



# A Case Study of How Teaching Practice Process Takes Place

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## Abstract

The process of "learning" carries an important role in the teaching practice which provides teacher candidates with professional development. Being responsible for the learning experiences in that level, co-operating teacher, teacher candidate, mentor and practice school are the important variables which determine the quality of the teaching practice. Opinions of mentors, teacher candidate, and school administrators who make teaching practice are very important in terms of attaining the objectives of the course. Therefore, in the research, qualitative data are obtained through face to face interviews and group discussions with totally 145 participants of whom are 22 administrators of practice schools, 86 mentors and 37 mentees in order to understand how the process of teaching practice takes place. According to the results of the descriptive analysis on the data obtained from seven different regions of Turkey, teaching practice couldn't reach its aim. According to the participants who call this process as "problematic", the process couldn't reach its aim because of such problems as "theoretical knowledge, the time and the duration of the practice, scheduling the practice, affective factors, laws and regulations, communication, quantity related and practical problems".

## Key Words

Practice Teaching, Practice School, Mentor, Teacher Candidate, Practice School Administrator.

Today, teacher training programs require scientific basis between theory and experience additionally qualified strategies and autonomous teacher leads the training models (Shulman, 1987). The purpose of the teaching practice process of the teacher training program which is developed depending on their competency within the Higher Education Au-

thority/The World Bank and National Education Development Project conducted between 1994 and 1998 has been defined as follows: "Teacher candidates are expected to develop their professional competence by conducting lesson in different classes of the practice school, to comprehend the curriculum of their own area of study, to evaluate the text books, to be able to test and make evaluation and they are expected to develop themselves by sharing the experiences they have had during the practice process with their friends and their mentors (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu [YÖK] & Dünya Bankası, 1998).

Since teaching training process consists of many factors and that complicated process have been defined by Corcaron (1981) such as:

*As intern teacher contacts with school rules, school administration even with parents they do not know who to tend and head through and where to start. Due to all these*

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*reasons and method based unknowns, the candidate of teacher might be in shocked that gained knowledge and abilities cannot be transferred (cited in Jhonson, 2002, p.57).*

Since the learning has been continuing in different way and it became more complicated level (Reiman & Thies, 1998) in that process. In that complicated process, practise teachers, practise school administrators and the staff of the practise school and the teacher candidates have important duties and responsibilities. That school administration, instructor, practise teacher and the use of technology have a meaningful relation with each other (Şahin, Erdoğan, & Aktürk, 2008) means that factors aforementioned have vital importance. The fact that candidate teachers have negative approaches (Alakuş, Oral, & Mercin, 2005) have been revealed again by cognitive approach in practice process. Teaching practice is an important variable completing the quality dimension of teacher training. However, this process is getting more and more ineffective mostly in the same way all over the world (cited in Kiraz, 2001, p. 85). The quantitative research conducted in our country has supported the views of Shantz. According to the results of this research, the teaching practice process cannot reach its aims because it gets more and more ineffective due to the similar problems experienced in the country (Yalın Uçar, 2008a). Therefore, the problems caused by various factors (Ayrancıoğlu, 2004; Baştürk, 2008; Karaca & Aral, 2011; Özdemir & Yetim, 2005; Paker, 2005; Silay & Gök, 2004; Ünver, 2003; Yalın Uçar, 2008b) indicate that the process have been out of the general aim might be pointed out. Whereas in the process of teacher practise practice, faculty-school and education workers have a cooperation that they would be interned with the help of them, the teacher candidate's first experience would be formed beyond his/her expectations (cited in Brewster & Railsback, 2001). Teacher candidates need support while taking his own class and students, from experienced educationist and his/her opportunities which will be supported by them (cited in Brewster & Railsback). The mentioned experienced educationists who appear in teaching process have vital importance for gaining teaching sufficiency. As school based experience and educating practises gain occupational sufficiency via teaching practice, even in primary school education program, the best way to learn all that knowledge would be appeared in that process (Senemoğlu, 1991). Therefore the teaching practises make teaching role and behav-

iors instinctive, the knowledge which are needed for teaching occupation and requirements supplement, behaviors and attitudes (Özbek & Aytekin, 2003) learning process must be evaluated as a fact. If teaching practise reach its aim is intended, initially the balance must be set among where practise is made, in the school where education theory preparation have been prepared in university (cited in Toprakçı, 2003). The mentioned balanced environment affects the attitudes and approach of the candidate teacher very actively. Even according to field specialists such as Arbuckle, Murray, Dubea, Williams, Gray and Gray, Krupp, Lortie, Loucks-Horsley and Harding theoretical accoutrements, lack of experience, idealism feelings, expectations and request of school etc. cannot prepare the reality of the occupation exactly. Besides, these types of teacher candidates, during their proficiency, will not discover teaching strategies and cannot apply them (cited in Newcombe, 1988, p. 27). For all the reasons mentioned, there must be an integrity between teacher educating process and theoretical part of it. The teacher educating process program indicates that the part of teaching practice process and its researchers show that disconnection of theory and practice problems. The quantitative results obtained from the mentioned research do not solely explain the reasons of the research conclusion. Therefore, the researcher tries to understand the reasons of the quantitative results of the study by putting out the effective and ineffective aspects of the teaching practice process through a qualitative research method since it is a nation-wide study.

