



## Conflict Situations between Student Teachers and Mentor Teachers

Research Article

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### ABSTRACT

This research looks into conflict situations and the reasons leading to conflict between teacher candidates and mentor teachers during the Teaching Practice course which is essential for teacher education. The study employs a phenomenological approach to research and semi-structured focus group interviews for data collection. The participants of the research are 163 teacher candidates from 8 different faculties and 4 different departments. Content analysis is used for data analysis. First, codes are identified in the text and themes were formed drawing on the codes. The findings revealed the following themes: problems related to the class, mentor teacher's perception of the teacher candidate, problems related to the process and problematic issues for the candidate. The teacher candidates stated the following reasons for conflict: causes related to the university tutor, causes related to schools and causes related to the practice process. The paper concludes with some suggestions based on these findings.

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#### Keywords:

Teacher education, teacher training,, mentor teachers.

### Introduction

One of the most important initiatives taken in teacher training in Turkey was transfer of teacher education to the Council of Higher Education (YOK) (YOK, 2007: 37) and "department of educational sciences" was established to deliver teacher training courses in all education faculties in 1982. In this process, the arrangements related to the programs also started and the regulations made for the pedagogical programs in light with the decisions of the Ministry of National Education. This was put it into practice in 1986-87 academic

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year. Introduction to Educational Science, Educational Psychology, Instruction programs, Measurement and Evaluation, Teaching Methods courses were introduced to be delivered 3 hours a week and Educational Sociology and Elective Courses are selected as 2 hours (YOK, 2007: 40-42).

To provide solutions to educational problems and to address the needs of the teachers, the teacher education was restructured in 1997. The number of pedagogical courses and credits, and practice courses were increased and these courses were linked with teach other. Thus, School Experience-1 course was planned to be introduced in the 2nd semester of the first year. And to avoid any problems that may occur due to the demand in the practice schools, it was decided that the course could also be offered in the first semester of the second year (YOK, 1998a: 6-10).

Within the scope of faculty-school cooperation, in order to determine the responsibilities of the teaching staff, important definitions were made within the frame of YOK / World Bank National Education Development Project carried out between 1994-1998. The study was published in 1998 and it aimed to ensure that the duties and responsibilities of the student teachers were shared between the education faculty and school practice in order to develop their professional knowledge and skills effectively and efficiently (YOK (1998b: 1).

In 2007 revisions, the student teachers were also given the opportunity to undertake their teaching practice or training in the combined classrooms, the villages and in the regional primary boarding school (YIBO) in order to improve the practices (YOK, 2007: 64).

It can be said that, since 1982, improvements for the teaching practice have increased so that the student teachers could gain experience in the education faculties, understand the qualifications of the teaching profession and feel themselves as teachers in real class environments. Senemoğlu (2003) stated that teacher practice at schools school are core to the training of student teachers, such as preparing programs that could ease children's learning and development, meeting individual and special needs of children, selecting and organising effective learning experiences, teaching these learning experiences and evaluating their results. In addition, Yildirim (2011) emphasizes that the teaching profession is based on learning through practicing the profession; the experience and perspective gained by the practice cannot be taught through the courses because the knowledge and skills taught separately form a major obstacle for student teachers to form a holistic understanding.

Through understanding the importance of teaching practices in the pre-service training process, the studies on the teaching practice process have also gained importance. Karadüz, Eser, Şahin, İlbay (2009) emphasized that the student teachers who has acquired a lot of knowledge and skills in real learning environments through the teacher training courses, the activities of this course in real learning environments will acquire permanent learning and gain new attitudes and behaviours related to the profession. Sural (2017) stated that the level of qualifications achieved by undergraduate programs can improve the level of professionalism through the school practice, and teacher training contributes to development of problem solving skills.

In these studies, it is aimed that student teachers gain better experience in practice. The literature on teacher training and school experience show that one of the most mentioned problem is difficulties in communication of all partners during the teacher training course process. The continuous and uninterrupted communication between the university tutor in faculty, the mentor teacher in school and the student teacher is important for a healthy process and it is a problem when the university tutor and the mentor teacher do not provide adequate guidance to the student teacher during the teacher training process (Kırksekiz et al., 2015 ). In another study conducted on the importance of sharing cooperation and responsibility among stakeholders in the training of teachers; it was emphasized that the cooperation between the mentor teacher and the student

teacher has a huge importance especially in teacher training. Another important finding in the same research is that the student teachers cannot have enough opportunity to teach as there is usually more than one student teacher in the same class (Dinçer & Kapısız, 2013). According to the results of another study conducted to evaluate the teacher training process, student teachers stated that they face inadequate physical facilities, lack of teaching material, disciplinary problems, and challenges related to over populated classroom in practice schools. In addition, mentor teachers' attitudes towards the student teachers, mentor teachers' intervention as the student teachers lecture and feeling of insecure are other problems for student teachers (Atmiş, 2013). Study of Gökçe and Demirhan (2005) also supported these findings and their results show that the cooperation between the student teacher, the mentor teacher and the university tutor in faculty was not sufficient, and it was found that there was a meaningful difference between the mentor teachers' opinions and student teachers' opinions about the training activities, and the mentor teachers did not provide sufficient support during the development of the teacher training course plans and materials. The research of Sezen Yüksel (2017) also showed that the student teachers' professional guidance expectations are not met and the mentor teachers are not seen enough due to the fact that they do not have capable knowledge on the teaching methodology. In the same study, it was emphasized that the mentor teachers did not provide enough guidance for the student teachers and they had negative attitudes towards student teachers and lacked the "teacher training" skills.

