

An Evaluation of the ‘School Experience –I’ Course Taken by First Year Students at the ELT Department of Gazi Faculty of Education

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ABSTRACT

In this study, a questionnaire was administered to first year students at the ELT Department, Gazi Faculty of Education, Gazi University, in order to gain a view of the effectiveness of the School Experience I lesson in providing the student-teachers with knowledge and experience of the teaching profession and school life. The results obtained show that while the student-teachers believe that the lesson is valuable in that they are given a general idea of the teaching profession, they are unable to communicate effectively with their mentors and the principals of the partner schools.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, öğretmen adayı öğrencilere öğretmenlik mesleği ve okul yaşamı konusunda bilgi ve deneyim kazandırmayı amaçlayan Okul Deneyim I dersinin bir değerlendirmesi yapılmıştır. Bu değerlendirme için Gazi Üniversitesi, Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi İngiliz Dili Eğitiminde okuyan birinci sınıf öğrencilerine bir anket uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular öğretmen adayı öğrencilerin bu dersi çok yararlı bulduklarını ancak uygulama okullarındaki rehber, öğretmenleriyle ve idarecilerle yeterince iletişim kuramadıklarını göstermektedir.

INTRODUCTION

Discussions on the subject of the structure of 'Teaching Practice' in teacher training institutions have been continuing for years. The responsibility of the faculties of education of universities in this matter has increased further, especially after the duty of pre-service teacher training was handed over to universities with the 'Law of Higher Education Numbered 2547' was put into operation in 1982. The realization of the effect and aim of these practices is not only the responsibility of the faculty, the faculty partnership co-ordinator and the supervisor, but also that of the partner school, the provincial educational directorate's partnership co-ordinator and the mentor. For this reason, a great responsibility falls both to the faculty and to the Ministry of National Education in the process of the practice. In order to reach the desired qualities of the teaching practice process, a commission formed of representatives of the Ministry of National Education and the faculties of education have prepared a 'Guidebook to the Teaching Practice of Student Teachers in Educational Institutions Affiliated to the Ministry of National Education'. The duties, authority and responsibilities of the institutions and individuals mentioned above are clearly defined in this guidebook, and the way in which the practice is to be carried out is presented in the form of items. Before this guidebook was prepared, the range of the student – teacher activities carried out in schools was defined under two headings in the book 'Student – Teacher Studies in Schools' by Sands and Özçelik (1997) within the framework of the Higher Education Council / World Bank National Education Development Project Pre-Service Teacher Training. The first of these headings was entitled 'School Experience', which consisted of observations and activities with the aim of introducing the many duties and responsibilities of the teaching profession to the student-teachers. The other was 'Teaching Practice'. This practice has been carried out for years in faculties of education. However, with a few small changes, it emphasized that just as it was possible for this lesson to be carried out twice a week for one semester (12 hours and 6 credits), then it was also possible to organize it as a full-day activity over a period of five or six weeks.

Later, a book entitled 'Faculty-School Partnership' (1998) was prepared by a commission of academic staff of faculties of education and teachers from the Ministry of National Education within the range of the project mentioned above. This book presents the duties and responsibilities of the faculty of education and partner school in the co-operation, and different matters concerning this co-operation. In addition, it gives explanations about teacher competence and evaluation, and the administration of the practice studies. Also emphasized is the necessity for the period to be spent in school. Planning and sufficient and systematic observation by the supervisor are required in order for the student-teacher to gain the necessary skills and become sufficiently familiar with the school environment. As a result of the attempts by Higher Education Council to restructure the Faculties of Education, the final shape of the practice activities that the student-teachers are to carry out in school has been defined in the form of School Experience I (3 credits), School Experience II (3 credits) and Teaching Practice (5 credits).

Since this paper is concerned with School Experience I only, School Experience II and Teaching Practice are considered as outside its range. Therefore, the aim, range, administration and evaluation of the School Experience I lesson as it is described in the book 'Faculty – School Partnership' will be described briefly here. In this lesson, the emphasis is placed upon observation and discussions carried out in order for the student-teacher to get to know the school in which he/she will do his/her practice, the students, the programme, the teachers and the school environment in general. On completing this lesson, a student-teacher should be systematically familiar with other aspects of the teaching profession such as the school's organizational structure, administration, as well as having knowledge of the management of the school, and the school resources.

