

Evaluation of the Research in the Scope of the Proficiency of Teachers in terms of Subject, Aim, Method, and Results

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Abstract

The aim of this study was the evaluation of the researches that were conducted in our country on proficiency of the teachers in terms of subject, aim, method and results, and was to state the necessary points to be taken into consideration in the choice of methods. 21 researches in the scope of proficiency of teachers were examined for this purpose. The data were qualitatively collected in the research and the content analysis method was adopted among the data analyses methods. According to the data acquired from the research, it was determined that the studies were generally conducted on prospective teachers, quantitative methods were applied, and the data were collected by surveys. The researches were generally on determining the professional proficiency perceptions and in the research results, there were mostly statements about the professional proficiency levels of the participants. This situation displays the fact that in most of the studies the adopted method is not in accordance with the aim of the study and that there are inconsistencies from the points of aim and results.

Key Words

Teacher Training, Teacher Proficiency, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research.

Teaching profession is one of the important aspects that affect the society. The fact that teaching profession guides the evolution of the society through education and training means that it also possesses a new vision. The teachers that meet the requirements of the students in the direction of providing them with social expectations and agreeable behavior are classified as “good” and the teachers which are insufficient in this direction may be classified as “bad”. However, evaluating teachers in this context is not going to be healthy. Thus, the Teaching profession is a subject on which the standards have

to be determined and taken seriously. In many countries today, there some criteria determined under the heading “Teacher Proficiencies” or “standards” and these criteria are tried to being used in training the teachers. However, teaching profession is not a profession of which the limits and rules may be determined with fine lines. Even though there are some universal rules, it is not possible to determine standards that may be used for all the countries and different societies. (Bellm, 2008 cited in Özer & İsmail, 2008). On the other hand, in our country, as a result of the studies to determine the Teacher Proficiencies started in 2002 and ended in 2008 in the scope of “Basic Education Support Project”, the general proficiencies of the Teaching profession consists of 6 main (personal and professional values, professional development, knowing the student, the process of learning and teaching, monitoring and evaluation of learning-development, relations of school-family-society) and 31 sub-proficiencies. Performance indicators for each one of the sub proficiencies have been developed and a total of 233

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performance indicators has been determined. (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2008).

When the fields of sub-proficiency were examined, it was stated that the general proficiencies of the teaching profession in Turkey coincided with the teacher proficiencies determined at the international areas in scope (Türk Eğitim Derneği [TED], 2009).

However, it is considered to be very important that besides these, it is crucial to determine how much of these standards the teachers and candidate teachers possess and that the feedbacks are provided. It is stated that the method in providing these feedbacks is a tool that takes aim and the goals are to be taken as a basis in the determination of the method.

The qualitative or quantitative approach adopted in the research process, may sometimes cause conflict at the point of data collection methods. At the discussions on the methods of research, it is argued that social sciences also share similar goals with physics chemistry and biology like developing rules regardless of time and space, explanation of events with functional models with the relations dimension, especially, the explanation of the relations of statistical and possible terms and events, conducting controlled experiment in the method of research (Bergin & Fisch, 1948). However, it is stated that the aim of social sciences is not developing physical rules or organic functions working with natural objects and organic processes. Even beyond this, social sciences are trying to explain the reasons that form civilization and culture (Christians & Carey, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This situation is subject to discussions at the point of the usage of qualitative and quantitative research methods within social sciences. The initial point of the discussions is emerging from the paradigms that the researches adopt. Modernist approach is after the rational, connected and generalizable explanations of the social world with the aim of reaching stable universal information. Postmodern approach on the other hand argues that there is no such thing as observable objective reality. There are only subjective points of view. Thus, at the scientific research which is conducted based on post-modern approach which is different from the other, the goal is not to obtain generalizable data. Instead, the points of view of the critical actors related to the events that are the subject of the research are tried to be understood (Baş & Akturan, 2008; Berg, 2001; Bryman, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kuş, 2007; Punch, 2005; Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

Even though the question of whether to use quantitative or qualitative methods should be used is dis-

cussed at the researches, it is stated that this choice might change according to the aim of the research. The statement "exactly" in the question "What exactly do we want to find?" is the thing that is important. The design and method interaction begin to develop in accordance with what is focused on by the researcher. Therefore, some questions might be answered using quantitative methods and some with qualitative ones. Even though the relation between the question and the method is important, it should be taken into consideration that the direction should be from the question to the method or there might be the danger to start with the method and adapting the research questions according to the method. In short, this would be like putting the "method carriage" before the "content horse" (Punch, 2005).

