

Examining the Training Process of a New Teacher Educator in the Field of the Education of the Hearing Impaired

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Abstract

Training of beginning teacher educators has become a popular topic in the literature. This study aimed to investigate the training procedures of a new teacher educator who would be working in the division of the hearing impaired. The study was designed as action research and a new teacher educator, an experienced teacher educator and an academic experienced in the areas of hearing impairments and qualitative research participated in the study. The data collection techniques included researcher diary, documents, interviews, evaluation forms, audio and video tape recordings. The analyses revealed that the process took six phases to complete which were "observation", "evaluation under the control of the experienced teacher educator", "independent evaluation", "re-evaluation under the control of the experienced teacher educator", "semi-independent evaluation" and "full independent evaluation". It was seen that throughout the process, the roles and responsibilities of the teacher educators changed and that these changes were unique to each stage. Another finding was that the procedures were very beneficial for the researcher who was both a teacher educator and a classroom teacher.

Key Words

Teacher Preparation, Teacher Educator, New Teacher Educators, New Teacher Educator Training Process, Action Research.

The teaching practice studies included in pre-service teacher training programs are important elements for training qualified teachers (Snoek & Zogla, 2009). Recently, the background, experience and qualifications of teacher educators (TE) responsible for teaching practice have been considered to be of great importance for the success of the training of teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006; Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996; Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner, 2002; Korthagen, Loughran, & Lunenberg, 2005; Liebhaber, 2000; Murray, Swennen, & Shagrir, 2008; Swennen & VanDer Klink, 2009; Timmer-

man, 2009; Zeichner, 2005). It is said that teacher educators should be primarily experienced in classroom teaching (Murray & Male, 2005) and they should be competent in the fields of education sciences, communication and research (Boyd, Harris, & Murray, 2007; Bullough, 2005; Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar, & Placier, 1997; Harrison & McKeon, 2008). Considering hearing impaired students, the reason for these competencies can be further understood. This is because the hearing deficiencies of hearing impaired students negatively affect their communicative skills, which leads to many diversified requirements in social, cognitive and academic fields. These requirements can only be met by the teachers who have the required knowledge and experience, who have been trained by competent teacher educators (Christensen & Luckner, 1995; Easterbrooks, 1999; Lartz & Litchfield, 2006; Schirmer, 2008). Consequently, it is strongly emphasized that new teacher educators (NTE) should participated in a good training process in order to acquire professional competence, NTE seem

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(Swennen & VanDer Klink, 2009; Ziechner, 2005). Despite this emphasis, the studies show that there are some problems regarding the training of NTEs (Daane, 2000; Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996; Murray, 2005; Rodgers & Keil, 2007; Van Velzen, Klink, Swennen, & Yaffe, 2008; Yusko, 2004). These studies also show that NTEs are not aware of their roles and responsibilities in the practical studies and they do not have competence in guiding prospective teachers since they have not gone through a training process. The opinions, problems and teaching perceptions of prospective teachers regarding teaching practice in pre-service teacher training in every part of the educational system in Turkey have been discussed (Birgin, Çatlioğlu, Kutluca, & Aydın, 2009; Çiçek & İnce, 2005; Dedeoğlu, Durali & Kış, 2004; Eraslan, 2009; Ergenekon, Özen & Batu, 2008; Gökçe & Demirhan, 2005; Köroğlu, Başer & Yavuz, 2000; Paker, 2005; Şişman & Acat, 2003; Ulusoy, 2009). However, only the teaching qualifications of TEs (Şen & Erişen, 2002), their cooperation with the practice schools during the process of teaching practice (Ünver, 2003), their roles and responsibilities (Demirkol, 2004) have been focused on. Therefore, point to the fact that the training of TEs is not sufficient. A system has been implemented for the training of TEs who are going to work in the teacher-training program Department of Hearing Impaired Education, Faculty of Education, Anadolu University. For several reasons such as the long-term NTE training process, TEs retiring after completing their terms of office, inability to adequately meet the needs of the increasing number of prospective teachers, there has been an increased demand for NTEs in the Department of Hearing Impaired Teaching in recent years. The author has been included in this process due to the future need for TEs. After the author graduated from Anadolu University in 1997 from the same department, he was in charge of practical studies of teaching in different universities and fields; however, he received no specific training for this work during that time. Moreover, after graduating from the department in 1997, since he was not formally employed as a classroom teacher, the training process as a TE started with his development in classroom teaching at the end of 2008.