### **Purpose**

In the research, whether the process of teaching practice reaches its aim or not, and if it doesn't, the reasons of it were aimed to be determined.

### **Method**

#### **Research Design**

In the research, qualitative research method was used. The data of the research were obtained through the technique of "Program Practise Case Studies", one of the qualitative research designs. Whether the teaching practice reaches its aim or not was tried to be understood through the program practise case study which is a kind of case study (cited in Gökçek, 2009). For this reason, the question "What are your opinions about teaching practice process?" was asked to the administrators

of the practice school, mentors and teacher candidates who take place in the process and the reason of why the process doesn't reach its aim was tried to be understood through the questions asked as a response of their answers.

### Universe and Sampling

The universe of the study consists of primary school teachers who worked in the first stage of the primary schools of Ministry of Education during the spring term of 2008-2009 school year and were assigned as mentors, school administrators and the teacher candidates who study in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school teaching department. In the research, cluster sampling method was used. This sampling method is commonly used as both qualitative and quantities research process. Seven cities from east, west, south, north and middle parts of the country were included into the samples (Ankara, Adana, Aydın, Van, Samsun, Bolu, Bursa). 86 mentors and 37 mentees (studying in the primary school teaching department) were interviewed as a group and 22 school administrators were interviewed individually. So, the opinions of 145 people about the teaching practice process were obtained.

### Interview Form

In the research, open-ended semi structured interview form was used. The question "What are your opinions about teaching practice process?" was asked by the researcher to the school administrators, mentors and teacher candidates during the face to face interviews. This open-ended question was tried to be analyzed through the follow-up questions depending on the flow of the interview because of the reason that a standardized open-ended negotiation, increases the possibility of repetition.

### Data Analysis

In data analysis, descriptive analysis was used. The data obtained in the study were organized and presented in terms of top priority theme (ineffective process) and sub-themes created as a consequence (the problem of theoretical knowledge, the duration and the time of the practice, affective factors, curriculum related problems, communication problems, the problem of quantity, the problem of practicing) taking into consideration the questions asked to the participants during the research process.

### Findings

Top priority theme created depending on the data acquired from the research's participants through an inductive approach is described as "problematic practice process". It is clear from this theme that the whole process of teaching practice is problematic. Sub-themes defining what the problems are briefly explained in the following seven items:

#### The Problem of Theoretical Knowledge

It is stated that one of the reasons why the teaching practice process couldn't reach its aim is the problem of theoretical knowledge. In fact, one of the dimensions of the three dimensions of teacher educating process including "the knowledge of teaching proficiency" gains many adequacy to teacher candidates (Tandoğan, 2007). The school administrators, mentors and teacher candidates told that the process couldn't achieve its aim because they don't have the necessary theoretical knowledge related with the "constructive learning approach" which is being applied in primary schools. No data describing a problem related to their own institutional theoretical competency could be obtained from the teacher candidates. The findings results which are similar to that of Ünver and Eroğlu (2002) prove that the participants of research are responsible for the finding results.

#### The Problems of the Duration and Time of the Practice

Fourteen week period of the teaching practice which is very short and not being in the right term in which the practice is made are stated as a problem in the process by the research participants.

#### The Problem of Affective Factors

The majority of mentors and school administrators participated in the research state that one of the factors that causes the process to be inefficient is affective behaviors consisting of factors such as the teacher candidates' dislike for their jobs, their lack of interest and the lack of motivation. On the other hand, the teacher candidates have mentioned that they are not welcomed (not wanted) by the school administrators and mentors. The teacher candidates might develop very important abilities with both some sensual factors and knowing some others in human relations (Paykoç, 1995) that must be known the facts in which indicated negativities would be decreased.

### **The Problem of Curriculum**

Because they aren't clearly informed about the legal responsibilities towards the parties, the mentors and school administrators who don't know how to manage the process and have problems concerning enforcement have mentioned that these kinds of problems make the teaching process away from its goal.

