

Full Length Research Paper

The effect of the courses of school experience and teaching practice on primary school mathematics teachers

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The aim of this study is to determine elementary mathematics teachers' thoughts and feelings on the courses of school-experience and teacher-practice. In this study was used the qualitative research method. Those involved in the study were 20 mathematics teachers employed in formal/government primary schools in the Province of Giresun and in the town of Bulancak in the academic years of 2010-2011. As a means of data collection, a semi-constructed interview form was used in the study. The data obtained were analyzed through the content-analysis-technique. The data obtained from the study indicated that primary-school mathematics teachers were faced with such problems in the courses of school-experience and teacher-practice as experience, the physical structure and managerial affairs of the school, observation, teaching-learning process, measurement and assessment, duration, communication and worry. The data also showed that the courses of school-experience and school practice they took during their school-years provoked their interest in their jobs, provided them with a close observation of a school, its classrooms and students.

Key words: School experience, teacher practice, mathematics teacher, pre-service education.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, constant developments in the field of informatics, technology and values and demands changing in parallel with the ongoing developments require a great number of changes in education as well as in other fields. New tendencies in the field of learning lead to alternative measurement and evaluation techniques besides traditional learning and evaluation methods. Considering the changes in the field of education, the Ministry of Education (ME) started to apply a new primary education program in the educational year

of 2005-2006. It is the teacher who is to apply the new program, take over the role-play in the process of an efficient, effective and systematic education and training. As one of the basic indicators of quality and efficiency in education is the quality of teachers involved in educational process, the basic condition of a qualitative education is to train qualitative teachers (Chapman and Miric 2009; Adıgüzel and Sağlam, 2009; Moreira and David, 2008). The quality of teachers is of great importance in obtaining excellent students and leading

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them to success.

The literature in the field provides you with great number of characteristics that a qualitative teacher should have. Some of them are self-esteem, encouragement, motivating students, using teaching activities suitable for the class, controlling the class, creativity, activities, good leadership, trustworthiness, being an organizer, good communication skills and having a good sense of humor (Pedry et al., 1998; Cullingfor, 1995; ext. Demircioğlu, 2010; Efe et al., 2008; Demirtaş and Güneş, 2004). On the other hand, training creative teachers who can think efficiently, having the ability of problem solving, being able to produce alternatives and thinking critically will facilitate applying primary education program containing new approaches (Kaur, 2008; Panizzon and Pegg, 2008). The method and technique used by teachers should be designed according to the age group taught. They should also be made to pay attention to the issue within the individual preference of students (Cross, 2009).

Professionalism is the leading feature needed in teaching. However, there is no other profession that makes professionalism almost impossible except for teaching. In a clinic where there is no optician, a urologist can never do the job for an optician. Even though there is a decrease in this perception, the philosophy that anybody can become a teacher is still widespread. In addition, it is a fact that many lecturers working at the faculties of education do not have educational expertise in education (Alton, 2010, p:2). Teacher training is a comprehensive and multidimensional issue. Selection of prospective teachers, pre-service training, and application period and follow-up and evaluation studies in this period is of great importance. In-service training issues are all regarded in the concept of teacher training (Kavcar, 2002). Pre-service training plays a significant role in training qualitative teachers. These programs facilitate the transition into actual educational process from university education and provide a suitable and balanced distribution of teaching-learning activities between theory and practice (Çoban, 1999). The problem of teacher training is one of the most significant troubles of many countries. The solution for these troubles is to train quality teachers for primary education. It is the teacher who keeps the educational system working and makes children attain the behaviors desired and become a guide in forming their personalities and characters. The most important task expected from teachers is to train individuals at desired features and competency within the framework of social expectations and in terms of the objectives of national education (Özerbaş, 2009). As there are great expectations, it is necessary not to create any problems that the issue of teacher training should be taken into consideration in a serious way since teachers are social architects.

The quantity and quality of the education given at schools are the two significant topics mostly discussed in

Turkey as well as in the world. One of the leading factors that have an impact on education is the teacher. In this sense, increasing the quality of education depends primarily on the awareness of the competencies a teacher should have and then making the prospective teachers attain these competencies as pre-service education (Erdem, 2005). The reality known by most is that if teachers are not equipped with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required in the profession of teaching, the students they will train will lack of all these; since the quality and success in education is a reflection of the quality and success of the teacher (Baştürk, 2009). Therefore, the teacher and teacher training have become significant and training qualitative teachers is primarily considered within the problems.