PROBLEM

The problem in hand is to evaluate the success of the School Experience I lesson by trying to identify the problems that the student-teachers carrying out the practice encountered in their relationships with the school administration, their supervisors and mentors, and in the performance of the thirteen activities defined in the School Experience I lesson.

METHOD

This section describes the partner schools and subjects, data collection, data analysis and finally covers some comments and suggestions.

Subjects and Partner Schools

The subjects of this study were first-year students taking the School Experience I lesson in the ELT Department of the Faculty of Education, Gazi University. The partner schools were all primary education schools in the centre of Ankara.

Data Collection

Data was collected by means of a three-part questionnaire. The first part consists of two questions asking the name of the practice school and the classes of the students on whom they carried out their practice activities. The second part consists of eighteen questions aimed at identifying to what degree the aims of the School Experience I lesson were realized from the point of view of the student-teachers. The third part is aimed at identifying to what degree the thirteen activities defined in the range of the School Experience I lesson contributed to the student-teachers' understanding of the teaching profession. In fact, the number of the activities is fifteen but the last two were excluded since the student-teachers did not carry out the last two activities which deal with microteaching and evaluation and consolidation of School Experience I. The activities are as follows:

1. Plans for the Semester
2. The Teacher's Day
3. A Pupil's Day
4. Pupil Study
5. Teaching Techniques
6. Teaching Techniques of a Different Branch
7. Observation Schedule
8. Observation Schedule for a Different Branch
9. Lesson Management and Class Control
10. Observing Questioning
11. Teaching Aids and Resources
12. The Principle and Whole School Issues
13. The School in the Community

The fourth and final part is an open-ended question in which the students are asked to make further comments about the School Experience I lesson.

The questionnaire was first administered to 135 first-year students during the 1998-1999 academic year carrying out the School Experience I lesson at eleven different primary education schools. The same questionnaire was then administered to 135 first-year students carrying out the lesson at ten different primary education schools during the 1999-2000 academic year.

Data Analysis

In answer to the first question of the second part of the questionnaire asking to what degree the student-teachers had become familiar with the running of the partner school he/she had done his/her practice, of the 1998-1999 group, 2.2% replied **very much**, 6.6% **quite**, 34.8% **partly**, 48.8% **very little**, and 7.4% **not at all**. Of the 1999-2000 group, 1.4%replied **very much**, 2.7% **quite**, 41.1% **partly**, 49.3% **very little**, and 5.5% **not at all**. When asked how successful the lesson had been for the gaining of knowledge about the administration of the partner school and school administration, of the 1998-1999 group, 5.2%replied **very much**, 17% **quite**, 31.1%**partly**, 39.3% **very little**, and 7.4% **not at all**. Of the 1999-2000 group, and 2.7% replied **very much**, 18.9% **quite**, 39.2% **partly**, 36.5% **very little**, 2.7% **not at all**.

To the question of how familiar the student-teachers had become with classroom activities, 3% of the 1998-1999 group gave the answer **very much**, 11.8% **quite**, 21.4% **partly**, 46% **very little**, and 17.8% **not at all**. As for the 1999-2000 group, 2.7% replied **very much**, 6.7% **quite**, 14.9% **partly**, 41.9% **very little**, and 33.8% **not at all**. In reply to the question of how familiar the student-teachers had become familiar with extra-curricula activities, 17% of the 1998-1999 group gave the answer **very much**, 43.7% **quite**, 19.3% **partly**, 16.3% **very little**, and 3.7% **not at all**. Whereas 12% of the 1999-2000 group gave the reply **very much**, 34% **quite**, 38% **partly**, 16% **very little**, and 0% **not at all**.

