The Teacher Candidates' Views on Essential Teaching Skills of Practicum Teachers

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ABSTRACT

All education systems need qualified teachers who have high knowledge and skills to gain them operability and character traits that are compatible with the profession. The aim of "Teaching and School Practicum" in Turkey is to employ this opportunity. While the professional compatibility of the teacher candidate students are being constituted with the Teaching and School Practicum classes, their professional development is endeavoured to be ensured. In this study, what classroom management skills and teaching strategies are, the attitudes of practicum teachers towards teacher candidates, and the contribution of school practicum to the development of teacher candidates in terms of teacher qualifications are elaborately discussed. Mixed methods have been used in the study. Although the main research question has been investigated in a quantitative fashion, phenomenology from qualitative paradigm has been used for other sub research questions. For this purpose, convenience sampling, which is a type of purposive sampling, has been used and 41 teacher candidate students, who attend to Teaching and School Practicum internship in two different high schools in European part of İstanbul, have been determined as the participants. In data collection process, first literature reviewed and expert opinion was taken to determine the classroom management skills and teaching strategies for teachers, then data related to the third and fourth sub questions has been gathered via open ended questions. When the findings were analysed, it was understood that the classroom management skills, the used teaching strategies of teacher candidate students and the practicum teachers resembled each other, but the practicum teachers have a lack of knowledge in both classroom management skills and teaching strategies. The attitudes of school administration and practicum teachers towards candidate students have been found as positive. Therefore the opinion that Teaching and School Practicum courses have contributed to their professional development has been supported.

Introduction

The school and teaching practicum exercise, also known as internship in Turkey, is as important as the faculty itself. Pre-service training starts with the teaching and school practicum courses while the teacher candidate is still in the process of education. While the professional compatibility of the teacher candidate students are being constituted with the Teaching and School Practicum courses, their professional development is ensured (Hacıömeroğlu and Şahin, 2011;Aksu and Demirtaş, 2006; Gökçe and Demirhan, 2005; Dursun and Kuzu, 2008). It is clear that the school practicums courses contribute significantly to the teacher candidates in terms of combining the theory and practice. Also, it helps them develop their qualities related to teaching, particularly general and specific field competencies that are necessitated by the profession (Görgen et. al., 2012). As teaching is a specialization profession that takes over the government's

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education and related administration duties (Kraut, 2000), it seems inevitable that a member of this profession is trained by the collaboration of both faculty and the school.

Teacher's Classroom Management Skills

Classroom is a living environment where educational activities takes place (Aydın, 2000). What should be the qualities of the teachers, who would lead this living environment in the direction of educational goals? Many studies tried to answer this question by listing the qualities a good teacher should have (Bkz. Feldman, 1976: 243; Adams, 1987; White et al., 1987:90-91; Becker and at al., 2003; Hotaman, 2012; Edwards, 1997; Lemlech, 1991). Amongst these, according to Clifford, an influential teacher should have the essential skills of field speciality, encouraging learning, awareness of student differences, planning the teaching, knowing and using teaching-learning strategies, regulating learning environment, efficient communication, and objective assessment (Hargreves, 2003; Virginia and Fallona, 2001). Classroom management skills clearly affect the success of teaching activities, as well as the quality of the education (Celep, 2002; Başar, 1999; Gündüz, 2004; Erden, 2014; Sanford and Emer, 1998). Fiddler (2002), however, indicates that there is a meaningful connection between the teachers' classroom management skills and students' academic success.

Communication skill of the teacher (verbal-nonverbal). A teacher should form a positive attitude about himself/herself and his/her students by using communication process, which is an emotion and thought exchange (Demirel, 2012; Sivez, 2010:70; Hoffman et al., 2009). Verbal or non-verbal (body language) communication, which has a vital role in implementing of in-class teaching activities, undertakes the duties of drawing students' attention, announcing the target behaviour, teaching the subject thoroughly, and giving necessary feedback along with the assessment (Hotaman, 2005). Elements of verbal communication, which are giving clear messages, using the rights channels, clarity, clearance, fluency, listening and giving feedback, and elements of non-verbal communication, which are tone of voice, mimes, body stance, hands-legs, and appearance, affect the effectiveness and the quality of the teaching process (Hotaman, 2005:364; Burden, 1995; Cipani, 2008; Duff,2008).