The course of school experience is carried out as a course with one-hour theory in primary mathematics faculties and four-hour application at schools. Lecturers teach prospective teachers what to do with the activities in the courses carried out at faculties and organize discussions on the observations, applications and the draft reports prepared by them. In this way, the prospective teachers are able to know their shortcomings and have a chance to compensate for them. As for the four-hour applications at schools, they carry out the observations, interviews and applications required for their activities they would like to do. At the end of each activity conducted at school, the prospective teachers prepare a report and present it to the lecturer (Yiğit, 2006). Therefore, the prospective teachers are able to transfer the theoretical knowledge they learned during the process of teaching and they will be prepared for the Course of Teaching Application they are to have in the following semester.

In the final year of the teacher-training school, all prospective teachers have to be involved in the Course of Teaching-Practice and School-Experience to get prepared for the profession of teaching. In the course of teaching-practice, prospective teachers have an opportunity to carry out teaching-practice in various classes in the practice-schools, learn much about the teaching program of the related field, the course books and the techniques of measurement and evaluation, and also to share and improve the experience they have during practices in order to gain the experience of teaching (YÖK, 2008). The guidance teacher or the lecturer is the person who evaluates the prospective teacher. The prospective teacher is provided with the necessary back-up and he or she tries to carry out his/her studies in line with the support that they get.

It is essential that the tripod of the guidance teacher, the college-lecturer and the prospective teacher who are the basis of the program should be conscious of the role they play and the responsibility they have taken over and work in a constant communication and in a planned and coordinated way so that the process of school experience and teaching practice carried out within the framework of

faculty – school cooperation can reach the desired success (Beck and Kosnik, 2002; Burton, 1998). This is because each leg completes and supervises the others in the system. As is known, it is due to the courses of school experience and teaching practice that prospective teachers, the most important leg of the system, are able to realize to step into the occupation, to adapt to the school and to observe the theoretical knowledge they learned at school and practice. It is of great importance to examine the views of teachers who officially work and personally experience the process in order to make the gains more active, eliminate the problems faced and make new arrangements.

The current study was carried out to determine the feelings and ideas of teachers over the courses of school experience and teaching practice. It is believed that the research would make a contribution to teachers having pre-service training. In addition, the research focused on teachers' views on the Courses of School Experience and Teaching Practice in detail, contributing to the literature. The research will make a positive contribution to prospective teachers before they are actively involved in teaching.

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

Research model

In the research, a case study, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. Determining and solving the problems faced during the application is possible through a case study. Since the researcher is near the data, he gets to know the process and feels it closely, allowing his research to be flexible (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). In such studies, the purpose is not to make a generalization, but to section the current case, to reflect the special case in a way and set a light for the future.

Population and sampling

In the population of the research were included totally 45 government primary schools, 30 of which are located in the Provincial Center of Giresun and 15 in Bulancak, a neighboring town. These schools were easy to transport to and formally communicate with. The research was conducted in The Fall Semester of 2010-2011 educational term. 20 mathematics teachers who work in those primary schools were involved in the sampling of the research. The sampling was randomly chosen. In fact, at the beginning of the research 25 teachers were selected, but afterwards, five out of these teachers did not want to be interviewed for a number of reasons. Out of these teachers involved in the research, 8 were men and 12 were women. The teachers interviewed were chosen from two locations to determine whether the method of alternative measurement and evaluation differed depending on the location.

Data collection instrument

The data were collected through a semi-structured interview to determine the views of teaches over the courses of their school experience and teaching practice. The studies carried out in the field were examined during the process of developing the form.

Related literature was examined and the questions of interview were formed in line with the knowledge obtained. The latest version of the interview form was determined by taking the views of the lecturer and primary school mathematics teachers. The latest version of the form comprised seven open-ended questions. The interviews carried out by the researchers lasted for about 20 min and the data were recorded by the researcher by writing down. The reliability of the interview was controlled by coding the data obtained by the two researchers and it was found they agreed at 82% for each question. Content validity of the questions prepared was obtained by getting the views of the experts in the fields of education and educational sciences.

