

ANOMALIES ASSOCIATED WITH SCHOOL EXPERIENCES: WHAT TEACHER CANDIDATES ENCOUNTER

OKUL DENEYİMİNDE ÇELİŞKİLER: ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARI ALANDA NELERLE KARŞILAŞIYOR

Ercan KIRAZ*

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this review is to underline some important aspects of school experiences stated in the literature. All individuals desire a better-educated teacher in the field. Even though universities and schools of education are insisting on educating future teachers more competently than ever before, teacher educators are kind of negligent to the realities during teaching practicum. As a requirement of pre-service education, teacher candidates are being sent to public schools to practice what they have learnt in college. But what they have encountered should be known by educators to overcome the problems. This review mainly concentrates on the relationship among teacher candidates and supervising teachers and its unexpected results.

KEY WORDS: Supervision skills, supervising teachers, school experiences, professional interaction.

ÖZET: Bu derlemenin amacı literatürde konu edilen okul uygulamalarındaki bazı önemli noktaları ortaya koymaktır. Alanda iyi eğitilmiş öğretmenler herkesin arzusudur. Üniversiteler ve eğitim fakülteleri geleceğin öğretmenlerinin iyi yetişmesinde her zamankinden daha ısrarlı olmalarına rağmen öğretmen eğitimcileri öğretmenlik uygulamalarına bir nevi ihmalkar kalabilmekteler. Öğretmen adayları fakültede öğrendiklerini uygulamak için okullara gönderiliyorlar. Fakat onların okullarda karşılaştıkları sorunlar eğitimciler tarafından bilinmeli ki çözülebilir. Bu derleme aday öğretmenle rehber öğretmen arasındaki ilişkinin beklenmedik sonuçlarına odaklanmaktadır.

ANAHTAR SÖZCÜKLER: Rehberlik becerileri, rehber öğretmenler, okul deneyimi, mesleki etkileşim

1. INTRODUCTION

Beginning teachers generally state that teaching practice was the most valuable experience of their preparation and that the cooperating/supervising teacher was the person from whom they learned the most (Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Griffin, 1983). Consequently,

classroom teachers who are also supervising teachers are often considered silent participants in teacher education. It is the classroom teacher who, because of close and ongoing interaction during the clinical practice period, potentially contributes the greatest influence on the development of a student teacher (Stanulis & Jeffers 1995). During this learning process, supervising teachers are in a position to watch the growth of student teachers as they develop into professional educators. Their expertise in teaching is critical to the pre-service program because supervising teachers must perform as model teachers, possessing broad knowledge in understanding both the education disciplines and pedagogy. In fact, they are expected to demonstrate their knowledge in professional ways because there is a great need to transform the traditional role of the "supervising teacher" into a true "school-based teacher educator" who can serve as role model, mentor, and coach.

It is a commonly held belief that experts in the teaching profession are judged by the length of their teaching. However, the growing emphasis on learning and teaching as well as the change in the role expectations for teachers in general require significantly better definitions of professionalism and professional expertise. Consequently, despite the claim by a number of researchers, expertise based on years spent in teaching is not the most important factor in determining expertise. Of course, teachers with many years in teaching clearly have more practical experience than do novice or beginning teachers, but experience is not the critical factor. More important is the way professional

*Assist. Prof., BAÜ, Necatibey School of Education, Dept. of Educational Sciences

knowledge is organized and used. Sternberg and Horvath (1995) stated "experts and novices differ not only in the amount of knowledge they have but also in the manner in which that knowledge is organized in memory" (p.11). To extend the concept of "expert", the stages of teaching must be delineated and defined. What does it mean to be an expert who plays an essential role in student teachers' professional growth? Shulman (1986) proposes three kinds of knowledge that clearly relate to expertise:

...knowledge about subject matter they are teaching (content knowledge), knowledge of general instructional strategies (pedagogical knowledge), and knowledge of specific strategies for teaching a particular subject matter (pedagogical content knowledge). Pedagogical content knowledge enables teachers to make connections between their knowledge of pedagogy and their knowledge of content.
...(p. 37)

Currently though, many supervising teachers who are expected to take on the role of coach and mentor rely on craft-centered traditional approaches which favor practicing and delivering the same knowledge congruent with their own.

Levine (cited in Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster & Cobb, 1996) underlines 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"(p. 102).