The present study aimed to analyze the NTE training process, in the Department of the Hearing Impaired Education. Within this department, it was expected that the definition and popularization of the model processes that were implemented for the training of TEs to work in every field of education could be ensured and the quality of teacher train-

ing programs could be improved. In this process, answers to the following questions would be sought: (1) What are the phases of the NTE training process? (2) What are the characteristics of the phases of the NTE training process? (3) What kind of benefits do the phases of the NTE training process have for NTE (4) What are the transitional criteria from one phase to another in the NTE training process?

Method

Pattern

In line with the objective of the present study, the TE training process was configured as an *action research* in order to explain the experiences of NTEs and the qualifications developed through these experiences, to realize and to analyze the process in a reflective and systematic way (Johnson, 2002; Mertler, 2006; Somekh, 2006).

Participants

The author of the article NTE working at the Department of Hearing Impaired Education, Anadolu University; an experienced assistant teacher (EAT) and an academic member took part in the study in order to strengthen the trustworthiness of the process.

The Place of the Study and Studies of Teaching Practice

The present study was carried out at the Hearing Impaired Children's Education and Research Center (ICEM) where the Department of the Hearing Impaired Education has been implemented teaching practice since 1982. The teaching practice was basically carried out during the 7th and 8th semesters. In the department, the prospective teachers were divided into two groups and each group was involved in teaching practice on two days a week (Monday-Tuesday/Wednesday- Thursday) (Birgin, 2006).

Data Collection Techniques

In the study process, the primary data collection sources were a researcher's diary, document analysis, meetings, evaluation forms and video tape records (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach & Richardson, 2005; Johnson, 2002). For all the experiences and reflections, a 320 page diary was kept in total. The documents such as course plans and the model studies of prospective teachers were analyzed. In the process, the interviews were held these comprised;

Evaluation of the Phase and Transition Criteria to the third phase: In the validity meeting held on 31.01.2009, it was decided that the NTE should fulfill his studies of teaching practice independently in order to test and evaluate himself foreseeing that he would reach a certain level based on the knowledge, skills and being a school teacher as a TE.

Third Phase: Independent Evaluation

The third phase was executed during 8 April and 30 April and a total of 12 one-to-one studies was carried out by the prospective teachers and 13 group language lessons were observed. The NTE recorded 5 one-to-one studies he carried out in his own class and 3 group language lessons in which he was a teacher. The characteristics of the phase and the role and responsibilities of the TEs were an independent evaluation, classroom practice, reflection on the classroom practice, and feedback to NTE.

Benefits of the Independent Evaluation Phase to the New Teacher Educator: Upon revising the knowledge he gained within the framework of the characteristics of the independent evaluation phase, the NTE had the opportunity to make progress and to determine the subjects he had difficulty in and also to apply the knowledge and skill he gained independently. The NTE could plan his advanced practice by undertaking this practice in his class, reflecting on the feedback he received.

Evaluation of the Phase and Transition Criteria to the Fourth Phase: In the validity meeting held on 01.05.2009, a practice of the NTE which took place with a group language lesson was monitored and assessed. The NTE talked about the concerns he had about determining and assessing the points where he should provide feedback and an evaluation score. The benefits of the NTE had in the phase were also shared and it was decided that the NTE should repeat the teaching practice observed by the ETE in order to eliminate the concerns of the NTE.

Fourth Phase: Evaluation under the Control of the Experienced Teacher Educator

The third phase was completed in the 2008-2009 academic year from 05 May and 21 May and a total of 13 one-to-one practice sessions was carried out by the prospective teachers and 20 group language lessons were observed. The NTE recorded 8 one-to-one studies he carried out and 3 group language lessons in which he was a teacher. The characteristics of the phase and the role and responsibilities of

the TEs were the re-checked evaluation, classroom practice, reflection on the classroom practice and feedback to the NTE.

Benefits of the Evaluation Phase to the NTE under the Control of ETE Again: The NTE questioned the findings he obtained in this phase and focusing on the concerns he had, tried to create solutions with the support of the ETE. The NTE did not have any problems in seeing the points that he should be aware of in the monitoring of the prospective teacher and felt more independent in providing feedback and assessing the teacher with the support of the ETE. The NTE made progress in preparing and applying the course materials in compliance with the lesson plans and reflecting on his teaching.

Evaluation of the Phase and Transition Criteria to the Fifth Phase: During the process, in the validity meeting held on 09.05.2009 the abovementioned benefits were deemed helpful. In this phase, the ETE was interviewed and it was reported that the NTE internalized the knowledge and experience he had gained during the process of becoming more independent and he had made progress in his classroom teaching. Moreover, the NTE talked about the problems he felt he had before regarding his concerns. Therefore, it was decided that both an independent and a controlled phase should be applied in order to increase his self-confidence.

