

THE IMPACT OF SUPERVISING TEACHERS: ARE THEY REALLY COMPETENT IN PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO TEACHER CANDIDATES' PROFESSIONAL GROWTH? REFLECTIONS FROM TURKEY

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Abstract – *This study investigates how teacher candidates assess their supervising teachers' supervisory competence in Turkey. Through a questionnaire and an interview schedule specifically developed for this study, teacher candidates were asked to assess their supervising teachers' competence in terms of preparation for supervision, instructional planning and reflection, and collegial supervision and effective mentoring. Data were gathered from 690 teacher candidates, who went through practice teaching in their last year in college. The results indicated that most teacher candidates rated their supervising teachers as 'poor' or 'partially competent.' Although no main difference was found between supervising teachers' competence in 'preparation for supervision,' and in 'collegial supervision and mentoring,' supervising teachers were deemed to be less competent in 'instructional planning and reflection.' Results showed that supervising teachers need to understand their role and responsibilities to demonstrate better supervisory skills for an effective practicum.*

Introduction

The improvement of pre-service teacher education has been embraced by reformist educators all over the world. Hence, many professional organizations such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and groups such as the Holmes Group, the National Network for Educational Renewal, Project 30, and the Renaissance Group, have issued influential reports making a case for, and pointing the way to, the improvement of teacher education. In addition to these reports, other countries have made efforts to reform their teacher education programmes. In 1989, for instance, France initiated an important teacher education reform (Bonnet, 1996). Turkey too has restructured its teacher education programmes through the launch of a Pre-service Teacher Education Project (PTEP) in the mid-1990s.

The professional growth of teacher candidates has been an important aspect of many of these reform movements. Almost all of the reports mentioned above

highlight the importance of the field practicum. Most also express the conviction that school-university partnerships are essential for the organisation of satisfactory internship experiences. For this reason, the Holmes Group (1990) emphasized establishing professional development schools in which university faculty and supervising teachers work in a collaborative manner for better-educated professionals in the field of education. On their part, national groups have identified the practicum period as one of the most important components of teacher education (Arnold, 1995; Carnegie Forum's Task force, 1986; Kettle & Sellars, 1996; Murray, 1986). The Carnegie Forum, for instance, proposed that the creation of professional development schools infuses teacher education with a reflective approach to teaching. Though the concept of school- university partnership, with a significant emphasis on school experience, has been around for many years, it has been heavily criticized due to its foundations in an apprenticeship model, and for the lack of a theoretical base (Guyton & McIntry, 1990; Shantz, 1995). The reason for this critique is related to both teacher education institutions and cooperating schools. That is, while teacher education institutions tend to be innovative in their approach to student teaching programs, and make efforts to improve the prospective teachers' vocational portfolio, cooperating schools still struggle with their assignment of providing effective supervision for student teachers. Shantz (1995, p. 339) in fact asks:

'What is the purpose of preservice education programs? Should they be developed to perpetuate the current system and utilize the field experience as an apprenticeship where preservice students imitate their cooperating teachers, or should they be programs that teach and encourage students to think beyond the present and be innovative? Many faculties of education design curricula that espouse new and innovative methodology and then place students in field experience situations that are traditional in nature. In some cases the preservice student can become the victim trying to satisfy both the cooperating teacher and the faculty instructor.'

Clearly, the traditional role of supervising teachers should undergo major change. Many supervising teachers who are expected to take on the role of a coach or a mentor rely on craft-centred traditional approaches that favour practicing and delivering congruent with their own. Levine (1992) urges that 'the traditional view of teaching includes a linear relationship between knowledge and practice, in which knowledge precedes practice and the practitioner's role is limited to being either a user of research or the subject of it' (quoted in Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster & Cobb, 1996, p. 102). That is, in some practicum settings, though the knowledge of supervising teachers in real teaching serves as an important benefit for the teacher candidate, in many instances, supervising teachers do not realize

the real value of the teacher candidate's professional knowledge. Hence, for the teacher candidates the practice becomes artificial and they try to satisfy the supervising teacher instead.

Supervising teachers might have a strong influence on student teachers' professional development, but the Kettle & Sellars' study (1996) reported that there was no evidence to suggest that supervising teachers were encouraging students to consider the broader ramifications of their field experiences.