If this is the case, then, what sort of anomalies student teachers face during their teaching practicum becomes an important aspect to consider in terms of professional growth.

2. TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISING TEACHERS AND STUDENT TEACHER

2.1 Apprentice/Unequal Relationships

Despite the ongoing discussion about improving the relationships between the

supervising teacher and the student teacher, in many schools the patterns of relationship still exhibit the traditional aspects of that relationship. Generally, student teachers are still considered to be apprentices to the supervising teacher. Many supervising teachers still believe in traditional ways of supervision and view student teachers as apprentices (Shant, 1995). In a study of student teacher-supervising teacher relationships, Kapuscinski (1997) reported that the majority of intern-master teacher relationships took the form of master-apprenticeship.

...the intern perceiving the cooperating teacher as the expert and attempting to emulate his/her teaching behavior. At times the cooperating teacher was responsible for directing the relationship to that end. He or she insisted on setting the pace of the course, dictating methodology, and determining which sources would be used. (p. 5)

Posner (1993) stated, "the student teacher is not typically seen as an equal member of a teaching team" (p.12). This perception is a major obstacle for the student teachers because, in many field experiences, shared responsibility of teaching between the supervising teacher and the student teachers is seen infrequently. Hence, student teachers feel like intruders into this environment and may not practice their student teaching as they once expected they would (Johnston, 1994). Unfortunately, student teachers that are placed into this type of classroom, where their supervising teachers are not aware of the importance of their supervisory roles, may come to perceive their practicum experience as somewhat artificial. Furthermore, when the student teacher perceives the nature of student teaching as artificial, he/she diminishes its value as a learning experience and begins imitating the supervising teacher's teaching (Valli, 1992). Guyton & McIntyre (1990) state that when student teachers interact with their supervising teachers, the content of interaction sometimes creates problems in that student teachers often simply mimic or copy their cooperating/supervising teachers' behavior

without understanding the reasons behind those actions. The student teachers then come to the point where they accept those behaviors mindlessly. Exner (1995) in reference to this type of response, states that the relationship between supervising teachers and student teachers is often limited to supervising teachers modeling and student teachers copying with little or no questioning. Furthermore, Valli (1992) asserts:

...when student teachers merely imitate their cooperating teachers they experience difficulty of their own teaching because they have not developed a consistent, internalized philosophy of instruction or have not found a style which suits them, and cannot adapt their behavior to new and different situations. (p. 19)

Therefore, the teaching opportunity for the student teachers in field experiences becomes mediocre.

Conflicts also arise between theory and practice. For example, when student teachers try to implement what they are learning in methodology courses during the actual field experience, many find themselves on the horns of a dilemma—teaching the way that the supervising teacher does or using their own knowledge garnered from university courses. Lucas (1996) defines the problematic relationship between supervising teachers and student teachers in field experiences:

...oftentimes, what happens instead is that the student teacher, feeling overwhelmed and stressed by the situation, reacts by jettisoning earlier-learned precepts and teaching methods. The student [teacher] reverts back to a more primitive survival mode, struggling to establish authority, to keep the children attentive and on task, and maintains classroom control. The [student] teacher's entire focus is narrowed, fastening on strategies for handling pupils' behavior much more than it is on facilitating their learning...[for most student teachers] what has been learned in pre-service courses may be undone or at least come to seem increasingly irrelevant. (p. 130)

2.2 Inhibiting Attitudes of Supervising Teachers

Generally, during field experiences, student teachers continuously try to implement what they have learned from university courses. Also, teacher educators encourage student teachers develop their unique teaching style and teach meaningfully. Even though student teachers attempt to use their pre-service knowledge in practice classrooms, Shantz (1995) stated that supervising teachers are often "resentful or sarcastic" about what student teachers are taught in their methodology courses and what they are expected to practice during field experiences. Then too, in many instances, supervising teachers appear to undermine the theoretical work being done at the university because, in general, supervising teachers do not question the wisdom of practice or model a variety of effective teaching strategies. Especially pertinent here is the work of Darling-Hammond and Goodwin (1995) which found that in many instances learning to teach is seen as a "craft," an attitude which does not necessarily encourage investigation into teaching but accepting existing circumstances and goals.

