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VISUAL ARTS TEACHER CANDIDATES' VIEWS ON TEACHING PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Teaching Practice is the most important and most effective practice course offered in the teacher training program of the education faculties. The Teaching Practice course is carried out as a course of two hours of theory and six hours of practice during the second semester of teacher candidates' final year. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the problems, experiences and observations of visual arts teacher candidates encounter during their teaching practice in middle schools. The study group consists of a total of 37 4th year visual arts teacher candidates majoring in Art Education of Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University's Education Faculty. In this study, the data obtained from the teaching practice courses carried out in 11 different middle schools in Niğde city center during the 2018-2019 academic year were used. After completing the 12-week (72-hour) teaching practice period, visual arts teacher candidates were administered interview forms consisting of six questions on the evaluation of the teaching practice process. The data were evaluated using the descriptive analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods. According to the most important study findings, teacher candidates improved themselves greatly in classroom management, and their self-confidence and communication skills increased. The findings also show that this process a challenging one for students who have anxiety in their 4th year over being appointed as teachers in the future and therefore focus on the big exam. The study suggests that Teaching Practice can be gradually increased starting from lower grades, and that students' days at some of the practice schools do not need to be divided into two days by increasing the teaching hours of practice teachers.

Keywords: Teaching practice, visual arts, painting.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher candidates are required to have the necessary educational environment in order to apply their teaching skills and experiences, no matter how theoretically equipped their undergraduate process has been. Due to this requirement, Teaching Practice courses with two hours of theory and six hours of practice are offered in the education faculties' second semesters of students' final year. Teaching Practice is the continuation of School Experience courses. Teaching Practice aims to prepare teacher candidates for their future teaching profession better in a real education teaching environment by giving them the ability to use their knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors regarding general culture, special field education and teaching profession they had gained during their education. Teaching Practice is one of the most important courses of teacher training programs.

According to the Ministry of National Education's Directive of 2018, the student who came to the stage of Teaching Practice has been able to apply what he or she has theoretically and practically learned in previous semesters. For this purpose, teacher candidates pass through various practices at different grade levels of classes in their own fields in their practice schools. These processes are determined as the preparation and planning, implementation, evaluation and development stages.

According to the TNMOE (Turkish National Ministry of Education) regulations (2018:2009), during this practice process, there are some tasks and responsibilities the practice teachers have to follow.

- a) The practice student must comply with all the rules that the teachers are subject to during the time they are inside the educational institution.
- b) In order to fulfill the requirements of Teaching Practice, the practice instructor from the faculty works in a planned manner in cooperation with the practice teacher and the student.
- c) While fulfilling the requirements of the Teaching Practices, the practice institution's administration cooperates with the practice instructor from the faculty, teachers and the other officials.
- d) The student submits a file containing the works and reports completed within the scope of the Teaching Practice to the instructor and the practice teacher.
- e) If the teacher candidate gets involved in any crime or disciplinary event in the practice institution, actions will be taken according to Academic Examination and Disciplinary Code and Procedure of the university/faculty.

'Teacher candidates enter the pre-service training process because they want to become teachers and they do not only learn how to teach. The practice teacher makes recommendations to the teacher candidates but this is, of course, only one of its duties. Many studies have examined the relationship between the practice teacher and the teacher candidates. These studies showed the positive effect of the relationship between practice teacher and teacher candidates relationships in increasing the adaptation of teacher candidates to school system and school culture and in increasing the effectiveness of their support in student learning' (Villani, 2002 cited in Gökçe & Demirhan 2005: 47).

According to Kiraz (2002); Practice teachers are considered as guides for the teacher candidates during their preservice training. The most important function of the Teaching Practices in pre-service teacher training program is the introduction of the profession to the teacher candidates and contribution of the practice teachers at the participant schools to the vocational professional development of these teacher candidates. According to this, the roles of the practice teacher and the teacher are different. The teacher candidate transforms into an active partner and a collaborator from a passive receiver. During this learning process, the teacher who is a guide and who is responsible for the teaching of the candidate, helps the candidate transform into someone who can direct himself or herself and who is responsible from his or her own learning. In addition, the length of the relationship between the teacher and the teacher candidate turns into a relationship based on purpose rather than a calendar.

In order to ensure smooth implementation of the practices in schools, teacher candidates, practice teachers and practice instructors should carry out the implementation in a coordinated and planned manner. The application should be able to regularly observe the prospective teachers within the fields of application.