The utilization of quantitative and qualitative methods also has significance in the scope of educational sciences and is subject to serious discussions. Due to the reason that educational researches generate practical information that formalizes application, the problems of this field may be solved by alteration and shaping (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Educational sciences field possesses some specialties due to the fact that the subject is the individual. For example, it is rather easy to collect information on the characteristics of the teacher or the student. In order to determine the success of the students in a school, an idea might be obtained from the final test grades of the students. But, in the phase of determining the factors that affect the success status of the students, the situation could be a bit more complex. Many determinants which are generally subjective like the individual characteristics of the student, beliefs, habits, past experiences, socio-economical level will elaborate the process. However, as the subject is human being, it might be said that quantitative methods are insufficient due to the fact that one human is different from the other because in a quantitative research design, the probable factors affecting the student's success are preliminarily stated by the researcher and they are tried to determine to what extent the students possess these characteristics. Still, as a human is in question; the determination of the reasons of an event within defined limits does not seem to be very healthy (Carr & Kemmis; Ekiz, 2004; Moles, 1990; Verma & Mallick, 1999). Whereas, in qualitative research the goal is the determination of a certain content deeply and in detail (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005, p. 57).

the educational science field rather than evaluating the scientific value of the publications. When the fields of study of the writers that took place in the research (the doctorate and higher education of the authors were taken into consideration) were taken into consideration, 24 authors were seen to have studies on the subjects of Education Programs and Training fields. The other authors were making studies in the fields of Psychological Consultancy and Guidance, Computers and Training Technologies, Education Management and auditing, Surveying and Evaluation, Science Education and Class Teaching fields. 14 authors were assistant professors at the date of the published study, 10 authors were still doctorate students and 8 authors were still post graduate students. One author had the title Ass. Professor and one was entitled as Prof. Dr.

Data Analyses

Content analysis approach was adopted in evaluating the obtained data. Content analysis aims to provide to be free of subjective factors in understanding and interpreting a discourse. These tools and techniques put together under the name of content analyses might primarily be defined as a controlled interpretation effort and a “reading” tool based on deductively (Bilgin, 2006).

A specialist examination was conducted in order to provide the validity and security of the study. In this context, related to the process of qualitative research, two academicians (one Assistant Prof and one Associate Professor) were consulted. Again, an academician entitled as Prof. Dr. was consulted to have his views on Teacher Proficiencies and the process of research was carried out. In the reporting of the findings, from the models that were named by Moles (1990) as analogy method was employed. The studies related to the models were examined from the aspects of subject, study group, method, data collection techniques and then results and charts were developed.

Results

General Characteristics of the Studies Considered within the Scope of the Research

A great many of the studies conducted in the scope of proficiencies are made with teachers or prospective teachers. Even though the studies are related to proficiencies on various fields, studies that have been conducted without being attached to a single field, aiming to determine professional proficiencies

in general and studies based on the professional proficiencies determined by the Ministry of Education are greater in numbers. Therefore, the goal of the most of the studies on the subject field of proficiencies may generally be expressed as determining the “General Professional Proficiencies”. We may say that when the studies are examined in the method context, quantitative method has intensively been adopted in the studies. It has been observed that most of these quantitative studies are mostly in scanning model. However, there are studies that the quantitative method is utilized and there is one study in which both qualitative and quantitative methods are used.

In the researches, surveys are generally used as data collection tools. These surveys are usually surveys developed by the researchers and they aim to determine the perception level of the study group related to professional proficiency. Besides, interview and monitoring forms are used in some of the researches, though few. When the results of the researches are examined, it has been observed that a great amount of positive results have been obtained. In the examined studies, one “negative” result related to solely monitoring and evaluation and one “partially proficient” result related to class management, the results of all the other studies are expressed as “positive” or “proficient”.

Still the important point here is the consistency of the goal and the results determined by the researchers in the conducted studies and that if the method related to determining the results followed by the researcher is appropriate. One of the primary goals of the educational researchers is to monitor, record, and institutionalize the process of education and training. These tasks include a reflective process that require the evaluation of the present moment and take decisions related to future, making use of the students past experience according to Abbott (1995 as cited in Mortimore, 2000). In cases where the goal of the research is to determine the proficiencies, the research has to be conducted at the moment of application and in real media. According to Ekiz (2004); the expansive definition of the environment the persons subject to research live in, the places where the events and happenings occur are being conducted by qualitative research process. While qualitative research works on the meanings people possess, it develops an understanding around the main concepts and use every lead to evaluate them. An explanation is as meaningful as the extent to which we can grasp the environment the goods are within.

narrower scope, and directed towards specific sub-proficiency fields may yield healthier results.

- In the researches related to proficiencies, it is supposed that studies focusing on the professional proficiencies of the teachers and studies towards detecting the professional perceptions of the candidate teachers will be more effective.
- It is considered that in the researches, instead of utilizing surveys in which the limits are previously determined, it would be more appropriate to use data collection tools like monitoring forms.

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