Fifth Phase: Semi-Independent Evaluation Phase

In this phase independent observations were undertaken on; 70 one-to-one studies and 20 group language lessons were carried out by prospective teachers in the 2009-2010 academic year and 63 one-to-one studies and 29 group language lessons were carried out under the guidance of the ETE. The NTE recorded 28 one-to-one studies he carried out and 6 group language lessons. The characteristics of the phase and the role and responsibilities of the TEs were revision of the process, semi-independent evaluation, classroom practice, reflection on the classroom practice, and feedback to the NTE.

Benefits of the Semi-Independent Evaluation Phase to the NTE: The NTE reviewed all the information he received regarding all the phases. The NTE had the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills he obtained during the process in a controlled and at the same time in an independent manner. In addition, carrying out more effective practice and reflections in his teaching, he was able to improve his teaching skills through the continuing feedback from the ETE.

as a classroom teacher, and transfer the skills he had as a classroom teacher to the supervision of teaching practice. This provided a rich bilateral development experience. In the literature, it is pointed out that being a model for prospective teachers in their teaching practice and deciding quickly on the feedback is an issue, and that this requires sufficient competence especially in the field of classroom teaching (Berry, 2009; Boyd et al., 2007; Morberg & Eischmidt, 2009; Tanner & Davies, 2010). If considered as a whole, it is observed that the NTE has always been trained in collaboration with experienced colleagues. The most important feature of this process is that the phases take the performance level of the NTE into consideration and that his needs are determined by observing the positive aspects of his teaching and his development during the process. All the studies carried out are clear indicators of how individual-oriented the process is in that the existing performance of the NTE is taken into account and the skills he has gained are always seen as criteria. In the literature, which supports this process, it is indicated that the NTEs should be supported by their ETEs collaborate with them, be guided and provided with feedback by them, during their training process (Barkham, 2005; Harrison & McKoen, 2008; Houston, Ross, Robinson & Malcom, 2010; Murray, 2008; Murray & Male, 2005; Tanner & Davies, 2010).

Finally, particular stress should be given to the importance in the process of the training of the reflections the NTE made in relation to the supervision of teaching practice and classroom practice NTE. During the validity meetings and individual meetings the NTE was asked the question "what could you have done to make it better? The NTE asked himself this question while making reflections for every practice he undertook. Thus, it can be said that what the NTE knows or does not know, the characteristics that he has to improve and whether he is aware of them or not are unearthed. In summary, by asking himself that questions, the NTE gained the skill of evaluating another teachers teaching practice and at the same, he developed his own self-evaluation skill which enables him to make progress and enrich his skills. In literature, in terms of regarding the training process as being basically realized reflectively, in this study the NTE making reflections on his own education-development process is of great importance in the discussions about how the NTE's can gain the required competence (Dinkelman et al., 2006; Guilfoyle et al., 1995; Harford & MacRuaic, 2008; Martinez, 2008; Tanner & Davies, 2010). Goodell (2006) explained

the reason for this by stating that the skill of reflection presents the trainees with the opportunity to be their own internal supervisors and mentors. On the other hand, it is pointed out in literature that the importance of reflection in literature for the TE and prospective teachers can develop their skills on their own (Harford & MacRuaic, 2008).

This means after the training process is completed and when the NTE becomes independent, he will always sustain his development with the reflection skills he has gained professionally. As can be seen, the training process of NTE is a very complex and tiring process for both the NTE and ETE. The reader may ask this question at this point: "Surely the ETE could have directly taught the NTE the competence that NTE he needed?". In answering this question, it is considered beneficial to see the results and the interaction between the ETE and NTE from a perspective of the trainer and trainee. For this reason, it can be analyzed in the process within the framework of Vygotsky's Constructivism Theory. According to this, the trainees learn about things around them by internalizing them and they need to scaffold them based on the characteristics of their individual learning processes. Vygotsky stressed that the trainer could create an effective learning process by entering the individual's zone of proximal and thus determining the learner's personal characteristics and experiences. According to Vygotsky, this training process means that the educator promotes the knowledge of the learner by guiding and supporting him and being a model for him. In other words, this process can be summarized as providing a strong support at the beginning and then gradually giving less support until the learner becomes independent in order to ensure complete learning (Golan & Fransson, 2009; McKenzie, 1999; Olson & Platt, 2000; Raymond, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, the training process of the NTE was planned considering his individual performance level, and the ETE guided, directed and provided him with suggestions and feedback during this process. This situation gradually enabled the NTE to attain the skills with which he could supervise trainee teacher's teaching practice and classroom teaching independently. This characteristic should be seen as the strong aspects of the NTE training process which is carried out in the Department of Hearing Impaired Education. On the other hand, the NTE was facing real teaching situations during the training process and was always on the job. This provided rich experiences for effective learning. Furthermore, it is also important to comment on the existence of a very important balance

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