The points emphasized in the study titled "The level of guidance provided by mentor teachers to student teachers" discusses the guidance of mentor teachers, and argues that teacher training task is a weekly 2 hours course, therefore, it is perceived as a burden for the mentor teachers and it is understood as a course in which student teachers give lecture alone to the classes. Due to the fact that the university tutors have a lot of teaching hours in the faculty, there is limited possibility of interviewing the student teachers at school and interviewing with the mentor teachers, which prevents the effectiveness of the course (Aslanargun, Kılıç & Acar, 2012). The study of "Cooperation in teacher training: a case study" also argues similar and supportive findings. In this study, the mentor teachers felt that they were responsible for the preparation of the lesson; however, they did not show any cooperation in helping student teachers to get used to the classroom and creating positive experiences. It has been indicated that for the mentor teachers it is important to complete the lesson smoothly and without any trouble (Ünver, 2003).

Findings about the problems of teacher training are presented in many studies. These problems are especially relevant for the mentor teachers, and the importance of the selection of the mentor teachers for teacher training. Although the duties and responsibilities of all the stakeholders in the teacher training process are defined in the Faculty-School Cooperation Guideline, researchers should continue to undertake studies looking into the problems. In particular, the criteria determined in the selection of the mentor teacher becomes important in this process. The Faculty-School cooperation guideline states the following criteria for the selection of mentor teachers; willing to contribute to teacher training, willing to improve themselves in their profession, having received education in their own field, having at least three years professional experience, being successful in applying teaching methods and techniques and being a role model to students with their attitudes and behaviours, (YOK, 1998b: 30). However, informal ideas of the student and university tutors in faculty and the school and university coordinator are effective in the selection of the mentor teachers. Apart from this, it is seen that factors such as ease of transportation of the school, number of students per teacher, finance, not having been previously employed, and holding a teaching certificate are seen to be effective in recruiting the mentor teachers (Göktaş & Şad, 2014).

The book of "Teacher training in Turkey" has similar statements related to teacher training. Experienced teachers should be used as a guide to the student teachers in teacher training and it is necessary to transform the mentoring into a practice that will bring functionality to school-faculty cooperation and to move the cooperation beyond the formalities. It has been underlined that mentor teachers are facilitators who contribute

to the improvement of teacher training, rather than judging or criticising students (Durdu Karılı & Güven, 2011: 73). The book titled "School experience and teacher training" emphasizes points about the tasks of the mentor teachers in the teacher training process such as guidance, monitoring, supervision and evaluation in order to ensure teacher training activities successfully implemented (Çaycı, 2014: 219).

Yalaza Atay (2003: 96) expresses that many mentor teachers believe that student teachers do teaching practice to learn classroom management and basic teaching skills. Often, the mentor teachers maintain their usual activities and they are not willing to have any changes in their program (for example, taking the time to talk about a lesson plan or lesson with a student teacher in breaks or being a role model for student teacher).

In order to produce solutions for similar problems experienced in teacher training, it is recommended that the mentor teachers should be informed about their responsibilities. In-service training programs can be prepared to inform the mentor teachers (Ünver & Eroğlu, 2003). Yalaza Atay (2003: 99) emphasizes that training for teachers is necessary because the task of being a mentor requires different knowledge and skills from the task of being a teacher; in many European countries and in the United States, teachers have been trained by academics for about 30 hours in order to become a mentor for student teachers. The basic elements of this education are; recognizing the role of the mentor, helping the student teacher, classroom organization and management, observing and giving feedback, duty of the teacher in general professional development, manager-instructor relationship. Taking all relevant studies into consideration, this study was carried out with the aim of revealing the actual conditions for the nature of teaching practice and training/internship process. The aim of the study is to identify the conflict situations between the teacher candidates and the mentor teachers during teaching practice and to understand the reasons of these conflict situations. The conflict expressed here is disputes between the parties. Karip (2013: 2) also stresses that conflicts are inevitable and that controversies can lead to conflict. Therefore, it is necessary to address the conflict in a constructive manner and doing this requires identification of the conflict situations. It is important to know the nature, sources, and communication of the parties before intervening the conflict (Karip, 2013: 44). In addition, Folger, Poole & Stutman (2013: 238) indicates that creating a collaborative environment is an important concept for conflicts, thus arguing that the parties in the conflict benefit best from the existing situation. To make the conditions better for mentor teachers and teacher candidates, the sub-problems of the research are devised as follows:

1. What are the main conflict situations that the student teachers experience with the mentor teachers in teacher training process?
2. What are the causes of conflict between the student teachers and the mentor teachers?

