# A Phenomenological Study on Teaching Practice In a Teacher Training Program

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**Abstract**

*This study aims to research an in-depth study of how the teaching practice in a teacher training program is carried out. Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs was used in this research. The participants were composed of 12 teacher training students, three practice teachers and three mentors. The interview form and the observation form developed by the researchers were used as the data collection tool in the research. Descriptive content analysis technique was used to analyze the data. According to results, derived from the analysis, 8 themes and 21 categories under these themes were obtained. Teaching practice provides experience to teacher candidates and teachers and mentors are expected to guide teacher candidates in an effective way. The greatest problem faced by teacher candidates in the process is that they have to join classes except their bachelor degrees. In addition, the teacher candidates stated that they have so little time to practice in schools; thus the number of candidates per teacher should be decreased.*

**Keywords:** Teacher training program, practice teaching, teacher candidate

**Introduction**

The training of the teachers has been one of the controversial issues in the history of our country, Turkey. It is thought that teacher training practices do not comply with facts and conditions of Turkey (Yüksel, 2011). A good teacher should be able to successfully carry out tasks such as guidance, leadership, management as well as teaching (Özkan and Arslantaş, 2013). In order to train qualified teachers many studies have been carried out for a long time in Turkey and also solutions having been produced of the problems that were found (Oğuz, 2004). Besides having many academic studies, several conferences and meetings were held to enhance the quality of teacher training in Turkey by Higher Education Council and World Bank in the scope of Increasing National Education Project. At the end of these meetings, it was clarified that it has been determined that prospective teachers in faculties of education were qualified in terms of field knowledge but lacking in pedagogical skills (Harmandar et al., 2000). In order to make up for this deficiency, Education Faculties have begun to give more weight to lessons such as school experience and teaching practice of prospective teachers and to school corporation (Seçer et al., 2010). Numerous research works have been done about teaching practice in Turkey for a few decades (Altıntaş and Görgen, 2014; Paker, 2008; Taşdere, 2014; Ünver, 2003).

Within the scope of the a set of principles taken by the Ministry of Education in Turkey, it is stated that students graduated from other faculties than the education faculty will be able to apply for teacher appointments if they successfully complete the teacher training program that is provided by the education faculties (Erarslan and Çakıcı, 2011). Although sometimes inconsistent decisions are taken in teacher training, it is also stated that prospective teachers can be supported both theoretical courses given by the faculty and the studies provided by the Ministry of National Education. It is expected that teachers should have certain qualifications in order to accomplish their duties and responsibilities such as managing and developing the educational setting. It is seen that in the training of prospective teachers expected to gain these qualifications, teaching practice in which they make observations and perform their teaching skills, has a great deal of importance (Gülşen and Gökyer, 2015; Özkan and Arslantaş, 2013). Teaching practice is a kind of course in which prospective teachers plan a lesson, apply their teaching skills, and after all they discuss and evaluate their performance in order to be more effective (Özenç, 2014). Teaching practice aims individual and professional development of prospective teachers by offering the opportunity to combine

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and use their general culture, content knowledge and teacher training knowledge in effective, productive and safe way in school environment (Özay Köse, 2015).

Goodwin et al (2016) state that teachers, as mentors at teaching practice, are one of the important factors that improves the quality of practice, thus it must be taken into consideration while assigning mentors that they are to be volunteer, open to self-development, willing to work cooperatively. Higher Education Council in Turkey (1998) has set out the purpose, structure and the basis of faculty-school cooperation in order to catch the standard throughout the country. Moreover it has also clearly defined the duties, expectations, and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in teaching practice. Gülşen and Gündüz (2016) indicate that teaching practice, which could be the first teaching experience of prospective teachers, has a high level of influence on teachers' views about teaching profession. A number of different studies have been conducted on teacher training program trainings, in which researchers try to investigate prospective teachers' attitudes towards the profession (Erarslan and Çakıcı, 2011; Özkan, 2012; Polat, 2013), motivation towards the profession (Altınkurt et al., 2014), and self-efficacy beliefs (Elkatmış and Demirbaş, 2013). However, it has been found that there is few studies about how teaching practice takes place in teacher training programs. Besides these studies are usually based on the quantitative screening pattern or only based on students' opinions. Taking into account of consideration of these facts, it is thought that that doing a study on how the teaching practice takes place in a teacher training program, by using method and data triangulation would increase the importance of such in depth studies. The main purpose of this research is to determine how the process of teaching practice takes place in the teacher training program. Hereby, the following questions are asked in our study;

1. What are the perceptions of prospective teachers, mentors at school, and instructors at faculty?

2. Does the teaching practice carried out appropriately with regard to its purposes?

3. How does faculty-student-school interaction take place in teaching practice?

**Methods**

*Model*

Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs was used in this research. In phenomenology, researchers aimed revealing and interpreting individual perceptions and perspectives for a phenomenon, focusing on phenomena that are generally known but have no detailed understanding (Creswell, 2013; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). The aim of using phenomenology in this study was to reveal how teaching practice takes place in teacher training program in a detailed and comprehensive way. When it is viewed from the outside, teaching practice can be perceived such a process in which prospective teachers just shuttle to school, but we use phenomenology in order to reveal several different variables and aspects of teaching practice.

*Study Group*

Participants of the study (See Table 1) were selected via convenience sampling, one of purposeful criterion sampling method. Researchers could reach to participants quickly by using convenience sampling method, which help to accelerate the research process (Ekiz, 2015). In the study, convenience sampling was chosen because the participants were studying in the same institution with the researchers. We chose eight female and four male prospective teachers, two female and one male teacher who were working at schools where prospective teachers attended classes, and one female and two male university lecturers who were responsible for the theoretical part of teaching practice as participants of the study. All of the

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participants were volunteer for the study. The ages of the prospective teachers changed between 24 and 36 and also all of them had bachelor's degree. Two of them graduated from department of public finance, three from department of business and the rest seven from department of public administration.

