Prospective Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Practice Experience in School Placements

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of prospective teachers' first contact with the teaching profession during their practising school attachments. The participants of the study were 101 prospective secondary school teachers at Dicle University in Turkey. The data were collected by using both questionnaire and interview research tools. The frequency, percentage, average and factor analysis techniques have been used for the analysis of quantitative data. The findings revealed that the main problems faced by prospective teachers are students' unwanted behaviours, difficulties in class management, and being treated indifferently by the school administrators and mentors. This situation affects the approaches and motivations of the prospective teachers, and increases the tendency to prefer another occupation than teaching after such practicing period. The prospective teachers believed that university teacher education courses are too theoretical and disconnected from the real world of the classrooms. The findings also show that the tutors, mentors, coordinators and school administrators need training for a healthy cooperation and better teacher education.

Keywords: Preservice Teacher Education; Prospective Teacher; Teaching Practice; Practicing School.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the crucial factors that are seen as specifically important in the development of nations. This fundamental importance of the education brings well qualified teachers to the forefront of the any education related argument. Teacher education programmes, in this respect, are expected to train prospective teachers who are able to deal with the demanding nature of teaching profession and develop personally. The importance of engaging prospective teachers in teaching activities is often argued. The prospective teachers with practicing experiences, for to enable them use their theoretically obtained information

more efficiently when they first start to work, is regarded to carry utmost importance. A prospective teacher who has obtained practicing skills is likely to feel more confident and love teaching more.

While trying to explain the complexities of this phenomenon, different approaches have emerged in the study of the process of "becoming a teacher", ranging from the cognitive and affective aspects of learning to teach (e.g. the changes occurring in the student teachers' concerns and beliefs) to the socialization process that takes place during the first contact with the realities of classroom teaching and the school context (Burn et al., 2000; Oosterheert & Vermunt, 2001; Zeicnher & Gore, 1990). Despite the coexistence of different approaches, not always compatible or consensual, it is widely accepted that the complex, interactive, dynamic and idiosyncratic nature of the process of "learning to teach" is largely influenced by the interplay between individual and contextual variables. Among them, the literature emphasises the prospective teachers' personal characteristics and resources, the quality of learning experiences, the supervisor's support and the quality of the school environment (Bullough et al., 1991; Flores, 2001; Karamustafaoğlu & Akdeniz, 2002; Kete et al., 2002; McNally et al., 1997; Stones, 1984).

In view of the significant impact of teaching practice on the personal and socio-professional development of the prospective teachers and all the richness and complexities involved in the "learning to teach" process, it seems highly relevant to explore how prospective teachers' experience their first contact with the teaching profession. The teaching practice courses are designed to provide prospective teachers with opportunities within schools and the university to acquire the required knowledge, understanding and skills important for the development of professional competence.

The recent educational changes related to teacher education in Turkey can be traced back to 1992. In that year, the two-year classroom teacher training programmes became four-year programmes, and teaching became a graduate profession. From 1994 to 1999 the number of education faculties increased almost by 50% rising from 34 to 51 (YOK, 2003). Along with this increase in the number of education faculties, the number of students also increased substantially in this period, which was also due to the need for a higher number of teachers (YOK, 2003). This was as a direct result of the implementation in 1997 of the Basic Education Law that increased the length of compulsory education from five years to eight years. The reasons for restructuring teacher education were the need for more and different subject teachers, dissatisfaction with the existing programmes and to ensure that every child in Turkey is taught by a well-qualified teacher.

The new teacher education programmes began in the 1998-1999 academic year. These new teacher education programmes focus on the teaching methods in each subject area and teaching practice in schools (YOK, 2003). These changes created the need for teacher educators able to implement the changes required by the new system. Before the restructuring occurred, education faculties had focused on the teaching of subject knowledge. In the new system, education faculties are given a major role for studies of education as opposed to the teaching of subject knowledge. The main aspect of this reform in teacher education was the need for a close partnership between practicing schools and education faculties to create an environment where prospective teachers can put the theory into practice. This resulted in adding new aspects such as School Experience, Teaching Practice and Classroom Management to the teacher education program (Boz & Boz, 2006; Çetintaş & Genç, 2005; Kiraz, 2002; Köroğlu & Güneş, 2000; Oral, 1997; Özbek & Aytekin 2003; Uslu, 2001; Yılmaz & Çavaş, 2008). The five year initial teacher education programme for secondary school teachers in education faculty consist of two main components which help the development of prospective teachers learning. It is important that these two components