The fifth question asked how successful the lesson had been for the student-teachers to get to know the students at the partner school. Taking the 1998-1999 group into consideration first, 2.2% said **very much**, 23% **quite**, 34.1% **partly**, 35.6% **very little**, and 5.1% **not at all**. Of the 1999-200 group, 1.5% replied **very much**, 12% **quite**, 27% **partly**, 46% **very little**, and 13.5% **not at all**. When asked how much guidance they had received from their mentors, 7.4% of the student-teachers in the 1998-1999 group said **very much**, 12.6% **quite**, 12.6% **partly**, 40.7% **very little**, and 26.7% **not at all**. As for 1999-2000 group, 4.1% said **very much**, 5.5% **quite**, 16.4% **partly**, 32.9% **very little**, and 41.1% **not at all**.

As for the question as to how willing mentors were to give help, 13.4% of the 1998-1999 group replied **very much**, 15.6% **quite**, 22.2% **partly**, 24.4% **very little**, and 24.4% **not at all**. When the replies of the 1999-2000 group are compared, it is seen that 5.4% said **very much**, 20.3% **quite**, 27% **partly**, 28.4% **very little**, and 18.9% **not at all**. The eighth question asked how successful the student-teachers had been in communicating with their mentors. The results gathered from the 1998-1999 group show that 8.1% replied **very much**, 8.9% **quite**, 25.2% **partly**, 36.3% **very little**, and 21.5% **not at all**. Those of the 1999-2000 group show that 8.6% replied **very much**, 10% **quite**, 24.3% **partly**, 35.7% **very little**, and 21.4% **not at all**.

When asked how much guidance the subjects had received from their supervisors, of the 1998-1999 group 0.7% answered **very much**, 5.2% **quite**, 14.1% **partly**, 32.6% **very little**, and 47.4% **not at all**. As for the 1999-2000 group 4.1% replied **very much**, 0% **quite**, 4.1% **partly**, 38.4% **very little**, and 53.4% **not at all**.

As for the extent to which the student-teachers felt their supervisor had a positive affect on their success in the lesson, 3.7% of the 1998-1999 group replied **very much**, 4.5% **quite**, 18.5% **partly**, 42.2% **very little**, and 31.1% **not at all**. This is compared with 4.2% of the 1999-2000 group who replied **very much**, 2.8% **quite**, 9.7% **partly**, 44.4% **very little**, and 38.9% **not at all**.

The eleventh question asked how satisfied the student-teachers were with their partner school. 3.7% of the 1998-1999 group said **very much**, 15.6% **quite**, 25.2% **partly**, 30.3% **very little**, and 25.2% **not at all** satisfied. Whereas, 9.5% of the 1999-2000 group replied **very much**, 9.5% **quite**, 24.3% **partly**, 39.2% **very little**, and 17.5% **not at all** satisfied.

To the question of how positively the attitude of the school administration affected the work of the student-teachers, 12.6% of the 1998-1999 group replied **very much**, 16.4% **quite**, 17% **partly**, 37% **very little**, and 17% **not at all**. As for the 1999-2000 group, 20% said **very much**, 17.3% **quite**, 28% **partly**, 18.7% **very little**, and 16% **not at all**. When answering the thirteenth question about the sufficiency of the opportunity given by the administration to the student-teachers for them to carry out their activities, 13.4% of the 1990-1998 group replied **very much**, 15.5% **quite**, 22.9% **partly**, 28.9% **very little**, and 19.3% **not at all**. This is in comparison to 16% of the 1999-2000 group who replied **very much**, 14.6% **quite**, 30.7% **partly**, 22.7% **very little**, and 16% **not at all**.

In reply to question fourteen about how much chance the student-teachers were given to observe and practice with classes of different levels, 10.4% of those in the 1998-1999 group said **very much**, 15.5% **quite**, 26.7% **partly**, 26.7% **very little**, and 20.7% **not at all**. 4% of the 1999-2000 group said **very much**, 13.3% **quite**, 32% **partly**, 38.7% **very**

little, and 12% **not at all**. When asked to what degree the student-teachers had felt successful in completing the thirteen activities, 0.7% of the 1998-1999 group replied **very much**, 8.9% **quite**, 30.3% **partly**, 48.2% **very little**, and 11.9 % **not at all**. However 2.6% of the 1999-2000 group replied **very much**, 2.6% **quite**, 5.2% **partly**, 61,9% **very little**, 27.7% **not at all**.

