problems, and different instructional methods should be implemented to improve student achievements. Mentee S77 indicated that the ideal teaching practice school should allow mentees to transfer theoretical knowledge into practice and improve themselves:

The ideal teaching practice school should be like the village institutes because teachers need to be trained in a space where they can improve themselves. Theoretical education is not sufficient. It would be more beneficial to face reality. As a primary school teacher, it would be more logical to practice in such places, since we will be assigned to a village school for the first time.

S54 stated that in the ideal teaching practice school, the following facilities should be provided to ensure the development of students:

The ideal teaching practice school should be like heaven because everything needs to be adequate for children to meet their needs. The interior, exterior, and objectives of the school should be adequate and ensure that children will be ready for life and can lead a healthy life.

The *prioritizing individual differences* category reflected that the ideal teaching practice school should include individuals with different attributes and should consider and respect individual

requirements and differences. Mentee S104 stated the ideal teaching practice school should include students with different attributes and respect differences:

The ideal teaching practice school should be like Rumi because students should live under the same roof based on the principle of equality, independent of their ethnic origin, language, race, color, or economic income. The school should allow the members of society to feel the philosophy ‘Come, come, whoever you are.

The *solidarity* category reflected that there should be solidarity in the ideal teaching practice school. Mentee S3 indicated that the employees and students should be connected, there should be a division of labor, and everyone should fulfill their responsibilities in the ideal teaching practice school:

The ideal teaching practice school should be like the family, because, just as the family members are closely tied to one another, the students and school employees should be connected to each other. They should adopt the division of labor principle. All must fulfill their duties.

The *orderly operations* category reflected that the operations in the ideal teaching practice school should be conducted within a certain order, there should be no disruptions, and all operations should be planned. Mentee S78 used a metaphor that emphasized orderly operations in the ideal teaching practice school:

The ideal teaching practice school should be like the circulatory system because it is a serious system that should always function and not tolerate errors. That is why everything needs to be planned and conducted in the best way possible.

Conclusions

Certain metaphors produced in this study about the current mentors and the ideal mentor were classified under the same category. This could suggest that some current mentors had certain ideal mentor attributes. Similar categories were *professional*, *sympathetic*, *caring and lovable*, and *just*. The *just* category emphasized the fair treatment of students. Fairness is considered important in effective mentoring. An ideal mentor should not be prejudicial nor discriminative, and should be fair, objective, and impartial (Arkün-Kocadere, 2015; Mubarak & Jamilu, 2015).

The *professional* category was another shared by two themes, where the mentor’s proficiency in the particular field and vocational knowledge were emphasized. Mentoring in pre-service teacher education should focus on the development of the mentee into a competent professional (Lopez-Real & Kwan, 2005). Thus, several previous studies focused on the assistance provided by the mentor for the professional development of the mentee, and the roles played by mentors (e.g., Maphosa et al., 2007; Maynard, 2000). Effective mentoring for the professional development of the mentee will be possible if the mentor is proficient in course planning and lecturing (Maphosa et al., 2007). Thus, field knowledge proficiency is the key to effective mentoring (Cothran et al., 2008). Mentors with professional competence can provide adequate answers to the mentees’ questions, which will lead to trust in the mentors (Arkün-Kocadere, 2015).

The category *sympathetic, caring, and lovable* was another common category, emphasizing metaphors demonstrating these characteristics. Participants stated that the ideal mentor should be sympathetic and caring towards the students and should be loved by the students. Others mentioned

that the current mentors were caring and sympathetic towards the students and mentees and were loved by both groups. Mentees require elevated levels of academic and emotional support (Izadinia, 2017). The interest of the mentor in the needs of the mentee and their ability to provide the required support will reflect the mentor's care for the mentee. Supporting the mentee is among the roles of the mentor (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011), both professionally and emotionally. The mentor should address the mentee's weaknesses through criticism and by providing opportunities for the mentee to reflect on their behavior to solve problems and improve instructional skills (Hall et al., 2008).

Furthermore, pre-service teachers are often unsure about their professional competence. Thus, mentees may have certain fears about the profession. One of the goals of the mentor is to help the mentee to overcome these fears. For this purpose, mentors provide emotional support for mentees and are considered a catalyst that promotes the learning of the mentee (Butler & Cuenca, 2012). Mentors, who are aware of the significance of a positive relationship with the mentee despite their main role involving both academic and emotional support, prioritize psychological or emotional support more when compared to educational support (Izadinia, 2015). An insensitive and impatient mentor will negatively affect the mentor-mentee relationship (Jones, 2000). The mentor should welcome the mentee, be understanding, and make the mentee feel that they belong to the school (Maynard, 2000).

