

Received: 13/03/2023

Accepted: 23/06/2023

Published: 04/07/2023

Opinions of Social Studies Teacher Candidates on Teaching Practice Process

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Kara, İ., Tokmak, A., & İnanoğlu, A.(2023). Problems experienced by social studies teacher candidates in teaching practice courses. *Asian Journal of Instruction*, 11(1), 12-28. Doi: 10.47215/aji.1264520

Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal the views of pre-service social studies teachers about the teaching practice process. The data of this research, which was conducted as a qualitative study, were obtained from interviews with 13 volunteer pre-service social studies teachers selected by criterion sampling method in 2021-2022. The research data were collected with a 10-question interview form prepared by the researchers. Content analysis method was used to analyse the data obtained. The findings obtained as a result of the data analyses were presented under four headings: Prospective teachers' expectations from the teaching practice process, prospective teachers' relations with the stakeholders of the teaching practice process, problems of the teaching practice course and suggestions for solving the problems. Tables related to coding and categories are given under the headings and some of the opinions that are the source of these codes are presented as cross-sections. As a result, it was determined that pre-service teachers expected the teaching practice process to prepare them for the teaching profession, but this expectation was not fully met. Reasons such as insufficient time, indifference of the stakeholders of the process, and lack of co-operation between the university and the school were cited as reasons for this. In line with the findings obtained as a result of the research, suggestions were made to increase the duration of the teaching practice process and to strengthen stakeholder communication.

Keywords: Practical education, pre-service teacher, social studies education, teacher education, teaching practice

1. Introduction

Since the 1998-1999 academic year, a course called Teaching Practice has been conducted in Faculties of Education in order to enable pre-service teachers to apply and develop the knowledge and skills they have gained in a school environment and to acquire the professional characteristics required of them. In order to carry out this course effectively and to create favorable learning environments, the practice school coordinator, practice teacher, practice instructor and pre-service teacher take on a number of different roles and responsibilities (Çetintaş & Genç, 2005).

The Teaching Practice course is a course in which pre-service teachers gain experience in the profession they are being trained in. They observe, practice and evaluate the learning and teaching process in a specific school. Selçuk (2000) defines the school practice as a basic element for enabling pre-service teachers to understand the relationship between theory and practice and

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states that it is through this process that pre-service teachers develop their professional competencies, gain the ability to apply the theoretical knowledge required by the profession in educational environments and form positive attitudes towards the teaching profession. This course aims to provide pre-service teachers with skills such as planning and implementing learning activities, recognizing individual differences among students, and working efficiently and harmoniously with other teachers in the school. Teaching Practice is considered to be a very important course because the activities included in it go beyond observation and prepare pre-service teachers to actually teach. It therefore holds an important place in the process of pre-service teachers gaining professional knowledge and skills. In the Teaching Practice course, pre-service teachers have the chance to make observations in a real classroom and school environment. In this process, a pre-service teacher can observe how teachers manage a classroom and how they convey the course content to the students, allowing them to obtain useful information about the situations they may encounter in the future (Selçuk, 2000). Future Social Studies teachers also have their first teaching experiences in the Teaching Practice course. These experiences are very important for them, because they give the pre-service teachers the opportunity to apply the professional and subject knowledge they have received during their undergraduate education in the school and classroom environment. Thus, they are able to prepare themselves before they start teaching, see the areas in which they need to improve and to begin to address these.

The experiences and developments of pre-service teachers in Teaching Practice should be examined continuously and regularly. This allows the theoretical knowledge of pre-service teachers and the Teaching Practice course to be updated and developed in a satisfactory and appropriate manner. For this reason, it is important to examine the experiences of pre-service teachers in Teaching Practice. Various issues need be taken into account in order for pre-service teachers to gain meaningful experiences. During this process, the biggest disadvantage is often that pre-service teachers do not fully know how schools function and that they are lacking experience. The attitude of teachers and school administrators towards pre-service teachers is thus very important at this stage.