should be integrated with each other. One of them is the university-based courses where some of the knowledge about teaching science is constructed. The other element of teacher education is the field-based component where prospective teacher learn to teach by means of experiences they get in the field (Brickhouse & Bodner, 1992; Britzman, 1991; Fosnot, 1996; Mclntyre et al., 1996; Samaras & Gismondi, 1998). After theoretical education, where the scientific and pedagogical subjects are distributed throughout the course, prospective teachers are attached to practising schools half an academic year of teaching practice in the last year of the course during which they assume all the responsibilities of a regular teacher. In this period, prospective teachers have the opportunity to teach one or more classes under the supervision of an experienced mentor (mentor is an experienced teacher who is responsible for the professional development of a prospective teacher in practising school) and a faculty method tutor (faculty member who guides and monitors prospective teachers for their personal and professional developments) to take part in all the activities and routines of school life, and to contact its different members (pupils, parents, other school staff, etc.). Prospective teachers' teaching practices are evaluated by both the mentors and tutors. In addition to school placements, prospective teachers attend two class sessions a week in the university for teaching practice. The various pedagogical experiences such as planning, teaching and assessment that take place during this period, the manipulation of a large amount of teaching tools, the resolution of real problems, and the reflection on the political, social and ethical aspects of teaching and education are examples of the richness and variety of the challenges encompassed by this field experience. Experiences in the schools shape prospective teachers' conceptions about teaching, learning and school contexts (Richardson, 1996). Therefore, for prospective teachers, teaching practices represent opportunities for the development and consolidation of a significant variety of knowledge and skills, and complete their filed-based components with positive gains and experiences (Caires, 2003; McNally et al., 1997; Shulman, 1986).

The main objectives of this research are to determine prospective teachers' perceptions of the practicing periods in practicing schools, to find out prospective teachers' ideas in relation to teacher education program of education faculties and prospective teachers' understanding of the value of partnership between education faculty and practicing school. In order to realise these objectives the following research questions were investigated:

1. What are the prospective teachers' perceptions of teaching practice after they have completed their practices?
2. What are the prospective teachers' opinions related to their teacher education at faculty of education after completing teaching practice?
3. What are the prospective teachers' opinions related to teacher education and practising school partnership after completing teaching practice?
4. What is the level of prospective teachers' motivation to become teachers after teaching practise?

METHODOLOGY

a- Participants

The study took place at the end of the teaching practice course in May in 2008-2009 academic year, at Dicle University (in Diyarbakir, in Turkey) with a group of 101 prospective teachers who fulfilled teaching practice course in the Department of Secondary Science and Mathematics Education. At the time of the study, 120 prospective teachers in total were available at the department. From this group, 101 voluntary prospective teachers were selected for the study. The demographic information of the participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Information of the Participants*

	Physics Education	Biology Education	Chemistry Education	Mathematics Education	Total
	Departments				
N	38	17	18	28	101
%	37.63	16.83	17.82	27.72	100

Both genders were represented; 76 male (75.24%) and 25 female (24.76%) prospective teachers. Twenty eight participants (27.72 %) were placed in Anatolian High Schools which have students who pass a national exam after primary education. Seventy three prospective teachers (72.78 %) attached to general secondary schools that are not selective.

b- Instruments

In this study, a questionnaire, The *Inventory of Perceptions at Teaching Practice* (IPTP), including of three sections and 25 items and interviews were used as data collection tools. In the first section of the questionnaire four demographic questions were asked. In the second section, three open ended questions and in the last section 18 four-point scale from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (4) likert type questions were asked.