Researchers in the field frequently discuss the importance of effective supervision or mentoring during practicum and the role of classroom teachers in this process. Therefore, placement of teacher candidates in schools, and selection of teachers with mentoring ability are important issues that require close attention.

Today, most institutions require certain criteria for teachers to serve as mentors. But as Phillips & Baggett (2000) stated, most institutions use the requirements as mere guidelines. It is important to choose mentor teachers 'who share the institution's philosophic and pedagogic goals' instead of merely making a random selection (Lemlech, 1995, p. 210). Interestingly, in most of the cases, supervising teachers are chosen on the basis of the recommendation of school administrators. Purkey (1995) criticizes such a selection method, stating that, for school administrators, the 'concept of a *good* teacher may be essentially one who maintains good discipline and control, and not one who is student centred' (p. 14). Theoretically, teacher education institutions should select classroom teachers based on their expertise and ability to mentor or guide a novice teacher. However, in reality, many teacher education institutions cede this privilege to the cooperating school districts. Although initial contacts may be made with public schools, many school districts do not communicate with participating schools or supervising teachers until the day of the student teachers' arrival for the student teaching (Beebe & Margerison, 1995).

The criteria for the selection of the supervising teacher is unquestionably of great importance for the professional growth of the student teachers. Instead of selecting supervising teachers whose times and locations are considered as convenient to the teacher education program, the method of selecting supervising teacher should be based on promoting expertise and development opportunities for student teachers. Lemlech (1995, p.211) made a set of suggestions for the selection of supervising teachers:

'Select experienced teachers who either model the behaviors consonant with the university teacher education program or who are considered *flexible* in their teaching style so that student teachers can practice what they are learning...Verify that the room environment arranged by the teacher and the teacher's classroom management skills are appropriate for new teachers to experience. The master teacher should *never* be selected

without a previsit to validate the aforementioned and to confirm the teacher's interest in preservice education. University based educators should not rely on school district placement of the student teachers; teacher education and the student teachers are the university's responsibility.'

Lemlech (1995) raises an important issue for the appropriate selection of supervising teachers. Among the many caveats to keep in mind, Lemlech highlights the following: What sorts of supervisory help do teacher candidates need? What type of supervisory skills should supervising teachers carry? The literature indicates that teacher candidates require supervisory help in different segments of the practicum. Tomlinson (1998) and Lemlech (1995) define the areas of supervisory need and propose a shift from the traditional supervisory role of the classroom teacher to more collegial roles. They argue that most teachers tend to focus on traditional aspects of supervision. However, Tomlinson (1998) indicates that teacher candidates need supervisory assistance in lesson planning-implementing, in the analysis of teaching, in reflecting before, during and after teaching, and in providing appropriate feedback. Another important aspect of supervision is whether the supervising teacher possesses the necessary skills in effective supervision. Lemlech (1995) states that, in the traditional way of supervision, many teachers assume a role similar to that of evaluators. However, collegial supervision creates positive relationships and opportunity for mutual exchange of perceptions and expertise.

As the world is rapidly shifting toward the development of all aspects of teacher education, Turkey, too, has also felt the need to restructure its teacher education institutions and licensing requirements. The late 1990s became the age of transformation or reform in the Turkish teacher education system. Full promulgation of the Basic Education Law in 1997 extended compulsory education to eight years nationwide, and, as a consequence, the universities felt obliged to increase their capacity to train more primary school teachers (for detailed information on pre-service teacher training reform in Turkey, see Simsek & Yildirim, 2001). Increasing the number of teacher candidates in Turkish universities resulted in poorer quality in teacher training.

Some brief information may be useful to further explain the pressure on Turkey to attend to the quantitative aspect in teacher education. According to data gathered from the Ministry of National Education (MONE), the total number of students in all teacher education programs in Turkey in the academic year 2001-2002 was 197,643, and of the total 53,695 fourth-year-students were sent to schools for practice teaching (MONE, 2002). This figure is expected to increase in the coming years.

Both quality and quantity issues led Higher Education Council to restructure the existing teacher education system. Within the restructuring process that took

place in 1997, two-semester school experience and one-semester school practice – both of which prioritize knowledge application at school site – were two major changes initiated in teacher training institutions.

