

# Dialogic research mentoring in pre-service teacher education

Dialogic  
research  
mentoring

Seden Eraldemir Tuyan

*Department of ELT, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Cag University, Tarsus, Turkey*

267

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper presents the results of my learning using my expertise in teacher-research mentoring to address the needs of pre-service teachers and the requirements of the action research course in English language teaching. It reflects on the different procedures of my mentoring model, enriched by the dialogic research mentoring strategies informed by Freire's dialogic pedagogy.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Through this first-person action research, the author aims to improve her teacher-research mentoring practice. As an inquiry into her own actions, the author examines her experiences, her understanding of them, and the potential meaning for her work as a teacher-research mentor during the two years she tutored the action research course. The author explores the procedures of the mentoring model she developed and the effectiveness of dialogic research mentoring in promoting critical consciousness and taking positive action in pre-service English language teachers.

**Findings** – Effective actualization of the teacher-research mentoring process facilitates mentors' refinement and understanding of their roles during teacher-research mentoring. Perceived barriers can be overcome by adopting nine relevant strategies, which can be grouped into three themes: community-building, nurturing competencies, and fostering growth. Accordingly, the research mentoring model incorporates these strategies.

**Originality/value** – The insights enriched the existing knowledge of the dynamics of mentoring in general and of teacher-research in particular. Additionally, the study offers strategies developed based on my informed actions as the researcher to attain more effective outcomes during the research mentoring process.

**Keywords** Freirean pedagogy, Mentoring, Pre-service teacher, Reflexive practice, Teacher-research mentoring, Action research

**Paper type** Research paper

Received 13 December 2021

Revised 21 July 2022

25 December 2022

23 February 2023

8 May 2023

Accepted 11 May 2023

## Introduction

Over the last two decades, action research (AR) for K–12 teachers has increasingly been recognized as an empowering and liberating professional development activity (Burns, 2010; Burns and Westmacott, 2018). However, teachers, including pre-service teachers (PSTs), may need intensive and focused support from mentors who have expertise in both general mentoring and research mentoring (Dikilitaş and Wyatt, 2018; Smith, 2020) for AR to be conducted successfully. PSTs need to be equipped with research knowledge and skills and have the self-confidence to conduct AR, which may be difficult if their AR is being formally assessed.

In the context of pre-service training, opportunities for PSTs to conduct AR during their practicum can be provided. Many researchers assert that encouraging student teachers to reflect on their teaching behavior allows them to evaluate their own teaching and develop decision-making skills (Bich Dieu *et al.*, 2019; Bognar and Krumes, 2017; Haberin *et al.*, 2019). According to McKnight (2002), knowing what happens in the classroom is not sufficient to be a good teacher; understanding the “whys,” “hows,” and “what ifs” is far more important, and the constant practice of reflective thinking leads to this insight (p. 1). During an AR project, the practitioner takes action or enacts a change (Ary *et al.*, 2010; Wood and Smith, 2016). In this respect, equipping PSTs with the necessary skills and knowledge to use teacher-



© Seden Eraldemir Tuyan. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

International Journal of Mentoring  
and Coaching in Education  
Vol. 12 No. 3, 2023  
pp. 267-283  
Emerald Publishing Limited  
2046-6854  
DOI 10.1108/IJME-12-2021-0110

research (TR) as a continuous professional development (CPD) tool is important (Mitchell *et al.*, 2009).

The empowering nature of “mentoring,” evident in TR, has led many teacher trainers and staff developers to question their roles in enabling teachers to use the required knowledge and skills and thereby improve their competencies in conducting classroom-based research. Nevertheless, introducing AR to PSTs as a course to be assessed requires extra care, especially given the contradiction between some aspects of the teacher educator’s tutoring and assessment and the nature of mentoring in TR. In mentoring, for example, instead of primarily assessing the mentee’s progress, as a teacher educator might, more space is provided for self-evaluation, self-monitoring, and self-observation. Mentoring is not primarily concerned with advising but rather with counseling teachers in discovering a path for themselves (Malderez, 2009; Smith, 2020). According to Smith (2020), mentoring as part of TR requires important qualities and skills such as providing constructive non-judgmental feedback while demonstrating an enthusiastic, motivating, and positive attitude. Hence, mentors must trust their mentees and mutually respect each other; they must learn to actively listen and develop different modes of communication such as eliciting, questioning (seeking clarification, probing, and inquiring about the meaning), paraphrasing, presenting alternatives, and guiding action (Smith, 2020).

My understanding of mentoring for TR stems from my experience in an in-service context and has been nurtured by my interactions with the IATEFL ReSIG community throughout my journey to become a TR mentor (see Eraldemir-Tuyan, 2017, 2018). Based on my own continuous AR process, on how to become a more efficient TR mentor, I added more elements to this understanding by making meaning out of my learning from different mentoring experiences. After transitioning from an in-service to a pre-service Turkish university context, I needed to apply my understanding of mentoring TR to tutoring an AR course for PSTs, which led me to seek new ways to better understand and meet my students’ needs (Eraldemir-Tuyan, 2019).

### Study background

#### *The role of dialogic research mentoring in cultivating research mindset*

Dialogic research mentoring is a strategy I have developed, drawing inspiration from several sources, to facilitate the AR of PSTs. Central to this notion is Freire’s (1994, 2000) concept of dialogic pedagogy, which is discussed below. I was also inspired by the idea of establishing a community of inquiry (Wells, 1999) with my students in order to find ways to motivate PSTs to gain a teacher’s sense of plausibility (Prabhu, 1990) and help them sustain their intrinsic motivation for growth.

Advocated by educationalist Paulo Freire (1921–1997), Freirean dialogic pedagogy is composed of a dynamic dialectical approach to the world, a praxis-based view of human knowledge, and a personal commitment to the liberation of oppressed people. This pedagogical approach generates general principles for teaching and learning by understanding human beings and the social world and requires critical, dialogical, and praxical aspects. Freire’s (2000) notion of dialogic pedagogy expresses the need for such a learning atmosphere in which everyone involved shares responsibility for a learning process that helps them grow in a free and creative environment through dialogue. A true Freirean dialogue constitutes love, including care and commitment, trust, humility, hope, mutual respect, humor, silence, faith, and critical thinking (Freire, 2000; Freire Institute, 2013).