However, for both personal and professional reasons, some teachers do not like the participation of pre-service teachers as observers in their classrooms during the teaching practice (Selçuk, 2000). Lee, Walker, and Bodycott (2000) observed that many pre-service teachers have negative beliefs about school management. In addition, when the related literature is analyzed, it is seen that pre-service teachers face many problems. In their study, Karamustafaoğlu and Akdeniz (2002) stated that pre-service teachers were not fully provided with opportunities by the practice schools and teachers to use laboratory and instructional technologies, prepare evaluation materials and develop simple tools and equipment. Can (2005) emphasized in his study that instructors did not carry out the weekly activities and evaluation meetings with pre-service teachers in a continuous and systematic manner. Aksu and Demirtaş (2006) concluded in their study that this course aims to provide pre-service teachers with skills such as planning and implementing learning activities, recognizing individual differences among students, and working efficiently and harmoniously with other teachers in the school. In their study, Çetintaş and Genç (2005) emphasized that instructors and mentor teachers who are aware of their roles and responsibilities and use their knowledge and skills in this direction should be in constant communication; they should identify the problems experienced by the pre-service teachers and seek solutions together. In the study conducted by Akpınar, Çolak, and Yiğit (2014), in which the opinions of pre-service social studies teachers about their competences were examined, it was revealed that pre-service teachers felt themselves to inadequate in many subjects in terms of course variables, and the reasons for this were inexperience, reluctance and the limited time they spent in the practice school. The results of the study conducted by Çepni, Aydın, and Şahin (2015) on the other hand,

showed that most of the pre-service teachers gained useful experiences when they started teaching, saw how they could benefit from the knowledge they acquired during their undergraduate education, and had the opportunity to observe the use of appropriate strategies, methods and techniques in the classroom during the teaching process. In the study conducted by Çetinkaya and Kılıç (2017), it was concluded that pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the Teaching Practice course were generally positive, but it was revealed that pre-service teachers experienced problems such as overcrowded classrooms, the rigid attitudes of the school administration, lack of equipment in schools and the need to start the practice education earlier. In the study conducted by Ülger (2021), it was concluded that the most commonly repeated problem during the Teaching Practice course was the inadequacy of the practice teacher. In addition, when the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that many problems related to Teaching Practice have been identified (Akkoç, 2003; Bağcıoğlu, 1997; Bektaş & Can, 2019; Çetintaş & Genç, 2005; Çevik & Alat, 2012; Dursun & Kuzu, 2008; Gökçe & Demirhan, 2005; Güven, 2004; Kiraz & Uyangör, 1999; Paker, 2000; Paker, 2008; Saka, 2019; Sarıçoban, 2008; Sarıtaş, 2007; Silay & Gök, 2004; Yavuz, 2019).

The focus of these studies was primarily on the challenges encountered in the Teaching Practice Course. However, there was a notable lack of adequate investigation of the recommendations provided by pre-service teachers for resolving these issues. This situation continues in current studies on the subject, and no study has been found that directly examines the problems faced by Social Studies teacher candidates and the solutions for them. This study thus aimed to address this gap by identifying the difficulties faced by pre-service Social Studies teachers during the Teaching Practice course and exploring their proposed solutions. By doing so, it is anticipated that this research will play a crucial role in filling a void in the current body of knowledge, while also offering valuable insights to educators, mentors, school administrators, and students involved in the Teaching Practice course.

This study aimed to examine the problems faced by pre-service social studies teachers during their teaching practice and their thoughts about the solutions to these problems. In line with this main purpose, the study aimed to determine the pre-service teachers' expectations about the teaching practice course, their thoughts about the adequacy of the course, their expectations of and communication processes with the administration, teachers and students in the practice school, their experiences with the university faculty member who oversaw the process, their thoughts about the contribution of the teaching practice course to the teaching profession, the problems encountered during the process and the solutions to these problems. The research set out to answer the following questions:

1. What expectations do the Social Studies teacher candidates have of the Teaching Practice course?
2. What are the views of pre-service teachers about the stakeholders in the Teaching Practice course?
3. What problems do pre-service teachers encounter in the Teaching Practice course?
4. What suggestions do the pre-service teachers have for solving the problems encountered in the Teaching Practice course?

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

This study utilized a qualitative approach. Qualitative study is an umbrella concept that covers a wide variety of complex, controversial, and variable methods and practices (Yıldırım & Şimşek,

2013). The purpose of a study and the research questions are determining factors reflecting which research model can be employed. In this sense, the qualitative study method was chosen with regard to the questions to be answered and the problems to be considered within the study.

2.2. Study Group

This study utilized criterion sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods. The basic aim of the criterion sampling method is to study all situations that meet a predetermined criterion or set of criteria. These criteria can be created by the researcher or a previously prepared list of criteria can be used (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this context, in the selection of the participants, the main criterion was that the pre-service teachers were fourth-year Social Studies Teaching students who had taken all the theoretical and practical courses that would form the basis of Social Studies teaching. In accordance with this basic criterion, interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis with 13 pre-service social studies teachers, seven male and six female, out of 90 senior students studying in the Social Studies Teacher Education Program in the 2021-2022 academic year.