Today the main emphasis on teacher education in Turkey is educating prospective teachers for K through 8 grades and there is a substantial focus on the teaching practicum. As it was stated earlier, prospective teachers need a great deal of support and assistance from their supervising teachers during the practicum period. Although school practice is considered an essential component of pre-service education in Turkey, educators still struggle to provide adequate pre-service education for all due to the great number of prospective teachers at the universities. Placing large numbers of student teachers in practice schools and assigning them with supervising teachers who have a clear understanding of the role of the practicum are difficult tasks for many teacher education institutions. In addition to the quantity issue is another important matter, namely whether the supervising teachers are competent enough to accept the responsibility of facilitating the professional development of teacher candidates.

The focus of this particular study is indeed an investigation into the extent to which supervising teachers in Turkey fulfil their supervisory duty, from the perspective of teacher candidates. In line with the relevant literature on this area of study, the supervising teachers' role completion is assessed in relation to three domains: initial preparation, instructional planning, and collegial conduct. The following research questions guided this study:

- How do teacher candidates assess their supervising teachers' initial preparation for effective supervision?
- How do teacher candidates perceive their supervising teachers' competency in relation to instructional planning and reflection?
- How do teacher candidates evaluate their supervising teachers' collegial conduct in relation to promoting effective supervision?
- What are other factors that affect competence in supervision?

Method

To answer the research questions in this study, both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were used. The investigator was interested in getting opinions of a diverse group of individuals who are currently affiliated with the field experiences and have solid experiences with practicum. Miles & Huberman (1994) suggest that a triangulation of various types of qualitative instrumentation be used to validate data and to provide rich descriptions of the study group.

Therefore, the researcher personally becomes situated in the subjects' natural setting to be able to understand the nature of the practicum and its effects on teacher education.

The initial data were gathered through qualitative techniques from thirty teacher candidates. Then, the qualitative data were analyzed and the results were used to develop an instrument. The aim was to reach a larger population and to triangulate quantitative findings with the qualitative ones.

Participants

Participants were teacher candidates selected as convenience sample from four leading teacher education institutions, all of which are in the capital city, namely Ankara University, Hacettepe University, Gazi University, and Middle East Technical University. Teacher candidates were in the last semester of their bachelor degree program and pursuing credentials for teaching in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education (1-5), Elementary Mathematic Education, Social Sciences Education, Foreign Languages, Turkish, Computer and Instructional Technology. Six hundred ninety teacher candidates participated in this study. Of the 690 teachers candidates, 30 were selected for focus group interviews and the remaining 663 candidates filled out the questionnaire. Although the sample may have limitations in terms of its representativeness, the selected teacher education programs from four different universities and the number of teacher candidates were considered representative of assessing supervising teachers' competency in Ankara Province. The findings of this study could be partially generalizable since all teacher education institutions follow the same teacher education program as set out by the Higher Education Council.

Data collection and analysis

The study focused on investigating supervising teachers' competence in supervision through the perspectives of teacher candidates. In order to gather accurate data, the investigator combined different research techniques. Data collection started in May 2001 with qualitative approach, continued by analyzing the qualitative data between June and November 2002, and concluded by transforming the results into an instrument in quantitative format to gather more generalizable data from a larger group of teacher candidates, in June 2002. This procedure enabled the researcher to verify previously collected qualitative data, to triangulate the finding of the qualitative and quantitative ones, and, eventually, provided opportunity for presenting more robust results in the area of supervision. The following delineates the qualitative and quantitative data collection processes.

First, an announcement was made to teacher candidates to share their experiences related to practicum. Among them, 30 teacher candidates volunteered to participate. After the first big group meeting, respondents were separated into two groups. 13 of the teacher candidates, who were satisfied with the supervisory help of classroom teachers, constituted Group 1. The remaining 17 were dissatisfied with supervision, and these became Group 2. Five sub-groups were randomly formed, 2 from Group 1 and 3 from Group 2. A focus group approach was used to gather information based on the methodological suggestions of Krueger & Casey (2000). A semi-structured, open-ended interview technique was employed. In order to get the opinions of teacher candidates related to their experiences with the supervising teachers, the investigator predetermined the areas (i.e. supervising teachers' preparation for supervision, the relation between experience and the quality in supervision, communication skills, and so forth) to be discussed, but did not formulate specific questions to refrain from leading the interviewees. This allowed the investigator to gather information from the different perspectives and to focus on the complete picture in a more holistic manner. All group-interview sessions were audio-recorded. A typical interview lasted approximately 90 minutes.