Like Freire, Wells (1999) also suggests that education should take the form of a dialogue with the participants. Inquiry, as he sees it, is a way of looking at events and ideas, a desire to wonder, to ask questions, and to strive to understand by working with others to find answers. Wells proposes that such an inquiry would encourage the teachers “to act informedly and responsibly in the situations that may be encountered both now and, in the future . . . and be

agentive in directing their own learning” (p. 121). Accordingly, his understanding of the “community of inquiry” differs from other communities of practice; “metaknowing,” as one of its distinctive features, enables members to think about knowledge building and the tools and practices involved. It is through engagement in the discourse of knowledge building that teachers develop theoretical knowledge as they connect objects and activities (Wells, 1999). Essentially, I drew on Wells’s (1999) view of the community of inquiry and Freire’s (2000) notion of dialogic pedagogy, which supported my research mentoring agenda in their own ways.

Prabhu (1990) claims that teachers must have their own theory of how their teaching can result in the desired learning outcomes. In such an environment, PSTs should be encouraged to actively participate in the development of their own pedagogical intuitions and analyze “how learning takes place and how teaching causes or supports it” (Prabhu, 1990, p. 172). This can derive from several different sources such as the teacher’s previous experience as a learner, prior teaching experience, exposure to different methods while training as a teacher, and identifying with one another. Accordingly, as Prabhu suggests, once a “teacher’s sense of plausibility” is engaged in teaching, the process is not mechanical and is more productive. This is compatible with Freire’s (2005) ideas on praxis: reflection and action on the world to transform it (p. 51).

Dialogic relationships in the mentoring of PSTs have been reported in different school contexts. Talbot *et al.* (2018) studied the dialogic interaction of a PST, a supervising teacher, and a university-based educator while considering their teaching philosophies, learning, and mentoring, as well as the moral and ethical requirements that drove them to action to maintain professional accountability (p. 22). Bjuland and Helgevold (2018) explored the dialogic processes in student teachers’ mentoring dialogues in practice teaching and discussed the importance of a mentor teacher as “a facilitator and knowledgeable other” based on student teachers’ reflections on selected activities, using predictions and detailed observations associated with pupils’ learning (p. 246).

### *The teaching model*

While tutoring the AR course for pre-service English language (EL) teachers starting in the 2018 spring semester and continuing the following year, I developed this teaching model that was informed by dialogic research mentoring in my own AR process to achieve more effective outcomes regarding my students’ research engagement (see Figure 1).

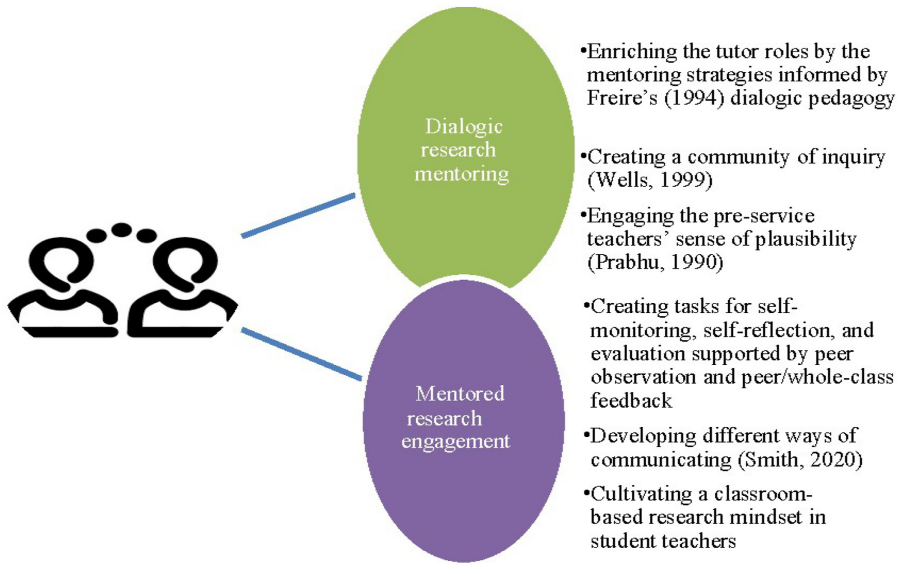
### *Study context*

Despite its importance in PST education programs, the practicum remains problematic in the Turkish context for a variety of reasons, including insufficient long-term assistance from university and school mentors (Yangın Eksi and Yakısık, 2016), the unpleasant effects of evaluation (Coşkun, 2013), and a lack of cooperation among stakeholders associated with the practicum (Yıldız *et al.*, 2016).

To overcome similar challenges, Şahinkarakaş and Tokoz-Göktepe (2018) developed the collaborative practicum model at my university, and an AR course was already available at the time I joined the faculty during the 2017–2018 academic year. My colleagues developed a model that involved AR mentors, university supervisors, school mentors, and student teachers themselves in guiding them when conducting AR and coping with the challenges they faced during their practicum.

### *The action research course*

The main purpose of the AR course, which was included in the program as part of the collaborative practicum model for training the PSTs (Şahinkarakaş and Tokoz-Göktepe, 2018),



**Figure 1.**  
Tutoring an action research course for pre-service English language teachers informed by dialogic research mentoring

**Source(s):** Author's own creation

was to help them conceive the basic concepts, methods, and approaches related to conducting AR. Following a four-week introduction to AR on how to plan–act–observe–reflect during their practicum process, Burns's (2010) *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners* was used as a guide, and the course consisted of feedback sessions accompanied by mentoring for the next ten weeks. These sessions focused on the problems they faced during teaching practice that they wanted to either change or improve as part of their individual AR plans. After identifying the problem, they presented their proposals to their peers and course tutors. During their data collection process, the AR mentor provided critical feedback to the PSTs to assist them in interpreting their data and identifying acceptable solutions for the issues they encountered during their teaching practice. They were then required to prepare their research reports, which were to be evaluated to determine their progress in the AR course.

### Methodology

Burns (2010) suggests that AR often emerges from a “burning question” (p. 22) that teachers have been struggling with for a while, a change they want to see in themselves or their learners, or a desire to become more effective.

Based on this understanding, I decided to use mixed methods within a “first-person action research” (Adams, 2014 cited in Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014, pp. 349–353) approach to address my students' needs better and to improve my practice as a TR mentor in the pre-service context during the two years I tutored the AR course. By self-inquiry, we explore the inaction of our own selves, and the inquiry occurs through us. Thus, as facilitators, we can increase our understanding of the inherent complexity involved in effecting change by reflecting in action (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). As such, knowing how we know involves taking responsibility for appropriating and practicing the knowing process, in which the knowledge is developed through experiential awareness, existential understanding, critical

judgment, and action. The research is a continuous, iterative process in which researchers go backward and forward through these stages, seeking deeper meanings implicit in their experiences.