Table 1. *Information about Prospective Teachers*

|  | Gender | Practice School | Department Of graduation | Working | Living place | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **P1** | F | O1 | Pub.Administration | No | Other | 25 |
| **P2** | F | O1 | Pub.Administration | No | Other | 24 |
| **P3** | M | O1 | Pub.Administration | Yes | Aydın | 30 |
| **P4** | F | O1 | Pub.Administration | No | Aydın | 28 |
| **P5** | F | O1 | Pub.Administration | Yes | Other | 29 |
| **P6** | F | O2 | Business | No | Aydın | 36 |
| **P7** | M | O3 | Finance | Yes | Other | 32 |
| **P8** | M | O3 | Finance | Yes | Other | 29 |
| **P9** | F | O2 | Business | No | Other | 28 |
| **P10** | F | O2 | Business | No | Other | 25 |
| **P11** | F | O3 | Pub.Administration | No | Aydın | 32 |
| **P12** | F | O1 | Pub.Administration | No | Other | 24 |

*Data Collection Tools*

In the study, data were gathered with semi-structured different but parallel interview forms for prospective teachers, teachers, and lecturers. Interview forms were prepared by researchers by reviewing the relevant literature and after that the views of three domain experts of teaching and instruction were taken and the necessary changes were made. Then, pilot interviews were held with two prospective teachers and it was decided to combine questions that were so related to each other. Bailey (1982) stated that observation was a method used to obtain a detailed, comprehensive and time-spread image of a behavior or process. Before the observation form created, researchers had made free observations, and then the observation form related to the research questions were created. In this form researchers focused on such topics like situations that were encountered by prospective teachers, behaviors of teachers and students at school against prospective teachers, and classroom communications.

*Data Collection Process*

Interviews and observations were made towards the middle and last parts of the process of teaching practice so that stakeholders could have a bright idea about teaching practice. Interviews and observations were carried out simultaneously. The interviews conducted with teacher candidates and teachers had been lasted about between 10-15 minutes while the interviews with academic staff had been lasted about 20 minutes. Contact information of the participants was taken and interviews were held at the appropriate times of them. Researchers observed the prospective teachers while they were teaching totally seven hours at which two hours spent for the pilot study.

*Features of the Teaching Practice School*

Observations were made in an Anatolian Vocational High School in Aydın province. The school located in a neighborhood that was located in the older part of the city and had

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two separate buildings. The physical structure and setting of the school is generally quite good and there are smart boards in every classroom. It could be said that students in that school did not care so much about academic achievement according to the information given by teachers and prospective teachers and also according to the observations of researchers. Although the class size is around 30 students, it was observed that between 20 and 25 students attend classes. Settings of the classroom are arranged traditionally and each student has a separate computer in PC laboratory.

*Data Analysis*

While analyzing the data, researchers used content analysis techniques. Initially researchers had created codes by viewing the data, then these codes were grouped under certain topics and these topics created categories that eventually created themes. These themes were analyzed and interpreted according to the research questions. And the names of the participants and schools were kept confidential and each was coded.

*Validity and Reliability of the Study*

In qualitative research, "validity" is related to the scientific findings and "reliability" is related to the reproducibility of these findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). Thus these following measures were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of this study. While the forms of interview and observation were prepared, literature was examined and expert opinions were obtained in order to ensure the validity of the study. Moreover, in order to ensure data triangulation interviews and observations were made, also teachers, prospective teachers, and university lecturers were involved in the study. Also the data were analyzed and coded by two different domain experts for providing inter-coder validity and according to results themes were accepted when the agreement among coders were 70% Furthermore, the researchers re-coded the three interview data that were selected randomly two weeks after the initial coding and it was found out that there was an agreement over 90% between these two coding.

**Findings**

In this part of the study, findings that were obtained with observations made by the researchers during the lectures of prospective teachers and interviews with teachers, prospective teachers and lecturers are included. After analyzing the data, 8 themes and 21 categories under these themes were found out and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Themes and categories*

| | Themes | Categories |
|---|---|---|
| Perceptions about Teaching Practice | Views of stakeholders | *Importance* |
| | | *Advantages* |
| | | *Restrictions* |
| | Expectations and responsibilities | *Prospective teachers* |
| | | *Teachers* |
| | | *University lecturers* |
| | Perspectives towards prospective teachers | *Views of prospective teachers* |
| | | *Perspectives of students towards prospective teachers* |
| | | *Interaction with school staff* |
| Practice of Teaching Practice | Process | *Process* |
| | | *Challenges* |
| | | *Time allocation* |
| | Planning | *Duration of practice* |
| | | *Duration of teaching* |
| | | *Restriction of the number of prospective teachers* |
| | | *Suggestions to planning* |
| | Gains | |
| Interaction among Stakeholders | Communication | *With prospective teachers* |
| | | *With teachers* |
| | | *With university lecturers* |
| | Guidance | *Guidance of teachers* |
| | | *Guidance of university lecturers* |