The content analysis technique (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990) was used to analyze the data. Verbatim transcript of each interview text was manually analyzed by using a thematic content analysis technique. Each interview transcript was searched for themes on supervision. Each theme was tagged with an appropriate name and with a short descriptive statement. Later, these themes were combined under various categories. Data gathered through semi-structured interviews were analyzed in order to find out how supervising teachers complete their supervisory roles and duties. Next, additional interviews were conducted with eight teacher candidates. These were from among the 30 teacher candidates who had previously volunteered to take part in the study. The additional interviews focused on the areas that arose during the semi-structured sessions carried out previously, and had, as a purpose, the clarification of grey areas in the data set. Qualitative data were gathered through the second round were analyzed based on the procedures highlighted by Marshall & Rossman (1999). First, the researcher read through all the interview data, observation notes, and documents to identify meaningful units based on the research questions and appointed descriptive codes to the units. For instance, codes like 'planning,' 'instruction,' 'model,' 'activity,' 'teaching,' 'information-flow,' 'collegial,' and 'preparation' were used to describe the data with respect to student teacher-supervising teacher interaction.

Second, the descriptive codes that fitted together meaningfully were grouped into categories such as 'planning skills,' 'maintaining discipline,' 'collegial interaction,' 'instructional planning,' and 'professional talk.' The categories

enabled the researcher to identify the present themes in the data. Later, thematic coding was employed and five general themes appeared to be more related to effective supervision. These were 'instructional planning,' 'competency in reflection,' 'collegial behaviours,' 'effective mentoring', 'being prepared for supervision.'

Third, based on the findings of the first and the second rounds of open-ended group interviews, the investigator developed a five-point Likert type instrument containing 74 close-ended and two open-ended items based on the themes developed earlier in qualitative data collection stage. Next, and in order to achieve content validity, the draft questionnaire was delivered to faculty members who were affiliated with a teacher education program and had experiences in practicum. The faculty members were asked to examine the items to determine whether they were reflective of the competency level, to ensure coverage of the themes, to eliminate unnecessary items, to revise any confusing items, and to provide general feedback that would assist in developing items crucial to supervising teachers' supervisory competency. Based on the feedback received from the experts, the instrument was revised and pilot tested with 39 teacher candidates. They were asked to provide feedback and opinions in terms of the clarity and comprehensiveness of the items. Later, the 46-item questionnaire was sent to teacher candidates in four universities and 663 of them were returned. The Supervising Teacher Competency Scale (STCS) was rated on a 5-point Likert type scale. Participants (teacher candidates) rated their supervising teachers' competency in a scale where 5=definitely competent and 1=definitely not competent. Higher scores indicated high level of competency (230 is the highest score) and lower scores indicated poor competency (46 is the lowest score).

A principle-components exploratory factor analysis was conducted with Kaiser Normalization to the instrument. The final form of the instrument consisted of 25 items. The first factor, labelled 'Instructional Planning and Reflection' (IPR) consisting of 11 items. The second factor, consisting of 7 items, was titled 'Collegial Supervision and Mentoring' (CSM). The last factor, titled 'Initial Preparation for Supervision' (IPFS), consisted of 7 items. The following internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach Alpha) were calculated for the instrument and for each of the factor with the total sample: IPR, .95; CSM .91; and IPFS, .86, and overall reliability of the scale was .96.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data collected through close-ended questions. Mainly percentages and mean scores were used to assess supervising teachers' competency in three domains stated earlier. In addition, open-ended responses were analyzed according to categories established through the interviews. Then, open-ended responses categorized according to the main themes and presented in the results section of this study as the qualitative results.