In my AR course, my students followed the exploratory action research (EAR) approach (Smith, 2015), which encourages teachers to explore classroom issues based on research rather than taking immediate action and tracking changes, without interfering with their teaching schedules. This approach was more comprehensible because PSTs decided to implement and evaluate new actions based on the findings of the exploratory research phase, which itself was justified by the findings of the first phase.

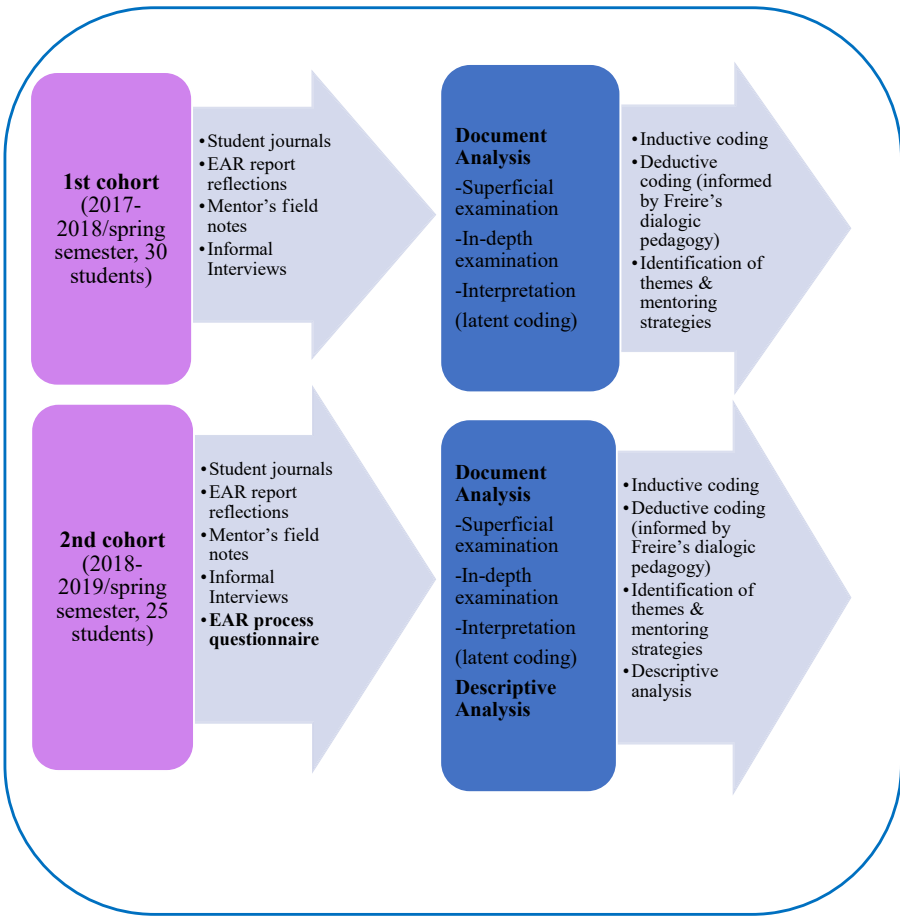
Based on my prior experience in mentoring TR, I followed the spiral model of the AR cycles that Kemmis and McTaggart (2007) present, whose key stages are planning a change, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflecting on these processes and consequences, re-planning, acting, and observing again, and reflecting again (p. 271). I sought to answer the following question: “How can I improve the methods I used to mentor in-service teachers to better meet my students’ needs while tutoring a pre-service action research course?”

To answer the question, I collected feedback throughout the course via informal interviews, students’ in-class reflections on their learning, and students’ journals, and I used them to fine-tune my TR mentoring approach as the course tutor of the PSTs. I maintained field notes during the four months of the course each year. At the end of the course, as part of the course policy, the students were asked to prepare their EAR reports, which included their reflections on their learning as prospective EL teachers during their practicum process and the AR course (see Figure 2).

In the second year, to evaluate the outcomes of my dialogic mentoring approach during the course delivery, I shared a questionnaire with the students at the end of the course to explore the influence of the AR course enriched by the mentoring strategies informed by Freire’s dialogic pedagogy (see Appendix). It consisted of nine items rated on a five-point Likert scale, enquiring how much the AR course experience influenced their understanding of the constituents, mainly trust, commitment, care, humility, hope, humor, critical thinking, faith, and silence. Items were scored from 5 (“totally agree”) to 1 (“totally disagree”). The students were also asked to justify their rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying, and commenting on each item.

I continued to study my own attempts to develop strategies to frame and reframe (Schön, 1987) how this learning could be facilitated for PSTs, particularly through the AR course during the practicum. To achieve my aim, I undertook this study in a cyclical fashion based on the reflections that I gathered from the informal interviews with PSTs, journals, in-class reflections, and my “reflections-in-action” and “reflection-on-action” (Schön, 1983) after implementing the contents of my model. During this process, I continued keeping field notes, and my dialogic research mentoring strategies evolved at the same time.

I examined the EAR process questionnaire reflections, EAR report reflections, and my field notes using document analysis techniques. A document analysis includes three stages: superficial examination (getting through the documents quickly), in-depth examination (reading the documents closely), and interpretation (Bowen, 2009). As a common interpretive strategy, thematic analysis involves systematically analyzing, organizing, and describing qualitative data based on emerging themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I used both inductive and deductive coding (informed by Freire’s dialogic pedagogy) to analyze reflections from EAR reports, EAR process questionnaires, and my detailed field notes. The first step was to review all student reflections both to develop initial codes and to code for the constituents of Freirean dialogue and review the data again through this framework to identify emerging themes. Multiple cycles through the coding process captured the impact of the AR course and my use of dialogic research mentoring strategies as more PSTs completed the EAR report



**Figure 2.**  
Overview of the data  
collection and analysis  
process during the  
dialogic research  
mentoring process

**Source(s):** Author's own creation

reflections over the second year. I applied a latent analysis as I developed and rearranged subtheme codes into subthemes and themes. As a result, I gained a deeper understanding of the data, the major themes, possible relationships among them, and gaps or dynamics that needed further exploration.