To identify potential variables (issues) affecting prospective teachers during teaching practice, a pilot study was performed. The prospective teachers were asked to write down problems they faced during school experience and teaching practice. The issues/problems proposed by prospective teachers were listed and a framework questionnaire was prepared. The items on framework questionnaire were presented to subject specialists. After the opinion of subject specialists were granted some of the items were eliminated from the questionnaire. With the help of subject specialist, interview questions, three open ended questions for the second section and 36 four point scale likert type questions were selected for the third part of the questionnaire. Factor analysis was carried out for the 36 likert type items in order to examine the construct validity of the items after they were completed by 60 prospective teachers. The KMO (Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin) value was 0.70 and the Barlett test value was 2244.64, which show that the adequacy of sampling for analysis at the 0.05 level significance. According to the analysis five factors had eigen-values greater than one. They were 5.73, 4.48, 2.128, 1.69, and 1.36 which explained 68.73% of total variance. This result is greater than the result obtained by Tabachnicket et al. (1989) and Kline (1994) in which they stated that the acceptable variance value of a scale should explain more than 41% of the whole variance. In this study, the factor loadings of 18 items had values below 0.40 and the factor loadings of 18 items varied between 0.40 and 0.80. Eighteen items with factor load of higher than 0.40 were left on the questionnaire. The remaining 18 items were eliminated.

Eighteen 4-point scale items with suitable construct validity include five dimensions which describe the teaching practice experience on five different aspects; 1- Subject content knowledge dimension (3 items), 2- School- faculty of education co-ordination dimension (4 items), 3- Pedagogic knowledge dimension (4 items), 4- Practicing school dimension (3 items) and 5- Motivation dimension (4 items) (Table 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9). The reliability co-efficient (Cronbach's alpha) for the total scores was 0.80. The Cronchbach's alphas values for the sub-dimensions were 0.78, 0.77, 0.74, 0.79 and 0.68 respectively. Thus, the 25 itemed (4 demographic, 3 open ended, 18 likert type) The *Inventory of Perceptions at Teaching Practice* (IPTP) was ready to use.

In order to support the findings, clarify misunderstandings from questionnaire, to give prospective teachers more opportunity to express their ideas and to realise triangulation semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews are seen as valid data collection instruments

for gathering deep information particularly in supporting data collected through questionnaires (Mason, 2002; Silverman, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the survey the prospective teachers were asked to response the open-ended questions and reflect the current situation of the school practice courses and possible underlying reasons on the problematic issues (Table 2, 3 & 4). In order to avoid losing any meaning from the translation, thus increasing the reliability, the data was analysed in its original language (Turkish).

c- Data Analysis

The data from the first part and open-ended questions in the second part of the questionnaire were analysed by frequency, percentage and arithmetic means. Since open-ended questions were used in the search for the prospective teachers experiences in the field-based component of teacher education, qualitative approach was used in order to analyse data. The data gathered through open ended questions were categorised and subcategorised according to the responses of prospective teachers and later these categories were coded. Coding was based on finding identical phrases, statements and themes and categorizing them under common criteria (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). When the categories were identified for each question, frequencies of items were calculated. Interview data was used in direct quotations throughout the findings.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSIONS

The findings from the open ended questions of the questionnaire and the interviews have been separately considered and interpreted. Table 2 shows the problems faced by the prospective teachers in the practicing schools.

Table 2. *Prospective Teachers' Opinions of the Problems They Have Met in the Practicing Schools*

Problems Faced	f	%
Problems coming from all sorts of indiscipline and insufficiency of physical conditions during teaching practice.	44	43.56
Problems coming from the negative approaches of the mentors and school administrators towards the prospective teachers.	29	28.71
Problems coming from the mentors not performing their responsibilities towards the prospective teachers.	21	20.79
Problems coming from the absence of the relation among the school administrators, mentors and prospective teachers.	17	16.83
No problems faced during teaching practice.	14	13.86
Problems coming from the tutors not caring the prospective teachers sufficiently in the practicing schools.	12	11.88

Discipline and insufficiency of physical conditions are seen as two of the important problems during teaching practice. An interview carried out with a male prospective teacher supports the questionnaire data:

> "I did not wish to re-enter high school grade 1 class which I had entered with my mentor before. The teacher of the course seemed to be qualified and the class seemed successful, however the students were too mischievous. For instance, the students in the back of the class used to interrupt the course, stand up from their seats, make planes from the sheets given by the teacher and swear to each other."

