

PEDAGOGICAL FORMATION TRAINING COURSE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING PRACTICE COURSE

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the perceptions of prospective teachers taking pedagogical formation education on teaching practice course. In this study qualitative research method and phenomenology pattern were used. Data were collected with an interview form which was prepared by the researcher and contained open-end questions. Study group was determined in line with the maximum variety sampling and a total of 32 prospective teachers including 15 males and 17 females. Content analysis was used for analyzing data. The data were coded based on content analyses and themes were developed. The reliability of the research was measured to be .84 level according to Miles and Huberman formula. The results obtained from the research were the facts that teaching practice course provided professional experience to prospective teachers and that their mentor teachers in the practice schools they enrolled during this period contributed to them. Study results revealed that prospective teachers experienced some problems caused by either themselves, practice schools or teaching practice course.

Keywords: Teaching practice, prospective teacher, pedagogical training program

Introduction

Teachers are the most important constituent in the phase making the population which is the main dynamic of a country more qualified. So care should be given to the education of the teachers. Teacher training programs of countries should be updated and renewed by concerning the current change and transformation. Giving importance to pre-service education of teachers (Polat, 2013: 48), constitutes the basis of continuing the social structure (Nartgün, 2008: 48). Changes made in Turkey in 1981 were also reflected in teacher training approach. Since 1982, the duration of three-year Education Institutes training teachers have been increased to four years and connected to the universities under the name "Faculty of Education" (Ergün, 1987: 10, Özoğlu, 2010: 7, Kartal, 2011: 51, Bilir, 2011). After 1982, teacher education was made in faculties of education, arts, science and arts and sciences (Kavcar, 2002: 4). During this period, professional knowledge was provided to graduates of other faculties and they also gained right to become a teacher. Teaching professional knowledge courses were given to the graduates other than faculty of education in scope of non-thesis master's degree program in latter period (Kartal, 2011: 51-52). With a decision taken in 2010, pedagogical formation training application was brought instead of non-thesis master's degree programs. Pedagogical formation program is evaluated as an individual development program in scope of lifelong learning. Accordingly teaching professional knowledge courses are provided for students who graduated from different faculties.

Pedagogy may be defined as a process including the activities of learning-teaching, student-teacher interaction and instructional methods (Lee & Tsai, 2010: 5). While prospective teachers take teaching professional knowledge courses during this period, they make practices on some classes. In scope of pedagogical formation training program, prospective teachers receive teacher certificates after completing their classes after two semesters. Pedagogical formation includes giving the education on how they will teach what they learned to people who completed their education in their fields (Yıldırım & Vural, 2014: 80). A teacher providing the knowledge on his/her field to the students, in the healthiest way possible can be explained by having teaching occupational knowledge as much as active field knowledge.

Prospective teachers enrolled at pedagogical formation education course take courses during two semesters. In the second semester, teaching practice must be provided in schools under Ministry of National Education together with theoretical teaching professional knowledge courses taken. This practice is applied under the scope of the class called Teaching Practice containing two hours of theory and six hours of practice. During this period prospective teachers make many different practices both in practice and presentation.

Teaching practice is a practicing and learning period in which prospective teachers have the chance to use their theoretical information and acquisitions both on their fields and teaching in scope of their bachelorship education and pedagogical formation program in real class environment, they take feedbacks from the faculty member in charge, mentor teacher and their peers on the course and they improve themselves accordingly. The main target of this class is to form an environment in which prospective teachers can exhibit their theoretical acquisitions and provide them the chance to practice (Tepeli& Caner, 2014). According to this, it may be thought that prospective teachers form a connection between their theoretical knowledge and practice in this practicing period. Hazzan and Lapidot (2004) stated that teaching practice includes all efficiencies in which a connection is built between theory and practice and prospective teachers gain experience in before becoming a real teacher. Similarly it is considered that teaching practice is a platform where real school environment is observed and an experience period in which students and professional teachers gather (Manzar-Abbas&Lu, 2013). Some studies made in the field show that prospective teachers give importance to the practices they make in scope of teaching practice class as much as the theoretical knowledge they acquired (Simith& Lev-Ari, 2005; Azar, 2003; Özay-Köse, 2014). This is because in the education of a teacher, dimensions consisting of theory and practice constitute the whole (Yalın-Uçar, 2012). Considering all these situations, such a study was found necessary considering the determination of problematic situations which may occur during teaching practice and perspectives of prospective teachers on the class important. The aim of this study is to determine the perceptions of prospective teachers continuing their pedagogical formation education on teaching practice.

