



The Satisfaction Level of Student Teachers with School Practice

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Abstract

The concept of satisfaction as a component of internal quality has been used in universities to evaluate services, including curricula, since the mid-2000s. The aim of the present study is to identify the satisfaction levels of primary teaching students toward the professional guidance services provided when acquiring knowledge and abilities through practical teaching experiences. One hundred and fifty-two (152) fourth grade primary school teaching students in Mehmet Akif Ersoy University's education faculty participated in the study. Data was gathered through a scale of student teacher satisfaction with school practice which was developed for this study. The satisfaction level of student teachers was in the mid-range (2.84) in terms of the scale. The satisfaction level of student teachers with professional guidance was lower at 2.53, with assessment and communication slightly higher at 2.95 and 2.92, respectively.

Keywords: Student teacher satisfaction, teacher education, school practice.

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INTRODUCTION

School practice for student teachers is of great importance in that it gives student teachers the chance to observe professional knowledge, skills and classroom approaches firsthand. It allows them to implement ideas they have started to form theoretically through their own classroom education at university, under the supervision of an expert (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Feimen-Nemser, 1990). In order for the trainees to succeed in these complex situations, teaching faculties must cooperate with multiple institutions and employees working in different divisions must operate collaterally. The quality of professional guidance, produced through the school practice process, has various cognitive, social and affective effects on student teachers. One of the areas influenced in the affective realm is student satisfaction. This study thus focuses on the satisfaction level of trainees who experience school practice as a part of their initial teacher training program.

School Practice and the Concept of Satisfaction

There is a three unit structure, the education faculty, practice school and national education directorate, which exists to carry out/manage/conduct the school practice work courses of School Experience I, Teaching Practice I and Teaching Practice II (Council of Higher Education (1998). Among the professional responsibilities of the heads of these units are identifying practice schools, choosing individuals to produce/offer professional guidance and tools and policies, and providing coordination among these individuals. In addition to the heads of these units,

teacher trainers, who are rather prominent figures in terms of their position and profession, are required to provide trainees with professional guidance throughout the process of learning how to teach.

Although the content of professional guidance services are formally defined (YÖK, 1998), the duties of the relevant parties have been expanded as a result of student teachers' views (Koerner, Rust & Baumgartner, 2002; Moore, 2003; Talvitie, Peltakallio & Mannistö, 2000) and expectations (Yazar, 2008) and now include aspects of professional expertise and human relations. These views and expectations are as follows:

- To comprehend that structure named as school through the relationship between director, teachers, students, parents and through the interaction of school with the environment, as a person experiencing teaching for the first time;
- To see the natural process of teaching and learning in the classroom environment, and to realize the teaching (and learning) process by recognizing the factors that influence the process;
- To implement the knowledge and approaches compatible with acquired teaching concepts and understandings; and
- To receive academic and practical advice from experienced teachers, teacher trainers and to replicate the work they will do.

Student teacher views (Andrew, 2007; Freidus, 2002; İlin, İnözü & Yıldırım, 2007; Koerner, Rust & Baumgartner, 2002) and expectations (Yazar, 2008) of school heads/principals and practice teachers/teacher trainers differ depending on the institution. These views and expectations include:

- The need for regular contact or outreach;
- The need for empathy; and
- The need for thoughtfulness and tolerance.

Flanagan (2008) defines the concept of satisfaction as “a human feeling that emerges depending on how many of one's expectations are met”. Oliver (1980) suggests that the concept is made up of two elements: “expectations” and their “level of their fulfillment”. It is thought that an individual judges satisfaction by comparing the standard(s) he/she has already formed depending on his/her expectations with the features of what he/she is experiencing. The judgment of satisfaction with its subjective aspect (Oliver, 1992) is assumed to appear as a pleasure effect on a one-dimensional spectrum typically ranging from dissatisfaction to satisfaction (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991).