These findings support the research findings suggested by Baştürk (2009) who claim that during teaching practice prospective teachers mostly are affected by classroom management related problems. Another male prospective teacher who faced the oral abuse of the boy and girl students in the practicing school told that he has managed to cope with the problems with the assistance of the mentor:

"In the first days of practicing, I was boggling in the class. I was orally abused by some girls and boys after the class while I was on my way to staff room. I shared these things with my mentor. In time, I learnt to solve such problems with the assistance of my mentor."

Previous studies shown that a great portion of the teachers, particularly the ones who have newly started to work, were facing behavioural problems, complaining about such problems and even thinking to leave their profession (Maskan, 2007; NASUWT Report, 2004; Roland & Galloway, 2002; Siebert, 2005; The Elton Report, 1989). A female prospective teacher told the oral aggressions of some students as follows:

"I felt the negative behaviours of some students towards the prospective teachers in the practicing school. In general there were the oral molestations of the male students. At one day, a student in class spoke to me as follows: 'You are not being appointed as a teacher already. Then why do you tire yourself so much?' These words really saddened me."

In this situation, it is impossible for students to think of prospective teachers as their own teachers. Research by Beck and Kosnik (2002) revealed that prospective teachers being respected and treated as a teacher both by their mentors and schools is a necessary and important part of a good practicum placement since this will help give prospective teachers more responsibility and more opportunity to figure things out. Besides, the problems coming from the negative approaches of the mentors and school administrators towards the prospective teachers, the mentors not performing their responsibilities towards the prospective teachers and the absence of the relation among the school administrators, mentors and prospective teachers are other existing problems. These affected prospective teachers' professional development in the school placement. However, one of the personal attributes that mentors should have for effective practicum is the ability to talk comfortably about their teaching (Allsop & Benson, 1996; Brooks & Sikes, 1997). Similarly, the survey by Koerner et al. (2002) showed the most critical aspect of a good placement as a collegial, open and friendly environment. A female prospective teacher mentioned that the indifference of some mentors and administrators disappointed them in the professional means:

"Another problem we faced in the practicing school was the negative approaches of some mentors towards the prospective teachers claiming that such practicing is increasing the burden on them. A teacher was such bored from the school and profession that she used to speak in a pessimist manner whenever she met us, telling how insufferable this profession was."

A female prospective teacher told the effects of the negative behaviours of the assistant director of the practicing school on herself as follows:

"In the first days of my practicing in the practicing school, I and my mentor discussed the execution of the courses. My mentor told me his own experiences. I did not have any problems in relation with my mentor. However, the school administration did not assist me. From the first day I was there the assistant director showed an expression of dissatisfaction in

each encounter. Owing to this reason, I preferred to go to the staff room directly in my each arrival to school for avoiding meeting the administrators."

A few prospective teachers mentioned to have no problems during teaching practice. Despite several complaints made by most prospective teachers in this study, the above statements indicated that there were at least some teachers in high schools who really helped prospective teachers enjoy the teaching process by giving good advice and coaching them very well. Some prospective teachers have stated that the tutors had not paid enough attention to the prospective teachers. This shortage has been mentioned by one of the male prospective teachers during the interviews:

"I noticed, during the practicing process, some of my lacking points due to the some information and practicing shortages. I could not obtain the sufficient feedback from the tutor during my period in school. I guess this originates from the gap through our relationship. Despite such lacking, the teaching practice was very beneficial for me since I believe that I overcame the excite I was feeling in the class."

These findings are in line with the findings of study carried out by Dursun and Kuzu (2008) who claim that prospective teachers do not receive sufficient feedback from tutors.

Table 3. *Prospective Teachers' Opinions of Teacher Education in the Education Faculty*

Opinions	f	%
Theoretical learning and lesser practicing in the education faculty.	53	52.47
Execution of teaching courses in the education faculty as far from their purposes and insufficient class management courses.	31	30.69
Teacher education in the faculty is sufficient.	18	17.82

As may be seen in the Table 3, many prospective teachers see teacher education course as too theoretical and less practical followed by insufficient class management. Siebert (2005) claimed that prospective teachers often perceive class management strategies at universities as too theoretical or disconnected from the "real world" of classroom. Classroom management studies of such as Britt (1997), Gibbsons and Jones (1994) and Maskan (2007) indicated having the training may not be enough, it may be necessary to have on-the-job experience of a year in the classroom in order to make better use of the guidelines offered in the classroom management training. Only a small portion of the participants believed that teacher education in the education faculty was enough.