Method

The research was performed in line with qualitative research method. Phenomenology pattern was used in research. Phenomenology pattern focus on cases we are aware of but don't have information in depth. Accordingly facts, senses and experiences may be the subject of research (Yıldırım& Şimşek, 2005: 72). The study group was determined according to maximum variety sampling. Maximum variety sampling aims to increase the variety of individuals who might take sides on research problem (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005: 108). So students who took pedagogical formation in Fırat University Faculty of Education, had different field trainings and are willing to participate in the research were included in the research. In this regard, prospective teachers included in the research were chosen from fields of Health, Turkish Language, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Maths, Philosophy, Theology, History and Geography and contained 32 individuals. 15 of the participants were male and 17 were female. Data were collected with an interview form prepared by the researcher. Questions to determine the perceptions on teaching practice were included in this form. Expert view was used during the preparation of questions. Content analysis was used for analyzing data. Content analysis is based on gathering similar data within the frame of certain concepts and themes and interpreting them (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005: 227). According to this, data were coded in the present research and themes and sub themes were formed after reviewing codings and acquired findings were tabulated and interpreted by presenting frequency values on codings. During data analysis process, two simultaneous analyses were made. After that a reliability calculation was made according to Miles and Huberman formula (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to this, the reliability of the study was found at the level of .84. Apart from this, the validity and reliability of the study were provided by direct citations consisting of the perceptions of prospective teachers provided for findings. The factor which would provide the plausibility of data and findings and the protection of the nature of the data as much as possible is direct citations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005: 270). Direct citations were given in findings section. While giving direct citations, coding for the person who built that sentence was given in the beginning.

Findings and Comment

Findings of research and their interpretations were provided in this section. First of all, the effect of teaching practice on the preparation of prospective teachers for the profession was examined. In this regard, the ideas of prospective teachers were evaluated and presented in Table 1.

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On teaching skills	Presentation	16
	Gaining experience	16
	Class management	6
	Conformance to class environment	5
	Control of the class	3
	Using teaching method/technique	3
	Addressing to the community	2
	Transferring knowledge	2
	Time management	2
	Gaining ability to solve problems	1

On general attitudes and behaviors	Observation	13
	Gaining self confidence	5
	Getting rid of excitement	5
	Increase in awareness	3
	Benefiting from the experience of mentor teacher	3
	Getting rid of occupational prejudice	2
	Presenting personal skills	2
	Comprehending the importance of value transfer	1
On communication with student	Knowing about the distinctive characteristics and ages of the students	6
	Communication	5
	Knowing about how to treat the student	4
	Communicating with the student without concerning the grades	1
On Occupational Responsibility	Comprehending the importance of getting ready for the class	6
	Forming an opinion of the occupation	4
	Getting ready for the occupation	2
	Taking responsibilities	2
	Observing the difficulties of the occupation	1

The role of practices made in scope of teaching practice course on the preparation of prospective teachers to the occupation was tried to be determined in the study. Analysis results made in this regard are presented in the table. According to this, four themes such as teaching skills, general attitude and behavior, communication with the student and occupational responsibility were determined. It was observed that prospective teachers paid attention to matters such as presentation and practicing for teaching skills in scope of teaching practice class. In addition to this it was stated that skills such as class management, orientation to class environment were acquired in scope of these practices. Similarly it was emphasized that situations such as using teaching method, addressing to the community, transferring knowledge, time management and problem solving skill are also acquired in these practices.

It is observed that prospective teachers emphasize especially observation, gaining self-confidence and getting rid of excitement under the title of general attitude and behaviors. It was also emphasized that different situations such as increase in awareness, benefiting from the experiences of mentor teacher, getting rid of occupational prejudices, demonstrating personal skills and comprehending the importance of value transfer also took place in addition.

Another important issue is communication with the student. At this point, the facts that prospective teachers try to especially know about the students of a different age group and characteristics communicate with them and learn about how they should behave the student draw our attention. Apart from this, when acquirements for occupational responsibility are considered, it is observed that prospective teachers emphasize going to highest number of classes after a preparation. Apart from these, it was also observed that teaching practice also has contributions such as having an opinion on the occupation, taking responsibilities and seeing the difficulties of the occupation.