Since the research was a qualitative study and the data collection instrument was made up of open-ended questions, content analysis was used to evaluate the data obtained (Türnüklü, 2000). The data collected were read line by line and they were coded. Then the codes were combined and common points were determined, so the themes (categories) that would form the main lines of the research findings were determined. The themes determined were examined in relation to each other and given in line with the wishes of the researcher. In order to support the comments made by the researcher and reflect the point of views of the participants, some quotations from the interviews were given. Following the quotations, such coding as teacher 1 and teacher 2 were made in order to determine the personal and professional features of the participants.

RESULTS

All the answers given by primary school mathematics teachers included in the research were analyzed in order to find common themes. Their views of school experience and teaching practice were given in Table 1 with their examples of their expressions written as two separate themes depending on their positive and negative ideas.

As given in Table 1, primary school mathematics teachers expressed 8 positive views while there were 20 other teachers with negative ideas. Among these ideas were such views saying that it was beneficial, it was the first step to the profession, it did not reserve the necessary attention, observation was boring, classical method was mostly applied and that it was tiring. In addition four other teachers pointed out that there was no coordination between the responsible teacher at the faculty of education and the counselors at the primary schools; so it caused some troubles in terms of prospective teachers.

The sub-themes under the positive views of primary education mathematics teacher are given in Table 2 with written expressions.

As given in Table 2, views were collected under 3 sub-themes. The positive view expressed by the primary school mathematics teachers were over attaining experience at teaching. Teachers pointed out that they attained experience at the courses of school experience and teaching practice; their self-esteem increased and had a chance to share experience. Secondly, mathematics teachers expressed that they had a chance to make an adequate observation over school, class, student and teachers. Another topic mentioned by the teachers was that the physical structure of the school

Table 1. The themes of school experience and teaching practice course.

Themes and number of teachers	Sample expressions
Positive views over the course (8 Teachers)	<p>“The courses of school experience and teaching practice contributed me much, I had experience”</p> <p>“I felt as a real teacher at school”</p> <p>“It was useful as it showed how theoretical knowledge should be turned into practice.</p> <p>“ It was an opportunity to see how a teacher should be”</p> <p>“I believe practical courses do not have the enough attention they deserve”.</p>
Negative views over the course (20 Teachers)	<p>“Making an observation during a whole semester bored me much”</p> <p>Counsellors did not have enough sufficiency at practicing schools”</p> <p>The fact that teacher still use direct teaching do not overlap even though teacher program changes”</p> <p>“Our being last grade and having other courses make the things harder”</p> <p>“</p>

Table 2. Positive views regarding school experience and teaching practice.

Sub-themes and teacher	Sample expressions
Teaching Experience (7 Teachers)	<p>The practical courses made a great contribution to me. I felt as if I were the real teacher”.</p> <p>“I had experience in teaching profession”</p> <p>“I had experience”</p> <p>“I benefitted from the experience of the teacher”</p> <p>“My belief to become a teacher increased”</p> <p>“The guidance of the teacher in the practicing school increased my attention to the profession”</p> <p>“ As the school I practiced at was newly constructed inner and outer facilities of it was good and it was technologically equipped”.</p>
Physical Condition of the School and Administrative Affairs (4 Teachers)	<p>“School playground was sufficient for the students to have a rest and there were areas to play football, basketball and volleyball.”</p> <p>“Technological equipment was enough it was not used adequately. “</p> <p>“The Collaboration between school and faculty was good.”</p> <p>“Official work was completed when I went to the school”.</p>
Observation (6 Teachers)	<p>“I had a chance to observe educational activities closely. “The students was thinking of the courses positively”</p> <p>“I coincided with real problems.”</p> <p>“I had a chance to get to know about the school, classroom, teacher and students closely.”</p> <p>“I saw how to teach at the levels of the students”</p> <p>“ I observed how teachers behaved towards students”</p>

was good and they did not have any problem with it, and they did not have any problem with the administrative affairs, either.

The sub-themes under the negative views of primary education mathematics teacher are given in Table 3 with written expressions.

As given in Table 3, it is clear that the views of primary school mathematics teachers concerning the courses of school experience and teaching practice were divided

into eight sub-theme categories. In terms of teaching experience, teachers expressed such ideas as insufficient and lacking application, being dull and monotonous, having no connection between theory and practice, and not paying enough attention to the courses by the guidance teacher and the prospective teacher. In addition, these teachers pointed out that the negative conditions had an impact on them and led them to thinking negatively about the profession of teaching. In

Table 3. Negative views regarding school experience and teaching practice.