2.3. Data Collection

In this study, a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers was used as the data collection tool. The interview form was prepared as a result of a comprehensive literature review. In the draft stage, 15 questions were included in the interview form, but the number of questions was reduced to 10 in line with expert opinion. After the number of questions was reduced, expert opinion was obtained again and some questions were reorganized semantically. At the end of the revisions, the experts recommended obtaining the opinions of two specialists in the Turkish and English languages to assess the grammar and meaning. At the end of these grammar and semantic controls, the final version of the form was presented to the experts and the data collection process started. The two experts whose opinions were initially consulted in this process are lecturers in the Department of Social Studies Teaching at Marmara University, while the two experts whose opinions were subsequently consulted for the linguistic validity are teachers in the Ministry of National Education. Within the scope of the form, the aim was to reveal the opinions of the prospective teachers about their expectations regarding the teaching practice, the adequacy of the course, the teachers, principal, and students in the practice school, the technical competences of the school, and the solutions to any problems they encountered. In line with the interview form questions, interviews were conducted with the pre-service teachers in February and May 2022. During the interviews, a voice recorder was used to collect the data. The necessary permission was obtained from each participant before using the voice recorder.

2.4. Data Analysis

The research employed the content analysis method to analyze the data gathered. The primary aim of the content analysis was to identify and understand concepts and relationships that could elucidate the collected data. While descriptive analysis provides a summary and interpretation of the data, content analysis delves deeper, enabling the discovery of concepts and themes that may have been overlooked through a purely descriptive approach. The fundamental process in content analysis involves grouping similar data based on specific concepts and themes, organizing them, and presenting an interpretation that is comprehensible to the reader.

In this study, the data analysis commenced with an examination of the transcribed data. In the initial stage, the researchers independently coded the data, considering the research questions. Coding was carried out based on the concepts derived from the data, and the codes obtained were subsequently grouped into meaningful categories. In the following stage, themes were derived by analyzing the codes that had been developed by the researchers. The codes were then organized

and defined in accordance with the resulting themes. The data obtained during this stage were presented without interpretation. Lastly, the findings were interpreted, and conclusions were drawn. The research objectives guided the tabulation and presentation of the findings. In presenting the findings, numerical data were utilized to represent codes and themes. However, quantification was not employed for generalizations or to explore relationships between variables. A process of digitization was undertaken to enhance reliability and reduce bias. Additionally, to augment the reliability and credibility of the research, direct quotations from participants' statements were occasionally included. In presenting the participants' direct views, the pre-service teachers were identified by the codes "P1, P2, P3...".

2.5. Ethics Committee Permission

In this study all the rules stated in the directive of the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions were followed. Permission to conduct this study was given by the decision of the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Educational Sciences of Marmara University, dated 19.12.2022 and numbered 10-13.

3. Findings

In this section, the findings related to the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews with the pre-service teachers are given with regard to the purpose of the research.

3.1. Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers' Expectations of the Teaching Practice Course

The findings regarding the expectations of pre-service Social Studies teachers of the Teaching Practice course are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Expectations for the Teaching Practice Course

Categories	Codes
Professional Development	Preparing for the teaching profession and acquiring professional experience Aiming to avoid difficulties in their future professional lives Adapting to the role of a teacher
Classroom Management	Developing classroom management skills
Relationship with the Student	Enhancing relationships with students Establishing meaningful connections with students Alleviating the stress and role ambiguity experienced as students
Effective Learning	Receiving a well-rounded education encompassing both theoretical and practical aspects Engaging in practical, hands-on learning

The findings obtained as a result of coding and categorizing the data obtained from the interviews with pre-service teachers are shown in Table 1. Examining Table 1, it is seen that the theme of expectations of the Teaching Practice course consists of four categories. All of the participants stated that it should prepare them for the teaching profession and that they had this expectation. In addition, the majority of the participants stated that the Teaching Practice course should prepare them for the difficulties they may encounter during their professional life in the future. Some of the teachers who expected to practice also wished to gain classroom management skills. At the same time, some of the participants thought that they would be able to receive practical training in addition to the theoretical training they had received through the Teaching Practice course. On the other hand, half of the participants thought that they would be able to develop positive relationships with students in the Teaching Practice course. Finally, one participant expected to

adapt to teaching and one participant expected to be relieved of the stress and role confusion of being a student.