A prospective teacher, emphasized both the responsibility and value transfer by saying **T.1.M** "*I comprehended the responsibility of my occupation and learned that the transfer of many values would be done with this occupation thanks to this class*". Another prospective teacher stated her gains by saying **T.4.F** "*First, I gained self-confidence and learned how to communicate with the students*".

		f
Personal problems	Inability to control the student	6
	Excitement	4
	Inexperience	2
Practice school sourced problems	Discipline problems at school	4
	Enough time not given for practice	4
	Crowded classes	3
	Periodic problems of students (adolescence)	3
	Problems with school management	3
Teaching practice class-sourced problems	Compulsory school attendance	8
	Inadequacy of practicing period	5
	Presence of a authority limit for prospective teacher	2

Problems faced in scope of teaching practice class constitute another subject questioned in research. In this regard, it was observed that different problem sources occurred when views of prospective teachers were analyzed. These are personal problems experienced, problems based on the school of practice and problems in scope of teaching practice class. According to this, it was observed that the candidates experienced personal problems based on student control, excitement and inexperience. In addition to these, it was emphasized that in practice schools, discipline problems were experienced, enough time was not given for practice, students in practice school were experiencing some periodic problems such as adolescence and some problems with school management. Problems experienced in scope of teaching practice class were its restrictive characteristics such as compulsory school attendance for this class, insufficient practice period and prospective teachers having some authority limits and the fact that these were perceived as problems by prospective teachers. Some of the views of the prospective teachers on the problems they face are; **T.F.7**, "There was no problem during the practice but I wish teaching practice was given not only this term, but also in the previous one", **T. F.6** "One of the most important problems we face is excitement... I get so excited during presentation".

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For the course	Management/teaching of the course	12
	Use of method/technique	6
	Preparation	2
	Providing samples	2
For the student	Communication with the student	6
	Attitude towards the student	4
	Influencing the student	3
	Psychology of the student	1
For class environment	Management of the class	4
	Use of time	2
	Solving problems in class	1

Another subject in which the prospective teachers stated their ideas on was the contributions of mentor teachers who help them during practices. When the answers given were analyzed, it was determined that these contributions were for the course, the student and class environment. The main contribution for the course was management of the course. Prospective teachers emphasized the contribution of mentors on how manage the courses. In addition to this, the ways of use for teaching methods and techniques used in classes and samples provided in preparations for the course and classes were conditions named as contributions by prospective teachers. In the contributions for the students, especially the emphasis on communication with the student draws attention. In addition to this, it was stated that there were also contributions such as the attitude toward the student, influencing the student and knowing about the student psychology. Another important fact is the contributions for class environment. These are management of the class, use of time and solving problems in class in order. Related to these situations, a prospective teacher, explained the contribution of her teacher as **T.F. 3** "I imitate my mentor for the attitude toward the students." Another one provided a sample for the situation by saying **T. F. 9** "I learn a lot from the teacher on effective use of time and communication with the student".

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More practices should be done		10
More responsibilities should be given to the prospective teacher		9
Time should be longer		7
Prospective teachers should keep observation reports		4
Use of teaching material should be enabled in the class		3
Presentation should be done after observation		3
Mentor teacher should make corrections with feedback		2

Prospective teachers are asked to provide some suggestions for practice as their suggestions are valued for better management of the course. In this regard, it was observed that prospective teachers taking education in the pedagogical formation group emphasized the necessity of more practice in scope of teaching practice.

In addition to this, among the suggestions, we can name the necessity for giving the prospective teacher more responsibility, making practice time longer and prospective teachers keeping observational reports in the classes they visit or participate. Another important suggestion is the necessity for providing the chance to the prospective teachers to use teaching materials in the classes they visit. Another suggestion is for the mentor teachers to provide

feedbacks for correcting the mistakes and deficiencies they see in prospective teachers. One of the prospective teachers made a suggestion by saying **T. F. 12** "*In my opinion we should also make presentation on our own in the class we visit for practice and take more responsibility. Thus we will gain a more effective experience*". Another prospective teacher expressed his opinion by saying **T. M. 14** "*It would be better if our mentor shared the situations we make mistakes with us and made corrections. We would see our deficiencies better that way*".

Result and Recommendations

In the light of the findings acquired, the following results were reached:

- Teaching practice course contributes to the occupational improvement of prospective teachers. Teaching practice has made contributions for providing teaching skills, shaping the general occupational attitude and behaviors, communicating more easily with students and providing occupational responsibility.
- Some problems are experienced during the management of teaching practice. These are problems caused by personal characteristics of prospective teachers, problems caused by the school of practice and the content of teaching practice class.
- The contributions of the mentor in practice are the contributions for teaching the course, for knowing the student and managing school environment.
- For the more effective management of teaching practice, prospective teachers should find more opportunity for practice, take more responsibilities and practice time should be longer.

In the light of these results, the following suggestions were provided:

- An opportunity should be provided for the prospective teachers to make more practice.
- During pedagogical formation education, teaching practice should be given in two semesters.
- Prospective teachers should be asked to make observations on class and school environment and report them.
- Mentor teachers should be asked to express the deficiencies they see in prospective teachers and should ask to correct them.

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