### **Methods**

This research employs a phenomenological method. Phenomenological method focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013: 78). A phenomenological research engages with the experiences of people and elaborates on how people describe and define their experiences (Patton, 2014: 107). This research focuses on the conflict situations between student teachers and mentor teachers during the teaching practice at schools and conceptualises how student teachers describe this experience of conflict. Interviews are the primary data collection tool of phenomenological method as it offers the researcher flexibility of using probing and enables interaction with the participants (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013: 80). Therefore, semi-structured interviews are conducted with student teachers.

### **Participants**

Purposeful sampling is used in recruitment of the participants. Patton (2014: 46) states that the purposeful sampling can lead to the selection of rich data source as it follows a line of logic in identifying the participants that could best serve to the aims of the study. Therefore, student teachers who have experienced

the teaching practice at schools were recruited. Criterion sampling method is used to identify the participants. The NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) classification is used for criterion sampling. According to NUTS, Turkey is composed of twelve regions. These regions are Istanbul, Western Marmara, Aegean, Eastern Marmara, Mediterranean, Western Black Sea, Eastern Black Sea, North-eastern Anatolia, Central Anatoli, Western Anatolia and South-eastern Anatolia (Wikipedia, 2017). According to this classification, one department of education in each region is included in the study. Further information on the selected faculties is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Education Faculties according to Region

NUTS-1	Education Faculties
TR1.İstanbul	TR11.Yıldız Teknik
TR2.Eastern Marmara	TR21.Sakarya
TR3.Western Marmara	
TR4.Aegan	TR41.Uşak
TR5.Western Anatolia	TR51.Gazi
TR6. Central Anatolia	
TR7. Mediterranean	TR71.Mersin
TR8.Eastern Black Sea	TR91.Gaziosmanpaşa
TR9.West Black Sea	
TRA. North-eastern Anatolia	TRB1Yüzüncü Yıl
TRB. Central Anatolia	
TRC. South-eastern Anatolia	TRC1. Ziya Gökalp

The participants were final year students in Science Education, Mathematics Education, Turkish Education and Elementary Education departments who took Teaching Practice course. Between 4 to 6 participants were employed from each department of the selected education faculty and focus group interviews were conducted. Table 2 presents the profile of participants.

**Table 2.** The Number of Participants

Education Faculty	Department	Number of Participants
Gazi	Science Education	5
	Mathematics Education	5
	Turkish Education	6
	Elementary Education	4
Ziya Gökalp	Science Education	6
	Mathematics Education	4
	Turkish Education	5
	Elementary Education	5
Mersin University	Science Education	6
	Mathematics Education	5
	Turkish Education	5
	Elementary Education	6
Yüzüncü Yıl University	Science Education	4
	Mathematics Education	6
	Turkish Education	5
	Elementary Education	6

Hendek	Science Education	4
	Mathematics Education	4
	Turkish Education	5
	Elementary Education	5
Yıldız Teknik University	Science Education	5
	Mathematics Education	6
	Turkish Education	4
	Elementary Education	6
Uşak University	Science Education	6
	Mathematics Education	5
	Turkish Education	5
	Elementary Education	6
Gaziosmanpaşa University	Science Education	5
	Mathematics Education	4
	Turkish Education	5
	Elementary Education	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>163</b>

### Data Collection Tools

Interview technique was employed as a data collection tool and an interview Protocol was used to conduct the interviews. In an interview protocol, the topics to be covered in an interview are pre-identified but the order of the questions and how they will be asked are determined by the researcher at the time of the interview. This is rather important as it makes the process more systematic (Patton, 2014: 349). Based on this, focus group interviews were conducted due to high number of participants. Focus group interviews should pay attention that participants share a common experience of an issue, product or service (Yildirim and Simsek, 2013: 180). Semi-structured questions were asked to a group of teacher candidates in the same field. Expert opinion on the prepared interview form was taken and data collection process started after the necessary revisions.

The interview form included basic questions about teacher candidates' communication with their mentor teachers during the teaching training/internship process, the process of the training/internship period, the problems they faced during this process, and some probing questions to elaborate on the responses. At this stage, pilot interviews were conducted with a teacher candidate from each department to check the if the interview questions fitted the purpose of the study. After the revisions, the actual data collection phase started.

### Data Collection Process

The data collection process started after the necessary permissions and consents were taken. Then, an appointment was set with faculties and participants. During this process, particular attention was paid to the availability of participants and only those who volunteered to participate were included in this research. Participants were informed about the study and interviews took place in an available classroom in their faculties. The data collection lasted for four months and most interviews were recorded whereas note-taking was used for some interviews. In total 32 focus group interviews were conducted and each interview lasted around 20 minutes.

### Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse the data. Before the analysis, participants' demographic information was sorted according to their faculties and departments and then the interviews were transcribed.

The interviews transcripts are 131-page long. Transcripts were analysed using QSR NVIVO analysis. The basic process in content analysis is to bring together similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes and to interpret them in a way that the reader can understand (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013: 259). Therefore, researchers read the transcripts at least a few times. Each interview was examined in detail and each important line was coded. As a result, a large number of codes emerged and then these coded were re-coded or merged with some other codes. This process was repeated a few times. The codes were finally grouped under themes. This coding process was completely based on the data to generate findings.