Some of the opinions expressing the expectations of the pre-service teachers regarding Teaching Practice were as follows:

P3: *“Our expectations are that it fully prepares us for teaching. The Teaching Practice course should prepare us pre-service teachers for the profession. We need to gain experience in schools. I think this should be the aim of this course”*. Another participant, P5, stated: *“I think we should learn how to manage the classroom [and] how to solve a crisis that may occur during the lesson with the Teaching Practice. There are good students and bad students in the classroom environment. Therefore, I think every teacher should have effective classroom management”*. P8 stated the following: *“There can be major problems when you start your professional life with only theoretical education, because the real classroom environment can be completely different. In fact, in the Teaching Practice, we see the difficulties that we may experience when we start our profession in the future, and in this way, we can easily overcome these difficulties by being prepared to teach. Of course, this is my expectation, I hope that’s true”*. P1 stated the following: *“We have the opportunity to practice in the Teaching Practice course. As we practice, our self-confidence increases. In short, I can list my expectations as practicing and increasing my self-confidence”*. The participants stated that in addition to the theoretical education they received during their undergraduate education, the Teaching Practice course should also offer practical training opportunities. P10 expressed her expectation in this context as follows: *“We actually get more theoretical education at the faculty. But of course, in school and in the classroom, things may not be like they are in the books. For this reason, Teaching Practice is actually a very good opportunity to put the knowledge we have learned into practice and for practical training. I think the Teaching Practice course should provide this”*. In general, we can say that the pre-service teachers had expectations about preparing for the profession and gaining professional experience, gaining classroom management skills, not having difficulties in their professional lives, practicing, receiving practical training and improving their relationships with students.

3.2. Relations with the Stakeholders in the Teaching Practice

The findings regarding the opinions of the pre-service Social Studies teachers about the stakeholders in the Teaching Practice course are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Analyses of the Stakeholders in Teaching Practice

Categories	Sub-Categories	Codes		
School Administrations	Caring about the Process	Positively	Follow-up for mentor teachers to carry out the process sensitively Review of internship files Regular discussion with faculty members about the process	
		Negatively	They didn't take it seriously They considered it as extra workload	
	Consultation	Positively	School introduction and orientation Introduction of Ministry of National Education Information Systems (MEBBIS) and Education Information Network (EBA) systems used by teachers	
		Negatively	More guidance is needed Information on relevant regulations should be provided Information about the procedure should be provided Information about teaching should be given	
	Communication	Positively	Demonstrate respectful and instructive behaviour Introduce all teachers in the teachers' room	
		Negatively	Not being well received Pre-service teachers should be taken seriously Should be more involved	
	Mentor Teachers	Professional Development	Positively	Tips for classroom management Suggestions for the use of textbooks Suggestions for resources other than textbooks Introduction of useful websites that can be used in the course
			Negatively	The application is seen as a formality Do not leave the student teacher alone in the lesson
		Consultation	Positively	Sharing experience Processing of student grades to E-School system Informing about the problems to be encountered in measurement and evaluation
			Negatively	Not following the process No feedback Indifference of the practice teacher Taking care of their own personal affairs
		Communication	Positively	Building relationships with students Demonstrating helpful, instructive and understanding behaviors to student teachers
			Negatively	Failure to establish any communication Humiliation in front of students

Table 2. (continued)

Categories	Sub-Categories	Codes		
Faculty Members	Monitoring the Process	Positively	Regular weekly visits to the practice school Interview with mentor teacher for pre-service teachers Requesting weekly report from teacher candidates	
		Negatively	Indifference of the faculty member Visiting the practice school only once or twice during the process Thinking the teaching practice to be extra work Cursory examination of the internship file	
		Positively	He's a stickler for the rules. He follows the process seriously The guiding role is very big Very open to communication Helpful and understanding	
			Negatively	Caused unnecessary stress Feeling inexperienced as a result of constant repetition of familiar things
	Communication	Positively	Open to communication Comfortable to ask questions Non-stressful	
		Negatively	Officious Overreaction to questions Hypersensitivity to asking for help	
	Students	In-Course	Positively	Asking detailed questions on the subject Satisfaction with the use of different teaching techniques during the lesson Showing extra interest and participation in the lesson when different techniques are used
			Negatively	Testing the candidate's knowledge with detailed off-topic questions Off-topic questions aimed at disrupting class order They had no expectations Comparison with own subject teachers
		Communication	Positively	Was respectful and balanced Wishing to include the prospective teacher in collective activities and game organisations (carpet field match, picnic, school trip, etc.)
			Negatively	Make you feel that you have only come for a temporary period of time They see us as trainees and temporary

When the opinions of pre-service teachers about the stakeholders of the Teaching Practice course were analyzed, the statements were grouped under four categories. These were school principals, mentor teachers, faculty members and students. A total of 11 different sub-categories were coded under these categories.