Planning skill of the teacher. Planning consists of forming learning experiences, determining the teaching methods and techniques, implementation of these and assessment activities in order to reach the previously set goals (Aydın, 2008; Cruickshank and et al., 1999; Burden and Byrd, 1994). Starting from the fact that every student is unique, a teacher should handle every kind of information that has been pre-planned to teach by using methods and techniques appropriate to students' level (Cangelosi, 2000:7). In an environment that is sensitive to students' individual characteristics, learning is more easy, efficient and permanent (Şimşek, 2003:35). Planning, which has a heavy place in the teaching process, is an essential skill field related to teaching (Gözütok, 2004:13).

Teacher's time management skill. Productive use of lecture time is one of the most important signs that shows the teachers' professional sufficiency and responsibility (Hotaman, 2010). Assude (2005), in his research, indicates that for everybody the time span used is the same, but some people manage it better than the others. Preparing well, being punctual, ensuring attention and motivation, moving onto class quickly, avoiding interruptions, evading questions unrelated to the subject, securing bell timing without deviating from subject and leaving the class on time would affect time management positively (Hotaman, 2010). In this aspect, time management is one of the most strategic elements of classroom management (Aydın, 2000. s.95).

Teacher's behaviour management skill. In everyplace where students are present, there will be unwanted or negative student behaviour. The teacher needs to decide to interfere, determine the timing, and decide whether interference would be verbal (Hotaman, 2010). Encouraging in-class participation, providing participation and self-expression opportunities for every student, relying on human rights, tolerating differences, and preferring democratic way of life would contribute to a positive class atmosphere, in other words, a democratic class climate. Such climate would increase the number of positive students while decreasing the number of negative ones (Hotaman, 2010; Başar, 1999: Aydın, 2000). Transactions that would not interfere with the class such as, making an eye contact, raising voice, awarding positive behaviour, and approaching should be used.

Teacher's assessment skill. Assessments can be done in order to determine students' skill, observe their improvement over time, order the students according to their success, specify the learning difficulties, define the learning level, or give a grade (Gözütok, 2004:40). How the knowledge and information that is desired to be gained to the students would be assessed, which assessment tools would be used and in which frequency are all actualised according to the decisions made in the beginning of the semester (Morrison et. al., 2004). Assessment reveals the learning deficiencies and creates time for them to be fixed (Sönmez, 2009:269: Erden, 2014:154; Cruickshank et. al., 1999).

Teacher's Knowledge of Strategy

In order to teach, one would need skills like the ability to regulate the lesson according to students' need, the ability to motivate the students, the ability to answer questions and problems from students, other than knowledge (Demirel, 2012; Senemoğlu, 2013; Tarman, 2012). That is why, it is essential for a teacher to have teaching skills (Erden, 2014; Cruickhank and et al., 1999; Minor et. al., 2002). By correctly determining the teaching strategies, the teacher should ensure student participation by using hints, feedback, corrections and reinforcements (Senemoğlu, 2013; Cruickshank et. al., 1999; Hotaman, 2002; 2010; Minor et. al., 2002).These affect of the quality of teaching service, efficiently. There are three types of strategies in educational environments; Learning by Discovering Strategy, Learning by Presentation Strategy and Learning by Researching-Examining Strategy (Demirel, 2012:151; Senemoğlu, 2013:465-477; Sönmez, 2009:110; Bilen, 1999:52-53).

Learning by discovering strategy. Bruner (1960) has developed a method for students to attain learning objectives via discussion, question-answer, and brainstorming techniques (Demirel, 2012:151; Bilen, 1999:54; Sönmez, 2009:105). Learning by discovery, encourages the student to make his own judgment based on his own activities and observations. According to Bruner, the teacher's role is to create an environment, where student can learn on his own, rather than to present them the pre-packaged information. In this strategy, the teacher never gives prepared concepts, principles and fact to the student; the students learn the concepts and principles by experimenting (Senemoğlu, 2013:469).