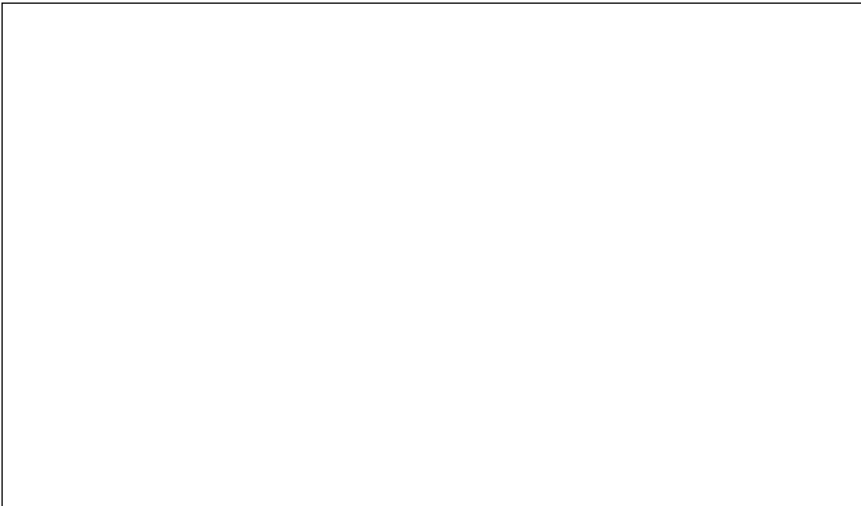
Results

The results were organised under two main sections. First, the analysis of quantitative data collected through the 25-item questionnaire from 663 teacher candidates was presented. Second, the analysis of qualitative data collected through initial group interviews and open-ended questions with teacher candidates was presented to provide explanations for quantitative results as well as to describe other factors that have an impact on supervisory competence.

Initial preparation for supervision

During the interviews with the teacher candidates, an important issue in supervision appeared to be supervising teachers' preparation for supervision. In order for the teachers' candidates to go through a successful teaching experience, all provincial educational directorates, administrators, and teachers are informed in advance so that teaching practicum can be organized before teacher candidates' arrival. On the first part of the instrument teacher candidates were asked to rate whether their supervising teachers were really ready for supervision. Table 1 presents their responses.

TABLE 1: Initial Preparation for Supervision (IPFS)



In this table and the following ones, the data are presented in percentages and means, and N's for each item may vary due to missing responses. DC=Definitely competent, C=Competent, PC=Partially competent, P=Not competent, DN=Definitely not competent.

Though two items ('organizing physical environment' and 'informing about the nature of practicum') slightly deviate from the others, the responses indicate that the teacher candidates rate their supervising teachers' preparation for supervision as 'partially competent.' The time and environment management duty is completed to a certain degree but not as sufficient as expected. It is assumed that the supervising teachers have adequate knowledge in terms of their roles and responsibilities and the purpose of supervision. However, the results indicate that only 16 percent of teacher candidates rated their supervising teachers as 'definitely competent' whereas 18.1 percent rated as 'definitely not competent.' This finding shows that almost one-fifth of the teacher candidates feel that supervising teachers do not possess adequate knowledge about their roles and responsibilities. One item related to advance material preparation for the teacher candidate to review has the lowest mean, 2.84. It is possible to conclude that supervising teachers may not have the necessary skills required to prepare materials as well as lesson plans. The responses also indicate that results presented in Table 2 might be a good determinant for this last item. It is clear that supervising teachers' competency in instructional planning (see Table 2) is rated between 'poor' to 'partially competent.' Lacking in skills in instructional planning may result in not being able to provide the sources or materials for the teacher candidate.

Instructional planning and reflection

With regard to competency in instructional planning and reflection, teacher candidates were asked to comment on the extent to which their supervising teachers' competency in instructional planning and whether they were capable of reflecting on instructional planning procedures. The results are presented in Table 2.

Supervising teachers' competency in this part is far from what is expected. According to teacher candidates' responses, supervising teachers' overall competency in instructional planning and reflection is between 'poor' and 'partially competent.' Although items that were mostly related to instructional planning (e.g. demonstrating competency in different design strategies, helping teacher candidate to prepare the first lesson plan, informing about the rationale for planning, providing assistance in selecting teaching strategy, guiding in establishing goal and objectives) are at the edge of partial competency level, from the results it is possible to conclude that they are rather at the poor level. Only one item with the mean score of 2.96 deviates little from others. This item is related to reflection on instructional planning but a careful focus underlines the fact that the item is related to teacher candidates' instructional planning, not the supervising teachers'. The responsibility of the supervising teacher in here is to gather lesson