On the other end of the attitude spectrum, is the widely held belief that "teachers are born, not made, and that each intern would develop his/her own teaching style if given freedom to do so" (Kapuscinski, 1997). Traditionally, supervising teachers who believe that the teaching profession is an art often limit the opportunities for the interns to observe, encourage independent planning, and gave insufficient supervision. Darling-Hammond and Goodwin (1993) maintain that individuals who perceive teaching as an art generally emphasize personal creativity and adaptability. In other words, "People who consider teaching as an art might believe that teachers are born rather than developed; some fear that teaching practice conceived this way could become so individual as to be idiosyncratic" (p. 24). Moreover, many supervising teachers tend to say "forget

everything they taught you back in college about teaching...Now you'll see what it's really like" (Lucas, 1996). Thus, the college teaching courses are not really reinforced in this type of field experience. Lucas (1996) maintains:

Indeed, [college preparation] may be deliberately undermined or contradicted by the experienced classroom teacher to whom the student [teacher] is assigned.... It is not to be wondered at, in such situations, that the student teacher eventually concludes that his or her prior training was "too idealistic" and "impractical." (p. 131)

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) indicated that many supervising teachers do not share ideas and talk about school problems, but instead tend to develop ownership of teaching specifically and the profession in general. Their researches stated that:

The traditional school organizations separate staff members from one another and from the external environment. Inside school, teachers are inclined to think in terms of "my classroom," "my subject," "my kids." Few schools are structured to allow teachers to think in terms of shared problems or broader organizational goals. (p. 601)

Complicating the situation is the aspects of many traditional settings where supervising teachers tend to perceive their role as demonstrators and expect student teachers to deliver an instruction similar to the one the supervising teachers deliver (Shantz, 1995). In reality, supervising teachers actually undermine their student teachers' knowledge and try to influence them to choose the teaching method or style that is very similar to what the supervising teacher already established. In many of today's schools, supervising teachers have the common belief that student teachers are in their classroom to learn how to manage and instruct. Feedback is given to student teachers to encourage them to develop a style more congruent with the supervising teachers' own teaching styles. Then, if the student teachers demonstrate resistance, they are not welcomed to the classrooms. For instance, Koerner studied eight

experienced supervising teachers and found five negative consequences of having a student teacher in their classroom:

1. Interruption of instruction
2. Displacement of the teacher from a central position in the classroom
3. Disruption of the classroom routine
4. Breaking the isolation of the classroom teacher shifting of the teacher's time and energy to instruction of the student teacher. (Cited in Hamlin, 1997)

2.3 Supervising Teachers as Evaluators

Traditionally, supervising teachers and university coordinators are responsible for the evaluation of student teachers. Their evaluation ought to help student teachers achieve their potential and should be objective (Anderson, Major & Mitchell, 1992). However, Stanulis and Jeffers (1995) reviewed the importance of the relationship as another important issue of interaction between student teachers and supervising teachers. They called it *complicated relationship* because it is tangled in issues of knowledge and authority. In many teacher education programs, student teachers consider their supervising teacher as an evaluator or grader rather than as a colleague. Preconceptions of student teachers about their supervising teachers' evaluator role may prevent the student teacher from establishing close relations with their supervising teachers. Lemlech (1995) states that master teachers can be a great help to the novice teacher, "if the assistance is provided in a nonevaluative way. If the novice teachers feel that their needs are reported to the administrator, they are less likely to be receptive of assistance proffered by a mentor teacher" (p. 218).

2.4 Haphazard Selection of Supervising Teachers

Even more disconcerting is Henry's (1995) finding that, in many traditional arrangements, there are no specific requirements for being a supervising teacher. It is important to select supervising teachers "who share the institution's philosophic and pedagogic goals" (Lemlech, 1995). In most of the cases, supervising

teachers are chosen based on the recommendation of school administrators. Purkey (1995) criticizes the 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 centered” (p. 14). Moreover, supervising teachers are often selected based on years of experience in teaching, even though their experiences in teaching may not precisely be related to good teaching and to supervision. Theoretically, teacher education institutions should select their supervising teachers based on their expertise and ability to mentor a novice teacher. In addition, many teacher education institutions rely on placements by cooperating schools where school officials often make last-minute assignments of convenience rather than placements, which are expected to provide effective student teaching experiences and professional development opportunities for student teachers (Goodlad, 1991). Interestingly, some teacher education programs ignore the value of expertise in teaching and assume that any experienced teacher can be a supervising teacher for the student teaching program. O’Bryan (1995) found that in some institutions teacher educators think that even an inexperienced person can adequately serve as a mentor or supervising teacher. To make matters worse, student teaching supervision for many supervising teachers is an additional responsibility that is added to their existing heavy workload without sufficient compensation (Lucas, 1996).

