

# Teachers' Evaluation of Their Pre-Service Teacher Training

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate pre-service teacher training of a faculty of education based on graduates' responses. The teachers who were the graduates of this institution and currently have been practicing teaching in schools. The study used an instrument entitled as the Pre-Service Preparation of Teachers to Teaching. The instrument was developed by Darling-Hammond (2006). The sample of this study included 228 teachers who were the graduates of Faculty of Education in Marmara Region and were teaching in elementary and secondary schools around Turkey. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis was carried out for validity of the instrument. Five factors were emerged. The results of CFA indicate a good fit. Cronbach alpha and split-half reliability procedures were used to establish reliability. The subscales were found to be reliable. These factors were highly and positively correlated with each other. The teacher responses were compared on these five factors based on gender, experience, teaching level, location of the school, number of students in classroom and school, socio-economic status of schools, and whether teachers had a master's degree or not. t-tests and one-way ANOVAs conducted to see whether there were differences among groups. Teachers indicated that the pre-service training they had received in the faculty of education prepared relatively well on supporting different learning styles. Secondly, they rated equally program and teaching and teaching and learning competencies. They rated professional development the third while they rated their preparation as the lowest on creating a productive classroom. Recommendations were made based on these findings.

## **Key Words**

Teacher Training, Pre-Service Teacher Training, Teaching Practice, Faculty of Education, and Teachers.

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The purpose of this study is to evaluate teacher preparation at a faculty of education in Turkey based on the views of the graduates who have been currently practicing teachers around the country. Whether teacher training makes a difference in the professional life of teachers is important. If it makes any difference, how this difference occurs has been investigated by scholars (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002; Porter, Youngs & Odden, 2001). These investigations led to reforms in teacher training programs around the world (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, Carnegie Task Force on the Future of Teaching in USA, OFSTED in England) and in Turkey. In 1997, the National Teacher Training Committee (NTTC) had been created and the National Education Development Project was put into effect in 1998, with the collaboration between the Ministry of National Education (MNE) and the Council of Higher Education (CHE) in Turkey. Studies carried out on the teacher education standards and accreditation and reports were published along with these developments (Şimşek, & Yıldırım, 2001; Yükseköğretim Kurulu [YÖK], 2007).

Teacher effectiveness to increase student achievement levels is a major issue in educational research. If the differences among teachers in terms of effectiveness are large, then determining effective teachers and the factors that lead them to be effective are crucial for both educational reforms and basic educational research. If no difference exists among teachers, then other factors for effectiveness may become important (Nye, Konstantinoupolous, & Hedges, 2004).

The evaluation of teacher effectiveness is not usually based on data. Evaluating teacher training programs based on output is accepted as an important topic that may lead to improvements in teacher training. Certain countries (i.e., US) require evaluations of teacher training programs and whether they contribute to student learning based on measurable data. Higher Education Law in US provides a legal basis for evaluating performances of faculty of education graduates in the accreditation processes of teacher training institutions (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

The number of studies that focus on evaluating teacher effectiveness has been on the rise around the world. Some studies use methods such as structured response evaluations and evaluation centers. These methods and strategies are relatively new. Others use standardized multiple-choice questionnaires, classroom observations, structured interviews, and they are more traditional approaches to evaluate the complex teaching performance (Youngs, Porter & Odden, 2003).

The evaluation of teaching effectiveness for policy making purposes is not an easy task to carry out. The nature of education-teaching-learning and the high number of variables that influence the educational process pose difficulties to assess the usefulness of these evaluations. On the other hand, it is difficult to develop valid and reliable instruments to measure student performance levels in the beginning and in the end of courses is comparatively an arduous task. Finally, it is difficult to determine how and to what extent teacher training institutions contribute to teacher knowledge and skills pose difficulties (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

In order to measure outputs, teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and characteristics should be defined since they all contribute to the success of evaluations in teacher training and determining effectiveness. Secondly, the measurement instruments which will be used in measuring the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and characteristics are crucial. Recently, there are three types of outputs in teacher training: First, teacher candidate performance data; second, standardized teacher test scores; and third, the effects of teachers' teaching on student-learning (Cochran-Smith, 2001).

Research results indicate that there is a high positive correlation between teachers' feeling of preparedness and the likelihood of becoming effective in teaching. For example, graduates of certain teacher training institutes believe that they contribute student learning more than their peers, home environment, and other factors. Although research results do not provide concrete evidence, there is a close relationship between teacher preparation to teaching and teachers' belief towards their effectiveness and the teaching environment (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

### **Teacher Competencies in Turkey**

Individual performance and efficiency are important factors that contribute and directly related to institutional goals. Teacher performance evaluation is different than performance evaluations in other fields. The reason for this difference is the lack of or delayed feedback structure in teacher training. In order to evaluate, a task should be defined clearly and completely. Even if it is defined clearly, it is not sufficient. Moreover, there are no clear standards for evaluating teachers' task, teaching load, and responsibilities. As a result, the supervision system and evaluation is not quite objective, functional, and reliable in Turkey (Koçak, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, the restructuring of faculties of education and studies on accreditation were relatively a new phenomenon in Turkey. A consensus has not been built yet around these concepts. Although the Ministry of National Education, the Council of Higher Education, and universities and faculties of education in Turkey carry out certain studies, these studies have not yet produced concrete results for teacher training and faculties of education yet.