Since empathic behavior towards students was emphasized in the *empathetic* category for the ideal mentor, the ideal mentor should also behave empathetically towards the mentee. Empathy is the basis of effective assistance (Rowley, 1999). A lack of empathy toward the mentee negatively affects the mentor-mentee relationship (Jones, 2000). The *source of knowledge*, *developing*, and *guiding* categories for the ideal mentor reflected that the ideal mentor should transfer knowledge to both students and mentees, contribute to their development, and guide them. Previous studies reported similar mentoring attributes. In a study conducted by Ganser (1994), orientation and development metaphors were attributed to mentoring. In a study carried out by Izadinia (2017), metaphors about guidance and support were emphasized for mentoring. In a study conducted by Cothran et al. (2008), mentors were reported as sources of knowledge. In Izadinia's study (2016), mentees produced metaphors that described mentoring as a process that supports and guides mentees. Mentors share their instructional knowledge with mentees to contribute to their educational development. As teaching coaches, mentors observe and assess the instructional practices of mentees and provide feedback to improve the methods and techniques adopted by the latter (Butler & Cuenca, 2012). Mentors argued that providing feedback was among their mentoring roles (Izadinia, 2015). Mentees appreciate mentor feedback since they consider it as a part of the process of effective instruction. They expect advice and recommendations from mentors on course design and presentation (Davis & Fantozzi, 2016). Mentors should encourage mentees to demonstrate their teaching skills, provide feedback about their strengths and weaknesses, and guide mentees until they can teach effectively (Maphosa et al., 2007).

Another category determined for the ideal mentor was an *influencer*. This category reflected that the ideal mentor should influence mentees and model themselves as a role model for mentees and others. Mentors should set an example for mentees in course instruction (Maphosa et al., 2007). Mentees should also see their mentors as role models to emulate in their future vocation (Ó Gallchóir et al., 2019). Furthermore, mentors should also encourage mentees to explore further instruction styles rather than dictating their own (Maynard, 2000). However, the study determined

that some current mentors were negative role models for the mentees. Thus, mentees should be more careful when selecting mentors. These negative metaphors about the current mentors were classified under the *inefficient and indifferent*, *authoritarian*, and *emphasizing competition* categories. The *inefficient and indifferent* category reflected that the mentees considered the current mentors inefficient and indifferent to both the students and the mentees. In a study conducted by Maphosa et al. (2007), most mentees could not benefit from mentors adequately and mentors were determined to be ineffective. The *authoritarian* category reflected that the current mentors were authoritarian in their relations with both the students and the mentees. They shouted at the students, threatened them, were harsh with them, and humiliated the mentees. However, the ideal mentor does not abuse his authority (Mubarak & Jamilu, 2015). The *emphasizing competition* category reflected that the current mentors promoted a competitive environment among the students. This could be due to the implementation of a central examination system in Turkiye, whereby the educational lives of students are shaped around examinations, and the academic achievements of the schools are determined by students' grades in these central exams. The common approach posits that competition among students will motivate them, thereby increasing the quality of learning. However, trying hard does not always guarantee a successful outcome. Students may fail even when they try hard. Failure may lead the student to perceive low self-worth, thereby reducing the future efforts of the student. This outcome may negatively motivate learning. Thus, a competitive learning environment can have a negative impact on students (Wang & Yang, 2003).

There were metaphor categories common to both the current teaching practice school and the ideal teaching practice school. This finding could suggest that some current teaching practice schools exhibited certain properties of ideal teaching practice schools. The common categories were *relaxing and pleasing*, *developer*, and *orderly operations*. In these categories, general factors such as human relations in teaching practice schools, attitudes of employees towards their jobs, individual psychological state, and the functioning and quality of educational activities were emphasized. The *relaxing and pleasing* category indicated that the administrators in the current teaching practice schools assisted the mentees, and the *developer* category indicated that the ideal teaching practice school should provide an environment adequate for the development of the mentee. On the other hand, categories that stood alone, especially negative metaphor categories, demonstrated that some current teaching practice schools did not provide adequate mentoring. The categories determined to be negative metaphors included *inadequate physical conditions*, *unproductive*, *limiting and oppressive*, *disorganized and confusing*, and *insincere relationships*. The negative metaphors in these categories included general factors such as human relations, physical conditions, educational activities, and the quality of education in the current teaching practice schools. Furthermore, the mentees mentioned transportation difficulties in the category of *inadequate physical conditions*. Inadequate physical conditions and transportation problems were also reported by Demir and Çamlı (2011) and Seçer et al. (2010). In Turkiye, mentees are usually assigned to teaching practice schools located in provincial centers. However, they are not usually residents of the city where the university is located, and they are not well-versed in that city which can lead to problems with transportation to teaching practice schools. The *unproductive* category reflected that teachers and administrators did not provide adequate opportunities for the development of mentees. This failure may prevent the acquisition of the expected benefits from mentoring. The *limiting and oppressive* category reflected that the mentees were exposed to psychological pressure. Exposure to psychological pressure may lead to the development of negative attitudes towards the teaching profession and the schools. Moreover, inadequate physical

conditions such as a lack of equipment and crowded classes in certain teaching practice schools may adversely affect both the quality of education and the instructional skills of the mentee. Furthermore, disorderly school operations, inadequacy of teachers, and limiting and oppressive teacher behavior towards students provide negative role models for mentees. Insincere relationships, parental disinterest, and the indifference of students can also negatively affect the professional motivation of mentees.

Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to the literature on mentor selection criteria for effective mentoring. Professional competence is a significant criterion in mentor selection. In selecting mentors, the mentor's knowledge of the particular field and teaching profession should be recognized. Another criterion should be their role as a mentor. To ensure the mentee's professional development, the mentor should share educational knowledge and skills, observe the mentee's performance, guide the mentee via adequate feedback, and provide a role model. The mentor should be aware of these roles and have the skills to perform these roles. The last criterion is interpersonal relationships. The personal traits of the mentor can affect the quality of mentoring (Hudson, 2003) and effective mentors should possess the skills to maintain interpersonal relationships (Nyanjom, 2020). Mentors should establish positive relationships, especially with students and mentees.

The teaching practice school properties are also important for effective mentoring. In this study, mentees evaluated the current teaching practice schools and the ideal teaching practice school based on human relationships and educational factors rather than on the contribution of the schools to their development. This demonstrates that the mentees prioritized the educational properties and human relations in the school. Teaching practice schools should be determined based on human relations, educational activities, the quality of education and instruction, and physical conditions in the school.

Practical Implications

In the present study, mentees evaluated current mentors and ideal mentor characteristics based on professional competence and the teacher-student relationship rather than on the contribution of the mentors to the mentees. Thus, the mentees expected their mentors to exhibit the behavior of a role model. Accordingly, mentors must have professional competence. Furthermore, mentors must be considerate towards students, take an interest in them, treat them fairly, empathize with them, guide them, and develop them. However, some mentors exhibited traits inadequate for mentoring. Since mentoring skills can be learned and improved (Ambrosetti, 2014), mentors with poor mentoring skills should partake in training programs developed based on the criteria above.

The school context is important for effective mentoring. The neglect of social conditions in schools hinders effective teacher training. The inclusion of mentees in the school's teacher community is essential for their development. In this way, mentees can associate the problems they encounter with the problems of other teachers, schools, and systems. The development of mentees should be the responsibility of all school staff (Zeichner, 1992). Teaching practice should be perceived as a collaborative process, not a division of labor (Atputhasamy, 2005). Mentees should be provided with due attention by school principals, other teachers, and students in teaching practice schools, and cooperation is essential for the professional development of mentees. The mentors, other

teachers in the school, and the school principal should all be aware of their duties and responsibilities and establish positive relations with one another to positively affect the attitudes of mentees towards the school and the teaching profession.

The quality of education in existing schools was not at the desired level as indicated by the quality of teachers and the school conditions, which were reported as negative. Some teachers were inefficient and indifferent towards students. Furthermore, they shouted at students, threatened them, and treated them harshly. This may indicate the inadequacy of some current teachers in terms of their professional competence and teacher-student relations. In addition to this, the inadequacy of the administrator and the indifference of the parents were also determined. This reveals the importance of conducting activities that increase the competence of current teachers and administrators and that raise awareness in parents.

Additionally, the physical conditions in some schools were not sufficient to ensure students' development. The lack of materials in schools can be overcome and the number of students in classes can be reduced. It is important to create school conditions that will ensure students' academic, social, and psychological development by considering their individual differences. Educating students should be regarded as the joint responsibility of universities and schools (Gürşimşek, 1999). For this reason, the goal should be to improve both school and teacher education through school-university collaboration. The school-university collaboration process should be reviewed and structured in such a way as to achieve this goal.

Limitations and Future Research

There are some limitations in the present study. The findings were from the Turkish context. Future research can focus on comparing different contexts to reveal the significance of context. In this study, the inadequacies of current mentors and teaching practice schools were revealed. Future research can explore how these inadequacies negatively affect mentees. In this study, mentor selection criteria for effective mentoring were determined. However, there was no indication as to which of these criteria was more important for effective mentoring. Future research can examine which of these criteria is more important for mentees and how they will affect their professional attitudes and development. Furthermore, future qualitative research can identify in detail why these criteria are important. The present study emphasized the significance of the teaching practice school for effective mentoring and the characteristics of the teaching practice school for effective mentoring were revealed. However, there was no indication as to which of these characteristics was more important for effective mentoring. Future qualitative research can focus on how these characteristics will affect the mentoring process.

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Acknowledgment

This study was presented as a verbal presentation at the 13th International Congress on Educational Administration, May 10-12, 2018, in Sivas, Turkiye.