Question sixteen asked the subjects how beneficial the School Experience I lesson had been for their understanding of school life and the teaching profession. Of the 1998-1999 group 3.7% answered **very much**, 5.9% **quite**, 24.4% **partly**, 39.3% **very little**, and 26.7% **not at all**. Of the 1999-2000 group, 2.7% replied **very much**, 2.7% **quite**, 5.5% **partly**, 41.1% **very little**, and 48% **not at all**. In reply to the question about how much information the subjects had acquired about the duties and responsibilities of a teacher, 3.7% of the 1998-1999 group said **very much**, 6.7% **quite**, 22.2% **partly**, 41.5% **very little**, and 25.9% **not at all**. However, the results of the 1999-2000 group show that 0% said **very much**, 6.8% **quite**, 6.8% **partly**, 51.4% **very little**, and 35% said **not at all**.

The final question asked to what degree the student-teachers felt they had got to know the teaching profession after the School Experience I lesson. 1.5% of the 1998-1999 group replied **very much**, 5.9% **quite**, 26.7% **partly**, 44.4% **very little**, and 25.95 **not at all**. In contrast, 1.3% of the 1999-2000 group said **very much**, 2.6% **quite**, 7.7% **partly**, 51.3% **very little**, and 37.1% **not at all**.

Questions	Very Much		Quite		Partly		Very Little		Not at all	
	1998-1999	1999-2000	1998-1999	1999-2000	1998-1999	1999-2000	1998-1999	1999-2000	1998-1999	1999-2000
1	2.2	1.4	6.6	2.7	34.8	41.1	48.8	49.3	7.4	5.5
2	5.2	2.7	17	18.9	31.1	39.2	39.3	36.5	7.4	2.7
3	3	2.7	11.8	6.7	21.4	14.9	46	41.9	17.8	33.8
4	17	12	43.7	34	19.3	38	16.3	16	3.7	0
5	2.2	1.5	23	12	34.1	27	35.6	46	5.1	13.5
6	7.4	4.1	12.6	5.5	12.6	16.4	40.7	32.9	26.7	41.1
7	13.4	5.4	15.6	20.3	22.2	27	24.4	28.4	24.4	18.9
8	8.1	8.6	8.9	10	25.2	24.3	36.3	35.7	21.5	21.4
9	0.7	4.1	5.2	0	14.1	4.1	32.6	38.4	47.4	53.4
10	3.7	4.2	4.5	2.8	18.5	9.7	42.2	44.4	31.1	38.9
11	3.7	9.5	15.6	9.5	25.2	24.3	30.3	39.2	25.2	17.5
12	12.6	20	16.4	17.3	17	28	37	18.7	17	16
13	13.4	16	15.5	14.6	22.9	30.7	28.9	22.7	19.3	16
14	10.4	4	15.5	13.3	26.7	32	26.7	38.7	20.7	12
15	0.7	2.6	8.9	2.6	30.3	5.2	48.2	61.9	11.9	27.7
16	3.7	2.7	5.9	2.7	24.4	5.5	39.3	41.1	26.7	48
17	3.7	0	6.7	6.8	22.2	6.8	41.5	511.4	25.9	35
18	1.5	1.3	5.9	2.6	26.7	7.7	44.4	51.3	21.5	37.1

The results of the third part of the questionnaire show that when asked how effective the first activity had been in contributing to the students' knowledge of the teaching profession, 10.4% of the 1998-1999 group said **very much**, 14.8% **quite**, 35.6% **partly**,

24.4% **very little**, and 14.8 **not at all**. As for the 1999-2000 group, 6.8% replied **very much**, 19.2% **quite**, 23.3% **partly**, 28.8 **very little**, and 21.9% **not at all**.

As for the second activity, 3.7% of the 1998-1999 group replied **very much**, 2.2% **quite**, 23% **partly**, 41.5% **very little**, and 29.6% **not at all**. In contrast, 1.4% of the 1999-2000 group replied **very much**, 5.4% **quite**, 9.5% **partly**, 37.8% **very little**, and 45.9% **not at all**.