Table 4. *Prospective Teacher' Opinions of a Better Education Faculty-Practicing School Partnership*

The recommendations of the prospective teachers	f	%
The coordination and communication between the education faculty and the practicing school must be complete as freed from the unnecessary bureaucratic transactions.	46	45.54
The tutors must spare more time to the prospective teachers and monitor them more during the practicing period.	35	34.65
The mentors shall be convinced to make the required feedback to the prospective teachers and build up better relations with the prospective teachers.	33	32.67
No communication breakdowns should be present among the school administrators, mentors and prospective teachers.	21	20.79
Teaching practice should be not only a semester but for a wider period.	18	17.82

According to the ideas of the prospective teachers in Table 4, for a better faculty and practicing school partnership the coordination and communication between the education faculty and the practicing school must be complete and freed from the unnecessary bureaucratic transactions. Prospective teachers indicated that the tutors should spare more time for guiding prospective teachers and monitoring them more during the practicing period, the mentors being provided to make the required feedbacks to the prospective teachers and establish good relations and no communication breakdowns being present among the school administrators, mentors and prospective teachers. Youens and Bailey (2004) suggested that mentor training held by universities could help to inform mentors about what is expected from them. In Turkey a period equivalent to a semester is being separated to teaching practice. Extending this period is recommended by the some of the participant prospective teachers. This also recommended by Dursun and Kuzu (2008).

Table 5. *Prospective Teachers' Opinions of the Subject Knowledge for Teaching Practice*

Opinions	$\overline{X}$		TODI	DI	AG	TOAG
I understood during the teaching practice that the subject knowledge courses given during teacher education have been enough.	2.30	*f*	20	34	44	3
		%	19.8	33.66	43.57	2.97
The class management courses in the education faculties should be more practice weighted.	3.40	*f*	3	5	42	51
		%	2.97	4.95	41.58	50.5
Practicing in the education faculty should be more about teaching methods.	3.42	*f*	3	6	38	54
		%	2.97	5.94	37.62	53.47

Totally Disagree (1) = TODI, Disagree (2) = DI, Agree (3) = AG, Totally Agree (4) = TOAG, Average = $\overline{X}$

Almost half of the participants thought that the subject knowledge given during teacher education was insufficient for the teaching practice (Table 5). A good majority of the prospective teachers suggested that the class management courses should be more practice weighted. Also, the majority of the participants thought that practice is needed in the education faculties for a complete learning of teaching methods. Boz and Boz (2006) found that an issue half of 41 prospective teachers complained about was that they did not have the chance to link theory with practice. They could not observe teachers apply teaching methods they learnt in the university courses due to fact that classes they observed were always delivered by traditional teaching. Similarly, Drever and Cope (1999) claim that theory taught in the universities should not be merely knowledge, but should be relevant to prospective teachers concerns and needs to be easily consolidated by their experiences at schools.

Table 6. *Prospective Teachers' Opinions of the Partnership of School and Faculty on Teaching Practice*

Opinions	$\overline{X}$		TODI	DI	AG	TOAG
I believe that I have obtained the required feedbacks from the tutor (what is learnt, what is confused, tutoring, strengthening etc.).	2.10	*f*	25	45	27	4
		%	24.75	44.55	26.73	3.97
I believe the mentors are being fully informed about what the prospective teachers are expected to do.	2.06	*f*	23	50	27	1
		%	22.8	49.50	26.73	0.99
I believe that the tutors should always monitor the prospective teacher during the teaching practice.	3.08	*f*	6	13	49	33
		%	5.94	12.88	48.51	32.67
I believe that I have obtained the required feedbacks from the mentor in the practicing school (what is learnt, what is confused, tutoring, strengthening etc.).	2.39	*f*	17	38	36	10
		%	16.83	37.63	35.64	9.9