*Perceptions about Teaching Practice*

Perceptions of teachers, prospective teachers and university lecturers about teaching practice are gathered under three themes; views of stakeholders, expectations and responsibilities, and perspectives towards prospective teachers.
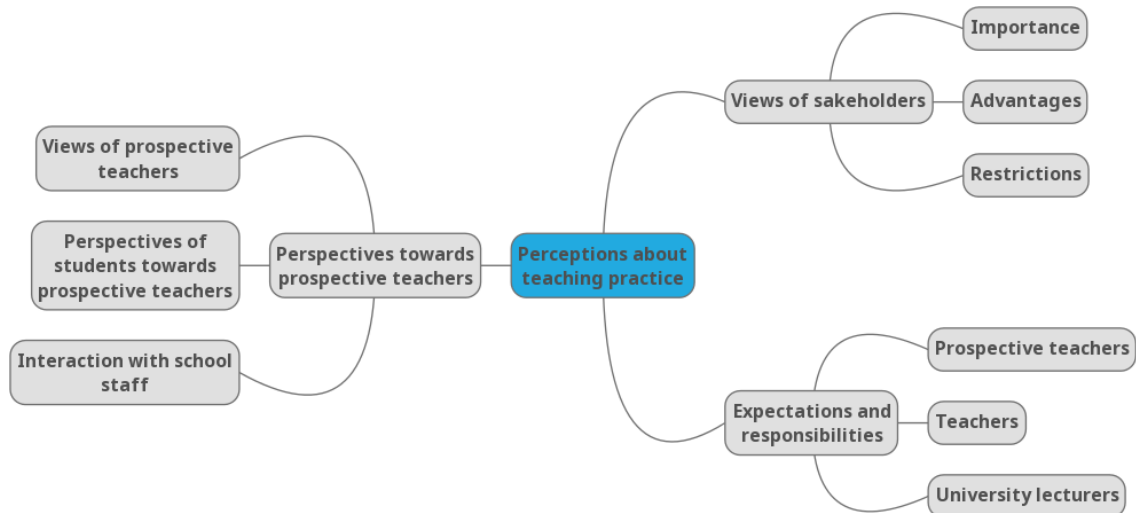


Figure 1. *Perceptions about teaching practice*

*Views of Stakeholders About Teaching Practice*

Under the theme of perceptions about teaching practice, we reached three categories namely importance, advantages, and restrictions of teaching practice. The data of these three categories were obtained from the interviews with all three stakeholders.

*Importance of teaching practice*

All of the interviewed prospective teachers stated that the teaching practice was very important in teacher training program, since they had the opportunity to practice the theoretical knowledge that they learned in lessons, also it gave them a great experience before starting their profession. One of the prospective teachers has expressed the following about this issue.

*"...Teaching is not only a theoretical accumulation but also a profession that should be carried out with practical gains, thus teaching practice is very important. We are trying to gain this experience as much as possible by teaching during the process..." (P7)*

Teachers, who were interviewed, indicated that teaching practice was one of the most important courses for the prospective teachers, because theoretical knowledge could sometimes differ from its application, so it was an important process that prospective teachers must complete to be an effective teacher. Lastly, the university lecturers who form the other part of the teacher training also supported the opinions of both the teachers and prospective teachers.

*Advantages of teaching practice*

Prospective teachers stated that teaching practice provided some advantages for them before starting their career. They explained that teaching practice gave opportunity to see school climate, communication among students, teachers, and administrators in schools. They also realized the problems in the classroom and would take precautions for such situations when they became a teacher. One of the prospective teachers has expressed the following about this issue.

*"...We gain some advantages by attending to classes like learning how to handle a lesson from teachers who have a great deal of experience in teaching, which helps us a lot..." (P8)*

Teachers working in the practice school also stated that teaching practice provided an advantage to prospective teachers before appearing in front of students on their own. They also pointed out that if the inexperience and mistakes of the candidates were determined at this stage and the necessary feedback and correlations were given, that would allow them to be a better teacher over time. And lecturers indicated that prospective teachers would be able to see the situations they could encounter in their future teaching life and would benefit from being familiar with these situations. One of the teachers has expressed the following about this issue.

*"...I think one of the biggest advantages of teaching practice is that it helps students to blow off their stress and tension which is derived from their first time teaching. They become more relaxed towards the end of the practice and at the least they have little experience when they start their profession..." (T2)*

*Restrictions of teaching practice*

Prospective teachers stated that there was not too much restriction of teaching practice in interviews. However, some candidates (n:2) indicated that even though teaching practice

provided a school environment, it did not create a truly natural school or class environment. One of the prospective teachers has expressed the following about this issue.

> *"...it is not 100% natural environment although we are in the school because of the fact that it is a lesson..." (P1)*

Moreover, some of them (n:3) specified that they could not spend enough time for teaching practice because of the intensity of their private life. Regarding this issue, teachers also utter that some candidates did not want to attend to practice, even some of them offered to sign for lessons that they had not came. Teachers also expressed that performance of that kind of candidates were not promising. Similarly, a lecturer stated that some of the candidates did not care much about the teaching practice and they thought that they would pass it in any case.

University lecturers has stated that the aim of teaching practice is enhancing the teaching skills of the candidates but students in teacher training program do not take the course of school experience that allows students to gain some experience without teaching. Thus, they get candidates to observe the various factors so that they get used to the environment of classroom before starting to teach.

> *"...while teacher candidates in the education faculty is taking the school experience that helps them to learn school climate and so on, teacher candidates in teacher training program can't take such course, they just take teaching practice. Therefore, we ask them to make observations in the first weeks of teaching practice to compensate lac of school experience course..." (L2)*

*Expectations and Responsibilities of Teaching Practice*

Teachers, prospective teachers, and university lecturers have expectations and responsibilities towards each other through the process of teaching practice. It has been seen that there are three categories in this theme, namely prospective teachers, teachers and lecturers.