Students gave oral consent to participate in my AR study. As part of my guidance, I told them that I would keep their responses confidential and that they themselves would be responsible for anonymizing their schools and students. Also, to use their responses for the study, I asked them to mark “Yes” on the EAR process questionnaire. I received the ethics committee approval for this study from Cag University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences (E-33089555-044-2200004963).

**The 2017–2018 spring semester**

Despite the positive influence of the collaborative practicum model on the successful outcomes of the AR course, I was not satisfied with the guidance I could provide to my

PST mentees. I felt that factors such as the large number of PSTs, traditional classroom atmosphere, perceived teacher–student roles, and the assessment policy were limiting both the students’ potential to learn and the quality of my research mentoring. The collaborative model was helpful; nevertheless, my situation required me to be innovative and find my own way.

The large number of PSTs I mentored during my first year (30 in 2017–2018) was a big challenge. I could hardly hear 15 of them at the end of the class, leaving me very dissatisfied. They all needed to talk about their challenges and feel cared for and understood about their possible concerns during the school practice. To overcome these issues, I began by revising my pedagogy, internalizing ideas from Freirean pedagogy, and reconsidering the role of dialogue in the tutor–student relationship. I strove to give them more autonomy to ensure effective utilization of the time available for mentoring. While doing so, I mainly needed to motivate them to explore their own alternatives for addressing their concerns during their practicum as part of their AR course. For example, I would designate my PST mentees as future colleagues (e.g. I would ask them to close their eyes and imagine themselves teaching their future students).

I also tried to establish a free and democratic classroom environment in which they would feel more accepted when expressing themselves and urged to take responsibility for their own professional growth. I felt that the teacher–student roles were restricted, as in traditional classrooms; hence, I gave them more space and freedom. For example, I allowed them to bring coffee to the classroom and attend class even if they were late.

Confirming my expectations, the feedback I received from the students revealed that the AR course contributed to their increased confidence as future teachers. Among the reported gains, increased self-confidence enabled them to collaborate more with one another and grow as teachers (see also [Eraldemir-Tuyan, 2019](#)).

### The 2018–2019 spring semester

To continue overcoming the barriers affecting the effective outcomes of the AR course, I continued updating the teaching model ([Figure 1](#)), accompanied by my dialogic research mentoring strategies in my second-year course (2018–2019 spring semester). They were shaped and reshaped during the process.

The analysis of the feedback from the mentoring role–EAR process questionnaire (see [Appendix](#)) revealed the positive outcomes of my dialogic research mentoring approach during the course delivery.

[Table 1](#) depicts the students’ perceptions of the nine constituents of Freire’s dialogic pedagogy infused into my mentoring strategies during the EAR course. According to the

Constituents of freirean dialogic pedagogy	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Trust	3	5	4.68	0.61
Commitment	2	5	4.48	0.69
Care	4	5	4.92	0.27
Humility	4	5	4.72	0.44
Hope	4	5	4.88	0.32
Humor	3	5	4.36	0.84
Critical thinking	3	5	4.76	0.58
Faith	4	5	4.84	0.36
Silence	1	5	3.52	1.36

**Note(s):**  $N = 25$

**Source(s):** Author’s own creation

**Table 1.**  
Perceived influence of  
the EAR course  
enriched by the  
mentoring strategies  
informed by Freire’s  
dialogic pedagogy  
(2nd phase, 2018–2019)

findings, *Care* was the biggest influencing constituent ( $M = 4.92$ ,  $SD = 0.27$ ), followed by *Hope* ( $M = 4.88$ ,  $SD = 0.32$ ), *Faith* ( $M = 4.84$ ,  $SD = 0.36$ ), *Critical thinking* ( $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ), *Humility* ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 0.44$ ), *Trust* ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ), *Commitment* ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ), *Humor* ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ), and *Silence* ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ).

The overall findings of the mentoring role–EAR process questionnaire indicated that all the students agreed with eight of the nine items in the questionnaire, except for *Silence* ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ). According to Freire (2000), silence means that everyone, regardless of their social class, gender, race, or other characteristics, should have a say in revolutionizing the world. As the mean score for *Silence* was greater than 2, this strategy was not clearly perceived by the students during the course. This might be because the term was not sufficiently explained before they did the questionnaire. Some contradictory student comments also revealed a misunderstanding of this concept, which supported this finding. For example, PST13 and PST3, who rated this item as 5 (“totally agree”), offered the following comments:

Silence was one of the best elements of this course because students probably need silence because of the nature of this course. We always come up with an idea, and our lecturer evaluates our idea without judgment. Our lecturer lets us show our potential. For instance, we keep a journal for the AR course, and it is a kind of our silence and personal space. (PST13)

To be honest, our lecturer wasn’t silent from the beginning of my study’s presentation to its completed version, but I think it is positive. My study needed to be guided. So, our lecturer guided our studies according to her attitude. (PST3)

Conversely, PST4’s comment showed they interpreted “Freirean silence” more precisely:

I gave 1 point because we, as the whole class, were not silent during the process. We made a lot of noise, and that noise helped us find solutions. We argued loudly, and each of us got different kinds of ideas from each of us again thanks to those noises. (PST4)

## Findings

The dialogic research mentoring strategies are the main themes I came to know that enhanced the outcomes I desired for my students, characterizing the research mentoring model in a pre-service context. As a result of the analysis of feedback on my various approaches from my students and of my own field notes, I discovered that I applied all these strategies in the relevant order at various points throughout the AR course to facilitate the learning of the PSTs. These strategies can be grouped under three main themes: community-building, nurturing competencies, and fostering growth (see Figure 3).