Learning by presentation (Receiving) strategy. This strategy, which was developed by Ausubel and can be applied in order to bring aims and gains on knowledge level to the student, can also be used with narrate method, demonstration and six thinking hats techniques (Demirel, 2012:151; Bilen, 1999:54). According to Ausubel, the student may not always know which information is important and which signs are suitable for the problem solving. For that reason, the individual can only gain concepts, principles, ideas related to any subject by receiving what is presented to them, rather than discovering. Thanks to Ausubel's pre-organisers, the student can learn better by easily seeing the relations between ideas and relating the new information to the old one (Senemoğlu, 2013:477; Bilen, 1999:54; Sönmez, 2009:105).

Researching-examining strategy. This is a modern method of learning is actualised by it, is both suitable to Pragmatic philosophy which lays at the foundation of our educational system, and is able to make the individual join all the way in the learning process (Sönmez, 2009). The methods of application, analysis, assessment and synthesis are used in teaching the objectives, and can also be strengthened by demonstration, problem solving, project methods and analogy drama, acting and dual or more study techniques (Demirel, 2012:151; Senemoğlu, 2013:477; Bilen, 1999:54; Sönmez, 2009:105). While working on a problem, the students formulates hypothesises or produce temporary solutions for the problem, collect data about the hypothesis and find solutions by assessing the data (Tok, 2007:142). With this strategy, the information that is to be given to the student, contains application and higher parts of the cognitive domain, organization and individualization parts of the affective domain, and all levels of psychomotor domain. Also, behaviours include features like using the principals, problem solving, making decisions, and making by showing (Sönmez, 2009:110).

Research Questions;

The questions asked in data gathering;

(1) What are the views of teacher candidates on the class management skills of practicum teachers?
(2) What are the views of teacher candidates on the teaching strategies used by practicum teachers?
(3) What are the views of teacher candidates on practicum teachers' attitudes towards them?

(4) What are the views of teacher candidates on School Practicum Process' contribution to their professional development?

Method

In this study, a mixed method has been used. The check-list about the first sub problem has been given to the teacher candidate students and the classroom management skills of application teachers have been recorded and digitized. For the qualitative dimension of the study phenomenology approach has been used. Phenomenology examines a person's conscious experiences in his or her world; hence, it is a daily life and a social act (Schram, 2003:71; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Different people's experiences are analysed in a parenthesis and compared in order to describe the real phenomenon (Merriam, 2013:25). The teacher candidates going to School Practicum, gain experience by watching the same practicum teacher mostly and simultaneously in the course they have had theoretical education for fourteen weeks. Determining these experiences, describing the teachers' use of teaching strategies and classroom management skills have been analysed.

Research Sample

The teacher candidate group has been determined by using the convenience sampling, which is a type of purposeful sampling. In convenience sampling, the conditions (time, money, place and responders) are important (Merriam, 2013:78). 41 students who fit this criteria and goes to internship in two different high schools (Beşiktaş Anatolian High School=21 and İbrahim Turhan Anatolian High School=20) in European part of İstanbul have been taken as the sample of the study. Since generalisation is not the main focus in qualitative studies (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013), there is no exact number in the literature about the number of people to take as samples. It is accepted that sufficient number of people have been reached when the gathered data seems theoretically sufficient (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Table 1. Demographical data of the study group

Schools	Mathematics		Chemistry		Physics		Biology		Total	
	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Practice Teacher	Student
1th School	6	3	5	3	5	2	4	2	20	10
2nd School	6	4	6	3	5	2	4	2	21	11
Total	12	7	11	6	10	4	8	4	41	21

Research Instrument and Procedure

Firstly, the literature has been reviewed in order to prepare the lists of class management skills of Practicum Teachers and Teaching Strategy/methods and Techniques. Then, the lists have taken their final version after consultation with three different experts who work in the related field. Two open-ended questions have been used in order to determine *the attitudes of school administration/practicum teachers towards Teacher Candidates* which forms the third sub problem, and *the contribution of Teaching/School Practicum Implementation to Teacher Candidates' professional development* which forms the fourth sub problem.