*Expectations and responsibilities of prospective teachers*

Some of the prospective teachers has expected to experience such situations that could be encountered in school environment (n:5), to find out the features that belong to good teachers (n:4), to develop communication skills with students (n:3), and to develop their teaching skills during the teaching practice. Furthermore, a great number of them has expected from teachers in practice school that they should maintain a useful guidance and give positive or negative feedback about themselves (n:7). However, four of the prospective teachers mentioned that their mentor teacher did not give enough feedback to them about at the end of their teaching performances. Besides, they also stated that teachers should be tactful, patient, and open-minded. Prospective teachers have expressed the following about this issue.

> *"... our teacher is interested in us and tries to help us from the beginning, indeed I don't have special expectations. We already begin to teach, but she does not make any comments after the lessons..." (P6)*

> *"... we have to grow up under the surveillance of a good in order to be a good teacher...in other words teachers who will be a guide to us should transfer his/her experience in a good way..." (P1)*

Finally, the vast majority of the prospective teachers mentioned that lecturers who carried out the theoretical part of teaching practice at university should be positive, patient,

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and instructive towards them. They also expressed that lecturers tried to help them to solve problems encountered in practice as well as they informed prospective teachers in advance about the situations they may encounter in future. Moreover, candidates stated they gave useful examples of methods and techniques in those theoretical lessons. Although it has been seen that the teaching methods and techniques are included in a different course content, it is considered that the lecturers have implemented such an application in order to overcome the shortcomings of the candidates.

When the candidates were asked about their responsibilities, besides the expectations of prospective teachers, they pointed out that they were in charge of attending to teaching practice on a regular basis and teaching a good lesson. Because they regularly followed the lessons so that they could make up for their deficiencies and have better relationship with students in the process. They also stated that they were expected to be a good teacher in their profession, thus they tried to fulfill their charges by preparing well for the lessons. Some of prospective teachers has expressed the following about this issue.

*"... our responsibility is to complete our deficiencies and I try to achieve that so much as possible by teaching in a well prepared way..." (P7)*

*"... our responsibility is to get students to comprehend the lesson better and help their learning by observing their inadequacies..." (P3).*

*Expectations and Responsibilities of Mentor Teachers*

The interviewed mentor teachers indicated that they expected students to join classes regularly and in a well prepared way; furthermore, they expected prospective teachers to be a good observer and to carry out an effective lesson. However, mentors also stated that not all candidates meet these expectations; even some of them were unwilling and just came to pass the course. One of the teachers has expressed the following about this issue.

*"...we do not expect prospective teachers to come blankly here as a guest but of course we expect them to be well prepared for lessons and to be beneficial both for students and themselves..." (T2)*

Teachers also expressed that if university lecturers communicated with them more frequently, it would be more beneficial, since they did not seem pleased with the current situation. One of the teachers has expressed the following about this issue.

*"...we see lecturers at university at the beginning and end of term, they just came here to watch or evaluate their students and do not have any interaction with us at that time..." (T2)*

Mentor teachers, in conclusion, has stated that as their responsibilities they must be a good example and guide to prospective teachers, also they give feedback that reflects their experience to candidates. They have also indicated that they help prospective teachers when they need help. One of the teachers has expressed the following about this issue.

*"...sometimes the students can be stuck in difficult situation while they are teaching, maybe because they are not master their subjects completely or they could hang up in the middle of the lesson, first I just wait a little bit and give some time to them then if they do not, I intervene to help..." (T3)*

*Expectations and responsibilities of university lecturers*

University lecturers initially stated that they want prospective teachers to go to practice regularly because they would expose to school climate such as interaction between students, teachers, and other staff at school, which would be so beneficial for them. In

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addition, lecturers have expected candidates to combine and apply their theoretical knowledge together with pedagogical skills that they gain in formation program. They have also expected candidates to prepare a well-organized lesson plan before teaching, since that is one of the vital requirements of a good lesson. And one of the lecturers has expressed the following about this issue.

> *"... we want students to prepare a lesson plan before teaching because they can be excited and can forget something that should be necessary for students due to their inexperience situations..." (L3)*

Lecturers has expected teachers in the practice school to provide guidance as mentors and to inform about the issues that are need to be done at school rather than teaching such as coterie meetings or software that are related to education system. They mentioned that as their responsibilities lecturers discussed the difficulties encountered by candidates in theoretical lessons and gave examples from their own experiences. Furthermore, they sometimes give lectures on teaching methods and techniques. A lecturer stated that she/he has two different groups, one of them was composed of candidates from her/his own field and the other was from different field, so she/he sometimes gave lectures on related to their field knowledge for the first group and on pedagogical knowledge for the other group. One of the lecturers has expressed the following about this issue.

> *"...I don't know something about their field so I just contribute to educational or pedagogical issues, however I help to other group in my own field mathematics as well..." (L1)*

*Perspectives Towards Prospective Teachers*

Under this theme, there are three categories, namely introduction of the prospective teachers to students, views of students and school staff towards prospective teachers.

*Introduction of prospective teachers*

Prospective teachers were asked how they were introduced to students when they first went to practice school, more than half of them mentioned that they were introduced as teachers or teacher candidates, which was frankly right way according to them. Two of these seven students reported that the mentor teacher warned the student to respect candidates because they would be teachers at the end of their trainings. One prospective teacher has expressed the following about this issue.

> *"... she introduced us as teacher candidates and said they came from university and would be teachers. I think that there is not any problem for being introduced like that, otherwise if she introduced as teachers, students could ask why there is a second teacher in class, so it was ok..." (P4)*

On the other hand, it was seen that one teacher mentioned about the candidates as trainee teachers in one of the observed lessons. The other four candidates expressed that they were introduced as teacher and they liked being introduced like that way. One of the interviewed teachers stated that she introduced candidates as "teachers" and other two teachers introduced them as "trainee teachers". Besides, it was seen during the observations that even some prospective teachers invited their friends, who would teach next, by calling trainee teacher.