In order for the Teaching Practice to reach its purpose, these people should cooperate in subjects such as program development, providing a suitable environment, placement of the teacher candidates to the practice school, helping to adapt to the classroom, helping to develop classroom tools, evaluating and giving feedback, enabling candidates' participation in extracurricular activities and solving problems arising from the practice (Ünver, 2003 cited in Altıntaş & Göregen, 2014: 190). According to Küçükahmet (2002: 6), the teacher candidates will learn the answers to the questions of who, where and how they will teach with vocational teaching courses.

Practice teachers should be open to cooperation, willing to introduce teaching-learning processes and should be sharing people. The practice teachers are expected to have the following skills: The teacher candidate should be able to establish and maintain the correct links between the people who have resources or who can provide resources for the teacher candidates to achieve their learning objectives (Zachary, 2000: 48). King (2006: 728) argued that an effective Teaching Practice would enhance the cooperation between faculty and school, increase the cooperation

amongst students, improve effective learning, provide feedback, teach the skill to do tasks on time, increase expectations and allow students to see different ways of learning.

Teaching Practice course is carried out in a coordinated manner by the faculty instructor and the practice teacher. During this process, each practice teacher is given four teacher candidates. These four students are required to teach a subject four times during one period. This process is observed by the teacher and faculty instructor. At the end of the semester, their performance is evaluated by both the instructor and the teacher. Inadequate (one hour) weekly hours of visual arts courses lead to visual arts teachers having less hours, free days and free periods. This makes it difficult to plan Teaching Practice programs. The lack of a six-hour back-to-back visual arts courses in many schools or the overlap of these courses with students' courses at the universities requires The Teaching Practices days into two, which makes the Teaching Practice process difficult, particularly in distant schools.

As in Akin (2016: 2231) which is another research on this subject; In the teaching practice course, teacher candidates provide the opportunity to apply the knowledge learned in theory. It has been confirmed once again that internship practices lead to a change in the expectations of students and their minds, change their images in their minds with real practices such as internship, and a very important lesson.

METHOD

Study Purpose And Significance

The study was conducted in order to determine the views and evaluations of visual arts teacher candidates who were 4th year students of Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University's Art Education Department on the Teaching Practice courses and the problems they face during these courses within the scope of Faculty-School cooperation program. It is important to evaluate the positive and negative situations encountered by teacher candidates during the practice process and to offer solutions, and to change and improve the practice school's administrators', teachers' and students' perspectives on visual arts. It is believed that the study findings will be important in terms of reviewing and improving the visual arts academic programs and course contents.

Study Problems And Sub-Problems

The Study problem is "What are the views of visual arts teacher candidates on Teaching Practice?"

The study sub-problems are:

1. What do you think about the adequacy of practice hours of the teaching practice course?
2. What do you think about the qualifications of the teaching practice course curriculum?

3. What do you think about the qualification of your practice teacher in the practice school?
4. What do you think about the adequacy of your visual arts practice fields?
5. What do you think about the qualifications you had after the Teaching Practice course?
6. What do you think about the attitude of the administrators, students and other teachers towards you during the Teaching Practice?

Study Design

The study is a case study, one of the qualitative research methods. Case study is an empirical research method that studies a current phenomenon within the context of its real-life framework (its content) where the exact boundaries between the phenomenon and the content are not clear and where there is more than one evidence or data source (Yin, 1984, p. 23 cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2003: 190).

Descriptive analysis method was used to evaluate the study data. The data obtained according to this approach are summarized and interpreted according to previously determined themes. The data can be organized according to the themes raised by the study questions but also can be presented by taking into account the questions or dimensions used during the interview and observation processes. In descriptive analysis, direct quotations are frequently given to reflect the views of the interviewed or observed individuals. The purpose of such analysis is to present the findings to the reader in an edited and interpreted way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2003: 158-159).

Data Collection Tools

The study data were obtained from the data of Teaching Practice course carried out in the 4th year of Niğde Ömer Halis Demir University's Art Education Department during the second semester of 2018-2019 academic year. The study was executed with 37 visual arts teacher candidates. The study was conducted in nine different secondary schools located in the city center of Niğde. After completing the 12-week (72-hour) teaching practice period, visual arts teacher candidates were administered interview forms consisting of six questions on the evaluation of the teaching practice process. The data were evaluated by the researcher by using 'Descriptive Analysis Technique', one of the qualitative research techniques.