### *Community-building*

*Creating a caring community (ensuring love, trust, respect, and responsibility for one another).* This strategy aimed to help the PSTs develop a sense of belonging by making them realize that everyone involved in AR had a common goal and enjoyed the research experience, including the course tutor. For example, I announced that “respect” was the first rule of the class, extending its definition to a democratic learning environment where each person feels respected and responsible for each other’s learning. I tried to ensure that each PST felt valued and respected regardless of their individual differences, while caring about their learning needs. For this, I kept track of their concerns via a WhatsApp group and e-mails. I made myself available whenever they wanted to contact me and promised to reply to their messages as soon as possible. I denounced judgmental attitude, considered it an obstacle to learning, and advised them to be open-minded when analyzing the classroom environment as



Source(s): Author's own creation

**Figure 3.**  
Dialogic research  
mentoring strategies

a whole. For example, during classroom discussions, while they were talking about their experiences during the practicum and made judgmental remarks, I asked them questions like “What makes you say that?” or “What do you mean exactly by saying . . . ?” to help them reconsider their teaching beliefs and assumptions. I displayed trust when they made excuses or shared stories about their backgrounds, fears, and worries and was considerate when they asked me to extend the deadlines of tasks; I provided constant support. I tried to be patient even when I faced challenges such as differences in their developmental paces and supported each of them in their progress. I always tried to establish bonds with my teammates and nurtured our relationships within the classroom community by guiding them with flexibility, tolerance, appreciation, and authenticity. PST 1 offered the following feedback in the EAR process questionnaire:

Such an experience definitely had a positive impact on my sense of trust because we were a team in this project, and we were aware of that from the very beginning of the process. It wasn't just me. Apart from me, there was my dear teacher S and my friends, and we all came to the end of the process by trusting each other and working in cooperation.

*Grounding humility-based dialogue.* According to Freire (2005), people are unsure of themselves if they have not had the opportunity to engage in discourse. They appear to distrust those who seek to engage in dialogue with them most of the time, as they have been repeatedly denied their right to speak and are instead forced to listen and obey (Freire, 2005, p. 109). Therefore, to ensure humility-based dialogue, I tried to establish a peaceful classroom environment where each PST felt heard and respected when sharing reflections or opinions on their research experience. I sought to understand each of them genuinely; for example, if someone interrupted between dialogues, I used a gentle tone to remind them to listen with patience and be respectful. To demonstrate this, I never acted as if I was “all-knowing” or “authoritarian” while mentoring them. I showed care for their physical and mental well-being, made myself approachable, and was helpful with modesty. Especially during the first lesson, after greeting the PSTs, I spent time talking with them instead of immediately beginning the lesson. Sometimes, during classroom discussions, we debated issues such as how the teacher's well-being is reflected in their work performance and relationship with the students,

the intrinsic and extrinsic causes that are likely to affect the teacher's well-being positively or negatively, and how important it is for teachers to ensure the well-being of their students.

Based on my retrospective field notes, I assumed that this strategy motivated some of my students who were labeled "low-achievers" in other departmental courses. They participated more in their classroom tasks instead of remaining silent or dropping out, despite their struggle with the course requirements. They returned their assignments with genuine reflections based on their teaching experiences and made outstanding poster presentations at the MySiP (My STory in Practicum) conference, held yearly at the university to help PSTs publicize their studies. One of the PSTs shared:

My action research journey was stressful for me . . . but when I finished my poster presentation, I said that I did it. I worked a lot to make my handmade poster, and it was like my dream poster; it was not just about my research; it reflects me a lot. When I saw myself achieving something, I felt free . . . This research also made me think like an adult. It was not my homework, it was my research, and it is my product; regardless of whether it is acceptable or not, it is good or not, I feel that my product is fully motivating. (PST 21, EAR Report, 2018–2019)

*Sustaining hope in the climate of interaction.* This strategy derives from Freire's emphasis on hope as a critical belief that humans can create and remake things and change the world. Therefore, to sustain hope during the interactions, I always encouraged the PSTs to do their best during their practicum, focus on their strengths, and be hopeful. For example, some PSTs felt insecure and anxious when their teaching practice began. I expressed my faith in them by avoiding negativity and displayed trust in what they were doing and always encouraged them to likewise have faith in their capabilities. One of the PSTs wrote the following in the EAR questionnaire:

During this time, we have been tired at times when we complain about it, our teacher always said we can do it, and she strived to motivate us. These positive attitudes have really been a big part of our work, so my hope has always been to continue. (PST 7)

This strategy also proved to be useful and effective at different stages of their AR projects; when they were identifying their research questions, they could always ask for assistance and support, which helped them remain resilient despite challenges. I followed [Burns's \(2010\)](#) advice that when student teachers develop their research questions, it is a good idea to double-check them from time to time. Furthermore, the students could reword their questions until they felt they appeared relevant and reflected the purpose of the study. This was further reinforced by the high achievers in the course who started enjoying supporting their friends during the class discussions and provided assistance whenever asked.

*Developing and practicing active listening skills.* This strategy aimed at much more than just listening to peers; it helped the PSTs develop active listening skills during their inquiries. I encouraged the use of the strategy, first in the whole group and then in pairs during the fifth and sixth weeks of the AR course, while the PSTs watched the video-recorded lessons to identify their strengths and weaknesses. They needed to follow what their friends said without interrupting them. They were allowed to ask questions in case they needed clarification. They also learned how to make someone feel listened to by smiling, nodding, or maintaining eye contact. As a PST shared: "I could not conduct this research without considering the thought and feelings of other people. So, questions and comments about myself provided me with a better understanding of my research" (PST 12, EAR Process Questionnaire).

To help them employ this strategy, I tried to model active listening during my dialogues with the PSTs. When I sensed any problem, I reminded them of the importance of active listening, especially to their peers who were speaking and who wanted to be listened to and understood.

*Nourishing the sense of humor.* As emphasized by Freire and Ramos (1997), humor enriches dialogue. Being a teacher who has always favored the smiling faces of students, I also included “nourishing the sense of humor” as a strategy in my research mentoring model for the PSTs. As part of this strategy, I shared funny anecdotes from my own life related to the theme being discussed at appropriate times during the mentoring sessions, and laughed at my own misunderstandings and at the difficulties faced in pronouncing some lengthy and difficult words in English, among other incidents. When the PSTs did not participate in class tasks and discussions about their inquiries, I pretended to be tired and bored and made faces to cheer them up. I let them laugh at me and created a space for fun and enjoyment to allow humor to be part of the classroom culture. After some time, they were used to the relaxing atmosphere in the classroom and developed more trust in the classroom community. As the research culture of the classroom environment improved the communication among the PSTs, they began to laugh at their own mistakes and the unfortunate, unexpected happenings in the practicum environment. Eventually, I was pleased to see them eagerly sharing the funny aspects of their research experience, as the following positive PST comment shows:

In fact, although our course process could be brisk and boring, our teacher comes to the lecture very energetic and happy, and this is reflected in us. Even if we are tired in the morning, teacher S replaces our tiredness with her energy. Sometimes she makes jokes, sometimes she laughs at a joke we make and creates a very warm and fun atmosphere in the classroom. (PST 18, EAR Process Questionnaire)