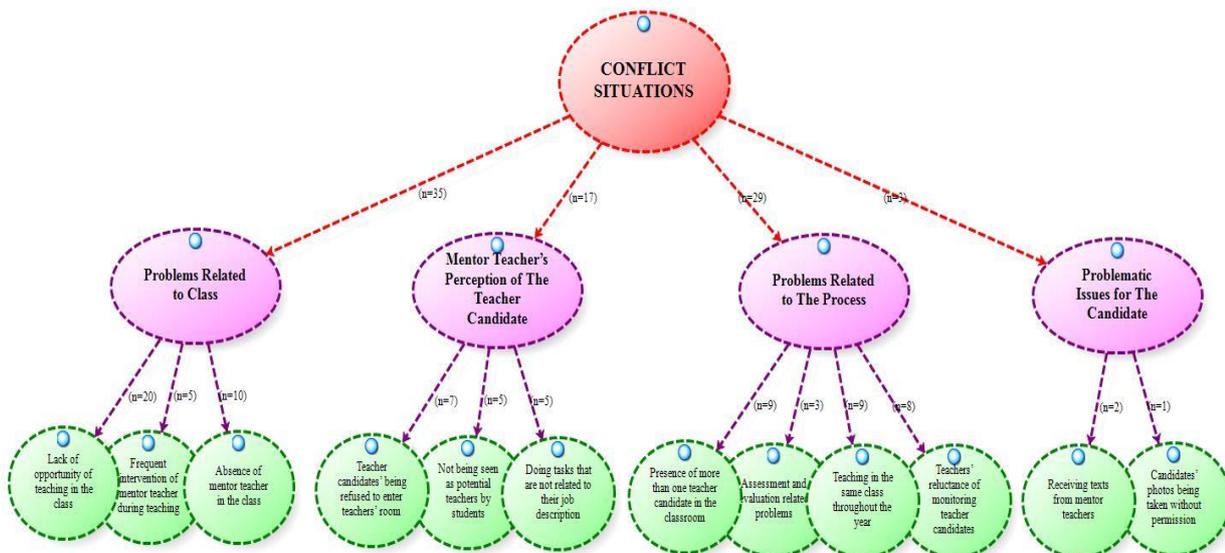
### Validity and Reliability

The validation strategies as determined by Christensen, Burke Johnson and Turner (2015: 405) were used for the validity of the research. One of these strategies is the comprehensive field work and the data collection of this study lasted around four months. Direct quotes are provided from the interviews.

Encoder reliability is used to determine the reliability of the work. Random interview transcripts were chosen and those transcripts were independently coded by two different researchers, and the fit between these the codes of the interviews were calculated. The formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) was used: Reliability = Agreement/ (Agreement + Disagreement). The reliability is calculated as 0.82.

## Findings

### Conflict Situations between Student teachers and Mentor teachers during the Teaching Practice



**Figure 1.** Opinions of Student teachers Regarding the Conflict Situations They Experience with Mentor Teachers

Four themes emerged regarding the conflict situations student teachers experienced with their mentor teachers at schools. These themes are course related problems ( $n=35$ ), *Problems regarding teaching* ( $n=29$ ), *Mentor teacher's perception of the student teacher* ( $n=17$ ), and *problematic issues for the student teacher* ( $n=3$ ). Course related problems theme is most articulated theme and the codes that emerged under this theme are respectively; *lack of opportunity of teaching in the class* ( $n=20$ ), *absence of mentor teacher in the class* ( $n=10$ ) and *frequent intervention of mentor teacher during teaching* ( $n=5$ ). Accordingly, it could be argued that student teachers are not given enough opportunity to gain experience. In particular, teachers who are anxious to keep up with the curriculum are not willing to let the student teacher do any teaching or even if they do so, they frequently intervene their teaching.

The second most articulated theme is the problems regarding teaching and the codes under this theme are as follows: *presence of more than one student teacher in the classroom (n=9)*, *teaching in the same class throughout the year (n=9)*, *mentor teachers' reluctance of monitoring student teachers (n=8)* and *assessment and evaluation related problems (n=3)*. Student teachers believe they experience challenges throughout the teacher practice process. Particularly, the imbalance in the number of student teachers allocated to per mentor teacher also cause this conflict.

The third theme is mentor teacher's perception of the student teacher (n=17) and the codes under this theme are as follows; *student teachers' being refused to enter teachers' room (n=7)*, *not being seen as potential teachers by students (n=5)* and *doing tasks that are not related to their job description (n=5)*. The codes listed under this theme indicate the reasons why student teachers do not see themselves as teachers when they are at schools. The student teachers also expressed dissatisfaction about being used as substitute teachers by the school management.

The last theme is problematic issues for the student teacher (n=3). The codes of this theme are *receiving texts from mentor teachers (n=2)* or *student teachers' photos being taken without permission (n=1)*.