2.5 Supervising Teachers Lack Training

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. Borko and Mayfield (1995) in their current review of the literature on student teaching 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. (Cited in Guyton & McIntyre, 1990)

Browne (1992) investigated the nature of the supervising teacher-student teacher relationships and found little evidence of “guiding.” 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 who are appropriately trained for supervision of the student teacher. In most cases, supervising teachers do not appear to provide appropriate feedback to student teachers (Browne, 1992). Everhart and Turner (1996) claimed that only very few supervising teachers exhibit effective supervision skills in terms of feedback. Louis, Kruse, and Raywid (1996) reasoned that one of the underlying causes for the lack of feedback might 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. Intentionally or unintentionally, the supervising teachers force their own interpretations of educational philosophy on the student teachers’ thoughts (Pape, 1993). One reason for this may be that many teachers are not accustomed to talking about what happens in their classrooms or working with other colleagues and they also limit their interactions with their student teachers. Reecer (1995) states that:

...the teachers were not accustomed to reflecting on their teaching and did not have analytical tools to do so. Discussing their teaching generally meant talking about which kids were having a hard time... they also discover that they can’t expect much help from their more experienced colleagues. Those teachers are busy teaching their own classes. Beside the idea seems to be that “professional” figure out their best way of getting across the

material. So young teachers learn to go into the classrooms, shut the door, and work things out for themselves... throughout their careers most teachers are cut off from all but casual contact with other teachers in their school. There is no accepted forum, in which they can talk about their problems or share their expertise. This means there is little chance to build on or preserve professional knowledge. And except for pockets of peer coaching and mentoring, there is no way for experienced teachers to pass on what they have learned to novices. (pp. 26-28)

Even though many institutions are innovative with their student teacher programs and demonstrate efforts designed to improve their programs, cooperating schools still struggle with their assignment of providing supervision for their prospective teachers. Shantz (1995) questioned:

What is the purpose of pre-service education programs? Should they be developed to perpetuate the current system and utilize the field experience as an apprenticeship where pre-service students imitate their supervising 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 pre-service student can become the victim trying to satisfy both the supervising teacher and the faculty instructor. (p. 339)

Westerman (1989) suggests that major revisions are needed to create staff development opportunities designed to assist supervising teachers in their implementation of supervision. He also suggests creating opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice and implement the information learned in their university studies. However, this will occur only if classroom teachers' interaction with the teacher education institutions is an integral part of the effort to provide those pre-service opportunities.

In conclusion, while many higher education institutions focused on improving their teacher education program and developing opportunities for student teachers to gain

necessary skills to practice their profession effectively, the literature pointed out that many cooperating schools and supervising teachers have not developed a vision of assisting student teachers and cooperating with the teacher education institutions. Ishler, Edens, and Berry (1996) stated that in traditional settings, most field experiences "still reflect the apprenticeship model. Students are placed in a classroom with a supervising teacher, conforming to the classroom routines and emulating the teacher's behavior. Reflective inquiry about student teaching experience frequently is not supported" (p. 360).

3. DISCUSSION

Clearly, the traditional role of supervising teachers should undergo major restructuring. Part of the restructuring effort should include three fundamental aspects for supervising teachers: information, clarification and encouragement to engage in interaction with other teachers and students (Bushing & Rowls, 1987). In this restructuring process, Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb (1996) challenge the traditional view of expertise in which there is a clear distinction between "teacher and learner," "expert and novice." In contrast to the traditional expertise, they indicate that in professional development schools (PDS) these distinctions begin to disappear:

In most highly PDSs, teachers work in teams with each other, with prospective teachers, and with teacher educators... they examine the effects of their practice; they adapt practices based on evolving understandings of learning and learners; and they continually rethink school structures and teaching strategies... both novices and veterans develop curriculum and make decisions about school and classroom practices; teachers lead problem solving endeavors within and beyond school boundaries and participate in research within and beyond their classroom walls. (p. 90)

Supervising teachers need to view or come to the realization that prospective teachers are indeed potential sources of new knowledge.