The Table 6 demonstrates that a majority of the prospective teachers do not believe that they have obtained the required feedbacks from the tutors and that they did not believe mentors are well informed about what are expected from the prospective teachers. Eraslan (2009) found that during teaching practice tutors in practicing schools were not present in classes and did not give enough feedback. Similarly, more than half of the participants thought that they had not obtained the required feedback from the mentors. However, the majority of the participants believed that tutors should always monitor prospective teachers during the teaching practice. These findings support the findings of several previous studies (Azar, 2003; Çepni, 1999; Gökçe & Demirhan, 2005; Sılay & Gök, 2004). Monk and Dillon (1995) proposed that constructive advice and feedback provided by mentors, which commences with observing prospective teachers teaching as well as encouraging prospective teachers to reflect on their teaching and identifying both their strengths and areas for development within reflective practice, is essential for effective mentoring.

Table 7. *Prospective Teachers' Opinions of the Pedagogic Knowledge Dimension of Teaching Practice*

Opinions	$\overline{X}$		TODI	DI	AG	TOAG
I believe that I have been sufficiently stimulated for that the different students in the practicing school may have different needs and I should be sensitive for meeting such needs.	2.29	*f* *%*	17 16,83	41 40.6	40 39.6	3 2.97
I believe that the prospective teachers should go to the teaching practice before their graduation.	3.62	*f* *%*	3 2.97	2 1.98	25 24.75	71 70.3
I believe that the rules of the class are important since they contribute to the shaping of the student development and behavioural attitudes.	3.43	*f* *%*	4 3.96	2 1.98	42 41.58	53 52.48
I believe that for an ideal education teachers should know better how to use education tools and media.	3.42	*f* *%*	3 2.97	12 11.88	26 25.74	60 59.41

Table 7 shows that more than half of the participants did not believed that they had been sufficiently stimulated for that the different students in the practicing school may have different needs and they should be sensitive for meeting such needs. Most of the participants believed that the classroom rules are important as they contribute to the shaping of the student development and behavioural attitudes, prospective teachers should go to teaching practice before they are graduated and the teachers should know better how to use the education tools and media for an ideal education.

Table 8. *Prospective Teachers' Opinions of the Practicing School Dimension of Teaching Practice*

Opinions	$\overline{X}$		TODI	DI	AG	TOAG
I believe that the observations and teaching experiences of the prospective teachers being obtained from the practicing school are sufficient.	2.25	*f* *%*	12 11.88	55 54.46	31 30.69	3 2.97
I believe that the mentor in the practicing school meet my expectations.	2.22	*f* *%*	19 18.81	48 47.53	27 26.73	7 6.93
I believe that the teaching practice positively affect myself thinking and self capability skills.	3.26	*f* *%*	1 0.99	8 7.92	56 55.45	36 35.64

When the Table 8 is examined, it may be seen that the mentors in the practicing schools did not meet with prospective teachers' expectations. Studies have suggested that prospective teachers did not receive enough guidance and help during teaching experience (Kiraz, 2002; Özbek & Aytekin, 2003; Sağ, 2008) and the feedback given were usually superficial in the mode of "good, not bad, will be better next time" (Paker, 2005). Similarly, the majority of participants did not think that the observations and teaching experiences of the prospective teachers being obtained from the practicing school are sufficient. Also, most of the participants believed that teaching practice positively affect their self thinking and self capability skills.

Table 9. *Prospective Teachers' Opinions of the Motivation Dimension of Teaching Practice*

Opinions	$\overline{\text{X}}$		TODI	DI	AG	TOAG
I believed that I will not prefer any other profession other than teaching after the teaching practice period.	2.15	*f*	24	46	23	8
		%	23.76	45.55	22.77	7.92
I believe that the awareness of the economic difficulties of the teachers effect prospective teachers' performance.	3.32	*f*	4	11	35	51
		%	3.97	10.89	34.65	50.5
I believe that the problems with the mentors, tutors or school administrators during the teaching practice affect the prospective teachers' performance.	3.33	*f*	2	8	46	45
		%	1.98	7.92	45.55	44.55
I believe that the problems faced by the prospective teachers while trying to implement their ideas affect their performances negatively.	3.10	*f*	4	10	59	28
		%	3.97	9.9	58.41	27.72