These themes and codes indicate that student teachers are not given an ample amount of opportunity to practice teaching and they conflict with mentor teachers. Yet, this conflict is more related to the school and it is less seen with regard to mentor teachers. The quotes related to the codes are presented below. Pseudonyms are used.

Miray (B Department, Y Faculty):

*"...For instance, when we are in class, mentor teacher presents us to students as if we are not teachers by using our first name. I expressed this concern to my mentor teacher, she understood it. Since I was introduced as someone helping the mentor teacher, students did not see me as a potential teacher. I am struggling to present myself as a teacher to the students. Mentor teacher should have thought this at the very beginning" (not being seen as potential teachers by students)*

Serap (A Department, Z Faculty):

*"...We are only teaching 1 or 2 times during the teaching practice. We are at school once a week for 6 hours. It is more like observation for us rather teaching practice" (lack of opportunity of teaching in the class)*

Tolga (C Department, V Faculty):

*"When I was teaching in the class, mentor teacher would leave me alone and this was challenging for me because students did not know me. S/he was giving different excuses or saying that s/he has admin duties to do." (absence of mentor teacher in the class )*

Leyla (B Department, Y Faculty):

*"Mentor Teacher would allow me to teach. S/he would do the lecturing part and we, teacher trainees, would help students with the activities. We entirely did not have the opportunity of teaching." (frequent intervention of mentor teacher during teaching)*

Işık (D Department, U Faculty):

*"There is more than one student teacher in classroom during the teaching practice. This sometimes causes problems as we teach. I think the student teachers should be distributed accordingly." (presence of more than one student teacher in the classroom)*

Kuzey (C Department, T Faculty):

*"One time, mentor teachers were not paid for mentoring us and they explicitly said that they did not want us. This tires us..." (mentor teachers' reluctance of monitoring student teachers)*

Deniz (A Department, R Faculty):

*“Mentor sends friend requests on social media and texts us at 1 or 2 am in the morning. Such things should not be done, you cannot text someone at midnight” (receiving texts from mentor teachers)*

Umut (A Department, U Faculty):

*“During my teaching practice, the only thing I did was to do activities with students. The mentor teacher was either asking us to solve problem in the class or prepare sample questions at home to solve in the classroom. I had the opportunity of teaching only a couple of weeks... (lack of opportunity of teaching in the class)*

Can (D Department, P Faculty):

*“I don’t think I am being valued by the mentor teacher. I am not even allowed to enter teachers’ room. They told us that as student teachers, we were too many and the teachers’ rooms was too small to accommodate us. This discouraged as the very beginning.” (student teachers’ being refused to enter teachers’ room)*

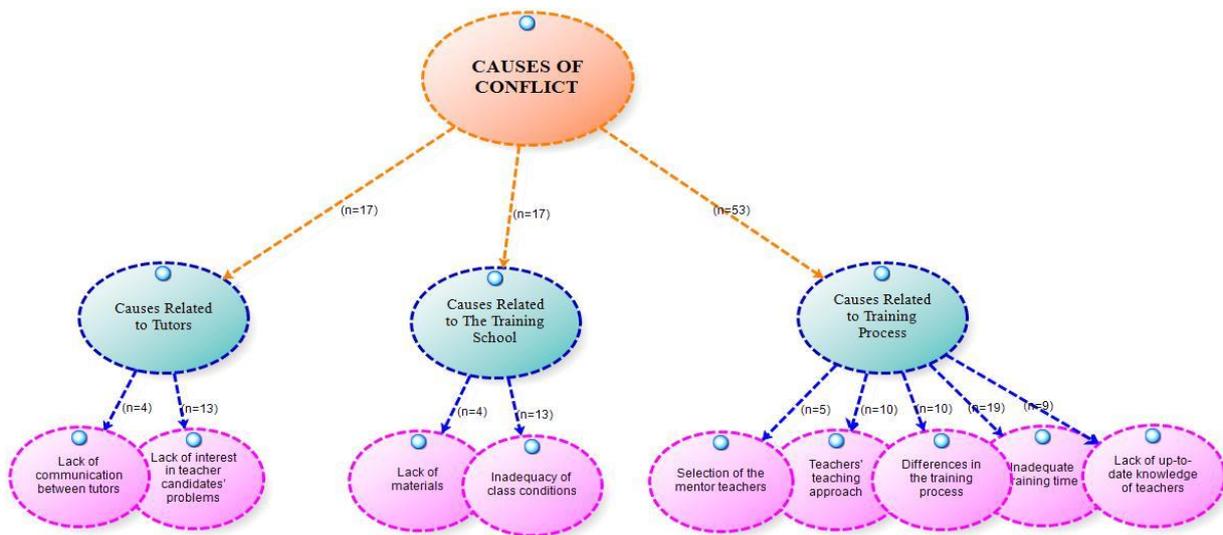
Zeynep (B Department, V Faculty):

*“When I enter the class, it is difficult for me to present myself as a teacher. I want my mentor teacher to see me as a teacher in the classroom but she instead presents me as an assistant and says that I will be their guest in the class.” (not being seen as potential teachers by students)*