### *Nurturing competencies*

*Cultivating PSTs’ critical thinking abilities.* This strategy was required to enable the PSTs to handle their challenges and effectively make appropriate decisions by applying their thinking ability. I used this strategy during the seventh and eighth weeks when the PSTs were at the plan and act stages of their AR projects and continued until the end of the course. The focus was on creating alternative explanations and solutions to the problems they faced during their classroom-based inquiries. They became more aware of their basic learning and teaching beliefs through reflection and listening to each other’s views. They utilized their thinking ability while observing their final AR plans, analyzing their data, and at the reflection stage of their projects. Relatedly, they had the chance to expand their sense of plausibility (Prabhu, 1990) while they were clarifying their assumptions and drawing conclusions with some PSTs in front of the entire class. I practiced different modes of communication with the student teachers during the discussion and feedback sessions to mentor them more effectively as their course tutor; I also shared the Ways of Communicating task (Smith, 2020, p. 22) in the second year to guide them through the mentoring process as they collaborated with their peers to gain a better understanding of the challenges they faced in their teaching practice. This allowed them to practice different modes of communication and guide their peers to action to mentor one another. They also learned how to direct their peers’ actions. Due to the large number of students enrolled in the AR course, they did not require my continuous assistance as their research mentor throughout the various stages of their EAR, which saved time. PST 24 clarified how they benefited from the collaborative effort:

I think I have improved my critical thinking skills throughout this course. I shared the topics I found and the results with my classmates, we reasoned together, we had discussions, sometimes our instructor joined us by giving her opinion, and sometimes she showed very different perspectives. We analyzed the results etc. of our entire class with one another. The whole class came up with very creative ideas as we had discussions together. (EAR Process Questionnaire)

*Cultivating PSTs’ problem-solving skills.* This strategy served as a supplement, guiding the PSTs through their critical thinking process as they worked on their AR projects. To assist

them in solving their own problems related to their research during the practicum, I instructed the PSTs to practice the process of identifying problems, considering contextual factors and underlying reasons, discovering their options for action, and selecting the best option after modeling the use of the strategy with certain students as the course tutor. This exercise was carried out in pairs. Following Wells's (1999) suggestion to facilitate their agentic growth, at the beginning of the weekly lessons, I required them to share their specific teaching experience from that week, as well as what they would like to improve. This allowed the students to self-monitor their teaching continuously, sometimes by recording their teaching practice and reflecting on their teaching experiences in their journals. Consequently, as their challenges became clearer, they realized that they could come up with different solutions and felt more hopeful and efficacious at the write-up phase of their projects.

#### *Fostering growth*

*Inspiring confidence in PSTs' future selves.* Using this strategy, I supported the PSTs by encouraging their efforts to work on their projects, especially those PSTs who were having difficulty identifying their problems and research questions. I not only provided them with more opportunities along with my guidance but also tried to show that I believed in what they did. I always told them that conducting AR was a process and that if they were optimistic, they would achieve the expected outcomes. I listened to their concerns whenever they felt stuck at any given stage and shared success stories of PSTs from previous batches to allow them to learn from the experiences of their seniors.

*Using dialogue as a humanizing action.* According to Freire (2005), "when the two 'poles' of the dialogue are linked by love, hope, and mutual trust, they can join in a critical search for something, and dialogue truly communicates" (p. 40). I used this strategy to ensure that dialogue was humanizing so that we considered, understood, and cared for each other's feelings in order to achieve this. I demonstrated that I was concerned about their needs, unique characteristics, and overall well-being whenever possible. Rather than any other traditional or lecture-based pedagogical strategy, the AR course required an inquiry-based approach. I attempted to facilitate peaceful discussions and allowed PSTs to express themselves freely without fear of being judged, despised, and/or bewildered by their peers. One of the PSTs commented:

In this work, we were a team, and I tried to help my friends as much as I could. I helped not only people in my own group but also others outside my own group, and I never withheld something I knew from my friends, even though I received little help from them. I tried to help my peers as much as I could without offending them or teasing them for what they did or couldn't do, and always tried to approach and communicate with them with humility. (PST 1, EAR Process Questionnaire)

*Enriching the research perspective.* I always encouraged the PSTs to listen, ask questions, and have a thorough understanding of the issue before drawing any conclusion. I modeled open-mindedness and facilitated critical thinking and reasoning to analyze issues when the PSTs worked on their research projects. They sometimes talked about the practicum schools and classes and tried to view situations from the perspectives of other teachers and students. I gave them various IATEFL Research Sig books and asked them to analyze EAR reports written by other teachers. They were also asked to explain how their reports benefited the teachers and to discuss the potential effects of an EAR mindset on the lives of EL teachers and their students.

*Igniting passion for teaching.* I was able to express my enthusiasm for teaching through my energetic stance in the classroom using this strategy. Moreover, I always attempted to ensure a positive research environment both inside and outside of the class, which acknowledged the PSTs' emotions and encouraged them to improve their critical thinking

---

and problem-solving skills. As a result, my commitment to responding to their needs had a positive influence on PSTs' understanding of commitment toward their professional development and transformation.

*My learnings as a dialogic research mentor teaching the AR course*

Communication and dialogue are fundamental to consciousness and critical intervention in reality (Freire, 1994). My first-person AR as a TR mentor started with PSTs for tutoring an AR course based on my understanding of mentoring in-service EFL (English as a foreign language) instructors. Those two years (2017–2019) led me to new paths to better meet my students' needs and co-create a teaching model with them. This situational realization contributed to my transformation as a research mentor, providing me with the opportunity to build on my research mentoring knowledge, skills, and strategies and synthesize them with my course tutor role. By grounding on PSTs' feedback, I have recognized that.

