

Qualifications of an Ideal Teacher according to Social Studies Preservice Teachers*

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Abstract

In this study, the question of what kind of qualifications an ideal social studies teacher has tried to be investigated. For this purpose, freshman social studies preservice teachers' perceptions about the concept of "ideal teacher" were explored. This study was designed with document analysis, one of the methods of qualitative approach. In this case, in total 234 social studies preservice teachers (111 female and 123 male), studying in Karadeniz Technical University Fatih Faculty of Education, were employed. The data were collected on 27 and 28th of October 2010 in the early weeks of 2010-2011 academic years. Before collecting data, researchers informed participants about the aim of study. Then participants started to write compositions individually to describe the qualifications of the ideal teacher by concerning their teachers affecting mostly them in the past. Besides, it was remembered that these compositions will preserve for 4 years, then they will rewrite compositions like this, and finally these compositions will compare and it will try to be examined pedagogical courses effect their perceptions about the ideal teacher. Collected data were analyzed through content analysis. In this case, participants' perceptions were presented with frequencies, percentages and direct citations from documents. The results of the study showed that an ideal teacher have some qualifications such as being good communication with students, being successful in education-teaching activities and subject-matters, being compassionate, well-behaved and tolerant.

Key Words

Social Studies Preservice Teacher, Ideal Teacher, Teacher Qualifications, Value.

First of all, education must train individuals who can internalize national and moral values, besides psychologically healthy and moral responsibility. Value is defined as integrative facts adopting by people or society, standards believing to be a good criteria for the sake of society and individuals, judgments regarding consciousness, emotion and excitements, and motives having in awareness of persons and driving behaviors of persons (Özgüven, 1999). Nowadays it is claimed that there are values crisis all over the world. The transition process from traditional society to modern one, it is noteworthy that the transmitter role of the family

regarding value education has started to decrease, and individuals' values have been formed by other factors like friend groups, internet, television, and etc. In particular, committing violence, consuming alcohol and drug, being disrespectful to parents and teachers has become big problems for Turkish society, and this situation revealed the requirements of effective value education (Hökelekli, 2010).

Teachers prepare students to real life. Besides, they apply curricula, communicate with students, teach and evaluate the process of global values. So teachers can be defined as leading actors of value education (Gençtürk & Sarpkaya, 2009) and their individual qualifications can be ahead of professional ones. In this case, in their study, Getzels and Jackson (1963) explain teacher's personality is the most important variable and some other studies supporting this data examine teacher's personal qualifications have effects on forming of students' personal qualifications (cited in Küçükahmet, 2006).

Turkey after accepting of being a teacher as a profession with 1973 National Education Basic Law, it was examined that what the basic requirements/qualifi-

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cations of this profession are. In this context, rulers explained three dimensions of it: Pedagogy, subject-matter knowledge, and general culture (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 1982). Then, by 2012 some studies on determining teacher qualifications have been done in 1996, 2002, and 2008 by Ministry of National Education (MEB, 2002, 2008). However in these studies qualifications related to teaching profession became more important than values and there are no any criteria about value education. Furthermore related literature revealed that value education, which is difficult to evaluate, is showed in personal qualifications of teachers. This situation explains in sources like this: First of all, teachers should be full of love and they like their professions and students. The fundamental of this love should base on respects to their individual characteristics, professions and students. Teachers are hardworking students and they always try to improve themselves. Teachers dispose to teach and train students. They have expectation of higher success from their students, and they encourage their students to learn by emphasizing their positive behaviors rather than negative ones. They hardly believe that they can teach and students can learn. They show patience and tolerance to create a democratic classroom atmosphere. They entertain their students by making jokes in accordance with their developmental characteristics. They are altruistic and helpful about in school or out of school necessities of their students. As models, they are decent, polite and cheerful in their personal relations and they pay attention clothing. They try to protect and keep our cultural values alive. They have social sensitivities and they are modern and idealistic (Ataünal, 2003; Bilgen, 1988; Cruickshank, Bainer, & Metcalf, 1995 cited in Tatar, 2004; Demirel, 1999; Eğitim Araştırma Geliştirme Dairesi [MEB-EARGED], 1999; Erden, 2005).