Ali (A Department, T Faculty):

*“The marks that we get from mentor teacher are all the same. The mentor teacher does not pay attention to marking and as a student teacher I cannot see my weaknesses and strengths. I don’t think my performance evaluation is entirely accurate (assessment and evaluation related problems).*

**Causes of Conflict Situations Between Student teachers and Mentor Teachers in Teacher Training**



**Figure 2.** Opinions of Student teachers about the causes of Conflict with Mentor Teachers in Teacher Training

The opinions of student teachers about the reasons of the conflict situations during the teacher training were analysed. The themes are *causes related to training Process* (n=53), *causes related to tutors* (n=17), and *causes related to the training School* (n=17) (see figure 2). Among these themes, *Reasons related to training process* is the most mentioned one. The codes under this theme are; *inadequate training time* (n=19), *differences in the training process* (n=10), *teachers’ teaching approach* (n=10), *lack of up-to-date knowledge of teachers* (n=9) and *selection of the mentor teachers* (n=5). Depending on these coding, it can be said that the student teachers often see the reason of the conflicts experienced with the mentor teachers as the *inadequacy of the training period*. Student teachers attend school for one or two semesters and they are required to attend school for one day a week, this situation

leads to a number of problems. In this process, student teachers believe that they cannot recognize the students in the class and they cannot get enough experience in the teaching profession, Therefore, they believe that the problems experienced during the teacher training process will diminish when they spend more and more time in class and at school.

According to the opinions expressed by the codes of *Reasons related to the Training Process*, some student teachers teach regularly each week, while in some school teachers allow only a few lessons. It can be said that this leads to imbalance between student teachers. In this theme, *teachers' teaching approach* code is one of the most mentioned codes. Based on the comments under this code, it can be said that each teacher has his or her own teaching style. There are certain methods and materials which are used by teachers and practices change across the class and their own experiences. It is difficult for students in the classroom to learn the lessons with new methods and materials because they are more familiar with the methods and techniques used by the teacher during the course. Likewise, student teachers have difficulty in interacting with students in the classroom when they use different methods or materials. Sometimes the mentor teacher do not have tendencies to accept different techniques and wants to direct the student teacher according to his / her teaching approach. Besides, it is also expected that the mentor teacher will provide positive criticisms and encourage and support behaviours of the student teacher in the classroom. The code that *lack of up-to-date knowledge of teachers* is one of the codes generated under this theme. In particular, student teachers are very concerned with the adequacy of the mentor teachers' content knowledge. The student teachers observe how mentor teachers use the activities in the program, how they communicate with the students, how they pay attention to classroom management. The last code mentioned in this theme was *selection of the mentor teachers*. It is very important that the mentor teachers contribute to the student teachers by providing guidance during the teacher training, examining the lesson plans, supporting them in the class work. According to the interviews, it was seen that some mentor teachers guided student teachers as they knew their duties and responsibilities, but some did not have sufficient knowledge of teacher training process. In this respect, it is important that the mentor teachers should have experience in teacher training.

The second theme is the *causes related to tutors*. This theme includes views on school-faculty co-operation and communication between tutor and mentor during teacher training. In addition, the student teachers' expressions about proficiency of the mentor teachers and their skill levels are included. The codes that emerge under this theme are; *lack of interest in student teachers' problems* (n=13) and *lack of communication between tutors* (n=4). The communication of the student teachers with the tutor in the faculty is also important in this process. The student teachers want to feel themselves as teachers when they are observed by the tutors at school. Tutors are expected to visit schools regularly and communicate with the mentor teachers. This will ensure regular communication between mentor teachers and tutors, and it will help them solve the problems that student teachers have during the teacher training.

The last theme under this heading is *the causes related to school*. Under this theme, codes are *inadequacy of class conditions* (n=13) and *lack of materials* (n=4). Crowded and small classrooms, lack of proper seating arrangement for group work, lack of equipment and materials, insufficient technological equipment make it difficult for the student teachers to teach. The quotes related to the codes are presented below. Pseudonyms are used.

Merve (Department B, Faculty Y):

"... I attend to the teacher training once a week and of course I am a stranger to the class, therefore, it is a bit difficult to teach and control classroom management. It may be better for us to do longer periods of teaching practice..."  
(*inadequacy of training period*)

İlker (Department D, Faculty P):

"... I think that the teacher training is very inadequate. We are having difficulties when we go to internship. It is

*very important to understand the characteristics of children and their psychology, we have difficulties in understanding children, approaching them ... " (inadequacy of training period)*

Can (Department C, Faculty Z):

*"... So they are right, we should not teach something wrong, or maybe we should not use a method that is not suitable for the class, however we are right too. Sometimes I feel very good in the classroom, sometimes I say that I cannot become a teacher. The attitude of the mentor is affecting us. They should be supportive and motivated, but not all of them are supportive ... " (teachers' teaching approach)*

Efe (Department D, Faculty T):