Sub-themes and number of teachers	Sample expressions
Teaching Experience (13 Teachers)	<p>“Practical courses did not make so much a contribution to me. Guidance teachers are carrying out their personal things thanks to us”</p> <p>“This course is lacking and insufficient in terms of teaching profession. Prospective teachers go to school sometimes and they sometimes skip. Guidance teachers are happy about it. The counselors are not informed about it. Both sides seem not to have perceived the importance of the issue”.</p> <p>“School experience was especially so boring. I got tired of watching mostly the same things every week.</p> <p>“I don’t believe the practice made a contribution to me. As far as I observed, there is a great difference between what we learned and the applications at school. There is no relationship between the theory and practice”.</p> <p>“Lecturers regard this course as an insignificant course. They think that any lecturer can teach this course at the faculty. Some teachers are unaware of the application group, while some others do not know about the practicing schools. In short, neither the experience of the counselor, nor the guidance teacher at the school made me a contribution”.</p> <p>“Practicing activities made me cooler against the profession of teaching. Things I encountered at the school I went for practicing were so bad. Students were all naughty and classroom management of the teacher was so bad. Actually, I sat on egg.”</p> <p>“I did not learn almost anything in terms of legislation”.</p> <p>“The cooperation between the faculty and school are connected very late at the beginning of the semester. Naturally, it leads to problems in the procedure and make the things move very slowly. It is necessary that cooperation should be connected urgently.</p> <p>“There is a strict upper and lower class relation between the teachers and the administration. So this case affects us.”</p> <p>“We had some hesitations in entering the teachers’ room in the practicing school. Teachers behaved us like a student, not like a teacher.”</p>
Physical Structure of the School and Administrative Affairs (8 Teachers)	<p>“Administration and other teachers were not warm in their relations with us. They disdained to talk to us”.</p> <p>“The school lacked many things in terms of equipments. Therefore, teachers preferred classical methods”.</p> <p>“The physical structure of the school, both inside and outside was not so good. Administration did not pay attention to this. Physical environment is very important”.</p>
Observation (10 Teachers)	<p>“I do not want to be a teacher any more due to the negative behaviors I observed while the teacher was teaching”.</p> <p>“Watching mostly the same behaviors every week was boring. Instead, it is necessary to increase the practice”.</p> <p>“I was scared of the students. I got the idea that teaching is hard to do”.</p> <p>“My observation of over-undisciplined teacher and students had an impact on my views over practicing courses”.</p> <p>“The fact that practicing courses, which are of great importance at pre-service teaching education, were not regarded as an important topic made me think negative on teaching profession”.</p>
Teaching – Learning Process (14 Teachers)	<p>“Guidance teachers at schools use the presentation method as the only method”.</p> <p>“I have never experienced many applications of the methods and techniques we learned at school. Teachers use a uniform teaching method.”</p> <p>“Teachers only use such methods as question-answer and direct method”.</p> <p>“Teachers use traditional teaching methods at school. They strictly base on course books.”</p> <p>“Teachers usually cannot control the class while teaching. Classical method is that teacher writes on the board and students take notes in their notebooks. Students are noisy while teacher is writing on the board.”</p> <p>“The communication between students and teacher was not so good. They were in an indifferent mood mutually.”</p> <p>“They were not using alternative Measurement and evaluation techniques. They did not have enough experience and knowledge to apply them. They were resisting to apply the new changes proposed by the new program.”</p>

Table 3. Contd.

