The Evaluation of Teacher Trainees' Program of Turkey*

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The aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of students about implementation of the certified program. In order to collect data for this study, a questionnaire which consisted of eight open-ended questions, was developed and administered to 140 students in the teacher trainee program. They were asked to write their opinions related to each question. The open-ended format of the questionnaire calls for a free response in the participants' own words. It also provides for a greater depth of response.

Keywords: initial teacher training program, the Turkish education system, teacher certificate program

Introduction

Since Turkish education system is centralized, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (The Ministry of Education Board [MEB], 1973, as cited in Acts 1739) appointed all novice teachers according to their scores in the nationwide state examination conducted by state for state employee. Teachers in Turkey are recruited from two sources: (a) from education faculty graduates; and (b) from different faculty graduates, such as faculty of literature, art, science, theology, etc. to teacher particularly at high schools. Except for education faculty graduation that takes a five year study in pedagogical preparation courses and content knowledge. While other faculty graduates must have a certification of initial teacher training program (called pedagogical formation) that takes one year. Effectiveness of this program is sometimes discussed. The programs implemented in education faculties both in Turkey and Europe is similar. However, initial teacher training certificate program in Turkey differ from the program in European countries (Kipp & Rothmann, 2012). In some years, Turkish government does not activate certificate program, but recruits novice teachers to teach at high schools exclusively from education faculty graduates. In this case, other faculty graduates make a pressure on government and organize lobby activities on policy makers to activate the initial teacher training program. Since unemployment rate among university graduates is very high in Turkey, several university graduates want to have a job from government as a teacher, because socio-economic status of teachers in Turkey is relatively reasonable in terms of job security and income. In fact, Turkish government sometimes takes a decision in favor of education faculty graduates or other faculty graduates. Still in Turkey, initial teacher training for high schools does not have a standard. Initial teacher training programs are influenced by current political policies. Education faculty and other faculties try to turn the advantage for themselves from the MEB and the Council of Higher Education (YOK).

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Literature Review

Although students' achievements are results of effectiveness of school, curriculum, teacher, and their home environment, a teacher can have a powerful effect on student's achievement regardless of the quality of school and home environment. According to the review of research results, student's academic achievement is influenced by three general factors: (a) school-level factors; (b) teacher-level factors; and (c) student-level factors (Marzano, 2003). In spite of school-level factors and student-level factors, teacher level factors are primarily under the control of individual teachers. Teacher level factors consist of instructional strategies, classroom management, and classroom curriculum design. In fact, teacher level factors are related to the quality of teacher performance in the instructional settings.

The most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher. The results of several studies indicate that teachers are the most influential factor on student achievement. Effective teachers do make an extraordinary and lasting impact on the lives of student. Moreover, as a result of meta-analysis, it was found that effective teachers have a profound influence on student achievement and ineffective teachers do not (Marzano, 2003). Effective teachers pay attention to students' social and emotional growth as well as offer high quality academic and cognitive support (Scherer, 2012). Sanders and Horn (1994) found that a student with a weak teacher for three straight years, on average scores 50% points was behind a similar student within a strong teacher for those years. The best teachers know how to respond to students' choices and to integrate their interests into a curriculum with high standards. Effective teacher facilitates differentiated instruction and leads to improved test scores (Caine & Caine, 2006).

Qualities of teacher effectiveness are resulted of his/her preparation, personality, and practice. It is recognized by all educators that a teacher's pedagogical background and professional preparation are prerequisites of effective teaching. According to the related research review, a teacher's formal pedagogical preparation has been shown to have a positive effect on student achievement. On the other hand, uncertified teachers and out-of-field teachers achieve far less with students than teachers with proper in-field certification (Stronge, 2002). In fact, there is no doubt that an effective teacher is an important factor on students' academic achievement. However, a key question is how to find, recruit, and prepare qualified teachers.

A major educational debate today concerns how to recruit and prepare teachers all over the world. In other words, policy makers in education attempt to figure out a high quality initial teacher training programs. Similarly, one of the main controversial issues in Turkey is who is going to be teacher at the high school level. Alternative programs for recruiting and preparing teacher have been devised, discussed, and applied. However, these programs have been implemented not because of results of research comparing the effectiveness of teachers from different types of preparation backgrounds, but the program has been implemented because of current government policies.