Data Analysis

After combining the observation results, their compatibility (reliability) has been reviewed and the parts of the open-ended question the students should bring to the fore, have been determined. The classroom management skills have been subjected to triple rating (good, mediocre, insufficient), and "unobserved" inscription has been placed on unobserved variables. By observing the practicum teacher during the period, they have been asked to mark the strategy, method and techniques that are on the list of teaching strategies, and they have been also asked to record strategies, methods and techniques that the practicum teachers use but that are not on the list.

Results

In this section, findings regarding every sub-problem has been combined and interpreted.

Table 2. Teacher candidate students' views regarding the classroom management skills of the practicum teachers (Good=G   Mediocre=M   Insufficient=I)

CLASS MANAGEMENT SKILLS	OBSERVED CLASS MANAGEMENT SKILLS			
Communication Skills	**G=f**	**M=f**	**I=f**	**Observation Stats**
Sympathetic/Smiling entrance to class	04	07	17*	
Adjusting Voice Volume	03	07	13	
Using right channels for the message	00	00	00	Unobserved
Giving clear messages	00	00	00	Unobserved
Getting feedback	00	00	00	Unobserved
Avoiding Monotony	05	03	11	
Efficient use of mimes	07	05	07	
Body Stance	04	05	06	
Appearance	11	03	07	
Planning and Execution Skills	**G=f**	**M=f**	**I=f**	**Observation Stats**
Determining Targets/Goals	00	00	00	Unobserved
Determining Content	04	06	16**	
Organising Teaching/Learning Lived	00	00	00	Unobserved
Actualising Activities	07	11	03	
Ensuring participation, hint, feedback, corrections	06	09	07	
Summarising and Assessment	00	00	00	Unobserved
Time Management Skills	**G=f**	**M=f**	**I=f**	**Observation Stats**
Entering Class on Time	03	06	13***	
Running Routines	00	00	00	Unobserved
Ensuring Attention and Motivation	07	07	06	
Reducing Uncertainties	01	05	05	
Reducing Interruptions	02	05	11****	
Avoiding Off-subject Questions	03	03	13*****	
Adjusting Bell Time	03	04	02	
Leaving the Class on Time	11	07	05******	
Behaviour Management Skills	**G=f**	**M=f**	**I=f**	**Observation Stats**
Making eye contact	14	07	07*******	
Using the tone of voice	03	07	09	
Ignoring Behaviour	00	00	00	Unobserved
Using Body Language	00	00	00	Unobserved
Coming near	00	00	00	Unobserved
Awarding Positive Behaviour	00	00	00	Unobserved
Verbal Warning	03	05	21********	
Assessment	**G=f**	**M=f**	**I=f**	**Observation Stats**
Routine and quick homework checking/gathering	05	04	06	
Utilizing Preparedness	00	00	00	Unobserved
Recording Performance	05	03	03	
Assessing the process	00	02	11*********	
Assessing at the end of the class	00	00	00	Unobserved

Note: *, **, ***, ****, *****, ****** have been explained in the interpretation of the findings.

When table 2 is analysed, it is seen that in communication skills area most teachers enter the class with a sullen face (see: *), and in appearance area even though teachers exhibit positive communication skills, their "using right channels for message, giving clear messages and getting feedback" skills remain unobserved. Their communication skills of avoiding monotony, efficient use of mimes, and body stance seem mediocre. When looking at practicum teachers' planning-execution skills, it can be seen that teacher candidates state most teachers' remaining loyal to the text book hence not using any other material (see: **). In this area, it is seen that "determining targets/goals, organising teaching/learning lives, and summarising/assessment" skills are not observed. It is understood that the skills determining the quality of the education such as actualising activities, hint-feedback-correction, and ensuring students' participation are observed as mediocre. When analysing the time management skill area, it is seen that practicum teachers are insufficient in "coming to the class on time" (see: ***), whereas they are sufficient in "leaving the class on time". It has been stated that most of the practicum teachers who have been observed as insufficient in reducing interruptions and avoiding off-subject questions skill areas (see: **** and *****), answer questions in

a way that increases interruptions and encourages off-subject questions. Practicum teachers' "making eye contact" in every behavioural process of behaviour management sub-area of class management skills, seems to happen on a positive/good level (see: ******). It has been stated that tone of voice just like verbal warning skill area (see: *******) has been used as warning the student, yelling at the student and even insulting them. Use of body language and awarding body language, which is a part of this skill area, has never been observed. In assessment skill area, it has been seen that assessing the process skill is not used (see: ********), moreover utilising preparedness and assessing at the end of the class are not observed. In this skill area, it is understood that routine and quick homework checking/gathering skill has been observed as mediocre.