*Perspectives of students towards prospective teachers*

Prospective teachers were asked how the students behave and see them. While five candidates indicated that students behaved and treated respectably like a teacher, three of

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them stated that younger age groups, such as the ninth grade, were more respectful, but the older did not regard them as real teachers and did not control how to speak with them. One student expressed that students saw her as a elder sister and could not adjust their friendliness. In addition, a teacher candidate also pointed out that students did reflect the negative attitudes against their teacher to them. One prospective teacher has expressed the following about this issue.

> *"... 9th grade students behave in a respectful manner like we are their teachers, but in other senior students behave in an inappropriate way, since they knew that we were not their teachers..." (P10)*

Mentor teachers stated that students often behaved respectfully to prospective teachers and thought them as teachers over time. They also mentioned that the candidates who were well prepared for teaching, had good communication with students and had a better general knowledge were more embraced than the others. One teacher has expressed the following about this issue.

> *"... one of our candidates was so quiet, so I wondered how he would maintain a lesson. He would teach 20 minutes originally, but he wanted to continue to lesson and I let him to go on. He maintained the lesson really perfect, gave own examples related to topic and I appreciated him on my own; furthermore, students liked him more after that..." (T1)*

Lecturers pointed out that they were not so knowledgeable with this issue and could only explain the situation just when they went to observe the candidates. However, lecturers indicated mentor teachers warned their students and they behaved differently rather than normal while they were observing. During these observations it was seen that most of the students behaved respectfully apart from some. Moreover, one lecturer pointed out that teachers and students in a ranking school did not think candidates as real teachers because of their levels.

### *Perspectives of school staff towards prospective teachers*

A large majority (n:9) of the prospective teachers indicated they did not communicate so much with other teachers and school staff except their own mentor teacher, since they hang out together outside of the classroom and did not use teachers' room so much. Some candidates also stated some teachers were warm and friendly towards them and sometimes they chatted together. One student indicated that some of the teachers in practice school criticized them for taking teacher training program because they thought that program provided an easy way to be a teacher.

Mentor teachers expressed their pleasure of spending time with prospective teachers and they sometimes talked all together with their colleagues and prospective teachers. It was understood from the speeches of teachers; school staff were in a positive manner towards prospective teachers. One teacher has expressed the following about this issue.

> *"... most of the time we are together, it is nice to spend time with young people, and sometimes our other colleagues joint to us..." (T2)*

On the other hand, it was seen that the university lecturers did not have enough knowledge about this issue, but two of them stated that there was no complaint related to this topic. However, L1 pointed out that the mentor teacher of science high school, which was ranking schools in Turkey, did not care the candidates so much and behaved them as students.

In addition, during the observations it was seen that two of mentor teachers warned and changed places of their students, who talked too much among themselves, while prospective

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teachers were teaching. Besides, it was seen mentor teachers took attendance themselves at the beginning of lessons, and one of them wandered around the classroom and tried to silence the students while a candidate was teaching. A different teacher also intervened in teaching and gave additional information related to the lesson by cutting candidates' words.
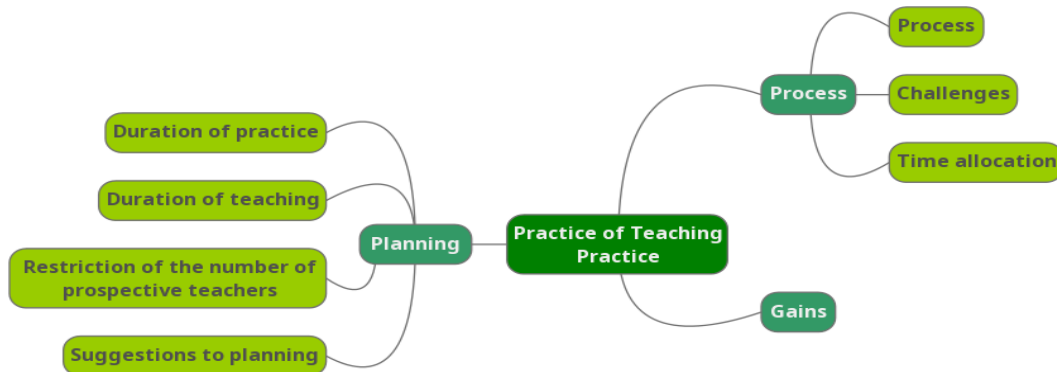
*Practice of Teaching Practice*



Figure 2. *Practice of teaching practice*

The findings of the research question "How does the teaching practice takes place?" were gathered under three themes; process, planning, and gains.

*The process of Teaching Practice*

Three different categories were reached under this theme from the obtained data; overall process, challenges of the process, and time allocation for the practice.

*Overall process*

According to the data obtained from teachers, prospective teachers, and university lecturers about the overall process of the teaching practice, the following information has been reached by the researchers.

- Teaching practice started at the beginning of spring semester.
- Prospective teachers must be registered into the MEBBİS system, that is a kinda software in which teachers can carry out their entities and evaluate the candidates.
- Prospective teachers take theoretical courses on weekends and go to teaching practice on weekdays.
- Prospective teachers go to practice for 4 hours a week for 14 weeks.
- Determination of the practice schools, mentor teachers and lecturers is carried out by the deanery of education faculty.
- Maximum six students can be assigned to mentor teaches in practice schools and 15 students to lecturers for theoretical lessons.
- Prospective teachers initially have observed the lessons then have begun to teach.
- University lecturers observe the lessons of the candidates at least once.