Student satisfaction in studies about the universities is often described as the fulfillment of students' expectations with the various implementations and products served to them by the universities (Elliot & Shin, 2002; Le & Agnev, 2003). The research (Dougless, Dougless & Barnes, 2006; Elliot & Shin, 2002) shows that there is a direct/positive and good level of correlation between independent variables such as student satisfaction and the quality of classroom teaching; the interaction of instructors with students inside and outside of the classroom; the presence of non-teaching activities for students and the opportunity to attend these. Given its subjective assessment, its role as an indicator of the quality of service produced by faculties/universities (Alves & Raposo, 2009; Elliot & Shin, 2002; Noel-Levitz, 2003; Walker-Marshall & Hudson, 1999) and its assessment/evaluation based on longtime concrete experiences (Oliver, 1992), the concept of student satisfaction is seen as having great potential for evaluating programs in education.

Satisfaction studies, which began with identifying the repurchasing tendencies of customers after they used a particular industrial product (Oliver, 1992; Eroğlu, 2005), have since become widespread in career assessments and commonplace in universities. Some of the satisfaction research with university students was done in order to determine prospective students' choice of university/faculty (LoBasso, 2005), evaluate administrative policies for keeping the students in the institution (Aitken, 1982; Bailey, Bauman & Lata, 1998; Le & Agnew, 2003), and determine ranking among institutions (Dougless et al., 2006). Part of this research was also done in order to evaluate the quality of service offered at universities (Moro-Egido & Panadés, 2008; Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, 2008; Stonehill College, 2008).

A number of factors affect the increased tendency to do research on satisfaction. One of these, as Flanagan (2008) states, is that universities have a sense of “...perceiving/conceiving/considering the satisfaction level of their students as a sign of success”. This is compounded by the European University Association of Universities in Bologna use of student satisfaction levels as internal quality factors to arrange/organize their other services including their education programs (EUA, 2005).

When the services offered to students by universities are observed they are grouped into (1) physical services; (2) efficiency/proficiency of teaching/academic and support staff, difficulty of field specific studies, and variety and quality of support materials; and (3) the psychological support provided to students in difficult/problematic situations (Dougless et al., 2006). These services range from university level to department level and from general to specific, and differ both in variety and content. For example, while professional guidance service programs for students at the university level have general content in terms of practice/implementation study, these programs include such concrete aspects as “preference of practice schools”, “identification/determination of implementation groups”, “qualifications of those in charge and the guidance about classroom teaching that is to be offered by them”.

Study Problem and Justification

Satisfaction studies on initial teacher training have recently become widespread in Turkey. This research has ranged from student satisfaction as an explanatory factor in projecting faculty and department successes to changes in student satisfaction depending on gender and university. The first study at the faculty level, conducted by Açıkgöz and Selçuk (1999), looked at changes in student satisfaction with teaching processes depending on their learning preferences. Another study at the institutional level was done by Erdoğan and Uşak (2007) and included candidates studying in the department of science teaching at six different universities. The researchers compared the satisfaction level of candidates in terms of faculty academic staff and administration. These studies have included satisfaction of prospective biology and chemistry teachers with services related to laboratories and change in this satisfaction level depending on their gender and university (Erdoğan, Uşak & Özel, 2009), social activities offered in the chemistry teaching department, (Erdoğan, Uşak & Aydın, 2008), and the identification of the general satisfaction level in the classroom teaching department (Ceylan & Demirkaya, 2006). Another study by Erdoğan and Uşak (2005) sought to develop a scale to measure aspects of the concept of satisfaction and candidates’ satisfaction level with the services offered throughout a science teaching program. Another study was conducted by Selçuk, Karabey and Çalışkan (2010) and concerned the effect of prospective teachers’ beliefs about physics courses enrolled in different teaching programs on their level of satisfaction. Despite the variations of all of these studies, none appear to cover school practice.