As can be understood from these explanations teachers have some individual qualifications besides pedagogical, subject-matter and general culture. Therefore, it is mentioned that an educator must have good morals and personality otherwise he can't be able to form a positive mass psychology in the classroom, and he can't be able to teach sanctity of life right, responsibility, tolerance, values (Demirel, 1999; Özkan, 2004; Sayar & Aysun, 2011). So, in this study, it is tried to be determined that how social studies preservice teachers, met with lots of different teacher models in their background and chose a career in teaching profession, think about the concept of 'an ideal teacher'.

Aim

The aim of this study is to examine social studies preservice teachers' perceptions about the quali-

fications of an ideal teacher. In this case following questions were tried to be answered:

1. What are the qualifications of an ideal teacher according to social studies preservice teachers?
2. What kind of values should an ideal teacher have according to social studies preservice teachers?

Method

In this study, qualitative approach was used to describe all aspects of social studies preservice teachers' perceptions, experiences about the qualifications of an ideal teacher. Because one of the most aims of qualitative approach is examining deeply perceptions and experiences of participants. For this reason, researcher talk with participants, he observes them, he is very flexible to them, and their responds aren't limited questions previously prepared by researcher. Besides, researcher focus on participants' special language, perceptions, concepts, and he tries to figure out the meaning of these elements for participants (Ekiz, 2009). In this study, it was tried to provide examining of social studies preservice teachers' perceptions about the qualifications of an ideal teacher without any limitations like questions, directions and etc. In this case, document analysis, one of the methods of qualitative approach was used in the study, and researchers demanded from social studies preservice teachers to write an authentic composition on qualifications of an ideal teacher.

Participants

In total, 234 social studies preservice teachers participated in the study. 111 of them were female, 123 of them were male. Researchers didn't need to use any sampling strategies. Because all of the freshmen, studying in Karadeniz Technical University, Fatih Faculty of Education, Social Studies Teacher Education program, were included in the study due to the fact that they hadn't taken any pedagogy courses by that time.

Data Source and Collecting Procedure

The data were collected on 27th and 28th of October 2010, admitted as the early weeks of 2010-2011 academic years. Before collecting data, researchers informed participants about the nature and aim of the study. Then they asked participants to think about their teachers affected them mostly and write an authentic composition on the qualifications an ideal teacher. In this case, researchers didn't ask students any directive and limited questions like what kind of

qualifications/values ideal teachers have, due to the fact that they didn't have any idea about participants' perceptions and experiences with the concepts of value and value education. So, researchers preferred more comprehensive question than limited one. At the last stage of collecting, researchers reminded participants that their compositions will be protected for four years, then they will rewrite compositions on the same issue and these compositions will compare to figure out the effects of pedagogy courses on their perceptions about the qualifications of an ideal teacher.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed through content analysis, enabling deeper and functional analysis, reaching concepts and relations for interpreting data, and presenting meaningful data to readers. In the analyzing procedure, at first, documents collected from participants were put in order. Then, categories and themes about qualifications of teaching profession in related literature were examined. In this case, related literature showed that most of the studies stress three important categories (pedagogy, subject-matter knowledge, and general culture) besides personal characteristics, including values, about the qualifications of teaching profession. In this case, researchers analyzed documents and determined the categories individually. Then they compared their categories and agreed on four of them. These categories and their definitions are explained based on related literature as follows (Ataünal, 2003; Bilgen, 1988; Celep, 2007; Cruickshank, Bainer, & Metcalf, 1995 cited in Tatar, 2004; Demirel, 1999; Erden, 2005; MEB, 1982; MEB-EARGED, 1999; Tekışık, 2003):

- a) Teaching Skills and Qualifications (Pedagogy): In this category, knowledge, skills and values related to teaching/pedagogy were handled.
- b) Subject-Matter Knowledge: In this category, knowledge, skills and values related to subject area were included.
- c) General Culture Knowledge: In this category, knowledge, skills and values related to social life and institutions were handled.
- d) Personal Characteristics: In this category, knowledge, skills and values related to personality were included.

The analyzed data were presented the themes by using frequency and percentages on tables. In addition to this, themes and their meanings were explained and they were supported with direct citations from documents. Each of participants was identified by his/her pseudonym (i.e. ÖA 1 means ÖA 1=Social Studies Preservice Teacher 1).