Three categories were determined for school administrators. Under the determined categories, the opinions of the pre-service teachers were categorized as positive and negative and were coded. Some of the participants' views on school administrators were as follows: "We were not really welcomed properly" (P9). "In the first days, there was only one meeting to get acquainted and we did not see them afterwards" (P2). "They just said 'Hello' and passed by" (P5). "Good relations were not established" (P3). "We were not taken seriously" (P10). Participants who stated that

their communication with school administrations was good expressed their opinions as follows: *"The principal welcomed me warmly, saw me as a teacher"*(P1). *"A good welcome and a good relationship was established"*. Some of the views of some participants on this issue were as follows: *"I think school principals should give information about the procedure at the beginning of the internship"* (P10). *"We do not receive much information about the regulations during our undergraduate education. Actually, we should learn something about the regulations in the Teaching Practice course. I think school administrations can provide this"* (P2). *"When we go to school, we only see the school administrations on the first day. I think they should be more interested. They should guide and direct us when we go into the school"* (P3). *"After all, the school principal is also a teacher. I think they should care and share their experiences about teaching at every opportunity. We go there to receive education"* (P5). *"They should take us a little more seriously, I personally feel that I am not taken seriously"* (P9).

The opinions of the pre-service teachers about mentor teachers were categorized under three categories. The statements related to these categories were categorized as positive and negative and were coded. As can be seen from data presented in Table 2, the communication between the pre-service teachers and the mentor teacher was generally positive. The participants mostly stated that their communication with the teachers was good and that the teachers provided guidance, support and insight. A participant who thought that she had good communication with her mentor teacher and that the mentor teacher was helpful and guiding expressed this situation in the following sentences: *"We've got on well with our mentor teacher since the first day. We have been with the same teacher for two semesters. The first semester was observation. She taught us many tactics to use in our relations with the students. Then, she helped us benefit from her experience and shared it with us. She gave us a lot of ideas and she was very friendly. In other words, she helped us to adapt very easily and to establish relationships very easily. She tried to integrate us with the students in the classroom. And she made us act as if we were in our own school, in our own classroom. She was very helpful and guided us well"* (P5). Participant 1 stated *"The teacher is very good. She was very understanding and had empathy"* and said that her communication with the mentor teacher was good and that the mentor teacher had an insightful nature. On the other hand, there were also statements with negative opinions. One participant stated: *"I can explain our relations with teachers as follows. I changed my internship teacher. My relationship with my first internship teacher was not good at all. Even my other friends are uncomfortable with him now. He has no dialog with us. I mean, he doesn't try to establish any relationship with us, he doesn't talk to us. We just said 'hello' and sat at the back. He doesn't deign to talk to us. I had to change my internship teacher later, not because of me but because of my other friend. When she left her teacher, I had to move to the other side"* (P3).

In line with the research objectives, the attempt was made to reveal the opinions of pre-service teachers about their communication with their mentor lecturers at the university. Information on the analysis of the data obtained from the participants' views on this issue is shown in Table 2. Examining Table 2, it is seen that three categories were formed. When the opinions that were the source of the categories and codings are analyzed, we can say that most of the participants had good communication with their supervisor in the faculty. On the other hand, some participants thought that the supervisor did not have sufficient knowledge and skills. In addition, one participant thought that the faculty member created unnecessary stress and bored them too much. Another participant stated that their communication with their supervisors was discreet. Some of the participants' views related to this subject were as follows: *"She helps us enough. I think she really puts her best effort into the practice course for us to be a good teacher. She also strictly adheres to the rules. She wants us to do everything we need to do as pre-service teachers. We are already doing it. The communication between us and our teacher is very good"* (P2). Participant 7 said, *"I had little communication with my advisor. I can say that the teacher was very formal"*.

In general, most of the Social Studies pre-service teachers, thought that their communication with the faculty member in charge of the practice course was good. On the other hand, some of the participants did have problems in communication.