	<p>"I did not have any evaluation from my counselor at the practicing school about correct and incorrect applications of me after practicing."</p> <p>As the teacher at the school did not listen to us so did not make a comment on my application. Therefore, I wasn't able to learn my mistakes. It would be good, if I had learned them.</p> <p>"My guidance teacher was busy with other things in the teachers' room while I was teaching in the class. Sometime he would give the control of the class to me when he had things to do out."</p>
Measurement and Evaluation (10 Teachers)	<p>"One of the things my guidance counselor lacked was that he did not make any comment after presentations. It naturally prevented me from developing."</p> <p>"As my teacher did not listen to me while teaching, the form of observation was filled in formality. It is against the criteria of measurement and evaluation".</p> <p>"Teachers did not read what was in the form or seldom read while filling it out". "Teachers in the same school with different groups would give different marks and I believe that it results from the fact that they regard this course as trivial".</p> <p>"Practicing takes much of my time and as we have to deal with other courses at the faculty it leads to negative results".</p> <p>"Practicing is not sufficient. The time is not enough to improve my knowledge and experience".</p>
Duration (6 teachers)	<p>"It is meaningful that teacher training in European countries is carried out as post graduate degree whereas it is carried out in a limited time".</p> <p>"Practical courses used to be taught as "School Experience I", "School Experience II" and "Teaching Practice". It was decreased to two courses as "School Experience" and "Teaching Practice". I believe that shortening the duration has a negative impact on the application".</p>
Communication (9 Teachers)	<p>"The schools we were going to practice were determined a bit later. When we arrived at the school, our names had not been given to the administration. It shows that there was a lack of communication between the faculty and the school". Counselor and the teachers at school should be more attentive and effective. Large numbers in the groups has a negative effect on the communication between the counselor and the guidance teacher."</p> <p>"Teachers at schools do not know the counselors at faculties. There is a cut off in the communication. Naturally, there is an uncertainty."</p> <p>"There is no communication between the counselors at the faculties. As in the courses, two teachers teach the same course but learning outcomes are totally different. They should take some precautions to increase the communication between them."</p> <p>"Even though we practice at different schools, what we do doesn't have something in common. Our friends are asked different things and we are asked different things. The difference at practicing schools is the main problem. This shows that there is a cut off in the communication."</p>
Problems Concerns (8 teachers)	<p>"The guidance teachers at practicing school feel a pressure of PT (Placement Test) on them. They are even disturbed that we are in the classroom."</p> <p>"As teachers teach depending on a certain plan and program, they believe that students will have harm in this program".</p> <p>"The guidance teacher at the practicing school has a concern over teaching all the subjects in time."</p> <p>"Fourth grade students at the faculties have an anxiety of KPSS (Civil Service Examination), so we cannot go to the practicing classes so often. Without solving this problem, I don't believe practice will have enough attention."</p>

terms of physical structure and administrative affairs of the school, it was pointed out that some schools lacked many things physically, there was nothing to help them in the legislation and that there was a ranking system among the administrators, guidance teachers and prospective teachers. As for teachers, they pointed out that they got rid of the same behaviors every week, the profession of teaching was not so easy, and students were naughty and undisciplined and that their interest in the profession decreased. In terms of teaching-learning sub-theme, it was found that most of the teachers did not use teaching methods, the only things they used were

presentation and question-answer method, they did not use any other source material expect for course books and that they preferred straight and simple way of teaching and learning process. In addition, teachers pointed out that alternative measurement and evaluation techniques, which are the latest changes in the program, were not applied. Regarding the measurement and evaluation of the courses of school experience and teaching practice, teachers indicated that guidance teachers did not participate in the applications in the classroom, while some others did it in a limited way and so they did not give any feedback or kept it short as a

Table 4. Recommendations concerning the courses of school experience and teaching practice.

Themes and number of teachers	Sample expressions
Measurement and Evaluation (12 Teachers)	<p>“Practicing files should be evaluated by only one person”</p> <p>“Evaluation criteria should be reviewed”</p> <p>“An measurement and evaluation unit should be established at the faculty”</p> <p>“Some seminars should be given to the lecturers at the faculties and the guidance teachers at schools”</p> <p>“Teachers with a practice group should come together at the beginning of semesters and they should determine common criteria”</p> <p>“Lecturers should have fewer students”</p>
Duration (7 Teachers)	<p>“The duration for practice should be longer”</p> <p>“The course of school experienced should be put in the second semester of the second year to make student like their profession”</p> <p>“Final year of the education should be designed as practical year as in the faculties of medicine”.</p> <p>“The day and hour for practice at the faculty and the day and hour of mathematics at school should be at the same time.”</p> <p>“All the mathematics classes at 6th, 7th and 8th grades should be visited”</p> <p>“In order to use the time more efficiently, there should be practice schools at the faculties of education as in the faculties of medicine.”</p>
Communication (15 Teachers)	<p>First of all, guidance teachers should be selected carefully. If possible, students should be allowed to choose them.</p> <p>“The qualities of teachers should be taken into consideration while choosing schools.”</p> <p>“There should be more faculty-school cooperation”</p> <p>“Some precautions should be taken to increase the cooperation between lecturer counselor – guidance teacher and prospective teacher. Introduction and cooperation activities should be organized”.</p> <p>“Students should be sent to different schools each year.”</p>

formality. This has a negative impact on the profession of teaching.