TABLE 2: Instructional Planning and Reflection (IPR)

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plans prepared by student teachers and to reflect on it. Two points should be clarified in this context, namely that teacher candidates may regularly plan the instruction, and the supervising teacher may feel or be forced to reflect on the lesson plans. So, if the teacher candidate fulfils his/her responsibility, so does the supervising teacher. Moreover, one of the most pertinent aspects of supervision is demonstrating expertise, for instance, in lesson planning and sharing knowledge. It would be important for the teacher candidate to see how others plan the instruction. For this reason, the supervising teachers' lesson planning approach for the specific topic may be useful for the teacher candidates. In addition to that, both supervising teacher and the teacher candidate may plan the lesson separately and later compare their work. This approach may be beneficial for the teacher candidate since they seek approval for their own approach. This issue was also

raised during the interviews. Teacher candidates thought that seeing the instruction planned by different individuals may provide opportunities. However, responses indicate that 42.4 percent of the teacher candidates feel that supervising teachers are weak in the areas highlighted in this item. Also, one-third (35.3%) of the supervising teachers do not present their lesson plans prior to actual teaching. For the teacher candidate, it is important to observe phases of the lesson and how lesson plan helps the teacher, unfortunately most of the supervising teacher lack in providing this chance to their supervisees. Another important issue is helping the novice in lesson planning. Teacher candidates may demand help in planning their first instruction. Responses indicate that more than one-third (39.1%) of the teacher candidates do not feel that supervising teachers provide them with much help. One reason might be that supervising teachers either lack necessary skills in lesson planning or do not believe in benefits of supervisory help in relation to first lesson planning.

Collegial conduct and mentoring

The demand to be treated as a colleague and a part of a teaching team may be a very natural instinct among teacher candidates. Although some supervising teachers attempt to see their supervisees as inexperienced or novice, the literature indicates that creating a collegial environment increases the communication among pupils in a positive way. Thus, this may result in quality in mentoring. As summarized in Table 3, it is possible to report that, to a limited degree, teacher candidates have a feeling of being treated as colleagues and mentoring is partially effective.

Deviating from the pattern in previous tables, Mean scores of Table 3 show that supervisors' competency in behaving as a colleague and as an effective mentor is slightly higher. For example, the mean score of 3.73 indicates that teacher candidates are given an opportunity to explain the reasons behind their actions. Professional talk is effective if it is conducted in a two-way format. One of the notable indicators of effective mentoring skills is giving a chance to teacher candidate to talk (or in some instances to defend him/herself). Collegial supervision, however, requires constructive feedback. Even unintended results of practicum should be critiqued in a constructive manner so that the teacher candidate does not develop a negative attitude toward the supervising teacher and the teaching practicum in general. Although the mean score of 3.56 is far below what is expected, it is still promising when it is compared with other items in the scale. On the other hand, teacher candidates' prior knowledge that comes from the college education and supervising teachers' attitudes toward this seemed to be a problematic issue to some degree. This perception may have negative impact on

TABLE 3: Collegial Supervision and Mentoring (CSM)

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what the teacher candidate is trying to employ. Thus, most of the teacher candidates begin to copy or mimic what the supervising teacher does without questioning.

The aforementioned responses explained under three tables indicate that the supervising teachers' competency in providing effective supervision is far from what is expected. Especially, in the second part, instructional planning and reflection, considerable number of teacher candidates rated their supervising teachers' supervisory skills as either definitely not competent or poor. The reason for this may be that supervising teachers establish their own teaching repertoire in advance and are not very receptive to the idea of changing their existing routines. Also, lack of supervisory skills may cause dysfunction in supervisory process. Hence, the teacher candidates may face a dilemma whether to plan the instruction congruent with their own and unique approaches taught at the college, or try to adopt what is already used by the supervising teacher.

Qualitative findings on teacher candidates' perceptions of their supervisors' competence

The responses from the teacher candidates indicate that supervising teachers' ability in providing effective mentoring is not as expected. Although quantitative findings may provide some evidences in relation to current supervisory activities, supervising teachers' ability, and the level of fulfilling supervisory duty in Turkish

practice schools, it might be necessary to focus on these issues from a holistic perspective. Hence, qualitative results may contribute a richer picture of teacher candidates' perception in relation to treatment by their supervisors.