*Challenges in the process*

Prospective teachers pointed out that one of the biggest challenges they faced in the process was doing teaching practice in unfamiliar courses rather than their graduation field. Due to this challenge, they had some difficulties, for instance they try to carry out lessons that they had little knowledge. When they were asked how they did cope with this situation, they

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said they studied earlier the topic. When the importance of the teaching practice is considered, it is unlikely to contribute to candidates. A teacher and lecturer has expressed the following about this issue.

> *"… the field of candidates are different from our lesson; as a result, they have difficulties while teaching. We don't want to get them to teach so much because we have to care our students as well…" (T1)*

> *"…some of the prospective teachers try to use this situation as an excuse and begin to complain when we ask something…" (L3)*

When it has been considered the views of teachers and lecturers, it seems this problem leads problems not only for candidates but also for teachers and lecturers. A lecturer stated that she came together with her students regularly but her students complained about that because other lecturers did not gather their students into classroom regularly.

*Time allocation*

In this category, findings about how much time the stakeholders allocate for teaching practice have been presented. Accordingly, prospective teachers have seemed to be separated into three in allocating time for teaching practice. Five candidates stated that they allow enough time for teaching practice, four hours a week as well as preparing for the lessons regularly, which took their time but enough. Four candidates said they participated regularly to the teaching practice but did not do anything else extra. However, two candidates admitted that they could not spend enough time for teaching practice due to their intensity. A candidate has expressed the following about this issue.

> *"… Obviously, I don't have too much free time more than going practice, I have a child, thus I must take care of him…" (P2)*

Teachers in the practice school pointed out that they were already at school with candidates and did not too much responsibility except for guidance at school. On the other hand, some of prospective teachers mentioned that the teachers did not give enough feedback while explaining the expectations from teachers. Lecturers reported that their schedule was dense enough, nevertheless they did theoretical lessons regularly and always had enough time to help them when they need help, also they allowed time for observing candidates while teaching at least once.

*Planning of Teaching Practice*

Three different categories were reached under this theme from the obtained data; duration of practice, duration of teaching of a candidate, restriction of the number of candidates, and suggestions for practice.

*Duration of teaching practice*

Five candidates indicated that duration allowed for practice was not enough to gain experience on teaching, school climate, and so on so forth. When the common characteristics of these candidates have been examined, it has been seen that they do not work in any job and it has been considered they have so much spare time. On the other hand, four candidates stated that the duration was sufficient and they could not allow more time because of their intensity. Two candidates said it would be beneficial to increase the time but they did not want it because that would bring extra burden to them. A candidate has expressed the following about this issue.

*"...I think time is sufficient enough but that would be good to allow much time in order to gain experience, however me and some of my friends don't have so much time for that and we come from outside of Aydın..." (P8)*

Mentor teachers said the period of practice was sufficient enough for the students who participated regularly to the classes. Likewise, two lecturers stated that the duration was enough and also thought students would not want spare more time. On the other hand, a lecturer said increasing the time would take much time of the students but it would be useful to raise them.

*Duration of teaching*

Majority of the prospective teachers (n:9) has thought that duration of teaching per candidate is not enough, although some of them have thought overall duration of teaching practice is enough. They stated for the reason of this situation that they joint the lessons in groups composed of at least three candidates, so they shared the topics and taught just one hour per week. The rest of candidates (n:3) said they taught just one hour as well, but they found this enough because of the preparation time for teaching. One of the prospective teachers has expressed the following about this issue.

*"... I teach once a week and it takes time for me to make preparations for it, of course, I think it is enough and I will teach more if I assigned..." (P8)*

Teachers indicated that it would be more useful for candidates to teach more, however they thought candidates had some other responsibilities against their families, employers, and themselves, so they thought current situation was sufficient. They also stated that after prospective teachers' lessons, they taught the missing parts of the topic. The lecturers pointed out that duration of teaching per each candidate was absolutely insufficient and must be increased. Furthermore, L1 said that the prospective teachers whose fields was mathematics are not allowed teaching, they are just allowed solving questions on board.

Claims of the L1 were supported by the observations made by the researchers, it was seen that candidates, who joint to mathematics class, solved questions they had prepared beforehand. In addition to this, it was seen that students just used the narration techniques while teaching rather than constructivist approach that was offered to use by their university lecturers. L1 has expressed the following opinion that supports these observations.

*"...for example students just prepare a power point presentation and read it, but that was not what we taught to them..." (L1)*

*Restriction of the number of candidates*

The number of prospective teachers given to mentors both at practice schools and universities is limited in accordance with the protocol between Ministry of National Education and Higher Education Council. According to this protocol, a teacher worked at the practice school could take six candidates at most, and a university lecturer could take fifteen candidates at most. Teachers found the current situation quite well and stated that sometimes two times more prospective teachers were assigned to them in previous years. Thus, they said it was too hard to control all of the candidates and the process. One of them said following about that issue.

*"... in previous years I hardly learnt the name of my students because of their huge number, so I could not be so interested to them..." (T2)*

The lecturers gave two opinions about this subject. First one they thought that it was good for prospective teachers because the amount of time they had was increased compared to

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the previous years. However, they pointed out that this situation has also caused such a negativity especially candidates in the fields such as public administration, business, and finance, got used to enter courses belonging to their fields, but with the new system they were also entered courses in different fields. Thus, the efficiency of teaching practice has been affected negatively.