Only two foreign-sourced studies on school practice, one of which is an abstract, could be accessed. The first was conducted by Mahan and Smith (1977) and was school-based, rather than university-based research. Participants were student teachers and practice teachers in three different initial teacher training programs. The study described satisfaction across twelve different aspects in school practice including school practice/implementations, professional guidance service offered to candidates in order to make the practice easier for them, collaboration with officials/agents (practice teachers, school principals, students, and with teacher trainers), workload, professional preparation, and training programs. The study focused on comparative analysis of the changes in the satisfaction level of student teachers in all three groups in 1972, 1973 and 1974 and the views of practice teachers about these changes between 1972-1973 and 1973-1974. The second study was carried out by Kremer-Hayon and Wubbels (1992) and attempted to describe, based on the concept of satisfaction, attitudes and behaviors of practice teachers during school practice and their relationship with student teachers in terms of professional guidance services.

The relevant literature has a clear deficiency in terms of identifying the satisfaction level of student teachers within school practice, a significant component of the classroom teaching program, and in determining changes in this satisfaction depending on personal and professional qualifications. The present study on the satisfaction of student teachers within school practice will thus contribute to the literature in a number of ways. First, it will describe aspects of satisfaction with school practice and specify levels for these aspects. Second, it will use the concept of satisfaction, which is rather emotional, rather than the term “view”, which is more intellectual and used so far in explaining professional guidance services for student teachers in school practice (Elliot & Shin, 2002). As such, the two research questions structuring this study are:

- What is the satisfaction level of student teachers with school practice?
- Do their levels of satisfaction vary by their personal (gender) and professional qualities (such as their teaching style, order of preference of the classroom teaching program, and opinion of the program)?

METHOD

The descriptive survey model was used in this study as it could best describe the satisfaction level of prospective teachers in school practice (Karasar, 2006).

Working Group

This study was carried out with senior student teachers studying in the Department of Primary School Teaching of Mehmet Akif Ersoy University. Participant profiles/related data are shown in Table 1.

The total number of women (65.8%) was higher than the number of men and most (86.2%) were 18-21 years old. In looking at Table 1, it can be seen that participants are about equal in their type of education. Also as shown in Table 1, although most of student teachers (86.8%) have a positive view of their profession, their willingness when choosing a classroom teaching program is not so high (%55.3).

Data Collection

Data was collected using a scale developed for measuring the satisfaction of student teachers in school practice. Items for the pilot form were drafted from the course content developed by HEI (YÖK, 2009). The job descriptions of staff who are assigned in school practice were described by the Ministry of Education (MEB) and HEI cooperatively (MEB, 1998). Information on staff roles and the functionality and expectations of the structure in school practice were scanned (Aytaç, 2010; Kiraz, 2004; Paker, 2007; Talvitie, Peltakallio & Mannistö, 2000) (Koerner, Rust & Baumgartner, 2002; Moore, 2003; Sağ, 2008; Yazar, 2008). Thirty-eight items were then described based on this research and researcher experiments. To assure validity, the scale was sent to experts in school practice for review. They noted that five items were unsuitable because three of these were the same or similar and two items needed correcting in terms of grammar rules. In the end, thirty-three items were selected for the first pilot form.

These items were then paired with a five-point Likert-type scale that allowed student teachers to express their level of satisfaction along a continuum that ranged from “I totally disagree/dissatisfaction” to “I totally agree/satisfaction” (Oliver, 1992). The instrument was pretested on 458 student teachers. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) value, which shows consistency between variables, was found to be .94 and Bartlett’s test value (BAT), which indicates the significance level of correlation, was .00 (Büyüköztürk, 2007). The aspects identified through the Principal Component Analysis were divided and categorized by Varimax rotation. Accordingly, the total variance explained by all three factors is 53.75%. On factor level, Factor 1 explains 21.26%, Factor 2 explains 17.7% and Factor 3 explains 14.82%. Reliability (α) values were counted as Factor 1 (.87), Factor 2 (.89), and Factor 3 (.80) respectively, and as (.93) on the whole scale. Factor 1 consists of ten items and was defined as “communication”. Factor 2 is made up of nine items and named “evaluation” and Factor 3 includes seven items and is described as “guidance”.