'*Being seen as an apprentice*' was the first issue to be underlined during the interviews. Nearly three-fourth of the teacher candidates focused on supervising teacher-teacher candidate relationship from the perspective of '*demonstrator-copier*.' That is related to the notion of '*expert knows and shows* and novice is in a position to *emulate* expert's behaviour.' Respondents indicated that in many areas of expertise, teacher candidates were considered as *apprentices* and their antecedent knowledge in teaching turned out to be '*invaluable academic jargon*.' In addition, many teacher candidates frequently focused on '*feeling of intruders*' into the classroom environment and had difficulty to practice as they once expected they would. Eventually, unexpected occurrences in teaching practicum alienated many teacher candidates from the school experience and started to perceive the nature of student teaching or practicum as artificial. In a similar vein, teacher candidates generally stated that being seen as an apprentice or intruder resulted in diminishing the value of learning to teach during practicum.

'*Inhibiting attitudes*' was the second issue. A pertinent issue was '*resentful or sarcastic attitudes*' of the supervising teachers toward teacher candidates' academic background. Teacher candidates frequently mentioned that supervising teachers are in a position to undermine the theoretical work being done at the college. Complicating the situation was the traditional setting and traditional behaviour. As candidates witnessed, supervising teachers tended to perceive their role as demonstrators and coerced the candidate to conduct what the supervising teacher had already established. This eventually caused a dilemma among teacher candidates, as to whether to practice in accordance with the college training or with guidance of the supervising teacher.

By the same token, respondents' complaints were common in terms of having difficulty in establishing a unique teaching style or in developing a personal teaching portfolio. Most of the candidates feared that they would not be able to develop a teaching repertoire that corresponded with their academic knowledge; instead they tended to become '*duplicator*' of their supervising teachers' traditional approaches. From the statements of the respondents, it can be clearly seen that as teacher candidates tried to implement their cognitive ability in teaching, they encountered the supervising teachers' negative attitude toward it. Inevitably, this type of behaviour causes dissatisfaction and most teaching practices become mediocre. Qualitative data were significantly congruent with the quantitative results in relation to Collegial Supervision and mentoring. The

qualitative data underlined the fact that most of the supervising teachers lacked in providing effective mentoring and assumed teacher candidate as novice, coming to their classroom to gain teaching skills from them. However, in reality, the ultimate goal of the teaching practicum is to provide teacher candidates with the critical skills congruent with their own academic knowledge.

'*Haphazard selection of supervising teachers*' was the third issue. The responses of the teacher candidates may clearly present the lack of appropriate arrangements for supervisory duty. It is essential to point out that in Turkey all teachers are considered to be potential supervising teachers regardless of their willingness or the quality of supervision they can provide. This was one of the major concerns for teacher candidates. Around sixty percent of the respondents indicated that unsuccessful supervisory practices among supervising teachers was a consequence of *feeling mandated* to complete the duty given by school administration. Another concern that came through from the respondents was that many supervising teachers assumed their role as an additional responsibility to their existing workload without sufficient compensation at all. Thus, in general, supervising teachers perceived their role in supervision as temporary and did not want to devote their time, energy, and expertise to teaching practicum. It can be concluded that selection of a teacher for a supervisory duty should not be a random assignment but teacher educators should employ rather careful criteria before hiring supervising teachers.

'*Professional Talk and Collegiality*' was the last issue derived from the teacher candidates' responses. This last issue is related to interaction patterns between supervising teacher and teacher candidate. Professional talk between parties of practicum is thought to greatly contribute to the establishment of collegiality and to the promotion of professional relationships by teacher educators around the world as well as in Turkey. Improved collegial behaviour and appropriate communication skills encourage supervising teachers to work with others and create a professional culture in their institution. Teacher candidates who participated in this study generally complained about the way their supervising teachers communicated with them. Teacher candidates who completed the practicum with supervising teachers who had 15 to 20 years of experience behind them usually felt put out by the supervising teachers' approach. They were often described as being unable to '*talk at the same level.*'

Another point that came to the surface was the perception of an experienced classroom teacher toward mentoring. Respondents concluded that some experienced teachers demonstrated signs of *burnout* and limited their conversations with the teacher candidates in terms of time as well as of content. Their perception was that a professional can find his/her own way when entering the profession and they did not value the practicum as part of professional development for the novice.