*Suggestions for planning of teaching practice*

Cases which teachers, prospective teachers, and university lecturers are not satisfied with or want to change in teaching practice have been presented. Initially, most of the prospective teachers stated that they did not join the classes in their own fields, therefore that must be turned over and improved immediately. After that four candidates mentioned that they did take the formation courses at the same time with the teaching practice, so it would be more beneficial to spread the process of teaching practice. Then three of them complained about the undesired behaviors of students in practice school like being uninterested in lessons or rude behaviors, hence they wanted to choose their teaching practice school on their own. At last two candidates stated that they should be assigned to mentors who were enthusiastic and willing to train prospective teachers. Candidates mentioned the following about that issue.

> *"… I just want to change the system of assigning mentor teachers, because it will be better assigning volunteer teachers who are eager to train teacher candidates…" (P12)*

> *"… I would like to change my practice school; it would be better if I were with more enthusiastic students, since sometimes I feel like I am teaching in vain…" (P4)*

Teachers wanted to change the co-operation with university lecturers and to increase the level because they pointed out that they just meet with lecturers at the beginning of term and nearly at the end when they came to observe candidates. But they found this inefficient and said there is a need to increasing the co-operation for better process. Also the lecturers stated that some steps need to be taken for the better implementation such as giving in-service training for teachers who take charge in teaching practice, assigning volunteer and useful mentors, and maintaining the theoretical lessons regularly all together with other lecturers. They also pointed out that too many candidates attend lessons except their fields, thus it would be appropriate to limit the number of students with respect to the number of teachers in the field.

*Gains of Teaching Practice for Prospective Teachers*

The majority of prospective teachers (n:8) indicated that practice get them to gain experience most as they just mentioned in their expectations. In addition, they stated that they began to teach more comfortably in time, since their self-esteem increased during the process. Moreover, they expressed they knew the importance of communication and interaction with students as much as having knowledge because they need these skills in order to transfer their knowledge.

> *"… teaching a lesson, guiding the conversations, managing the classroom and so on so forth gives you self-confidence in other words gives you the experience you need; furthermore, most importantly we see our potential and I need to come here to discover it…" (P7)*

It can be understood that teaching practice get students to know themselves and to recognize whether they are prone to teaching or not. Teachers mentioned that candidates gained experience in how to control classroom and communicate with students, also they

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found prospective teachers nervous at the begging of process but then they did overcome it as they teach in time, consequently it was a vital gain before starting teaching professionally for them.  University lecturers supported the opinions of teachers and candidates similarly and pointed out it was a great experience to apply the pedagogical and field knowledge all at once.

*Interaction among Stakeholders of the Teaching Practice*

The findings of the research question "How does faculty-student-school interaction take place in teaching practice?" were gathered under two themes; communication and guidance as seen in the Figure 3 below.
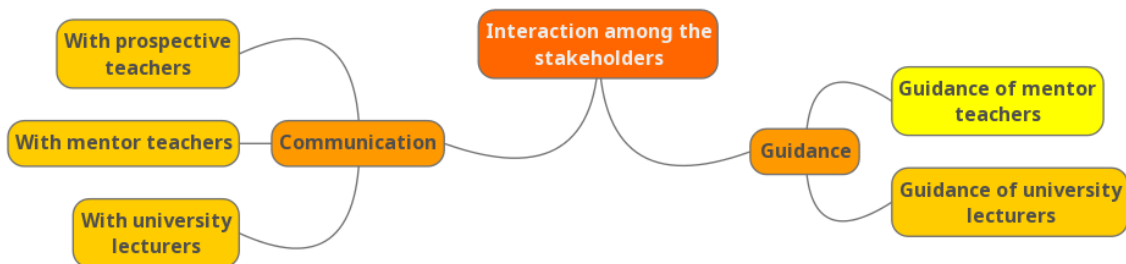


Figure 3. *Interaction among the stakeholders*

*Communication*

Under this them three categories were reached, namely communication with prospective teachers, mentor teachers, and university lecturers.

*Communication with prospective teachers*

Teachers stated that they took the contact information of the candidates and called them when it was necessary. Two lecturers mentioned that they use WhatsApp groups for communication while the other lecturer selected candidates from each of groups who would deliver the messages of her. On the other hand, it was understood that prospective teachers did not visit the lecturers except for theoretical lessons.

*Communication with mentor teachers*

Prospective teachers pointed out that they could communicate easily with their mentor teachers whenever they want by calling or texting messages. Lecturers indicated that they visited mentor teachers at the beginning of term and took contact information mutually but they did not contact so much during the process.  They also added that teachers called them when they need help with the files or MEBBIS *[a system that allow mentor teachers to evaluate student teachers in digital platform]* system. A lecturer mentioned the following about that issue.

*"... we don't communicate so much in the process, sometimes they have questions about MEBBIS so they call us..." (L3)*

*Communication with university lecturers*

Prospective teachers indicated they took the contact information of lecturers and were able to communicate easily just as with their mentor teachers. They preferred texting instead of calling lecturers because of not to disturb them, and also preferred using WhatsApp groups. One of the prospective teachers mentioned the following about that issue.

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*"... we don't have any communication problem, we have the phone numbers of both of our mentors, and mostly we use our WhatsApp group…" (P2)*

Teacher at the practice schools stated that they often communicated with lecturers through the candidates. Nevertheless, they expressed if the communication increased, the efficiency of the practice would increase as well.

*Guidance*

According to the data obtained from the interviews, there have been two categories under this theme, namely guidance of the teacher and guidance of the lecturer.

*Guidance of the mentor teacher*

Some prospective teachers stated that they tried to benefit from the experiences of teachers in terms of classroom management and interaction, however they could not find any support about field knowledge due to their different fields. One of the prospective teachers mentioned the following about that issue.