For the third activity, 4.5% of the 1998-1999 group replied **very much**, 7.4% **quite**, 27.4% **partly**, 37% **very little**, and 23.7% **not at all**. As for the 1999-2000 group, 1.4% replied **very much**, 6.8% **quite**, 28.8% **partly**, 34.2% **very little**, and 28.8% **not at all**.

For the fourth activity of the 1998-1999 group, 1.5 replied **very much**, 9.6% **quite**, 20.7% **partly**, 43.7% **very little**, and 24.5% **not at all**. However, of the 1999-2000 group, 1.4% replied **very much**, 4% **quite**, 26.7% **partly**, 44.6% **very little**, and 24.3 **not at all**.

In reply to the fifth activity, 3.7% of the 1998-1999 group said **very much**, 9.6% **quite**, 30.4% **partly**, 34.1% **very little**, and 22.2% **not at all**. This is compared with 4.1% of the 1999-2000 group who replied **very much**, 2.7% **quite**, 10.8% **partly**, 37.8% **very little**, and 44.6% **not at all**.

As for the six activity, 10.4% of the 1998-1999 group replied **very much**, 17.8% **quite**, 35.6% **partly**, 22.2% **very little**, 14% **not at all**. However, 5.4% of the 1999-2000 group said **very much**, 9.5% **quite**, 33.8% **partly**, 35.1% **very little**, and 16.2 **not at all**.

For the seventh activity, 0.7% of the 1998-1999 group said **very much**, 6.7% **quite**, 21.5% **partly**, 40% **very little**, and 31.1% **not at all**. In contrast, 4.1% of the 1999-2000 group replied **very much**, 2.7% **quite**, 5.4% **partly**, 43.2% **very little**, and 44.6% **not at all**.

For the eighth activity, 8.9% of the 1998-1999 group thought it had been **very much** successful, 19.3% **quite**, 31.1% **partly**, 26.7% **very little**, and 14% said it had been **not at all** successful. However, 4.1% of the 1999-2000 group replied **very much**, 14.9% **quite**, 24.3% **partly**, 36.5% **very little**, and 20.2% **not at all**.

While 1.5% of the 1998-1999 group thought the ninth activity had been **very much**, 6% **quite**, 22.2% **partly**, 40.7% **very little**, and 29.6% **not at all** successful. 2.7% of the 1999-2000 group replied it had been **very much**, 4.1% **quite**, 11% **partly**, 32.9% **very little**, and 49.3 % **not at all** successful.

As for the tenth activity, 0.7% of the 1998-1999 group replied **very much**, 6.7% **quite**, 21.5% **partly**, 42.2% **very little**, and 28.9% **not at all**. In contrast, 2.7% of the 1999-2000 group replied **very much**, 4.1 **quite**, 8.2 **partly**, 39.8% **very little**, and 45.2 **not at all**.

The results given for the eleventh activity show that 11.1% of the 1998-1999 group thought the activity had been **very much** successful, 19.3% **quite**, 37.1% **partly**, 24.4% **very little**, and 11.1% **not at all**. However, those for the 1999-2000 group show that 0% replied **very much**, 23% **quite**, 48.5% **partly**, 19% **very little**, and 9.5% thought it had been **not at all** successful.

In reply to the twelfth activity, 9.6% of the 1998-1999 group replied **very much**, 20% **quite**, 31.9% **partly**, 25.2% **very little**, and 13.3% **not at all**. Of the 1999-2000 group, however, 5.4 replied **very much**, 26% **quite**, 35.6% **partly**, 22% **very little**, and 11% **not at all**.

Finally, 14.1% of the 1998-1999 group found the thirteenth activity to have been **very much** successful, 15.6% **quite**, 29,6%**partly**, 29.6% **very little**, and 11.1% **not at all** successful. In contrast, 3% of the 1999-2000 group found it to be **very much** successful, 20% **quite**, 26.7% **partly**, 32% **very little**, and 17.3% **not at all** successful.