- (1) My encouragement to do their best provides them with an opportunity to question themselves and discover their strengths, which makes them keep hopeful to continue their research process.
- (2) When I express my faith in PSTs by avoiding negativity and displaying trust in what they are doing, my faithful attitude helps to increase their faith in their capabilities and empower them to deal with their weaknesses related to their teaching practice. Then, it becomes easier to persuade them about the benefits of consulting previous research to better understand their challenges and face them accordingly.
- (3) PSTs feel the need to be listened to and understood during the practicum process. Therefore, developing and practicing active listening skills with their peers, or as a whole-class activity, enables them to understand better both their own and their friends' challenges and benefit collegiality starting from the pre-service years. To be able to help them develop and sustain the use of these skills, as the course tutor, I need to supervise and consistently actively listen to them as a model in a caring community of inquiry (Wells, 1999). If they can grow as active listeners and practice different modes of communication (Smith, 2020), they will become more competent in research engagement and guide one another, and it is time-saving for all of us.
- (4) When PSTs feel capable of taking action toward their goals until the successful completion of the EAR projects, they tend to become autonomous in facing challenges and developing action. This experience fosters their commitment toward their profession and gets them to start taking responsibility for their own professional development, infusing their intrinsic motivation to become agents of change. Therefore, as a dialogic research mentor, I need to ensure that I equip them with strategic means to self-monitor their teaching as well as to observe, give constructive feedback, and learn from their peers. When I provide them with critically engaging tasks by facilitating dialogic interaction and getting them to discuss their challenges or puzzles within our community of inquiry, I can mentor their transformation into becoming more effective future teachers. These skills and strategies also help them expand their sense of plausibility (Prabhu, 1990) for their future teaching and enhance their self-efficacy.
- (5) By completing EAR projects based on their teaching practice within the AR course process, PSTs listen to their own voices during classroom research. In this way, they also realize their teaching philosophies and the mismatches between their beliefs, attitudes, dispositions, and behaviors to self-direct their learning. This experience

gives them the chance to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct the underlying views of their teaching philosophies.

- (6) Freirean dialogue (Freire, 2000; Freire Institute, 2013) with PSTs helps them feel comfortable, empowered, secure, inspired, understood, and supported during the dialogic research mentoring process, getting them to enjoy their learning experience and perform their best. Accordingly, throughout this AR course process, working with and for these kinds of students with this state of mind is a source of joy, productivity, and job satisfaction for a course tutor.

### Implications and conclusions

I believe that having AR as a formal course in PST education programs is critical. By conducting this first-person action study, I found that the AR course provided PSTs with the opportunity to become teachers with an AR mindset. Therefore, I strongly believe that this experience could have a significant impact on their understanding and competency in dealing with the potential challenges they are likely to face in their future teaching careers. My findings also suggest that involving PSTs in the dialogic research mentoring process throughout the course has a cumulative effect on their *personal knowledge*. As Kumaravadivelu (2012) points out, teachers' personal knowledge is the result of their reflections, reactions, insights, and intuitions; therefore, by conducting AR during their teacher training serves as a foundation for their continued professional development, such student teachers are more likely to use AR in their teaching careers (Goh and Loh, 2013; Ponte *et al.*, 2004).

As I suggest in Figure 1, teacher educators can use dialogic research mentoring strategies while tutoring senior ELT (English language teaching) students pursuing AR courses to empower a humanistic and innovative change process in a congenial classroom environment. My findings confirmed that, by treating PSTs as teachers-to-be, guiding them to discover their potential, facilitating their learning processes, and helping them build their confidence regardless of the assessment issues associated with passing a course, a course tutor could help them attain more fruitful outcomes from the AR course. I have confidence that this finding implies bearing fruitful outcomes in other contexts of teacher preparation, with some adaptations considering the globalizing perspectives (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

Collaboration through dialogic research mentoring fosters PSTs' creativity and has a liberating effect on their self-expression, as supported by Freire (2005) pedagogy. Furthermore, in line with my findings, practicing different modes of communication (Smith, 2020) and arming PSTs with mentoring strategies can promote collaboration in a community of inquiry and enable teacher candidates to make evidence-informed changes. Based on this understanding, PST educators can integrate reciprocal peer mentorship opportunities and peer collaboration/feedback within program coursework for improvement and time management, following the suggested model in this study.

Although it is limited to the current research, my findings offer hopeful suggestions to overcome the problematic aspects of the practicum process in the Turkish context as well as other contexts for reasons such as insufficient long-term assistance from university and school mentors and the unpleasant effects of evaluation.

The outcomes of this model can also align with teacher retention and satisfaction, quality instruction, and teacher leadership. Thus, mentoring through this model, with a focus on building communities of inquiry (Wells, 1999) and cultivating dialogic relationships, teacher educators and other stakeholders can aim for the improvement of some factors, such as student academic achievement, social-emotional skill development, improved attendance, positive attitudes, improved self-confidence, and resilience and grit, and can achieve similar outcomes in different educational contexts.

---

**References**

- Adams, D. (2014), "First person action research", in Coghlan, D. and Brydon-Miller, M. (Eds), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research*, SAGE Publications Limited, Vols 1-2, pp. 349-353, doi: [10.4135/9781446294406](https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446294406).
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L.C., Sorensen, C. and Razavieh, A. (2010), *Introduction to Research in Education*, Thompson Wadsworth, Holt.
- Bich Dieu, N., Kean Wah, L. and Choon Keong, T. (2019), "Understanding Vietnamese preservice TEFL teachers' TPACK development with design-based learning via reflective learning", *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, Vol. 4 No. 31, pp. 154-169.
- Bjulan, R. and Helgevol, N. (2018), "Dialogic processes that enable student teachers' learning about pupil learning in mentoring conversations in a lesson study field practice", *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 70, pp. 246-254.
- Bognar, B. and Krumes, I. (2017), "Encouraging reflection and critical friendship in preservice teacher education", *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 87-112.
- Bowen, G.A. (2009), "Document analysis as a qualitative research method", *Qualitative Research Journal*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 27-40, doi: [10.3316/QRJ0902027](https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027).
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006), "Using thematic analysis in psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 77-101.
- Burns, A. (2010), *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching. A Guide for Practitioners*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Burns, A. and Westmacott, A. (2018), "Teacher to researcher: reflections on a new action research program for university EFL teachers", *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 15-23, doi: [10.15446/profile.v20n1.66236](https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v20n1.66236).
- Coghlan, D. and Brannick, T. (2010), *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, 3rd ed., SAGE, London.
- Coşkun, A. (2013), "Stress in English language teaching practicum: the views of all stakeholders", *Hacettepe University Journal of Faculty of Education*, Vol. 28 No. 3, pp. 97-110.
- Dikilitaş, K. and Wyatt, M. (2018), "Learning teacher-research-mentoring: stories from Turkey", *Teacher Development*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 537-553, doi: [10.1080/13664530.2017.1403369](https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2017.1403369).
- Eraldemir-Tuyan, S. (2017), "What I've learned as an action research mentor: some highlights", in Burns, A., Dikilitaş, K., Smith, R. and Wyatt, M. (Eds), *Developing Insights into Teacher-Research*, IATEFL, Kent, pp. 39-52.
- Eraldemir-Tuyan, S. (2018), "On the way to achieve sustainability: an evaluative look at a three-year action research program in an ELT context", in Barkhuizen, G., Burns, A., Dikilitaş, K. and Wyatt, M. (Eds), *Empowering Teacher-Researchers, Empowering Learners*, IATEFL, Kent, pp. 19-28.
- Eraldemir-Tuyan, S. (2019), "From in-service to pre-service: a comparative look at my action research mentoring experience", in Barkhuizen, G., Burns, Dikilitaş, A.K. and Wyatt, M. (Eds), *Energizing Teacher-Research*, IATEFL, Kent, pp. 11-17.
- Freire, P. (1994), *Pedagogy of Hope*, Continuum Press, New York.
- Freire, P. (2005), *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*, Westview, Boulder.
- Freire, P. (1997), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (M. B. Ramos, Trans.)*, The Continuum, New York, NY.
- Freire, P. (2000), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (M. B. Ramos, Trans.)*, Continuum, New York, NY.
- Freire Institute (2013), "Concepts used by Paulo Freire", available at: <https://www.freire.org/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire> (accessed 20 June 2018).
- Goh, L. and Loh, K.C. (2013), "Let them fish': empowering student-teachers for Professional development through the project approach", *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 202-217.