*"... I think the teacher is very talented and experienced in classroom management and has her own techniques, thus we try to take her as an example…" (P5)*

Four of the candidates pointed out that their mentors did not give any feedback after they taught. However, three prospective teachers stressed that the guidance of the mentors was useful and she supported them, also used a positive language. Two candidates complained that their mentor intervened them so much. Although they knew that she tries to help them by warning students to become quiet, candidates did not like that type of behavior. One of the prospective teachers expressed the following about that issue.

*"... she intervenes to us while we are teaching, I think that hinders our performance. Instead of intervening to us she should give feedback at the end, this would be better…" (P2)*

*Guidance of the University Lecturer*

Prospective teachers pointed out that lecturers provided sufficient and useful guidance, also provided solutions to the problems they faced and behaved patiently towards them. Moreover, they gave constructive and positive feedback to candidates. Prospective teachers also indicated that lecturers showed useful teaching methods and techniques they could use while teaching.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

In this research, it was aimed to investigate in a detailed way ow the teaching practice takes places in teacher training program. Thus, the views of the prospective teachers, mentor teachers, and university lecturers were consulted; furthermore, it was also supported by observations made by researchers. When it was viewed from the outside, teaching practice could be perceived such a process in which prospective teachers just shuttle to school, but phenomenological design was used in order to reveal several different variables and aspects of it. After analyzing and coding of the data, 8 themes and 21 categories under these themes were found out. It was seen that providing an experience to the candidates was the most emphasized issue about teaching practice. When the literature has been surveyed it was seen there are studies that support our findings about teaching practice, being one of the first and vital steps in teaching profession (Baran et al., 2015; Çepni et al., 2015; Kana, 2014; Özay Köse, 2014; Ramazan and Yılmaz, 2017).

Considering the expectations and responsibilities of the stakeholders, the most important expectation of prospective teachers was a useful guidance from mentor teachers and university lecturers. Moreover, these expectations and responsibilities have been stated in the Faculty-School Cooperation guide published by Higher Education Council (1998) as the qualities that the teachers should have. There are lots of research that point out teachers should be an example to prospective teachers (Erarslan, 2008; Karasu Avcı and İbret, 2016; Paker, 2008). In addition, candidates indicated they were informed about the situations they could encounter and how to act to these situations by lecturers. Sılay and Gök (2004) similarly expressed that lecturers should explain the roles and behaviors demanding in teaching at the beginning of practice.

On the other hand, prospective teachers pointed out that the mentors should give them feedback in order to be aware of their mistakes and to be able to get rid of them however they also added that their mentors did not do it effectively. It has been emphasized in many studies that feedbacks and corrections have an important effect at every stage of learning (Boud and Molloy, 2013; Soden, 2017; Van den Bergh et al., 2014). Gündoğdu et al. (2010) stated that mentor teachers could not help prospective teachers to apply the methods and techniques they learnt theoretically, and also they had difficulties in getting candidates to adapt school and classroom environment. Therefore, it is necessary to remind teachers on their duties and responsibilities that should be monitored in the process regularly. Teachers and lecturers expect from candidates to participate in practice on a regular basis, but it is not so for all. Paker (2008) has indicated that it can't be said teachers and candidates have enough knowledge about mutual responsibilities to each other; furthermore, he has pointed out that despite of the high and positive initial expectations, some problems could occur in the process due to the different charges of the parties.

Not being seen as the legally appointed teacher by students was one of the important complaints of prospective teachers, which has been similarly seen in the literature (Baştürk, 2009; Karaca and Aral, 2011; Oğuz and Avcı, 2014). Therefore, teachers and administrators of the practice school must take the necessary precautions to prevent the candidates suffering from emotional and psychological problems. The other problem that candidates encounter is that they attend classes rather than their own fields. It has been presented in the guide prepared by Higher Education Council (1994) that one of the most important aims of teaching practice is combining the field and pedagogical knowledge.

One of the other problems of prospective teachers is that they found the duration of teaching per them inadequate, even the candidates who said the overall duration of it was enough thought that they could not teach enough because they attend to the same classes together with their friends. There are many studies that show the negative effects of attending classes in crowded groups (Baran et al., 2015; Baştürk, 2009; Karaca and Aral, 2011; Seçer et al., 2010). This situation could hinder the development of prospective teachers, since they could not find enough time to practice. Improvement of this situation, which is frequently expressed in the studies about teaching practice, has contributed to improve the quality of teaching practice, however, it has been stated that the ideal number should be determined as two or three at most per teacher (Baştürk, 2009; Çelikkaya, 2011; Özay Köse, 2015; Sılay and Gök, 2004).

It was seen that the communication of prospective teachers between teachers or university lecturers was good and could be sustained easily vice versa. However, it was understood that the communication between teachers and lecturers was not very satisfied and need to be improved, and there are other studies that supports this result (Baştürk, 2009; Karasu Avcı and İbret, 2016; Oğuz and Avcı, 2014; Sılay and Gök, 2004).

## Suggestions

The following suggestions have been presented in the light of this study:

- It has been suggested that all stakeholders should come together at the beginning of term and define their expectations and responsibilities to each other, which seems to end many problems that were mentioned. Especially it was advised that communication between teachers and lecturers should be improved.
- It has been suggested to take the number of candidates and teachers in the same field into consideration so that every candidate can practice in their own fields.
- It has been understood that prospective teachers can't teach enough due to their crowded numbers; therefore, it has been suggested to decrease the number of them per teacher.
- It has been suggested that teachers who are enthusiastic, responsible, and open to self-development should be assigned in teaching practice.
- It has been suggested to give in-service training for teachers who take charge in teaching practice to improve the quality.

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