As mentioned earlier, teacher educators suggest that teaming teacher candidates promotes reciprocal growth and serves as a professional development opportunity. However, large number of teacher candidates sharing the same supervising teacher and the classroom may decrease the amount of collegial interaction and professional talk. Though teacher candidates may not complain about the size of a teaching partner team due to finding an opportunity to observe and to reflect on different perspectives in teaching, the supervisory assistance they demand from their supervising teachers may not be as intended.

Discussion

Prospective teachers' perceptions of their supervising teachers' competence in relation to their practicum experiences appear to be disappointing. Although teaching practice in schools may be affected by several external factors, such as class size, duration of practicum, and attitudes, most of the discussions about practicum centred on questions toward supervising teachers' role in public schools. What are the roles of supervising teachers? A friend, a colleague, a mentor, an evaluator, an expert, or a demonstrator? Are they really aware of their professional responsibilities in nurturing today's teacher candidates and tomorrow's colleagues? Research in teacher education underlines the fact that supervising teachers should cooperate with teacher education institutions so that future teaching generation can be educated to be not only competent in theoretical aspects of teaching but also be capable of applying theory into real life teaching (Kiraz, 2002).

Unfortunately, this cooperation among public schools and teacher education institutions is seen only too rarely. In many instances, many university curriculum committees 'categorize' and 'compartmentalize' the pedagogical content and deliver the conceptual knowledge, skills, and dispositions in 'three-credit-pieces' over four to six semesters. 'After a quick review of the conceptual knowledge, instructors in schools of education advise the pre-service students, supply them with student teacher handbooks, assign them supervising teachers, and explain to them what is expected' (Barone *et al.*, 1996, p. 1121). Moreover, at the other side of the spectrum there are public school and supervising teachers most of whom do not know what is expected from them. Teacher candidates are negatively affected by lack of collaboration. Inevitably, supervising teachers play the most important role in collaboration process. Their principle responsibility is to work with the teacher candidate and guide him/her to develop an appropriate teaching repertoire. Today, the emerging problem in field experiences is not how knowledgeable the student teacher is but how the

supervising teacher guides student teachers to apply their knowledge to certain teaching situations. In their review of the literature on student teaching, Borko & Mayfield (1995) found substantial disagreement with the notion of guided relationships:

‘... little is known about the student teaching experience, guided teaching relationships, or their influence on the process of learning to teach. ... Teachers constantly rate student teaching as the most beneficial component of their preparation programs. On the other hand, scholars have cautioned that student teaching can have negative as well as positive consequences for prospective teachers’ (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990, pp. 502-503).

Browne (1992) investigated the nature of the supervising teacher-teacher candidate relationships and found little evidence of ‘guiding.’ It was noted that many supervising teachers undermine the knowledge of the candidate and are determined to demonstrate that their way is the best way to teach. Although supervising teachers may have a broad knowledge of curriculum and instructional methods, often they do not share their knowledge probably because there are few supervising teachers appropriately trained for supervision of the teacher candidate. Especially, supervising teachers do not appear to provide appropriate feedback to teacher candidates (Browne, 1992). Everhart & Turner (1996) claimed that only very few supervising teachers exhibit effective supervision skills in terms of feedback. Louis, Kruse & Raywid (1996) reasoned that one of the underlying causes for lack of feedback may be that most teachers do not have the abilities to engage in conversations with their colleagues and skills to engage in team teaching or peer coaching.

Turkey has taken up the challenge of improving its teacher education programmes, considering that well-designed school-university collaboration is an important asset in the overall enterprise of educational reform. In this study we have seen how attempts have been made to distribute responsibilities and decision-making processes among higher education institutions and public schools. We have seen how, at the site of practice, classroom teachers took on the main responsibility of mentoring. However, the extent to which these classroom teachers were prepared for such a responsibility is still a question mark. While collaboration does exist among schools and colleges, the results of this study underlined the fact that the nature of this collaboration should be gone into in greater depth, and indeed immediate action should be taken to improve the quality of supervisory practice at the school site. To do this, program designers and implementers of the practicum should work together to discuss internal and external factors that affect the targeted outcomes and standards expected during practicum.

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