Table 1: Participant Profiles (N=152)

Features	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	100	65.8
Male	52	34.2
Age		
18-21	21	13.8
22 and over	131	86.2
Type of Education		
Daytime	75	49.3
Evening	77	50.7
View of Profession/Vocation		
Positive	132	86.8
I can take it or leave it	12	7.9
I don't like it much	7	4.6
I really don't like it	1	.7
Preference for classroom teaching program		
I preferred it willingly	84	55.3
I was undecided	21	13.8
I had no other choice	34	22.4
I preferred it reluctantly	13	8.6

After the factor analysis, the scale as a satisfaction construct including guidance, evaluation, and communication was tested according to the first level Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Results are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2 indicates that items in the guidance factor correlation co-efficient ranges between .61 and .76, and T values are between 12.76 and 17.69, with explaining R^2 from .37 to .58. The correlation of evaluation factor items co-efficients are from .49 to .76, where T values are 10.47 to 17.92, and explaining values R^2 from .24 to .57. The correlation coefficients of the communication factor are between .60 and .76, T values are 13.47 to 18.92 and explaining R^2 from .36 to .61. Additionally, the correlation co-efficient is .49 between guidance and communication factors, .49 between guidance and evaluation factors, and .74 between communication and evaluation factors.

The output of analysis demonstrates that the model needs two modifications between M12 and M14 and M13 and M14 because of decreasing chi square value. The model's fit indices were selected to present the values the model has after analysis. The ratio is 2.21 Chi – square value (647.2) to df (293) so this value is close to 2 and lower than 5. The value of RMSEA (.05) is good, as are values between .00 to 0.5, and SRMR (.04) can be accepted as good because SRMR is .04 (<.08), NNFI (.98) and (PNFI) .87 and CFI (.98) values are close to 1.00. Looking at the fit values of the scale, the model represents a good scale because most values are within acceptable limits (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2007; Kenny, 2012; Şimşek, 2007).

Table 2: First Level Confirmatory Factor Analysis (N=458)

Factors/Items	Standard Solutions	T Values	R^2
<i>Guidance</i>			
3.1	.70	16.94	.58
3.2	.65	14.48	.50
3.3	.64	14.17	.43
3.4	.76	17.69	.50
3.5	.71	16.06	.41
3.7	.69	13.26	.47
3.10	.61	12.76	.37
<i>Evaluation</i>			
2.12	.49	10.47	.24
2.13	.57	12.29	.32
2.14	.59	12.99	.35
2.17	.74	17.25	.55
2.18	.76	17.92	.57
2.19	.72	17.87	.52
2.20	.71	16.55	.50
2.21	.67	15.29	.45
2.22	.72	16.60	.52
<i>Communication</i>			
1.24	.77	18.79	.60
1.25	.71	16.57	.50
1.26	.65	14.82	.42
1.27	.75	18.03	.57
1.28	.73	17.27	.53
1.29	.78	18.92	.61
1.30	.69	16.13	.48
1.31	.60	13.47	.36
1.32	.63	14.18	.40
1.33	.63	14.09	.39

Fit values: N=458, $X^2 = 647.2$, df=293, RMSEA=.05, SRMR=.05, NNFI=.98, PNFI=.87, CFI=.98

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In the descriptive analysis of the data, frequency, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation statistics were used respectively and the variability of factors was tested with MANOVA statistics. The level of significance was

specified as .05 in all analyses. In the interpretation of arithmetic means, a five-point system was divided into low, medium, and high after extraction from 5 to 1. Accordingly, the low level is between 1.00 and 2.33), medium is between 2.34 and 3.67, and high between 3.68 and 5.00.

FINDINGS

Satisfaction Level of Student Teachers

The data gathered about the satisfaction level of student teachers is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Satisfaction Level of Student Teachers with School Practice