When the motivation dimension of teaching practice from Table 9 is examined, it can be seen that the majority of the participant prospective teachers will prefer any other profession than teaching after teaching practice. Similar results may also be seen in the international studies carried out. Over years, studies (Chan, 1998; Ingersoll, 2001) have continuously reported that an alarming number of beginning teachers leave the profession within the five years of entering the field. Likewise, in Hong Kong, Chan (1998) while studying 400 teachers' stressors that found that student behaviour management rates as the second most significant factor stressing teachers. Similarly, Ingersoll (2001) reports that 30 percent of teachers who chose to leave the professional identify student discipline as one of the reasons that caused them to give up teaching. Garmon (1993) also argued that classroom management has always been a problem for teachers, especially for novice and prospective teachers but it has often been ignored. Most prospective teachers saw the public awareness of the economic difficulties of the teachers as a serious factor affecting the motivation. The presence of the economic difficulties of the teachers is not specific to Turkey though; for instance Caires and Almeida (2005) indicated that in Portugal, teachers' unemployment is a wide phenomenon, affecting, in 2003/2004 around 40000 candidates. Also, prospective teachers believed that their performance are effected by the problems related to the mentors, tutors or school administrators during the teaching practice and the problems faced by the prospective teachers while trying to implement their ideas. These explanations express the importance of guidance and support by mentors in their development as teachers which is also mentioned by several research findings (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Maynard, 1996; Paese, 1996).

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, the experiences of prospective teachers' first contact with the teaching profession during their practising school attachments were examined. The study revealed prospective teachers' views in six inter-related dimensions of a teacher education programme. These dimensions are the effectiveness of the teacher education programme at education faculty, help and monitoring by the mentors and tutors, administrative difficulties in schools, practical difficulties in classrooms and lack of effective partnership between schools, the faculty of education and awareness of economic difficulties. The study shows that prospective teachers did not believe that they are prepared effectively in the education faculty and the lack of ineffective communication and coordination were seen as important obstacles. Teaching practice should not only be for one semester but for a wider period. Also, prospective teachers believed teacher education programme should be more practical. In terms of help and monitoring by mentors and tutors, prospective teachers indicated a need for a more help and a better way to monitor prospective teachers' development in practising schools. Mentor teachers not having sufficient knowledge of teaching practice and perceiving it as a burden were the other most important findings of the study. Lack of adequate relationship among the school administrators, mentors and prospective teachers was the major finding in the dimension of administrative difficulties in schools. The practical difficulties in classroom are the misbehaviours and class management difficulties faced by the prospective teachers in practicing schools affect their attitudes towards teaching and their motivation to teach. The last important dimension is that the awareness of teachers' economic difficulties affects prospective teachers' performance. As a result of this, prospective teachers show tendency for another profession after teaching practice.

Taking the findings into consideration it is suggested that prospective teachers should be attached to learning-teaching environments with least behavioural problems where the lessons are taught and listened as bringing a well organized learning environment. Also, the prospective teachers should be taken seriously in the practicing schools they practice. In addition, the school administrators and mentors should show positive behaviours towards prospective teachers. It is important to realise that should a comfortable working and preparing to the class not provided, the motivation of the prospective teachers will fall and their confidence and belief to the profession will get lesser. Similarly, the mentors in the practicing schools should be appointed among the teachers who have the knowledge and professional experience that can meet the expectations of the prospective teachers. The mentors and tutors should spare more time to the prospective teachers, make the required feedbacks and establish good relations for a successful practicing period. Additionally, the tutors shall perform their obligations in the matters with which they are obliged and shall act as appropriate examples to the others (practicing school administrators, mentors and prospective teachers). Likewise, teacher education programmes should provide prospective teachers with necessary class management ability and teacher education courses at universities should be more practically focused and should be derived from observation and real-life scenarios. The findings of the study show that the mentors, coordinators and school administrators require training in the field of partnership. Meeting these requirements will inevitably require the partnership between the education faculties and the practicing schools. Only if this partnership comes to life then the system of "tutorship, mentorship and partnership" may be functioned.

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