*"...the teacher of the class is always following the book and readings, students find words, then we write the words. This is how the course continues. They don't have any other source. How successful would I be in this class if I try the six thinking hats method or something else. The teacher has only one approach and that is to give a lecture, to write, to read ..." (teachers' teaching approach)*

Ecem (Department B, Faculty Z):

*"... there are teachers who are unaware of even the examples in the textbooks, and they ask me," Where did you get this sample? "However, I used the example in the book. Sometimes there are changes in the topic headings or minor changes in the program, but some of the teachers are not fully qualified and they do not follow what has changed ... " (lack of up-to-date knowledge of teachers)*

Eda (Department C, Faculty P):

*"... the teacher training is really short. In the 3rd year, for one term, we went to school to observe. We had our internship this year, it's over now. But I think the duration is not enough. We need to see more and observe more in the classroom. It is not enough to give lecture. Managing the class, being in the class is completely different. We really need to start the teacher training in the first year, we need to gain more experience to become a teacher ... " (inadequacy of training period)*

Berkay (Department of A, Faculty of P):

*"... there is also lack of communication. All our friends know that. We went to the school to start the training, however, the school said that the teacher training won't start this week. I told it to the tutor in the faculty and he/she said that it has to start this week. So they do not have communication between each other. Sometimes we are stuck between the mentor teacher in the school and the tutor in the faculty. First of all, they need to be clear, so that we will not have any problems ... " (lack of communication between tutors)*

Ezgi (Department B, Faculty Y):

*"... There are many differences between the mentor teachers and the tutors. Some of us have 2 or 3 hours in school, some of us going at 7:00 am. So it's a matter of luck. I have never been absent, but there are people who do. Our instructor is very meticulous, and every week they look at our plan, telling us to keep our file carefully. But some tutors in the faculty do not want the teacher training file. So it changes so much from tutor to tutor... " (differences in the teacher training process)*

Kemal (Department A, Faculty T):

*"... There is lack of knowledge, they are not developing themselves professionally. Some teachers are very inadequate. In basic statements, even in communication there is a tension between the teacher and the students. For instance, my mentor teacher was referring to the student as 'my love'. We have learned that we should not refer the students like that in 1st or 2nd class, but s/he does not know ... " (lack of up-to-date knowledge of teachers)*

## Discussion and Conclusion

The primary aim of the education faculties are to train “quality teachers.” Quality in teacher training could be defined as raising teachers who have adequate content knowledge, good personality, and the skills of teaching, classroom management, planning and assessment (Aypay, 2009). Those who want to become teachers are taking content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and general culture courses at education faculties to gain aforementioned skills. The arrangements for these three different areas (content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and general culture) in the programs differed over time. One of the major amendments was made in 1997 after the teacher training was transferred to universities in 1981.

The reason for this amendment was that the teacher training courses were mostly based on theoretical knowledge and they were not sufficient in terms of providing necessary knowledge and skills for practice. For this reason, in the 1997 regulation, the teacher training courses were redesigned in a way to provide theoretical knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge and skills that are essential for teaching profession and school environment. Therefore, School Experience-I and School Experience-II courses were respectively introduced in first year and last year of teacher training programs (YOK, 1998a: 168).

Approximately eight years after 1997 amendment, it was stated that teacher training programs should be revised in a way that it can reflect the changes made in primary education programs by Ministry of National Education, address the problems in teacher training programs, and the innovations required by European Higher Education. Therefore, the programs were revised as of 2006-2007 academic year. With this revision, the general culture courses in the programs increased and the new programs has 50 % of content knowledge, 30 % of pedagogical content knowledge and 20 % of general culture courses. With these changes, it was aimed to train teachers who can teach problem-solving and learning skills (YOK, 2007: 63-64). In the new program; School Experience-I and School Experience-II courses were combined and took place in the second term of the third year. In addition, Teaching Practice-I and Teaching Practice-II courses were introduced respectively as first year and last year courses. In the programs such as Science Education, Turkish Language Education, Primary School Mathematics Teaching, the School Experience course is placed in the first term of the fourth class and the Teaching Practice course is in the second term of the fourth class.

The last revision to the teacher training programs was introduced in 2018. This revision aimed to reorganize pedagogical content knowledge courses and increase the emphasis of such courses and introduced structured teaching practices throughout the training. The revisions also aimed to make the teacher training graduate programs compatible with the curriculum that the Ministry of National Education. For this purpose, programs have been modified to include 30-35% of pedagogical content knowledge, 15-20% of general culture, and 45-50% of content knowledge, and a core program has been established among all teacher education degree programs. Significant arrangements have been made with respect to content knowledge aspect of the programs. In this context, the "School Experience" course was cancelled because it could not be realized in a functional and effective manner and instead Teacher Practice-I and Teacher Practice-II courses were introduced (YOK, 2018: 11-17.).