Factors/Items	Arithmetic	Standard Deviation
	Mean (\bar{x})	(SD)
Guidance	2.52	4.30
Presenting options for developing teaching skills	2.68	1.20
Helping in the preparation of teaching activities	2.41*	1.06
Guiding the use of theoretical knowledge in practice	2.57	.98
Encouraging the use of modern teaching and learning approaches/methods	2.62	1.07
Helping with the preparation of a training record book	2.14*	.97
Presenting different sources for improving teaching skills	2.71	1.12
Encouraging students to put teaching skills based on theory into practice	2.51	1.05
	2.95	7.26
Evaluation		
Finding time to evaluate practice/implementations	2.81	1.08
Giving feedback that identifies positive aspects and shortcomings about teaching practice after the observation	3.22	1.08
Evaluations that show where students are in terms of profession	2.98	1.10
Regularly tracking activities at the practice school	3.10	1.12
Providing evaluations with constructive tips for learning the process of the teaching profession	3.05	1.12
Providing evaluations that enrich/improve professional lives	2.99	1.09
The core of evaluations encourage students to improve the profession	2.55	1.06
When evaluating school practice, judgments and assessments on the basis of educational reasons	2.78	1.11
Associating judgments and assessments in the evaluation process	3.05	1.07
	2.92	7.21
Communication		
Correct wording to avoid communicational problems	2.98	1.18
Sincere/whole-hearted in communication	2.93	1.07
Respectful during communication	2.92	1.04
Use of proper language to encourage self-confidence	2.80	.97
Making students feel valuable and respected	2.84	.93
Use of constructive language to help professionally while stating shortcomings or mistakes	2.88	1.10
An efficient listener during communication/conversation	3.36	1.11
Communication occurs within the limits of being colleagues	2.97	1.06
Avoiding the need for the final word during communication	2.61	1.09
Language used makes it easier for students to take risks in professional practice	3.30	1.01
<i>Whole scale</i>	<i>2.84</i>	<i>15.87</i>

*Values regarded as important

As depicted in Table 3, the satisfaction level of student teachers with the school practice, on the whole scale, is 2.84). In terms of factors, their satisfaction level, from greatest to least is with evaluation at 2.95, communication at 2.92 and guidance at 2.53. The satisfaction level of trainees with guidance services is quite close to the upper limit value of the low level at 2.33. When examining the items in Table 3 it can be seen that the arithmetic mean of some items are also close to the low level, while others are more in the medium range. Within Guidance, for example, the arithmetic mean of “helping in the preparation of teaching activities” is 2.41, and “helping with the preparation of a training record book” is 2.14. These values are quite close to the low level with its upper limit of 2.33.

Though values of some items are at the medium level on average, they are closer to the lowest level of fine (3.67) on their relevant factor. While the arithmetic mean of the communication factor is 2.92, “language used makes it easier for students to take risks in professional practice”, one of the items in this category, is only 3.30. Likewise, while the factor mean of evaluation is 2.95, the arithmetic mean of the item “giving feedback that identifies positive aspects and shortcomings about teaching practice after the observation” is 3.10, and is 3.05 for “providing evaluations with constructive tips for learning the process of the teaching profession” and “associating judgments and assessments in the evaluation process”, both of which are far above the factor mean/average.

This research was also aimed at studying the variance coefficient by looking at the homogeneity of points within the group (Büyüköztürk, Bököçlü & Köklü, 2009). The homogeneity values of all factors are below 50% and are as follows: whole scale 22% (group point average 71.00), Guidance 28% (factor total point average 15.12), Evaluation 27% (factor total point average 26.55) and Communication 24% (factor total point average 29.2). Thus, it can be concluded that views are similar on factor basis.

Variation of Satisfaction Level Based on Characteristics of Student Teachers

This sections aims to determine whether the final points on the scale differ depending on trainees’ personal and professional characteristics including gender, teaching style, order of preference and view of the profession, alongside the guidance, evaluation and communication aspects. Values are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: MANOVA Results for variations in satisfaction level based on qualities of student teachers

Factor	Values	F	Hypothesis Df	Error Df	Sig.
Gender	.99	.22	3.00	148.00	.87
Sort of Education	.95	2.46	3.00	148.00	.06
Order of preference	.94	.85	9.00	355.47	.56
View of Profession	.96	1.91	3.00	148.00	.13

When we analyze the values in Table 4 in full, it becomes clear that the satisfaction of trainees does not vary according to their characteristics. When examined more closely, their satisfaction level does not differ significantly according to their gender [WilksLambda (η^2)=.99, F (3, 148)=.22, p>.05], teaching style [WilksLambda (η^2)=.95, F (3, 148)=2.46, p>.05], order of preference [WilksLambda (η^2)=.94, F (9, 355)=.85, p>.05] and view of their profession [WilksLambda (η^2)=.96, F (3, 148)=1.9, p>.05].