Additionally, lecturers at the faculties pointed out that some guidance teachers did not read the practicing files, some did it partially and some others read it completely and marked the prospective teachers. Some stated that the number of prospective teachers per guidance teacher was high and that the time to evaluate was short. As for the sub-theme of duration mentioned above, six teachers pointed out that the application was short, the time was not sufficient, the number of courses should be three instead of two and the education level should be as post graduate. In the communication sub-theme, teachers expressed their views as deciding on the practicing schools very late, lack of communication between faculty and school, guidance teacher and counselor lecturer, no relation between the applications, no cooperation between lecturers, having different wishes, presence of lecturers who cannot differentiate between school experience and teaching practice.

Finally, teachers expressed that guidance teachers felt a pressure of PT upon them and had an anxiety of not completing the program in time. Also, practicing students did not pay enough attention to the courses which are of vital importance in the profession of teaching, as they are doing KPSS courses; naturally they gave the priority to civil service exams. In other words, prospective teachers cannot focus on the courses of school experience and

teaching practice adequately under the pressure of civil service exam courses. This is the reason why prospective teachers are not willing to apply the courses of school experience and teaching practice.

The recommendations of primary school mathematics teachers to make the courses of school experience and teaching practice more effective and systematic are presented in Table 4 in their own expressions.

As given in Table 4, the recommendations of primary school mathematics teachers over the course of teaching practice were divided into three themes. The recommendation given by the teachers mostly was communication. Other recommendations were; being careful in the selection of guidance teachers, the quality of the practicing school, increasing the cooperation between the faculty and school administration, having an active and constant relation between lecturer and guidance teacher, keeping the evaluation criteria updated, having a center of measurement and evaluation, determining the criteria at the beginning of the semester by the lecturer and designation of fewer groups to the lecturer in order to carry out a healthier measurement and evaluation. Finally, primary school teachers recommending about the duration expressed that the duration of the application should be increased, last year should be designated as a practice year, the application day of the faculty should be at the same time with primary school courses at the school, there should be a school of practice at the

faculties, and indicated that they believed the problems emerging in the application would be able to be solved in that way.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings in the current study suggest that primary school mathematics teachers had more negative ideas about the course of school experience and teaching practice than positive ones. This result is an indicator that primary school mathematics teachers were not happy about the application of these courses. In a similar study, Eraslan (2009) found that teachers had some negative ideas such that they were not able to find enough opportunity at the courses of school experience and teaching practice, they could not have enough feedback regarding the applications they carried out, they could not relate basic mathematics courses and with the school mathematics; on the other hand, they had few positive ideas such that they benefitted from the courses, they were able to contact the students.

According to the data in Table 2, the positive views of the teachers over the courses of school experience and teaching practice focused on teaching experience, physical structure of the school, administrative affairs and observation. Mathematics teachers pointed out positive views such that they had experience of teaching, their interest in the profession increased, they thought the physical structure of the school was good, there was a good cooperation, they observed the school, the class, the students closely. In addition, teachers indicated that they had a chance to observe the profession closely, observed how students behaved in the real school environment; they liked the profession due to the school experience and teaching application courses. Altınok and Eskimen (2011) found in their study that teachers observed the profession closely, they were willing to do the profession and they liked it due to the application of the courses of school experience and teaching practice. Erkan and Severcan (2010) pointed out in their studies that teaching practice increased the belief that prospective teachers could carry out the profession successfully by attaining self-esteem.

Primary school teachers included in the study expressed their ideas about school experience and teaching practice and indicated their criticism clearly about the problems of experience, physical structure of the school and administrative affairs, observation, teaching and learning process, measurement and evaluation, duration, communication and anxiety (Table 3). The criticism the teachers mostly put forward about the school experience and teaching practice were that teachers use a uniform teaching method and technique; they are strictly bound to the course books; they cannot control the class; they use classical evaluation techniques, they do not apply the changes in the new

program. Özgen (2008) pointed out in their study carried out during teaching practice of the prospective teachers that prospective teachers were not able to observe the new components introduced by the new program for the mathematics course.