All revisions and amendments aimed to increase the quality of teacher education and teacher training programs. The development of educational technologies and the differentiation of educational settings have influenced the expected competences of teachers. These regulations aim to train teachers that can keep up with current educational conditions and who are open to self-development. In this respect, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and general cultural knowledge courses in the programs are important. Especially content knowledge courses have particular importance. The findings suggest that content knowledge courses should be organized in a way that could integrate theory and practice and ensure that the student teachers' development are supported, and their competencies to organize and manage the teaching-learning process to meet their specific educational needs are developed (Senemoğlu, 2011). The Teaching Practice course, which

is closely related to the profession and in which students experience teacher-student relationships in real class environments forms the basis of the program. The careful, systematic and accurate completion of the teaching practice course is very important not only for the student teachers to pass the teaching experience but also for the development of attitudes and behaviours towards the profession. Şişman (2009) argues that there is not enough cooperation between the faculty and the school in teacher education and teaching is a profession learned in practice, and therefore the practice at schools has a very critical value. Some problems experienced in teaching practice are the lack of systematic selection of schools, the inadequacy of mentor teachers, the excessive workload of student teachers and the physical conditions of schools (Eret Orhan, 2017). In particular, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours of the practicing teachers, who are role models of the student teachers during their school days, are important in this process. Therefore, recruitment of teachers, the qualifications they possess, the duties and responsibilities in the process are vital for student teachers. The problems experienced in these issues can cause conflict between the student teachers and the teachers and the purposes of the teaching practice course may not be achieved sufficiently. Many studies (Ünver, 2003, Ünver & Eroğlu, 2003, Yayli, 2008, Gökçe & Demirhan, 2005; Aslanargun, Kılıç & Acar, 2012; Dinçer & Kapısız, 2013, 2013, Göktaş & Şad, 2014, Eret Orhan, 2017, Sezen Yüksel, 2017) show that some of the problems experienced by the student teachers during the teaching practice process are related to mentor teachers. In this study, opinions about the conflict situations experienced by student teachers were revealed. The results show that student teachers in different faculties and in different departments of education experience similar conflicts. These conflicts are related to *classroom, mentor teachers' attitudes, the process and problematic issues for the student teacher*. Within the identified conflict situations, theme of problems related to the classroom (n = 35) was the most articulated theme. The codes that emerged under this theme are lack of opportunity to teacher, absence of mentor teacher in the class and frequent intervention of mentor teacher during teaching. According to these codes, we can say that student teachers are having problems with mentors teachers in the classroom environment. For this reason, it is recommended to inform mentor teachers on what student teachers should do when they are in the class and how they should behave towards the student teachers. It is believed that student teachers and teachers will fulfil their responsibilities better when such information is given at the beginning of the semester.

Based on the findings, another conflict situation is related to the teaching practice process. The codes related to the theme are *presence of more than one student teacher in the classroom teaching in the same class throughout the year, mentor teachers' reluctance of monitoring student teachers and assessment and evaluation related problems*. According to these codes, it is important for student teachers there is only one student teacher in every class. However, it is not desirable for student teachers to be present in only one class during the implementation process. It is believed that the motivation and success of the student teachers who are in different classes together with different students may increase. For this reason, it is suggested that the teaching practice should be planned at the beginning of the semester, so that the course of the teaching practice can take place in different classes. Another problem expressed by the student teachers is the assessment. In order to make the evaluation process objective, consistent and correct, the student teacher should be observed, provided with feedback and guidance. Thus, student teachers will be able to find opportunities to improve themselves professionally. The fact that the teachers do not want student teachers in this process affects the process negatively. Mentor Teachers who want to voluntarily be mentors and willing to take this responsibility should be recruited. They should not be forced to take such a responsibility.

The least articulated themes are the mentor teacher's perception of the student teacher and the problematic issues for the student teacher. It is important that mentor teachers have positive attitudes towards the student teacher. The student teachers need a mentor teacher who will guide them during the practice and the positive attitudes of the mentor teacher towards the student teacher can positively affect the student teachers. When the causes of conflict situations are analysed, it could be seen that student teachers expressed

causes related to university tutor, the school and the teaching practice process. The most articulated theme is the process (n = 53). According to this theme, majority of student teachers expressed that the teaching practice should be longer and they think it is not enough to go to schools for practice during their final years and believe that going to school once a week will not gain them much in terms of experience. For this reason, they pointed out that teaching practice should be extended. The duration and frequency of the practice should be regulated to ensure that student teachers spend more time in real classrooms and school settings. In addition, there should be standard rules that each school should comply with during the teaching practice, and the duties and responsibilities of teachers in charge of this process should be better expressed. In this way, it is possible to avoid different regulations in the implementation process.

Another important finding is that mentor teacher, student teacher and the university tutor should collaborate during the teaching practice process. Especially the communication between the mentor teacher and the university tutor affect the student teacher. Student teachers who receive support from their university tutors solve their problems more efficiently during the teaching practice. If the student teacher has positive teaching practice experience, this positively affects his professional attitudes and skills. For this reason, ensuring school-faculty collaboration is very important.

It is important to understand the functioning and necessity of teacher training course in teacher training process and to address the problems experienced in this process. This research is limited with understanding the opinions of the student teachers. It is recommended that in the other studies related to teaching practice could look into mentor teachers' opinions and identify the problems they experience. In addition to this, studies can be conducted with branch teachers to reveal the differences in teaching practice.

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