Study Group

The study was executed with 37 visual arts teacher candidates who were 4th year students from Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University's Art Education Department. Keeping the visual arts teacher candidates' personal information as their views were listed by coding them as TC1 (Teacher candidate- TC), TC2, TC3, ..., TC37, and this coding was presented in the Findings section.

Findings And Interpretation

The findings obtained from the study were evaluated by grouping them under each question included in the interview forms.

Question 1 Of The Study, 'What Do You Think About The Adequacy Of Practice Hours Of The Teaching Practice Course? Related To Findings And Comments

The most important finding obtained from this question is that 29 of the teacher candidates believed that they have adequate practice hours. While, TC3 stated that "The practice hours are neither more nor less, I believe they are ideal lesson hours", the TC19 said that "I think it is sufficient". Similar to these short statements, TC22 and TC33 stated that "I believe they are enough" and TC8, TC11 and TC16 stated that "I think it is enough". Unlike these short statements, TC15 expressed that "If the hours can be gradually increased starting from lower grades, it would be more beneficial and highly effective". Furthermore, TC5 and TC7 mentioned that "We are experiencing exam stress and appointment stress in our last year. Cram schools takes a lot of our time. Therefore, we can't give the necessary importance to our courses at the university". Similarly, TC23 and TC 25 stated that "While Teaching Practice is a lesson we go to very fondly, the exam stress challenges us. If they start Teaching Practice from lower grades, it would be more appropriate and I believe we will be more successful". Like the previous candidates TC17 stated that "Since we are preparing for the exam in our last year, we can't give the necessary importance to our courses and our course achievement decreases. I believe we will do the Teaching Practice course more fondly if they start the course from lower grades.

Question 2 Of The Study, 'What Do You Think About The Qualifications Of The Teaching Practice Course Curriculum?' Related To Findings And Comments

The findings of this question can be grouped under two categories as in sufficient and insufficient and boring. 27 of the teacher candidates believed that the current curriculum was sufficient. In fact, TC12 said that "I think the current program is quite sufficient, but the fact that the students are indifferent and insufficient in bringing the necessary materials makes even the functioning of the current curriculum impossible". TC22 stated that "Since the students' financial situation is insufficient, we are always doing simple tasks that can be completed with simpler materials rather than following the current curriculum". Furthermore, TC28 expressed that "Since students and parents believe that visual arts courses are just about drawing paper and some simple paints, we have to work with what they bring to the classroom". TC18 recommended that "Instead of repeating the boring subjects in the curriculum, more beautiful and entertaining topics can be added to the earn by having fun can also be added'. In addition, TC5 mentioned that "In current classrooms, even the drawing books don't fit on the desks. You must first create more suitable

learning environments. When you provide appropriate environments, the application of the curriculum will be more possible to provide more '.

Question 3 Of The Study, 'What Do You Think About The Qualification Of Your Practice Teacher In The Practice School?' Related To Findings And Comments

The finding obtained within the scope of this question is that 30 of the teacher candidates stated that they were satisfied with their teachers, their teachers were great guides for them and they gained quite a lot of the experience from them in terms of their own field. According to TC9' view, "Our teacher continually works with students individually, she checks their works and gives feedback. I think she is a very successful and devoted teacher". TC27 stated that "Our teacher has a workshop and he is constantly working with his students in the workshop. He rarely goes out for break. He never leaves us and goes to the teachers' room. He shows a lot of support for his students a lot of effort and puts a lot of labor". Unlike those who believe that the practice teacher is sufficient, seven teacher candidates argues that their practice teacher was not sufficient. For example, TC17 expressed that " I am satisfied with the practice teacher but when she enters the classroom she has to shout at the students constantly to control the crowded classroom, which leads to a tense atmosphere in the classroom. This causes me to feel stressed too. I don't think students can enjoy working in environment this tense". Similarly, TC19 mentioned that "Our teacher doesn't bring any sample works or documents before entering the classroom. After giving students a few information about the subject, she sits in her desk and waits for the students to show their works. I don't think that she is equipped in her own field". Similar to TC19, TC32 stated that "There is a smart board in our class but our teacher does not use it appropriately. Sometimes she opens paintings and wants students to copy the same. Copying them in this way will curb the students' creativity and decrease their interest. I think what our teacher does is wrong". Very similar to TC32, TC3 said that "Our teacher draws on the board on certain topics and wants the students to draw by copying what is on the board. I believe this is totally wrong. I think she doesn't know exactly what she should do". Finally, TC31 stated that "Our teacher constantly focuses on providing silence in the classroom, She constantly warns the students. Instead of creating good works, she just wants a noise-free classroom".

