

Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Views on Their Attainment in Community Service Practices Course

Hande Serdar TLCE
Istanbul Bilgi University

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine prospective English language teachers' views on their attainment in community service practices course. The sample included 28 prospective English language teachers majoring in English Language Teaching in the Faculty of Education at a foundation university in Istanbul, Turkey. The data were collected during the spring term of the 2011-2012 academic year. The participating prospective English language teachers were asked to write reports which involved details about their practices and their personal views on their own performances, the processes they had been through and their attainment. Content analysis was used in the interpretation of the reports obtained from the participants. It was found that some personal, professional, emotional and social attainments in community service practices course were reported by the participants.

Keywords: *Teacher education, community service practices, foreign language teacher candidates*

SUMMARY

In today's world all institutions whether governmental or nongovernmental are responsible for understanding and meeting the needs of the society and universities are no exceptions. Universities are institutions in which individuals acquire some knowledge and skills to get ready for their future social roles and duties in life. Teachers have great responsibility for performing social leadership so teacher education programs at universities should cater to this need. In Turkey community service practices course has been offered as a compulsory course in undergraduate teacher education programs since 2006-2007 academic year. In this one- semester required course pre-service teachers are expected to perform some social activities at least one day a week. The course is generally offered in the third or fourth year of the undergraduate programs at the Faculties of Education. The aim of the course is to support both social responsibility and sensibility and foster democratic and social values. Through this course pre-service teachers are encouraged to develop projects which deal with the current problems of their local environments.

A closer look at the literature on community service practices courses shows that the course has positive effects on students (Bender & Jordaan, 2007; etin & Snmez,

2009; Dinçer et.al., 2011; Elma et.al., 2010; Eyller, 2000; Gürol & Özercan, 2010; Keleş & Aydın, 2011; Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008; Horzum & Bektaş, 2012; Keleş & Aydın, 2011; Küçüköğlü & Çoşkun, 2012; Mirzeoğlu et.al., 2011; Moely et.al., 2002; Myers-Lipton, 1996; Özdemir & Tokcan, 2010; Prichard & Whitehead, 2004; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Sönmez, 2010; Sönmez et.al., 2009; Tilki, 2011; Uğurlu & Kırıl, 2011; Waterman, 1997). Although many studies have examined the effects of community service practices course, to my best knowledge, there are not many studies examining the issue from the perspective of prospective English language teachers. Thus, the present study was designed to fill this gap in the literature.

Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to determine prospective English language teachers' views on their attainment in community service practices course.

METHOD

For the purpose of the study, data were collected from 28 (27 females and 1 male) prospective English language teachers majoring in English Language Teaching in the Faculty of Education at a foundation university; namely Maltepe University in İstanbul, Turkey, during the spring term of the 2011-2012 academic year. The participating prospective English language teachers were asked to write reports which involved details about their practices and their personal views on their own performances, the processes they had been through and their attainment. Prior to the data collection process, all participants were informed that their responses will be analyzed and reported anonymously only for academic purposes and their consents were taken. Content analysis was used to interpret the reports obtained from the participating prospective English language teachers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to the findings, some personal, professional, emotional and social attainments in community service practices course were reported by the participating prospective English language teachers. With regard to personal attainments, participants mentioned that they had benefited from the community service practices course in terms of learning how to cope with problems, learning about the real life and developing their problem solving skills. In relation to professional attainments, participants acknowledged that they had the opportunity for self-assessment of whether they would be able to do the teaching profession or not. They also mentioned that they had the chances of recognizing the theory and practice relationship, having professional experience, developing a professional identity, learning about students and experiencing the student-teacher relationship. Pertaining to emotional attainments the participants expressed that they felt useful, self-confident, peaceful, happy and proud of themselves during and after the community service projects. In regard to social attainments, the participants commented that they developed a positive perception of the concept of

volunteerism, understood the importance of community service, and developed awareness about social problems. Studies related to community service practices courses indicate that the pre-service teachers report positive effects of the course on their personal developments with regard to human relations, professional life, self-confidence, and leadership (Gürol & Özercan, 2010; Mirzeoğlu ve diğ., 2011; Özdemir & Tokcan, 2010; Uğurlu & Kırıl, 2011). Thus, the findings of this study are in line with the related literature.

CONCLUSION

It can be said that, according to the participating pre-service English language teachers, the community service practices course produces an array of positive impacts in the areas of personal, professional, emotional and social life. This finding is indicative of the importance of community service in teacher education programs which aim to integrate academic learning with community service.