Question	Very Much		Quite		Partly		Very Little		Not At All	
	(1998-1999)	(1999-2000)	(1998-1999)	(1999-2000)	(1998-1999)	(1999-2000)	(1998-1999)	(1999-2000)	(1998-1999)	(1999-2000)
1	10,4	6,8	14,8	19,2	35,6	23,3	24,4	28,8	14,8	21,9
2	3,7	1,4	2,2	5,4	23	9,5	41,5	37,8	29,6	45,9
3	4,5	1,4	7,4	6,8	27,4	28,8	37	34,2	23,7	28,8
4	1,5	1,4	9,6	4	20,7	26,7	43,7	44,6	24,5	24,3
5	3,7	4,1	9,6	2,7	30,4	10,8	34,1	37,8	22,2	44,6
6	10,4	5,4	17,8	9,5	35,6	33,8	22,2	35,1	14	16,2
7	0,7	4,1	6,7	2,7	21,5	5,4	40	43,2	31,1	44,6
8	8,9	4,1	19,3	14,9	31,1	24,3	26,7	36,5	14	20,2
9	1,5	2,7	6	4,1	22,2	11	40,7	32,9	29,6	49,3
10	0,7	2,7	6,7	4,1	21,5	8,2	42,2	39,8	28,9	45,2
11	11,1	0	19,3	23	37,1	48,5	24,4	19	11,1	9,5
12	9,6	5,4	20	26	31,9	35,6	25,2	22	13,3	11
13	14,1	3	15,6	20	29,6	26,7	29,6	32	11,1	17,3

It was noticed that a majority of the 1999-2000 group chose not to make comments in the fourth part. Of those that were made, positive ones include: 'This lesson was useful for teaching us about the school and the teacher right from the first year', 'It was on the whole a useful study, and the thirteen activities helped us to learn about the structure of the school, the administration, the classroom atmosphere and the teaching profession in general', 'This lesson both provided us with knowledge and gave us experience. Tough work lies ahead of us', 'I believe that the lesson was beneficial. At least I was able to experience the teaching profession and students personally, 'I learnt about the teaching

profession by living it', 'The School Experience I lesson was very different from and more beneficial than the lessons we have every day.' Others include: 'As long as we are not given sufficient chance to make observations in a suitable environment at the primary education school, the School Experience I lesson has no meaning', 'The only problem I experienced was the indifference of the school administration, and the mentors and supervisors should show an interest in the student-teachers. We were affected negatively by the indifference of the administration and felt that we were not wanted in the school.

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Comments

The results do not show a general change for the positive between the 1998-1999 group and the 1999-2000 group. A majority of responses were weighted around the partly and very little responses with both groups. Since the School Experience I lesson was carried out for the first time in the 1998-1999 academic year, it is only natural to expect a few teething problems. By administering a questionnaire to identify the problems which arose, it was possible to make adjustments in order to improve the running of the lesson, which the results show.

The results show that the greatest amount of dissatisfaction among the 1999-2000 group are:

1. The degree to which the student-teachers were able to become familiar with extra-curricula activities.
2. The degree to which the student-teachers were able to communicate with their mentors.
3. The degree to which the student-teachers were satisfied with the school in which they carried out their school experience.

4. The degree to which the attitude of the school administration affected the student-teachers' work.

5. The degree to which the school administration offered the opportunity for the student-teachers to carry out their activities.

6. The degree to which the Teaching Aids and Resources Activity (Activity 11) had contributed to the student-teachers' knowledge of the teaching profession.

7. The degree to which the Principal and Whole School Issues Activity (Activity 12) had contributed to the knowledge of the student-teachers.

Suggestions

These results show that the main source of problems seems to be the lack of communication between the student-teachers and the practice school, and their mentors or the school principals. Replies to the open-ended question in part four reflect this also. Unless complete co-operation is established between the practice schools and the faculty, the advantages of the School Experience I lesson will continue to be limited. This study has revealed the opinions of the student-teachers. However, in order to be able to suggest ways in which the administration of this lesson can be improved, it is necessary to carry out a similar research asking how effective the mentors find the lesson. Such a work, coupled with the present one, would provide a complete picture from both sides, enabling the faculty to prepare the student-teachers accordingly.

References

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