- Haberlin, S., Jacobs, J. and Robinson, R. (2019), "Multiple ways of reflecting: teacher candidates' introspective use of the arts in a clinically rich field experience", *College Teaching*, Vol. 67, pp. 222-232.
- Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (2007), "Participatory Action Research: communicative action and the public sphere", in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, Sage, London.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2012), *Language Teacher Education for a Global Society: A Modular Model for Knowing, Analysing, Recognising, Doing, and Seeing*, *ESL and Applied Linguistics Professional Series*, Routledge, United Kingdom.
- Malderez, A. (2009), "Mentoring", in Burns, A. and Richards, J.C. (Eds), *Second Language Teacher Education*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 259-268.
- McKnight, D. (2002), *Field Experience Handbook: A Guide for the Teacher Intern and Mentor Teacher*, University of Maryland, College Park.
- Mitchell, S., Reilly, R. and Logue, M.E. (2009), "Benefits of collaborative action research for the beginning teacher", *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 344-349, doi: [10.1016/j.tate.2008.06.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.06.008).
- Ponte, P., Beijard, D. and Ax, J. (2004), "Don't wait till the cows come home: action research and initial teacher education in three different countries", *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, Vol. 10 No. 6, pp. 591-621.
- Prabhu, N.S. (1990), "There is no best method – why?", *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 24, pp. 161-176.
- Şahinkarakaş, Ş. and Tokoz-Göktepe, F. (2018), "My story in practicum: a project of student teachers action research during practicum", in Barkhuizen, G., Burns, A., Dikilitaş, K. and Wyatt, M. (Eds), *Empowering Teacher-Researchers, Empowering Learners*, IATEFL, Kent, England, pp. 39-46.
- Schön, D.A. (1983), *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Basic Books, New York.
- Schön, D.A. (1987), *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Smith, R. (2015), "Exploratory action research as workplan: why, what and where from?", in Dikilitaş, K., Smith, R. and Trotman, W. (Eds), *Teacher-researchers in Action*, IATEFL, Kent, England, pp. 37-45.
- Smith, R. (2020), *Mentoring Teachers to Research Their Classrooms: A Practical Handbook*, British Council, New Delhi, ND.
- Talbot, D., Denny, J. and Henderson, S. (2018), "Trying to decide . . . what sort of teacher I wanted to be: mentoring as a dialogic practice", *Teaching Education*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 47-60, doi: [10.1080/10476210.2017.1347919](https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2017.1347919).
- Wells, G. (1999), *Dialogic Inquiry towards a Sociocultural Practice and Theory of Education*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom.
- Wood, S. and Smith, J. (2016), *Educational Research: Taking the Plunge*, Independent Thinking Press, Bancyfelin.
- Yangın Ekşi, G. and Yakışık, B.Y. (2016), "To be anxious or not: student teachers in the practicum", *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 4 No. 6, pp. 1332-1339, doi: [10.13189/ujer.2016.040610](https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2016.040610).
- Yıldız, M., Geçikli, M. and Yeşilyurt, S. (2016), "Turkish prospective English teachers' reflections on teaching practice", *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 4 No. 4, pp. 696-703, doi: [10.13189/ujer.2016.040406](https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2016.040406).

**Appendix**

Exploratory Action Research (EAR) Process Questionnaire.

Dear my students,

This questionnaire aims to explore the influence of the EAR course enriched by the mentoring strategies informed by Freire's dialogic pedagogy. I invite you to rate each of the items below and justify your rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying and commenting.

Your responses will be analysed in a research paper but will not be shared for any other purposes. They will remain confidential and be deleted 6 months after the publication.

Lecturer Dr Seden Eraldemir Tuyan

I give my consent to the use of my responses for the study mentioned above. YES/NO.

The experience influenced my understanding of	5	4	3	2	1
1. Trust					
Justify your rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying and commenting					
2. Commitment	5	4	3	2	1
Justify your rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying and commenting					
3. Care	5	4	3	2	1
Justify your rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying and commenting					
4. Humility	5	4	3	2	1
Justify your rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying and commenting					
5. Hope	5	4	3	2	1
Justify your rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying and commenting					
6. Humor	5	4	3	2	1
Justify your rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying and commenting					
7. Critical thinking	5	4	3	2	1
Justify your rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying and commenting					
8. Faith	5	4	3	2	1
Justify your rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying and commenting					
9. Silence	5	4	3	2	1
Justify your rating by explaining, clarifying, exemplifying and commenting					

**Note(s):** Would you also like to reflect on other elements that may not have been mentioned in the questionnaire above?

**Source(s):** Author's own creation

**Table A1.**  
In the questionnaire,  
5 refers to "totally  
agree", 4 to "agree" 3 to  
"not sure"  
2 to "disagree" 1 to  
"totally disagree"

**Corresponding author**

Seden Eraldemir Tuyan can be contacted at: [sedentuyan@gmail.com](mailto:sedentuyan@gmail.com), [sedentuyan@cag.edu.tr](mailto:sedentuyan@cag.edu.tr)

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

[www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm](http://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm)

Or contact us for further details: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)