How the supervising teacher can benefit from this new knowledge needs to be explained in a way that supervising teachers can link student teachers' new knowledge with the supervising teacher's current practice. Tillema (1994) maintains that for many individuals new knowledge becomes meaningful only if its structure conforms to existing knowledge. Therefore, since the nature of this construction or confirmation of knowledge is related to prior experiences and the supervising teacher's own education, it sometimes becomes difficult for supervising teachers to accept student teachers' current professional knowledge. For example, when differences or disagreements occur between supervising teachers and student teachers in the clinical (actual) classroom, student teachers frequently become intimidated by their supervising teachers. Substantive talk about teaching does occur but it is often one-sided, with the supervising teacher doing most of the talk (Lemlech & Kaplan, 1990). Supervising teachers do need to exercise a great deal of understanding with their student teachers and even learn from them particularly when the knowledge of the student teacher may differ from their own knowledge and experience (Weaver & Stanulis, 1996).

Specifically designed staff development may be part of the answer to bringing supervising teachers into their new role (Westerman 1989). Classroom teachers who engage in appropriate staff development programs often show positive changes in listening actively, using different teaching models, and improving communication with each other and with their student teachers. Appropriate staff development helps classroom teachers develop consulting skills, conference techniques, and improve interpersonal skills (Lemlech, Hertzog-Foliart & Hackl, 1993). In addition, teachers who have received special preparation can provide the critical connection between the school district and the college.

Today, pre-service education as a part of teacher education requires a close relationship between higher education institutions and public

schools. Decisions about the education of teachers are (or should be) the shared responsibility of the university faculty, practitioners, and other related professionals. Professional practice schools or professional development schools are becoming critical environments for gathering higher education faculty and public school staff together in a collaborative manner for development of student teaching and professional growth (Imig & Switzer, 1996).

In the past, many supervising teachers accepted student teachers in exchange for financial considerations, such as a stipend and tuition waiver for their own continuing education. Now, this motivation is being challenged with some supervising teachers considering the acceptance of a student teacher into their classroom as an important step in their own professional development, and a means to demonstrate their commitment to the teaching profession.

Since the skills and knowledge demands for success in supervision of student teachers is fast increasing, guided teaching relationships have become critical to the implementation of theory into practice. During guided teaching, a number of individuals are in a position to guide student teachers to be professional educators. Supervising teachers, university coordinators, university faculty, and peers are all seen as active participants in the student teachers' growth (Imig & Switzer, 1996).

The development of a professional relationship that provides valuable learning opportunities both for student teachers and supervising teachers is critical. If supervising teachers consider student teachers as teaching partners and act together to improve student learning, they will succeed and improve.

4. SUGGESTED IMPLICATIONS

Throughout the literature the importance of teaching practicum and its affects onto student teachers' professional growth is widely stated.

In light of these facts, field experiences should be reconsidered. If researchers in the field of education come to the point of mediocrity in field experiences, then, this important aspect of professional growth is demanding some revisions.

At the beginning *expertise* must be redefined. This is related to the supervising teachers' ability in supervision. Supervising teachers' role must be shifted from being an evaluator to a coach or a mentor.

School university *partnership* should also undergo major restructuring. In most cases there is interaction problems among practice schools and university. Because of lack of essential interaction, student teachers come to face the dilemma of whether fulfilling school's or program's requirements.

Collegial relations should be encouraged. Instead of accepting students in exchange of financial considerations or other extrinsic rewards, supervising teachers should have been motivated to help student teachers in accordance with the professional obligation. Through collegial relationship, supervising teachers should understand the importance of reciprocal development.

Orientation meetings to exchange concerns and encourage discussion about university and school requirements, expectations, and competency standards should be organized in an appropriate manner. Seminars about student teaching should frequently be scheduled to allow natural interchange of concerns between university personnel and supervising teachers.

Through collegial interactions and relationships, they can also build personal and professional skills needed to lead others, for staff development, coach other teachers and student teachers, and help to develop action plans for reaching the goals of the school

In conclusion, in most instances field practices become unsatisfactory for both teacher candidate and supervising teacher. In order for teacher educators to change this, joint

collaboration is required. All parties that are involved in the professional teacher development process should acknowledge the importance of shared responsibility. Only then can teacher candidates be able to practice teaching instead of trying to satisfy supervising teachers or university professor.

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