Question 4 Of The Study, 'What Do You Think About The Adequacy Of Your Visual Arts Practice Fields?' Related To Findings and Comments

The findings of this question can be grouped under two categories as in adequate practice environment and inadequate practice environment. In the first group, 25 of the 37 teacher candidates who participated in the study believed that the classes were conducted in students' regular classrooms and that these classrooms are not very appropriate for students. Teacher candidates mentioned that the class sizes are very crowded and that it is almost impossible for

the teacher to follow all of the students. In fact, TC18 stated that “The weekly hour of the course is already very little. It is very difficult to control 30-40 students in one classroom during one period. It is very difficult to pay attention to all of the students. Our teacher is constantly trying to quiet the students. Since many of the students don’t care about the class, they don’t bring their materials. The ones who don’t have their materials with them disturb the class”. Mentioning the student size, TC23 stated that “It is very difficult to control the 7th and 8th graders. Lower grades want to conduct the classes more. They bring their materials more than the older grades. In lower grades, it is easier to control the classroom”. Talking about 8th graders, TC29 expressed that “In our school, 8th graders always want to solve tests. They don’t bring materials. They don’t have any interest in the course. Since there will not be any questions on the national exam from this course, they don’t pay attention”. ST[^]/ also focused on the student size by saying that “We have a workshop. Our application environment can be considered as adequate but classes are very crowded. The classrooms can be divided into groups, and more appropriate conditions can be provided for both students and teachers. Contrary to what the previous candidates told, TC33 mentioned that “Our school has a workshop and it is very good. Since the neighborhood is a good neighborhood, the students are also very interested in the class. Everyone generally brings their material, and they willingly do this. We are very pleased with our teacher, too”. Unlike TC33, TC11 stated that “In our practice school, there are even classes of 50 students. The classes turned into torture in those classrooms. We spend a lot of effort, and we get very tired. The teacher is very unhappy and reluctant to teach in these classes. The students size should definitely be reduced”. TC also talked about the classroom size by saying that “Although visual arts classes should be places where the students relax, these classes turn into classes that put the teacher into distress due to inappropriate environment, lack of equipped workshops and the large size of the classrooms. AÖ14 stated that “We have a workshop but it is small and consists of desks just like normal classrooms. It is not spacious with tables and stools. The classroom doesn’t take good light inside. Equipment should be provided fitting to a workshop. The lessons can be made more enjoyable if appropriate environments are created. I think the course will reach its aim more if the workshop has equipment like wooden easels and smart boards”.

Question 5 Of The Study, ‘What Do You Think About The Qualifications You Had After The Teaching Practice Course?’ Related to Findings and Comments

According to the findings obtained from this question, 33 of the teacher candidates gained experience from their Teacher Practice, especially in class management. They developed themselves in the field of stress excitement and they lost the uncertainty they had at the beginning of semester. They could obtain information about many issues related to school and had the opportunity to transfer their knowledge and skills. They were satisfied from the process, students and the teachers. In fact, TC12 argued that “I think Teaching Practice is quite useful and

comprehensive". TC21 told that "The practice provided a great experience for me. It helped me find answers to many of my questions and concerns". Similarly, TC28 mentioned that "I gained many skills such as classroom management, controlling the classroom and getting the attention of students". TC13 stated a positive view like "The practice provided me with experience and a love for my profession". In addition, four teacher candidates defended the opinion that these gains were insufficient contrary to these positive views. In fact, TC11 mentioned that "I don't think I had any gains. I believe the practice could have been more comprehensive". TC31 stated that "If all teacher candidates didn't go on the same day to school practice to the same classroom, it would have been more effective and beneficial". Furthermore, TC37 argued that "Our teacher could leave the control of the class to us completely. Four lessons by us didn't give us any opportunity outside these lessons. Therefore, we couldn't fully adapt. I don't think I gained a lot because I didn't give any grades and the classroom management wasn't totally in my hands".