Table 3. What are views of teacher candidates on teaching strategies used by practicum teachers?

Suggested Teaching Strategies, Methods and Techniq.			Observed Teaching Strategies, Methods and Techniques		
Learning Strategy	Level of Knowledge	Methods and Techniques	Learning Strategies	Level of Knowledge	Methods and Techniques
Learning by Learning by Discovery	Comprehension, Applic., Analyses, Assessment, Synthesis	Question-Answer Brain Storming Cooperative Learning	Learning by Discovery has not been observed	Knowledge, Comprehension Practicum	Telling, quest. answer, problem solving
Learning by Presentat.	Knowledge	Telling, Showing Brain Storming, Six hats, Cooperative, Learning	This strategy is used as plain telling. Meaningful learning and organisers have not been observed.	Knowledge, comprehension	Telling, Question-answer
Learning by Researching- Examining	Practicum Analyses Assessment Synthesis	Dramatization, Problem solving, Project, Analogy Drama,Acting, Dual or group studies	Researching-Examining strategy is given as projects. Laboratory or workshop studies have not been observed	Knowledge, Comprehension, Practicum	Telling, Project, Problem solving, Dual or group studies (for projects)

The observations of teacher candidates regarding practicum teachers' use of strategies, methods and techniques have been given in Table 3. It can be said that information levels of practicum teachers regarding teaching strategies, are insufficient. Even though all of the practicum teachers are from physical sciences field (Math., Chem., Phys., and Biol.), it is understood that they do not use researching-examining learning strategy often in class. Constructivist approach is a program and learning approach that puts student at the centre and, enables them to reach the solution by trial and error, and claims that the information should be constructed by the student. However, it is understood that teaching strategy, method and techniques knowledge level of the program and particularly the teachers is not suitable for this. According to students' statements, it can be said that teachers confuse learning by presentation method and narration method. Learning by presentation teaching is a strategy that has the ability to ensure meaningful learning due to organisers. In this case, it can be used for comprehension levelled learning, which can enforce a knowledgeable and meaningful learning experience regardless of the discipline area. The fact that the use for laboratories in high school level mathematic, chemistry, physics and biology courses are intensive, and narration and question-answer methods as teaching strategies are often used instead of making student reach for the information themselves, naturally hinder student from going above comprehension level.

Table 4. What are the views of teacher candidates regarding the attitudes of practicum teachers and school administrations towards them?

		(+/-)	f	%	Perception
1.	School administration was kind to me.	(+)	14	34.14	(+)
2.	School administration was not kind to me.	(-)	01	02.43	(-)
3.	School administration helped me.	(+)	20	48.78	(+)
4.	School administration didn't help me.	(-)	04	09.75	(-)
5.	Practicum teacher was kind to me.	(+)	21	51.21	(+)
6.	Practicum teacher was not kind to me.	(-)	01	02.43	(-)
7.	Practicum teacher was supportive.	(+)	28	68.29	(+)
8.	Practicum teacher was not supportive.	(-)	00	00.00	(-)
9.	Practicum teacher was a good guide to me.	(+)	12	29.26	(+)
10.	Practicum teacher was not a good guide to me	(-)	00	00.00	(-)

Table 4 shows that a student in out of forty one who attend the school practicum, and fourteen of them indicate that school administration was polite to them. One of them indicated that school administration was not polite to them, four of them indicated that administration did not help them and two of them did not give an opinion. When the views of candidate students regarding the attitudes of practicum teachers towards them are examined, it is understood that twenty one of the teacher candidates state that the practicum teachers were polite, twenty eight of them state that practicum teachers were supportive, twelve of them state that practicum teachers were guided well, and one of the candidate teachers indicates that the practicum teachers were not polite.