Within the scope of the study, another aim was to assess the participants' communication with the students in the practice school and determine what kind of reactions they received. The findings obtained as a result of the analyses of the data obtained during the interviews are presented in Table 2. Reviewing Table 2, the participants' opinions about the students are gathered in two categories. Generally, the participants characterized their communication with the students as good, respectful and balanced. However, there were also participants who thought that students saw them only as temporary interns. In addition, some of the participants stated that the students did not have any expectations about them. Some participants also stated that they had no communication with the students in the schools where they practiced. Other participants stated that students stayed away and that therefore there was little communication. Some of the participants' views on the subject were as follows: Participant 1: *"There was no problem in my communication with the students. It was very good. Personally, I maintain a good balance because it is useful to be balanced. I see the benefits of the education I received during my undergraduate education. Of course, I also observed the teacher in the lessons during the practice. I also saw the benefits of this. My communication was not a problem. I can say it was quite good"* (P1). Participant 3 expressed that she had a respectful and balanced communication with the students in the following sentences: *"My communication with students was respectful and balanced. In my opinion, respect and balance are essential for healthy communication with students. We should ensure that students are respectful towards us"* (P3). Some participants stated that students saw them only as interns and as being temporary. In this regard, Participant 7, Participant 5 and Participant 4 stated the following: *"Since the school we go to has had interns before, they don't see us as teachers. They look at us as fourth-year intern students, not as teachers but as students. Since they know what we are, they think we are just students. There is very little communication and only when it is necessary"* (P7). *"They know that you are a trainee and they know that you are only there for one lesson. They know that you will be nervous, that you may be a beginner...they are very confident and they can easily pick up on the weaknesses of the person in front of them and act accordingly"* (P4). *"Sometimes I see that they don't take it very seriously – you know, in the early days when they are still getting used to us. There are some people who say, 'Don't worry, he's only a student too'. There are also those who say, 'Oh, who cares?!' and so on. Girls, for example, try to behave very respectfully, but the first time there were some situations when they were arrogant and didn't like or belittled the teacher"* (P5).

3.3. Problems in the Teaching Practice Course

The findings related to the problems the pre-service Social Studies teachers had regarding the Teaching Practice Course are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Problems Identified During the Teaching Practice Course

Categories	Codes
General Structure	Theoretically good but practically dysfunctional Should be carried out over a longer period of time The Teaching Practice course should be staged as classroom functioning and paperwork
Quality of the Practice Teacher	Inadequacy and monotony of the practice teacher Traditional teaching techniques are frequently used Outdated information in terms of subject knowledge Occupational fatigue and boredom
Learning	Lack of a study on mainstreaming and students with learning difficulties Lack of differentiated instruction Not using alternative teaching methods and techniques in teaching
Material	Active use of smartboards Diversity in terms of audio-visual materials Diversity in terms of laboratory equipment Materials are old and kept under lock and key
Classrooms/Laboratories	Computer labs with one computer for two to three students, but not for every student Stuffy classrooms Overcrowded classrooms
Environment	Good in terms of recognizing the school environment and classroom environment Security measures The small size of the school garden
Time	Lack of time
Coordination	Communication breakdown between the supervisor faculty member and the mentor teacher

When the opinions of the pre-service teachers about the Teaching Practice Course were analyzed, it was found that they expressed many problems related to the process. These opinions were gathered under the categories of general structure, quality of practice teacher, teaching processes, materials, classroom and laboratories, environment, time and coordination. Some of the views that are the source of the categories and codings presented in Table 3 were as follows: Participant 3 stated that she saw the practice as inadequate and attributed the reason for this inadequacy to the duration as follows: *"For me, it's not enough, because the duration is so short. Both the weekly practice time and only in the last year, i.e., for only one year, are not enough. I think it should be throughout undergraduate education. There should be more weekly practice time in the last year. For example, two hours a week in the first year, four hours a week in the second year, six hours a week in the third year and four days a week in the last year. I think the duration should be increased"* (P3). Participant 7 attributed the inadequacy of the practice to a communication breakdown between the supervisor and the mentor with the statements such as *"I think the problem is the communication breakdown between the supervisor and the mentor"* (P7). Participant 2, on the other hand, attributed this inadequacy to reasons such as the practice being seen as a formality and the lack of interest of the supervisor and the mentor teacher with the sentences such as *"I think the practice is just a formality, that's why both the supervisor and the mentor teacher are not interested in it"* (P2). Participant 4 stated that the practice was partially sufficient with the following statement: *"I think the practice is not completely adequate. But it also has its benefits. So, we can say it is partially adequate"* (P4). In general, most of the participants did not see the Teaching Practice as adequate and attributed this inadequacy to reasons such as the lack of time, the lack of interest of the supervisor and mentors, and the practice being seen as a formality.