There are several program evaluation approaches. Participant-oriented evaluation approach is one of them. It seeks to use evaluation data for practical problem solving. In the participant-oriented evaluation approaches, evaluators work to portray the multiple needs, values, and perspectives of program stakeholders to be able to make judgments about the value or worth of the program being evaluated (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). The aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of students about implementation of the certificate program. In order to investigate the research question, the following eight open-ended questions were used:

1. What did you think of initial teacher training program before beginning the program?

2. Could you explain if your opinion about the program changed during this program?
3. Could you explain if you have any difficulties that you have faced in this program?
4. Are you satisfied to find what you have expected from the program?
5. What do you think about the necessity of this program in terms of effective teacher?
6. What do you think about the content of courses?
7. What do you think of the quality of instruction?
8. What do you think of the effectiveness of whole program?

Method

Qualitative methodology was used in data collection. In order to collect data for this study, a questionnaire which consisted of eight open-ended questions was developed and administered to 140 students in the initial teacher training program. They were asked to write their opinions about each question. The open-ended format of the questionnaire calls for a free response in the participants' own words. It also provides for a greater depth of response. The respondents revealed their frame of reference and possible reasons for their responses (Best & Kahn, 1989). Each question was analyzed in terms of content, and then, a list of participants' opinion from top to down about related questions was made.

Results

What Did You Think of Initial Teacher Training Program Before Beginning the Program?

Table 1 indicates that the majority of initial teacher training participants did not realize the importance of the program. They thought that they would have a certificate need to be a teacher at high schools. After graduating from university, if they want to be a teacher, they need to have initial teacher training certificate. On the other hand, about one fifth (22%) of the participants had not believed necessity of certificate for being a teacher at the high school level, because they felt that they could do teaching job without pedagogical education background. Some of the participants (20%) also stated that participating in the initial teacher training program was not a big deal. Even this program does not affect teacher quality. Some of the participants in this program had not had any idea about the program. They had heard from their friend and then applied to the program.

Table 1

Students' Views Before Participating Initial Teacher Training

Rank	Statements	<i>F</i>	%
1	To have certification is a requirement.	65	46
2	It is unnecessary.	31	22
3	It is optional.	28	20
4	I did not have any idea about the program.	16	12
Total		140	100

Could You Explain If Your Opinion About the Program Changed During This Program?

Table 2 indicates that the changing views of the participants after participating teacher initial training. In general about 80% of the participants have positive views about the program, but almost half of them had had positive views about the program and the other half have changed their views from negative to positive. On the other hand, 10% of them still have negative views about the program. Meanwhile, 10% of the participants have changed their views from positive to negative.

Table 2

Changing Students' Views After Participation Initial Teacher Training

Rank	Statements	<i>F</i>	%
1	Still positive	60	43
2	Changed from negative to positive	51	36
3	Still negative	15	11
4	Changed from positive to negative	14	10
Total		140	100

Could You Explain If You Have Any Difficulties That You Have Faced in This Program?

Table 3 indicates that the difficulties the participants had in the initial teacher training program. Almost half of the participants (45%) expressed that they had burdensome to attend in the program, because they lived out of city. Even some of them lived far away from the training center. On the other hand, the courses of initial teacher training program were scheduled only on Saturday and Sunday. In fact, 21% of the participants complained about a very busy schedule. Furthermore, 17% of the participants had difficulties to figure out the contexts of courses. Very few participants (9%) did not mention any problem about the program. Lastly, economic problem was expressed by 8% of the participants.

Table 3

Participants' Difficulties While in the Initial Teacher Training

Rank	Statements	<i>F</i>	%
1	Attendance	63	45
2	A very busy schedule	30	21
3	Intensive courses	24	17
4	No problem	12	9
5	Economic difficulties	11	8
Total		140	100

Are You Satisfied To Find What You Have Expected From the Program?

Table 4 indicates that the satisfaction level of the participants from the program. Almost half of the participants (48%) expressed their satisfaction and 23% of them were slightly satisfied. Some of the participants (17%) did not have any expectation from the program, because they just needed certificate (official document to be a teacher) and they did not have any interest in quality of the program, because they did not have positive attitude and belief about the necessity of initial teacher training program.