In addition, the fact that prospective teachers have an anxiety of KPSS (civil service exam) and that the guidance teacher at the practicing school has an anxiety of preparing the students for the PT and complete the subjects in time make the activities to be applied in the courses of school experience and teaching practice. Therefore, the courses of school experience and teaching practice do not get enough attention they deserve and teachers do not pay much attention to benefit from the applications as much as possible while they are studying. This result shows a parallel with the study carried out by Eraslan (2009).

Another result shows that teachers cannot benefit from the experience of the lecturer counselors at the faculty and the guidance teacher at the school as much as is desirable during their education. It was pointed out that practicing teachers often did not come to class and they did not give feedback in their presence in the class or give it in a limited amount. It was expressed that the faculty-school cooperation under the communication sub-theme was problematic. It was indicated that the problems were mostly experienced in the triangle of teacher, the guidance teacher at the practicing school and the lecturer counselor at the faculty. The poor coordination between faculty and school leads to late determination of the practicing schools and to the lack of communication between the institutions and people. In their study carried out to find out the problems in the course of teaching practice, Dursun and Kuzu (2008) found a result that there is a lack of communication between the lecturer and guidance teacher and this should be eliminated. This result is parallel to the ones in the current study. In another study that supported this research by Gök and Silay (2004), they pointed out that 32% of the prospective teachers agreed that faculty-school cooperation does not go on in a healthy way. It was focused in the research that the insufficient and limited time has a negative impact on making prospective teachers attain knowledge, skill and experience in the teacher training process. Even though the preparatory education of teachers is different in various countries in different duration, prospective teachers are trained at the level of post-graduation (Şişman, 2009). In addition, it was found that physical structures of some schools were insufficient and administrators behaved prospective teachers as a student not a teacher.

As for the recommendations of primary school mathematics teachers over school experience and teaching practice courses, the recommendations put forward by the teachers over elimination of the negative things in the process are of great importance. The most striking recommendations were an increase in the

cooperation between faculty and school, cooperation between counselor and guidance teacher, being more attentive in the selection of the practicing schools. As is known, the courses of school experience and teaching practice have three important legs. These are prospective teacher, responsible lecturer at the faculty of education and guidance teacher at the practicing school. As stressed in many researchers, the lecturer at the faculty of education has to be in a very close contact with the guidance teacher at the practicing school (Maynard, 2000; Zanting et al., 2001; Gök and Silay, 2004).

In addition, teachers recommended in the study that a unit of measurement and evaluation should be established at the faculties, seminars should be given to lecturers at the faculty and the guidance teacher over measurement and evaluation, evaluation criteria should be updated, cooperation should be made with the counselors during the evaluation. Arı and Kiraz (1999) recommended that assignment should be evaluated by just one person; Kavcar (1999) recommended that the number of prospective teacher per teacher should be decreased; while Yiğit (2006) said a general evaluation scale should be used for the school experience and teaching application.

Another striking recommendation was that the number and duration of the application courses for the school experience and teaching practice should be increased, the application should be carried out in a full season or in a semester when there are no other courses or there are not in an intense form (field studies, professional knowledge and other cultural courses), just like those applied at the last year of the faculties of medicine. This result supports the findings of the study by Özgür et al., (2009) that the duration of school experience and teaching practice should be increased.

The current work was aimed at making a general evaluation of the school experience and teaching practice courses prospective teachers take as pre-service courses. As a conclusion, primary school mathematics teachers made a great many criticisms for the school experience and teaching practice applied at schools. These views are of vital importance in terms of the fact that application studies should be carried out at faculties and schools successfully; since it is not possible to expect teachers to reach the targets by carrying out an activity they are not happy about. Depending on the fact that teachers have the key role in the process of change, it is also important for the responsible people at the faculties of education and at practicing schools to take the results obtained in the current study into consideration and eliminate the problems in terms of the efficacy of the application.

These are the recommendation put forward depending on the results obtained in the current study:

1. The undergraduate program of Primary Education Mathematics Teaching Department, the programs of School Experience and Teaching Practice should be

reviewed again and some functional arrangements should be made,

2. The responsible lecturers at the faculties of education and guidance teachers at schools should be made aware of the issue through the workshops to be held at the beginning of the season

3. With the cooperation faculty and schools, prospective teacher, lecturer and guidance teacher should be made more active.

4. The number of the studies to determine the views of lecturers and guidance teachers over the courses of School Experience and Teaching Practice should be increased

5. The last year of undergraduate education could only have a content of application.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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