### **The Problem of Communication**

One of the reasons why the teaching process couldn't achieve its goal is the problem of communication. This problem has been stated in two different ways both by the teacher candidates and by the mentors and the school administrators of the practice school. The first one is the lack of communication between the practice school and the faculty of education and the other one is the communication problem between the mentor and the teacher candidate. In fact if the both sides provided a chance to individualism, respect requirements and make an opportunity to each other's creativity and development, reaching the expected aim would be easier (Ergin, 1995).

### **The Problem of Quantity**

The mentors and school administrators participating in the research dealt with the problem of quantity in two different ways. The first is the fact that the number of the teacher candidates sent to the school for practicing is above the school capacity. The second is the physical condition of the school due to its problem with infrastructure. It is clear that there is a consensus among the teachers about the bad effects of the crowd, which is as a result of the lack of facilities and the fact that the number of the teacher candidates is high, on the educational learning of the students.

### **The Problem of Practicing**

The other reason why the teaching process couldn't achieve its goal was reported to be the problem of teacher candidates' not being able to put their theoretical knowledge into practice. The mentors and the school administrators have stated that the teaching practice results in failure due to the fact that the teacher candidates don't know the teaching methods and principles. On the other hand, the teacher candidates state that they couldn't be successful because they are not provided with the op-

portunity to show their performances. Büyüközge Kavas and Burgay's (2009) researches' findings are similar to the study's findings in the meantime that attracts the attention.

### **Discussion**

The problems of theoretical knowledge and practicing which are among the research findings are in fact important variables for the practice dimension even though it is theoretical. The fact that the qualifications to be acquired in the theoretical dimension of teacher training are in a desirable level is one of the objectives of education faculties. However, the findings obtained from the participants of the practice school in the research are generally used for questioning the competency of the teacher candidates in theoretical dimension. The findings obtained from the different parts of the country in the research showed whether the levels of the qualification or the competency levels of the teacher candidates are in a desirable level. Therefore, the faculties of education are expected to enable the integrity of the practice process by utilizing mechanisms which will question the theoretical dimensions. There should not be a distinction between the theory and practice in teacher training (Jones, Reid, & Bevins, 1997). In fact, due to the stability which is as a result of the cooperation between the practice school and faculty of education, it is found that the teacher candidates are provided with a professional identity (Borko, Michalec, Timmons, & Siddle, 1997). The corporation between individuals and institutions in order to maintain the unity among theory and practice remains to be seen as inevitable. Thus, in order to maintain such a corporation mentioned above an institute where instructor, students and teachers can communicate with each other interactively must be established (Talvitie, Peltokallio, & Paivi, 2000). Because the study held in a safe atmosphere with mentor increases self-confidence of the candidate teacher (Guillaume & Rudney, 1993). The directly relationship between them is progressive and helps to determine the effects and outcomes of the program. On the other hand, in order to provide these parameters occupational professionalism, corporation, identification of roles and respect are the crucial criteria (cited in Broom, 1996).

The findings of the research also show that there are significant differences between the definitions of the mentors and school administrators concerning the process and those of the teacher candidates. While the teacher candidates have called the prac-

tice school and system planners as a problem, the school administrators and mentors talk about the problems resulting from the fact that the teacher candidates and faculties of education do not carry out their responsibilities. Given the fact that the participants from the same institution have expressed their opinion from different point of views, another study can be executed regarding determining the reasons of the situation (Katrancı, 2008; Seçer, Çeliköz, & Kayılı, 2010; Ünver & Eroğlu, 2002).

In the Teacher Training Coordination and Corporation Meeting (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 1996) problems related to teacher training show similarity with findings of this study and also another study (Sağ, 2007) made throughout the country. If the long years past since 1995 when these findings obtained are taken into consideration, it can be said that it is remarkable that there is nothing progressive about problems above mentioned. Throughout teaching training period, as long as the concept of “responsibility” caused by legislations problems remains, this process should not be expected to be effective since responsibility is the most general and greatest undertake in the name of being human. Furthermore, first of all there must be a competent and dominant conscious (Timuçin, 1997, p. 83). By the knowledge that teacher training process is not a direct branch of routine teaching and it requires different perspective of view, skills, attitudes and tendencies (Brooks & Sikes, 1997) may provide the abovementioned responsibility to trainee teachers. All of the research findings should be taken into consideration which focus on the lesson “Teacher Training” in accordance with the essential provisions of teacher training and the social responsibilities of all institutions and people who are directly or indirectly responsible for teacher training depending to the principle of continuous development of the staff and process. Thus, the process of teacher training and the quality of the staff participating in the process can be developed continuously. Research findings should continue to be the guide or a road map in order to ensure the development.

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