Participant 2 said: *"In terms of materials, I think there are plenty, because even at our university it is difficult to find a projector and a computer in the classrooms, whereas in our practice school we go to, there is a projector and a computer in every classroom and there are materials"* (P2). Participant 6, who stated that the practice school was technically inadequate, used the following statements regarding this issue: *"We believe that they are places where people with better income levels and more educated people are concentrated. But the school showed us the opposite. Like what? For example, there is no overhead projector in the school. There are a few maps in the classroom, but they are already unusable. There was only one TV in the classroom and it was locked. They built a ramp in the shape of a cage, it was locked. We couldn't use it anyway. We wanted to use the maps, but they were dusty and unusable. My school was inadequate in terms of technical materials"* (P6).

3.4. Suggestions for Solving the Problems Encountered in the Teaching Practice Course

The findings related to the opinions of the pre-service Social Studies teachers on how to solve the problems experienced in the Teaching Practice Course are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Participants' Thoughts on Solving Problems Encountered in Teaching Practice

Categories	Codes
Teaching Practice Course	Increase the duration of the practice period.
	Introduce student teachers as teachers.
	Encourage student teachers to show care and concern during the practice.
	Provide opportunities for students to receive evaluations.
	Ensure proper supervision of the practice teacher's performance.
	Enhance the technical equipment and resources available in schools.
	Enhance the quality of field education.
	Teaching Practice course should have two phases as technical subjects and course operation
	Some of the university courses should be taught practically from the 1st grade. For example, classroom management, material design, etc.
	The supervisor faculty member should follow the weekly visits in full
	The ECTS rate of the course should be increased
	The reporting process should be followed more seriously on a weekly basis.
	The lectures of the teacher candidates should be video-recorded and then evaluated together with the lecturer.
Stakeholders of the Teaching Practice Course	Improve communication with the practice teacher.
	Increase communication with the advisor.
	Foster communication between the practice teacher and supervisor.
	Informing mentor teachers about the content of the Teaching Practice course
	Pre-service teachers' evaluation of practice schools with a scoring at the end of the process.
	Not sending teacher candidates to schools that do not show the necessary care and sensitivity regarding the Teaching Practice Course
	Submission of the evaluations made by the teacher candidates and faculty members about the practice school and mentor teachers to the District National Education Directorates by the university.
	Universities should look for specific criteria in mentor teachers who will accept teacher candidates.
Mentor teachers should receive in-service training from faculty members related to the Teaching Practice course at the beginning of each academic year.	

When the problems expressed by the pre-service teachers regarding the Teaching Practice course and their views on the adequacy of the course were examined, the participants' views were grouped under two categories. Some of the views that were the source of the categorization and coding were as follows, and Participant 10 and Participant 1 listed their suggestions for solving the problems encountered in Teaching Practice thus: *"As I said, I think that a three- or four-hour practice one day a week in practice schools is not enough. I think that this practice should be done more. For example, for two days a week and these days should be limited to four to five hours, and that the lecturer at the university should be interested in the school where we go on internship and take care of us, tell us how we should behave, how we can engage and connect students to the lesson. I also think that the teacher at the school where we go on internship should share with us their thoughts about the students, such as what kind of behavior would really motivate them and make them participate in the lesson"* (P10). *"First of all, our teachers at the practice schools should understand and take care of the pre-service teachers, because we go there as pre-service teachers and we only have theoretical knowledge about practice. They need to help us put this knowledge into practice. Also, the relations between our teachers at the school and the lecturers at our university should not be broken, because what happens between them affects us, the pre-service teachers"* (P1).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This research aimed to reveal the expectations of the pre-service teachers who took the Teaching Practice Course regarding its implementation, their opinions about the stakeholders in the process and the problems experienced during it, and their suggestions regarding the problems determined.

The findings revealed that pre-service teachers expected the practice to prepare them for the teaching profession and provide valuable practical experience. However, most participants felt that it fell short of fully meeting their expectations. Factors such as limited time and lack of attention from instructors and practice teachers were identified as reasons for this dissatisfaction. Additionally, the effective utilization of theoretical knowledge gained at the university level was deemed inadequate in the school environment. Lack of cooperation between the university faculty and the practice schools, as well as insufficient physical resources, posed significant challenges.

The results of this study align with previous research conducted by Gündoğdu, Bay, Coşkun, and Albez (2010), which also highlighted the inadequacy of cooperation between faculty and practice schools, leading to various problems. Furthermore, the study revealed a lack of effective utilization of in-class activities and materials during the Teaching Practice, which is consistent with the findings of Akpınar and the others (2014), who observed difficulties in selecting methods, subject knowledge, and communication among pre-service teachers.

