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Assembling a Toolkit for Resilience: Pre-service English Teacher Mentorship

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Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Turkiye has unique challenges, including large class sizes, limited exposure to English outside the classroom, and a conflict between the demands of academic success and the practical use of the language in real-life situations. The practicum period is intended to bridge theoretical coursework and classroom practice. As they are still forming their professional identities, pre-service English language teachers (PELTs) often enter practicum settings unprepared for these realities, which makes practicum experience emotionally and professionally overwhelming. This qualitative study explores the development of resilience skills in PELTs through structured, individualized mentoring during their practicum. The study is guided by the following research question to understand how mentoring during the practicum might support the development of resilience skills among PELTs: How can mentoring contribute to building their resilience in navigating challenges during the practicum? The research was conducted with eight fourth-year PELTs enrolled in an English Language Teaching (ELT) program at a state university in Turkiye. They were assigned to a secondary school for a weekly practicum during the 2024-25 fall term, where they observed their mentor teachers and taught lessons. The first researcher initially held an online session to introduce the concept of resilience as both a personal and a professional skill. Throughout the practicum, she provided one-on-one mentoring to support PELTs as they navigated emotional, pedagogical, and professional challenges. The mentoring sessions were designed to provide a safe and nonjudgmental space for open dialogue, where PELTs could feel more comfortable sharing their personal and professional challenges. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured individual and group sessions, and reflective papers. Observations focused on emotional responses as teaching behaviors. Individual and group sessions, as well as written reflections, provided valuable insights into the PELTs' practicum experiences. To analyze the data, we used thematic analysis to identify, organize, and interpret recurring themes within the data. The findings demonstrate how mentoring practices can affect PELTs' long-term resilience skills and teacher identity. The findings have important implications for designing ELT programs and broader educational policies regarding the support systems integrated into practicum experiences.

Keywords: English language teaching, mentoring, pre-service English teacher education, practicum, resilience.