Table 4

Participants' Satisfaction From the Initial Teacher Training program

Rank	Statements	<i>F</i>	%
1	Satisfied	67	48
2	Satisfied moderately	32	23
3	Not any expectations	24	17
4	Not satisfied	17	12
Total		140	100

Could You Explain the Necessity of This Program in Terms of Effective Teacher?

Table 5 indicates that the participants' views about the necessity of initial teacher training. Very few participants (9%) thought that the initial teacher training program is useless. A very high proportion (91%) of

the participants thought that the initial teacher training program is necessary. Even some of them confessed that they realize usefulness of the program.

Table 5

Participants' Views About the Necessity of This Program

Rank	Statements	<i>F</i>	%
1	Necessary	128	91
2	Useless	12	9
Total		140	100

What Do You Think About the Content of Courses?

Table 6 indicates that participants' evaluation of the content of the courses. Majority of the participants (59%) expressed that the content of courses was good enough. On the other hand, some of the participants (21%) stated that the content of courses must be revised and improved. Also, some of the participants (20%) thought that the content of the courses was inefficient.

Table 6

Participants Evaluated About the Content of Courses

Rank	Statements	<i>F</i>	%
1	Good enough	83	59
2	Not very well	29	21
3	Inefficient	28	20
Total		140	100

What Do You Think of the Quality of Instruction?

Table 7 indicates that participants' perceptions of the quality of instruction. Majority of the participants (52%) stated that the instruction of courses was good enough. In other words, the participants were glad to be in the teaching and learning atmosphere of the program. However, one-fourth of the participants (26%) stated that the quality of instruction was insufficient. Even though this evaluation depends on the quality of each teacher, participants' perceptions reflect the result of quality of all courses. On the other hand, about one fifth of the participants (30%) stated that the instruction quality was mediocre. In fact, some instructors performed very well but some did not.

Table 7

Participants Evaluated the Quality of Instruction

Rank	Statements	<i>F</i>	%
1	Good enough	73	52
2	Insufficient	37	26
3	Mediocre	30	22
Total		140	100

What Do You Think of the Effectiveness of Whole Program?

Table 8 indicates that participants' evaluation of whole program. In general, very high portion of the participants (87%) believed that initial teacher training program was very effective to be a teacher. Furthermore, they stated that nobody was allowed to go to classroom as a teacher without completing this program. Some policy makers in Turkey still believe that content knowledge is enough to be a teacher, but the majority of the

participants acknowledge the importance of initial teacher training program to be effective teacher. On the other hand, few participants (13%) thought that the program was ineffective to be a teacher. They suggested improving the program in terms of implementation level.

Table 8

Participants Evaluated the Effectiveness of Whole Program

Rank	Statements	<i>F</i>	%
1	Very effective program	122	87
2	Ineffective program	18	13
Total		140	100

Findings and Discussion

One of the most important findings is that the majority of initial teacher training participants did not realize the importance of the program before joining the program. They thought that they would have a certificate for government fulfillment of requirement to be a teacher. Even most of them thought that this kind of programs were useless and only time consuming, because they had enough knowledge about what were going to teach. This belief is also very common among Turkish society. Furthermore, pedagogical background of teacher is not considered to be effective teacher in Turkey. Several university graduates want to be a teacher at the high schools because of very high unemployment rate among them. Recently, popularity of teaching profession has been increased in Turkey because of job security, income, and nation's economic condition. Every year, the highest rate of employee recruited by state consist of teachers. In some years, novice teachers were recruited exclusively from education faculty graduates and sometimes both education faculty graduates and other faculty graduates. This fact is a big obstacle to set up tradition of teacher training policy.

Second issue of the initial teacher training of Turkey is the length of program. It takes one year (two semesters-courses, seminars, and teaching). However, in European countries, it takes more than one year. For example, in Germany, Hesse initial teacher training takes two years with courses, seminars, and teaching, leading to the second state exam for teachers (Kipp & Rothmann, 2004).

Conclusion

Time in one year, initial teacher training is not used effectively either, because some participants live far away from training center, and they have to travel each weekend. In fact, they experience several problems, such as transportation, accommodation, and timing. As a result attendance appears to pose a difficulty. Fortunately, the problems mentioned above are not due to the initial teacher training program itself. They are external problems but, they influence the quality of the program. The majority of the participants in the programs in this study have understood the value of the program and found that the program is effective and gained crucial skills and experiences even though some of them had prejudice.

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