In terms of communication, the study identified insufficient interaction between pre-service teachers and administrators/teachers at the practice schools, hindering the acquisition of crucial information related to the teaching profession. This limitation prevented pre-service teachers from gaining comprehensive experience in school management. These findings echo the study by Ülger (2021), who highlighted administration-related inadequacies as a recurring problem in the Teaching Practice Course.

Overall, the study shed light on the challenges faced by pre-service Social Studies teachers during the Teaching Practice, emphasizing the need for enhanced cooperation, improved resource allocation, and better communication to address these issues.

In this study, the majority of the pre-service teachers expressed positive opinions about the lecturers' support and guidance during the Teaching Practice. They acknowledged that the

lecturers at the university provided the necessary information and assistance regarding the practice. Similar findings were reported by Çepni and the others (2015), who found that pre-service teachers were satisfied with the Teaching Practice process and gained valuable experience. However, it was noted that the prospective teachers did not have a structured planning process for implementing the current curriculum. This indicated a limitation in their ability to plan and prepare lesson plans aligned with the curriculum.

The participants also highlighted difficulties in communication with the mentor teacher, school administration and teaching staff. They suggested that solving the challenges faced during the Teaching Practice should involve tripartite coordination among the university, pre-service teachers, and practice schools. It is important to establish an effective communication network between university lecturers, practice school teachers and administrators. Regular meetings and seminars can facilitate cooperation and address the problems faced by the candidates.

Furthermore, establishing collaboration between schools and faculties can allow pre-service teachers to observe administrative and socio-cultural activities in the school, as well as actively participate in related activities during their time in the practice schools. Adequate monitoring and periodic evaluation of candidates' teaching activities by lecturers will enhance the quality of the teaching practice. Addressing one of the concerns raised by pre-service teachers, it is suggested that theoretical courses at the university should include practical training sessions, going beyond mere information transfer.

Regarding the adequacy of the Teaching Practice in preparing pre-service teachers for the profession, the findings indicated that most participants did not consider it sufficient. Reasons cited for this inadequacy included time constraints, lack of communication between the supervisor in the faculty and the practice teacher, inadequate and monotonous practice teachers, viewing the practice as a formality, and insufficient interest from both the practice teacher and the faculty member. To address this issue and improve the quality of the Teaching Practice, suggestions from pre-service teachers included increasing the duration of the practice, improving education in the subject, enhancing communication between the practice teacher and faculty member, establishing communication between the practice teacher and the mentor, introducing pre-service teachers as teachers, fostering a caring attitude towards the practice, providing opportunities for student evaluation, ensuring supervision by the practice teacher, and enhancing the technical resources of schools.

In summary, the study concluded that pre-service teachers have high expectations for the Teaching Practice Course, hoping that it will effectively prepare them for the teaching profession. However, most participants expressed dissatisfaction with the adequacy of the practice. Recommendations derived from the study's findings are presented below. Based on the research, the following recommendations can be made to address the issues identified in the Teaching Practice for pre-service Social Studies teachers:

- ✓ Increase the duration of the Teaching Practice: Recognizing that the current duration of the practice is insufficient, it is recommended that the duration of the Teaching Practicum be extended. This will provide pre-service teachers with more time to gain valuable experience and better prepare for their future profession. Furthermore, this extension should be implemented not only at the senior undergraduate level but also in other years of study to enhance practical training opportunities.
- ✓ Improve communication among stakeholders: To address the lack of communication between stakeholders, measures should be taken to enhance communication channels. In-service seminars and workshops should be organized specifically for teaching staff, practice

teachers, and school administrators to promote effective collaboration and exchange of information. Increasing inspections and monitoring will ensure that communication is prioritized and maintained throughout the Teaching Practice process.

- ✓ Improve how pre-service teachers are perceived: It is important to address the issue of pre-service teachers not being taken seriously by students in practice schools. Practice teachers and school administrators should actively work towards creating an environment that recognizes and values the role of pre-service teachers. This can be achieved through training and support for mentor teachers, raising awareness among students about the significance of pre-service teachers, and potentially making legislative changes to reinforce the importance of pre-service teachers' roles during their practice.

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Ethics Committee Permission

In this study all the rules stated in the directive of the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions were followed. Permission to conduct this study was given by the decision of the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Educational Sciences of Marmara University, dated 19.12.2022 and numbered 10-13.