Table 5. What are the views of teaching candidates on School Practicum Process' contribution to their professional development?

Contribution of School Practicum according to Teacher Candidates	f
1. I learned that a teacher should be disciplined	17
2. I learned that it is a hard profession.	15
3. I learned to plan	
4. I learned that one should go to class prepared.	13
5. I learned that it is important to connect the subject to daily life.	
6. I learned that using time efficiently is important.	12
7. I learned to communicative learning with the students.	
8. I learned how to fill the class book.	
9. I learned that student-teacher relationship affects the quality of class.	11
10. I learned that student-teacher relationship.	
11. I learned the importance of field expertise.	
12. I learned the importance of class management.	
13. I learned the importance of loving the profession.	
14. I learned how to use the methods and techniques.	9
15. I learned official correspondence.	
16. I gathered information about the regulations.	
17. I learned student behaviour is different for every class.	
18. I learned how a teacher spend their day at school.	
19. I learned that it is important to love the profession.	
20. I learned tone of voice should be used well.	
21. I learned what to watch out while on duty.	7
22. I learned that a teacher has many duties.	
23. I learned to use school tools.	
24. I learned how importance appearance and words are.	
25. I learned the teachers' responsibilities at school.	
26. I learned how to use the board.	
27. I learned how public schools worked.	
28. I learned how to prepare an exam.	5
29. I learned how to do an introduction, development and ending to the class.	
30. I learned the importance of body language in communication.	
31. I learned how to grade a student.	
32. I learned how to make an introduction to class.	4
33. I learned the invisible background of being a teacher.	
34. I learned when and how to fill the notebooks.	3
35. I learned school administration-teacher relationship.	

In table 5, teacher candidate students' answers to the contribution of school practicum to their professional development presented after being categorised and analysed. When the table is examined, it is seen that almost all of the students have gained outcomes that are important and valuable to their professional development. It is stated that participating in the process caused them to face the reality and taught them the relationship between administration and teacher is not taught in the faculty, official correspondence, filling the class book, regulations, how a day passes at the school, the numerous duties of the teacher, the workings of a public school, preparing an exam, how to grade at the end of the semester and the invisible back side of the teaching profession. Particularly, classroom management process has been emphasised by laying weight on the fact that a teacher should be disciplined. It is also seen that a considerable amount of people have concluded that teaching profession is hard. Also, it is understood that they have gained strong experiences regarding classroom management, from their adscriptions to planning, entering class prepared, connecting the subject to daily life, using time efficiently, having healthy communication with the students and field expertise.

Conclusion and Discussion

In a teacher's professional success, his or her classroom management skills and sufficiency of teaching strategy-method-techniques come to the forefront (Arı and Saban, 2000; Brophy and Good, 1986; Nelson, 2002). "The one who knows, teaches" understanding is no longer applicable for today's teacher. All teacher candidate students coming to the faculties, including the teachers, should be trained as the age requires and the teacher candidate students should take every opportunity to improve themselves. This study shows that, there are inadequacies in the current classroom management and teaching strategy-method-techniques that teachers use. While the faculties are doing their share, education ministries should contribute to the qualified teachers with new regulations and programs. According to study findings, teachers need supplementary information on communication, planning-execution, time management, behaviour management and assessment skill areas. The inadequacies in a teacher's communication skills will keep them from reaching out to their students. Planning skill is not just a conscious culturing process that distributes the information and skill predetermined to be given to the students, to years, months, weeks and days, but it such planning would also affect the efficient use of time skill, because the rational use of time can only be done through good planning. Ensuring the float of personal and educational lives in a plan and organization, should be the most important goal of a teacher. Changing particularly negative behaviours that form or show up during this process requires a strategy. It can be said that for teachers creating educational and personal behaviour changing prescriptions directed to gain in this area and executing them according to behaviour and student, constitute an essential part of professional expertise. Apart from exhibiting assessment skills and grading the students, the teacher can determine learning inefficiencies and incorrect learnings. In this skill area, it is more suitable for today's education and assessment concepts to use alternate process measures and assessment techniques.

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