The Council of Higher Education and the Ministry of National Education had begun collaborating on the National Educational Development Project over a decade ago. This project characterized teacher competencies in four areas and they were similar to Rothstein's (1990) findings (Karakelle, 2005). These competencies were defined as follows:

*Subject Knowledge:* Teachers knowledge in their field and curriculum.

*Teaching-Learning Competencies:* Planning, preparations for the courses, using instructional methods, communication skills, classroom management, developing healthy relationships with students, recording student development and evaluations of student learning.

*Student Counseling Services:* Teachers' contribution towards developing students as healthy and well-balanced persons in the student personality development services.

*Personal and Professional Characteristics:* Effective time-management, establishing professional relationships with other teachers, and demand for professional development.

Some of these factors presented were also needed to establish an effective relationship with teachers (Atay, 2003). The success of any educational system depends on teacher competencies (Evertson, Emmer, & Murray, 2003; Hoy, & Miskel, 2007). In order to understand teacher effectiveness, variables such as the teacher, student, program, teaching, learning, and classroom are needed to be taken into account (Anderson, 2004). Teacher training process may be related to indirect control over educational system (Üstüner, 2004). The task of teacher training institutions is to train qualified teachers and this is the basic training which also happens to be the most important one (Alkan, & Kurt, 1998; Erişen, & Çeliköz, 2003; Şeker, Deniz, & Görden, 2005). Changes in societies lead changes in teacher training systems as well. Turkey has also introduced changes in her teacher training systems (Kutluca, Birgin, & Çatlıoğlu, 2007; Sabancı, & Şahin, 2006). However, studies that focus

on pre-service teacher training after graduation and in the field are limited (Baki, & Çakıroğlu, 2006; Bukova, Elçi, & Alkan, 2006).

The 1998 restructuring of faculties of education brought some innovative approaches. Some of these innovations were: More structured teacher training, more emphasis on pedagogical knowledge over knowledge of subject matter, master's level training for secondary teachers, instructional design and material development, classroom management, emphasis on school experience, aiming at national competencies, and accreditation (Şimşek, & Yıldırım, 2001). However, some of these new approaches were discontinued later. Some of the reasons for returning back to the old system in pre-service teacher training included criticisms of the top-down approach in the development and implementation stages of the Council of Higher Education. The alleged use of coercive approaches by the Council of Higher Education during the implementation of the restructuring process was reflected in the findings of studies (Aypay, & Kalaycı, 2008; Grossman, Onkol, & Sands, 2006).

### **Method**

The Pre-Service Preparation of Teachers to Training includes 30 items and was developed by Darling-Hammond (2006). Responses were on a five-point Likert type scale. The questions began with a statement: "How well do you think your teacher preparation program prepared you to ..." and then the items followed. The instrument was adapted to Turkish. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted and the five dimensions existed as in the original instrument. These factors were:

Factor1: Instructional Design and Teaching,

Factor2: Supporting Various Learning Styles,

Factor3: Evaluation of Teaching and Learning to Provide Guidance,

Factor4: Creating a Productive Classroom,

Factor5: Professional Development.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) shows how the variable structure based on data fits in the theory. Researcher is able to decide based on CFA. CFA provides answers regarding what type of flaws or where there are problems, what needs to be done in order to overcome these flaws (Brown, 2006; Büyüköztürk, 2005; Kalafat, Özbaşı, & Dilek, 2008; Şimşek, 2007). Some fit statistics are used to determine the model

fit. These indices are: Chi-square, Comparative Fit Index, Normed Fit Index, Relative Fit Index, Incremental Fit Index, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation. The goodness-of-fit-statistics were confirmed based on the following values: Chi-square was significant ( $\chi^2 = 847.2$ ,  $N=228$ ,  $df=340$ ,  $p=0.00$ ), and the values of other fit indices were: RMSEA=0.081, NFI=0.83, CFI=0.89, IFI=0.89, RFI=0.79. They all indicated a good fit.

Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients for reliability were calculated. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the overall instrument was found to be .96. The coefficients for the sub-dimensions of the instrument were: Factor1 (0.92), Factor2 (0.89), Factor3 (0.81), Factor4 (0.87), Factor5 (0.75). Based on the results it was concluded that this is a reliable instrument.

In addition to the percentages, frequencies, means, standard deviations, t-tests, One-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation coefficients were used in this study. Correlation coefficients indicate that all the sub-dimensions of the instrument were highly correlated with each other. Correlation coefficients ranged from the lowest .72 to the highest .91. All correlations were positive.

The sample of the study includes 228 teachers who had graduated from the Faculty of Education in Marmara Region between 1986 and 2008. In the sample, 70 % were females and 30 % consisted of males. Fifty percent of teachers in the sample graduated between 2006 and 2007. Only about 8 % were 2008 graduates. A little over 50 % were graduated in 2000 and later.