Results

Findings based on content analysis are presented toward categories as follows:

In the first category of findings social studies preservice teachers' perceptions about teaching skills and qualifications of an ideal teacher are introduced. As can be seen in Table 1, participants claim that an ideal teacher should give importance to communication (33.06%), they should make quality education (33.06%), they should discipline students (16.26%), they should be a good leader (7.59%), they should be a good model (3.53%), they should like teaching (2.98%), and they should be a good guide (2.98%).

In the second category of findings, social studies preservice teachers' perceptions about subject-matter knowledge of an ideal teacher are presented. As shown in Table 2, all of the participants (100%) explain that an ideal teacher should know his/her subject-matter. According to participants, the most important factor to be a good teacher is having subject-matter knowledge. ÖA85 says "An ideal teacher should be an expert of his subject-matter and he should answer all the questions that he might be faced, and he shouldn't leave any questions unanswered. Also ÖA113 mentions "An ideal teacher should well-know the information that he teach to students and he shouldn't teach false information. He should train himself to gain his students the right knowledge and experience."

In the third category of findings, social studies preservice teachers' perceptions about general culture knowledge are handled. As can be seen in Table 3, all of the participants (100%) mention that an ideal teacher should know general culture and they should follow the world agenda. ÖA221 says "An ideal teacher should closely follow the political, social, scientific, and technological development occurring all over the world and he should try to gain knowledge about every issue." Also ÖA34 explains "Teachers always want their students to be hardworking, honest, eager and enthusiastic, because students always have an insatiable desire for knowledge. To meet these needs teachers should try to learn information in every subject. They should increase their cultural knowledge by reading or involving social activities."

In the fourth category of findings, social studies preservice teachers' perceptions about personal characteristics are shown. Participants claim that an ideal teacher should be full of love (33.60%), well-behaved (14.09%), tolerant and perceptive (13.64%), respectful (10.98%), idealist (10.29%), equitable (5.37%), patient (4.48%), helpful (5.37%), responsible (3.35%), genial (2.68%), modern and hardworking (2.46%), active and so-

cial (1.56%), smooth-out appearance (0.44%) and regular (0.44%).

In the study, social studies preservice teachers' perceptions about what kind of values an ideal teacher are explained as well. As displayed in Table 5, participants assert that an ideal teacher should have some values such as being full of love (28.58%), well-behaved (15.52%), tolerant (15.02%), respectful (12.07%), idealist (11.33%), equitable (5.92%), helpful (4.68%), responsible (3.69%), hardworking (2.70%), and smooth-out appearance (0.49%).

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study showed that social studies preservice teachers have different opinions about the qualifications of an ideal teacher. From the findings it is understood that teaching skills and qualifications, subject-matter knowledge, general culture knowledge and personal characteristics are important factors to become an ideal teacher. In the context of teaching skills and qualifications, participants emphasize giving importance to communication. Actually, this situation overlapped with Demirel's (1999) argument in which he stresses teacher's good communication has positive effects on classroom climate and motivations of students.

In accordance with the findings it has appeared that an ideal teacher should know his/her subject matter very well. As Yiğit, Alev, Özmen, Altun and Akyıldız (2009) emphasize that when students trust their teacher's subject-matter knowledge, they can easily admit what he/she says. Based on this result it is possible to say that preservice teachers are aware of the importance of subject-matter knowledge.

In the light of data it is seen that first of all, an ideal teacher should be full of love, well-behaved, tolerant and perceptive, respectful and idealist. Also he/she should be equitable, patient, helpful, responsible, genial, modern and hardworking, active and social, smooth-out appearance and regular. This result is in substantial agreement with Akbulut's (2004) detection that successful teachers are tolerant, equitable, genial and full of love to their students.

From findings it is examined that an ideal teacher should know and apply some values such as being full of love, well-behaved, tolerant, respectful, idealist, equitable, helpful, responsible, hardworking, and smooth-out appearance. In this case preservice teachers' perceptions and values of primary school social studies curricula are overlapped (Akbaş, 2004; MEB, 2005a, 2005b). So it is fair to say that without taking any courses social studies preservice teachers know the importance of values and its place in the qualifications of an ideal teacher.

Based on these results, the studies about developing awareness of preservice teachers on teaching profession should be increased. Besides, value education should take place in teacher education programs as an independent compulsory or elective course. Also, value education and its importance in teacher qualifications should be more emphasized in current courses like special teaching methods.

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