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Cheng and Tam (1997) state that they began to focus more on the needs and expectations of their students to better reflect the definition of universities as institutions offering an educational service (in Elliot & Shin, 2002). In part due to studies on student satisfaction, or the perceived fulfillment of their needs, universities have a chance to reshape their structure so as to meet student needs (Elliot and Shin, 2002). Given the functionality of satisfaction as a concept, universities appear to prefer it over the less emotional views of students when evaluating educational programs (EUA, 2005; Farge, Virieux, & Doury, 2000).

This study has examined the satisfaction levels of student teachers with professional guidance services which include the guidance, evaluation and communication services offered to candidates during their school practice. This study has, in fact, established that it is possible to assess the satisfaction levels of student teachers with school practice using a measurement model built upon specific guidance, evaluation and communication factors. Unfortunately, however, although the values gathered from this measurement model were verified at the first-level stage, they were not sufficient for the second-level stage of confirmed factor analysis. Therefore, instead

of regarding the findings from this study as a satisfaction variable explained by guidance, evaluation and communication variables, they must be dealt with at the level of the sub-variables producing this aspect. It is assumed that if this constraint of the study is known, it may enhance the use of the research findings and the design of prospective future studies.

Another constraint of the study pertains to the fact that the school practice satisfaction levels of student teachers were limited to “experienced implementations-behaviors” only. It is thus assumed that the content validity will improve if future studies on the school practice satisfaction of candidates are designed so as to include their “expectations-anticipated behaviors” as well.

This study determined that the arithmetic mean of the satisfaction level of candidates in terms of the guidance offered to them during school practice was 2.53. In terms of the evaluation of their work it was 2.95 and was 2.92 with regards to communication. When looking at the scale as a whole, the arithmetic mean of student teacher satisfaction was 2.84. In addition to the fact that all these values are below the determined “fine” score interval (3.68-5.00), the score for the guidance aspect is particularly close to the “low” level score interval (1.00-2.33). As the variation of points is less than 50%, both factors and group points constituting personal and professional qualities don’t differ, in other words, they appear similar.

Findings around the guidance aspect are similar to those on professional support services as found by Mahan and Smith (1977) in one group, though not all groups, where the arithmetic mean value was lower than the determined medium level ($\bar{x}_{\text{support}}=2,41 < \bar{x}_{\text{mean}}= 2.5$). It is not surprising that the findings concerning the satisfaction level of student teachers with the services offered to them during school practice is at the “medium” level. Findings from studies on school practice conducted in Turkey show that teacher trainers, in charge of practice, (Aytaç, 2010; Kiraz, 2003, Paker, 2005) and practice teachers (Kiraz, 2002, Kiraz ve Yıldırım, 2007; Yazar, 2007) have low levels of success fulfilling their duties and responsibilities with regards to professional guidance service.

It was determined in this study that satisfaction levels didn’t change based on candidates’ gender, teaching style, order of preference or views of the primary school teaching program. This is not surprising as research (Aytaç, 2010; Yazar, 2007) suggests that education faculties, as the administrative units of school practice, don’t have policies that would accomplish this and so there are no tangible educational efforts directed at unit managers, teaching staff and practice teachers.

Kremer-Hayon and Wubbels (1992) have previously identified school environment as one of the most significant factors influencing student satisfaction. Future studies looking to determine factors in the school environment, such as qualities of the teaching staff and administrative features of the practice school, will likely provide school practice coordinators with a rich resource. Thus, although this study did not find any differentiation with regards to student teachers’ gender, age, type of education, order of preference, and view of profession, it remains important that future studies examine the professional qualities of practice teachers and teacher trainers so as to determine more precisely the form and depth of interaction among student teachers, practice teachers and teacher trainers during the school practice period.

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