## Results

In this section, the results of the study will be presented in the following order: Teacher responses were compared based on gender, school-level, class-size, socio-economic status of the school, school-size, experience, and whether teachers have a master's degrees or not. Moreover, teacher responses on how useful their teacher training program has been in their teaching included in this section.

When comparisons were made based on sub-dimensions, no significant difference was found in terms of gender. When the means of sub-dimensions were compared, teachers thought that they had been prepared in the faculty of education to support various learning styles (factor2).

The second high ranking sub-dimensions were program design and teaching (factor1) and evaluation of teaching and learning to provide guidance (factor3). While teachers ranked their professional development (factor5) into the third place in the hierarchy. The factor that teachers rated themselves the lowest prepared was establishing a productive classroom environment (factor4). Based on these findings, it could be argued that this particular faculty of education should improve their pre-service teacher education in terms of factor4 and factor5 more than the others.

Teacher responses on their pre-service preparation do not differ on the location that teachers worked. The size of teachers' work location, whether in large cities, medium size towns, or villages, does not lead to a statistically significant difference regarding teacher views on their preparations. Teacher responses do not also differ on the school level that teachers were currently working. Whether teachers work in grades 1-5, 6-8 or secondary level did not result in any significant difference in their views.

However, teacher responses differ on class size [ $F_{(2-190)} = 3.652, p < 0.05$ ]. When post-hoc comparisons were conducted by using LSD test, teachers who teach in classrooms with 30 or less students indicated that they were able to create productive classrooms when compared to teachers who teach in classrooms with 31-40 students.

Socio-economic status also led to a significant difference on teacher views with respect to program design and teaching sub-dimension [ $F_{(2-189)} = 3.299, p < 0.05$ ]. The difference was found between teachers who work on low SES and high SES schools. Nye and colleagues (2004) also found that teachers make relatively higher difference in low SES schools.

Teacher views did not differ significantly depending on whether teachers hold master's degree or not. In contrast, differences in experience led to a significant difference on the factor4 [ $F_{(4-200)} = 2.45, p < 0.05$ ]. The LSD results indicated that the teachers who graduated after 2006 had higher mean scores than the teachers who had graduated between 2001 and 2005.

### **Conclusion**

This study with a sample of teachers who had graduated from the same institution aimed at determining how well they were prepared in teaching. This study established discriminant validity and reliability of the Pre-Service Preparation of Teachers to Training based on the gradua-

tes of a faculty of education in Turkey. The instrument provided results in Turkey similar to the findings in the US. However, the sample of the current study is medium and not representative of the teacher population in Turkey to make a generalization for teachers in Turkey.

Teachers in this sample indicated that the faculty might have prepared them better in classroom management and professional development. These results were consistent with the Darling-Hammond's (2006) findings. In the US, teachers found teacher education sufficient in terms of planning and organizing subjects, using teaching and evaluation methods.

Teacher views were similar with respect to the place of work and the grade teachers work in this study. Abbott-Chapman, Hughes and Williamson (2001) also found that teacher views did not differ on the level they work. So, the finding of this study was consistent with those of Abbott-Chapman and colleagues.

Teachers' views differed based on class sizes in the current study. This finding is consistent with the other research in classroom management and school size studies (Aypay, 2003). Teachers were able to establish order easily in smaller classrooms. This finding indicates that the faculty of education under consideration does not prepare students for crowded classrooms. This is not consistent with the current reality of class sizes in the educational system in Turkey. Abbott-Chapman et al. (2001) and Nye and colleagues (2004) found that classroom size makes a difference on teaching.

On the other hand, school size did not reflect a change on teacher views on teachers' pre-service teacher preparation. Nye and colleagues (2004) claim that teacher effects could be more important than the school effects. This might be an indication of class effects being more important than school effects.

Nye and colleagues (2004) found that teacher training is less important than teacher experience. Teacher views on further training did not differ in this study. However, Nye and colleagues indicated that this was one of the factors that influence student achievement. The finding of this study was that teacher views differed based on experience. As a result, this finding was consistent with Nye and colleagues' findings.

While the majority of teachers indicated that the faculty of education had prepared them in their undergraduate program in teaching on medium to high levels, only one-third of the teachers indicated that they

were prepared rarely or not prepared at all. This finding should be taken into account by the faculties of education in general and the specifically by the faculty of education at the Faculty of Education in Marmara Region. Improvements in pre-service teacher training in this institution might be needed.

The graduates of this specific faculty of education rated their preparation at the lowest level on establishing a productive classroom as well as their preparation for professional development. These areas might need a special attention by the faculty of education under consideration. Especially, classroom management skills required for an effective performance in classrooms with a large number of students might help teachers in the field when they go into teaching. Additional non-elective and elective courses on these areas might be useful while improvements on the existing courses could be helpful to the student teachers who were currently enrolled.

The sample of this study included teachers who graduated from the same faculty of education. This is a limitation because it is not a representative sample of teacher education institution graduates across Turkey. More studies are needed on a larger scale and with more representative samples. New studies might take such variables as teacher satisfaction, in-service trainings they had received after graduation, and other relevant variables into account in teaching. Both quantitative and qualitative studies may further advance our knowledge on the effectiveness of teacher training.

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