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 & Ismail, 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 discussed 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 & Malikic, 1999). Whereas, in qualitative research the goal is the determination of a certain content deeply and in detail (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005, p. 57).
The Aim of the Research

The aim of this study was to express the points to be attended to in the choice of method in studies related to the teacher proficiencies by evaluating the researches conducted in our country on the subject of teacher proficiencies through their goals, methods, and results. In line with this goal, the studies conducted between the years 2004-2009 in the scope of “Teacher Proficiencies” are tried to picture generally and then, these studies are attempted to be evaluated through their goals, methods, and results.

The Significance of the Research

Thousands of teacher candidates are being graduated from our institutes that educate teachers and take their places in the education-training system. The determinations of the proficiencies of the teachers who are already on duty are especially in question lately. Minister of Education Ömer DINÇER said in his statement to a newspaper in 16th August, 2011; “... With this, the teacher starts his duty and goes on with the same information for 30 years. We, as the Ministry, forget about them following the first assignment. We are going to produce a more effective and active system in which we evaluate the proficiencies of our teachers, determine the shortcomings and solve them” (Güçlü, 2011). So, we think that the research method which will be adopted in the studies in order to determine the proficiencies is important to be able to provide healthier feedbacks to the system.

As the educational management academicians state that the positivist approach is ruling in Educational Science field in the study of Örüçü (2009), they have also stated that education is not exactly similar to positive sciences and has to be named in the application of social sciences category. In a lot of researches conducted in Turkey in the field of Educational Sciences, it has been expressed that generally, a quantitative method is adapted and data are collected through surveys (Balci, 1990; Balci & Apaydın, 2007; Güz & Köle, 2009; Okutan & Ekşi, 2007). It is observed that generally similar methods are adopted and similar subjects are continuously being repeated. In the study of Karadağ (2009) in which he examined 211 doctorate theses in the Educational Sciences field, he has stated that the subjects were usually on “attitude” and “success”. This situation shows that instead of using new and original themes, the educational sciences researchers in Turkey prefer the repetition of a previously conducted research with similar methods on a different universe and sampling (Balci, 1993 cited in Karadağ, 2009). Therefore, it is thought that in order to generate a solution to the problem, the discussion on the subjects of research and the adopted methods in the researches of the field of educational sciences are important.

Method

Design of the Research

Qualitative research approach has been adopted in the Research. Qualitative research is an approach which is sensitive to the social context in which it is generated, based on flexible data collection techniques and the understanding of the context deeply (Mason, 1996). Research has been realized by adopting case studies from the models of qualitative research. Case model study is a strategy which aims to understand a social event and researches the events in the media in which it is present (Bloor & Wood, 2006). It may be said that the study is approached in the instrumental case study type which is one of the kinds of case study types. Instrumental Case study is the examination of a case in order to produce results, clarify a situation or to redefine a hypothesis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Data Collection Process

The data given in the research were obtained by document examination method. Document examination involves the analyses of the written materials which include information on the event or events that are aimed to be researched (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Patton, 2002). In this context, 21 papers on the subject of Teacher Proficiencies were examined. The papers that were examined for the research were the articles that were in the national and international refereed journals published in Turkey between the years 2004-2009 on the subject of Teacher Proficiencies. The subject of Teacher Proficiencies was in effect in the year 2000 within the scope of Support to Basic Education, the Project was commenced in 2002, studies of determining the Proficiency fields were conducted in the year 2004, was in effect in 2006 and the studies were terminated by the end of 2008 (MEB, 2008). Therefore, the studies published on the subject between the years 2004 – 2009 were employed. The journals or names of the authors were not referred to due to ethical concerns. Because, the goal of this study was to be included in the discussions of method issue with an example in the studies that would be conducted in
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 proficienci-
In this context the meaning can be determined by the concept (media) and not any statistical indicators (Christians & Carey, 1989).

**Evaluation of the Studies Examined within the Scope of the Research by Subject, Goal, Method and Results**

It has been observed that most of the studies concerning determining teaching profession proficiencies are aimed to determine the “Perceptions of Professional Proficiencies”. In most of the studies, to determine the perceptions of proficiency, quantitative methods and surveys have been used. Also, in studies that aim to determine the level of possession of proficiency, quantitative method and surveys have been used. At the point where the result of the research is to be expressed, there are usually statements towards the “levels of possession of proficiency” and fewer statements for “levels of perception related to proficiency”. In the light of the data obtained from both findings, it has been stated that they mostly have professional proficiencies. The subjects of the researches are usually prospective teachers and it is tried to determine the professional proficiency of the candidates, quantitative research design is adopted and surveys are used as data collection tools. Also, generally, perception of professional proficiency levels are tried to be determined, quantitative research methods are adopted and surveys are used as data collection tools. There are also statements related to the levels of possession of perception of professional proficiency.

**Discussion**

The main conflict that the results obtained from the research reveal; is that even though the goal in the studies is to determine the professional proficiencies of the teachers and prospective teachers, the evaluations are made by relating to the comments of the participants (teacher or prospective teachers). As far as methods are concerned, even though there are no disadvantages in determining the teachers' perception of proficiency or their general inclinations through quantitative methods or survey applications, quantitative methods or surveys alone are thought to be ineffective at the job of determining the proficiency they possess.

Berger (1963); states that in the researches, people should not be treated like puppets on a string or convicts, instead, they should be perceived as living actors on a stage continuously improvising (cited in Christians & Carey, 1989). Because humans live by making interpretations. We are born into an intelligible an interpreted world, and we struggle to use these interpretations creatively for making sense of our lives and the lives of those around us. The task of social science, the basic task of qualitative studies, is to study these interpretations so that we may better understand the meanings the people use to guide their activities (Christians & Carey, 1989). Therefore, it is believed that for the purpose of the expressions related to the possession of professional proficiency containing healthier information, the study group should be monitored in real environment as a part of the process (Shermann & Webb, 2005). Thus, we think that the possessed professional proficiency levels may not be determined sufficiently by surveys, based on the self-perception of the individuals. The studies have usually been conducted related to the determination of the professional proficiencies as a whole. Even though the scope of the professional proficiencies is very wide, the fact that it includes more than one concept, each being the subject of a different line of specialty will cause limitations at this point. The assessment tools (mostly surveys utilized in the researches are seen to be usually designed by the researchers. In the field that contains certain standards as professional proficiencies, the extent of differentiation of the scales is considered to be another limitation.

Researchers are generally made towards the candidate teachers. It might be considered important to call the candidate teachers to the center, give feedbacks to the system and taking precautions but the thought that professional skills will only be apparent while they are performed should be questioned at this point. On the other hand, in the researches, mostly the goal is determined to be the determination of the perception of the professional proficiency and surveys have been used as data collection tools. However, at the conclusions, generally there are statements related to proficiency levels and it has been stated that the professional proficiencies were “good”. Therefore, this situation has caused the formation of inconsistencies regarding goal and results.

The following suggestions for the studies on teaching profession proficiencies to be conducted are made in accordance with the results of the research:

- It is assumed that instead of researches towards all the fields of proficiency, research processes of
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.

References /Kaynakça