Question 6 Of The Study, 'What Do You Think About The Attitude Of The Administrators, Students And Other Teachers Towards You During The Teaching Practice?' Related to Findings and Comments

All of the teacher candidates who participated in the practice stated that they were all well received and respected by the practice teachers. When they were introduced to the students, they were called "teachers". They did not experience any problems with their teachers. In fact, TC1 expressed that "Our teacher was very pleased with us and thanked us. She told us that we alleviated the course burden from her very much". In addition, TC28 told that "Our teacher mentioned that we could offer more creative and different ideas than them. It was very beneficial for him for us to follow the technology very well. Our teacher said we inspired him by giving him many different ideas". Similarly, TC9 stated that "Our practice teacher was very happy with us showing him new painting techniques, and expresses us that show his satisfaction. This makes us proud". Unlike the teachers, 23 teacher candidates believed that they were treated as students rather than teachers by the school administrators and other teachers and students. In some schools, they were not even allowed in the teachers' room. Even in the schools where they were allowed in the teachers' room, they were not paid any attention to. In fact, TC22 stated that "Particularly, the other teachers should be taught to respect the practice students since they are also teachers". TC32 said that "It was ridiculous that we were not let in the teachers' room despite going to the school for six hours of practice. The teachers' room is the common area of all teachers and we are teacher candidates". Similarly, TC23 mentioned that "We are going to schools with a teacher ID, not with a student ID, and we want to be respected as a teacher". Furthermore, TC11 stated that "We are visual arts teacher candidates, we do not come to school as wall painters. They should stop asking us to paint as if we are the school painter. We come to

school to learn how to be a teacher, we don't come to school to paint". Similar to previous statements, TC17 stated that "The school administration believes that painting is our only job. So, they look at us thinking where we can make them paint". TC31 also said that "Administration expect us to paint the walls both from the art teacher and from us as if this is our mandatory duty". In addition, TC7 told that "They don't care about our class. When there are no teachers in other classrooms, they make us responsible in them so that students would be quiet". Like TC7, TC19 expressed that "The administration's priority is not about us to gain experience from the visual arts teacher but to fill the empty classrooms and empty bulletin boards". From a different perspective, TC10 mentioned that "Students do not take us seriously because they know that we are not authorized to give them grades". TC14 stated that "Students tend to make us paint constantly, show a painting. Some students in the upper grades do not look at us as teachers". Finally, TC13 said that "Since the teacher doesn't leave the control of the class to us completely, we are not able to carry out the lessons with self-confidence and we can't be effective on the students".

RESULT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study results showed that all of the visual arts teacher candidates had the opportunity to transfer the knowledge, skills and experiences they had gained during their degree through Teaching Practice, and believed that they felt ready for the profession by experiencing teaching. It was determined that they did not have any difficulty in one-to-one relationships with the students, and they were hopeful to start work immediately since the students welcomed them lovingly. Other than the 12 students who believed existing school conditions meet their expectations, the others believed that the classes were taught in regular classes, these classes were not equipped with sufficient equipment, and the student sizes were too large and this made conducting lessons more difficult. These led to disappointment amongst teacher candidates. The results revealed that only three schools had workshop environments but these workshops did not have enough equipment. The low number of visual arts hours at school causes less working days for teachers. On the day (Friday) when the teacher candidates are free to go to the practice school, many of the teachers do not have any classes. Therefore, the candidates have to go to the practice school twice a week and their practice hours are most of the time on the same day with their university classes. When you consider the fact that the schools are far way, this made the process even more difficult for teacher candidates. The high number of course loads of the lecturers and the overlapping of the practices with the course hours caused the faculty members to observe each teacher candidate only twice a semester and therefore could not provide them with enough feedback.

The study results revealed that more than half of the teacher candidates, believed that school administrators, students and other teachers did not see them as real teachers, they were not given their value, they were not let into the teachers' room in some schools, treated as students. Therefore, these issues disturbed them. some schools in the teachers' room even if they are treated as students in this case is quite disturbing candidates. In addition, since the students in their last year are less interested in their university courses because they are more concerned with the national exam and appointment, it is recommended that the Teaching Practice course should be offered starting from lower grades.

Some other study results revealed that the student sizes were too crowded, the classes were not conducted effectively due to insufficient learning environments, students and parents do not do not give importance to the lesson, there are many students in each class who do not bring any materials. These issue put the teachers under stress and show that visual arts classes are not given the right amount of attention. because they have a high number of teachers and they do not give enough importance. Amongst the other recommendations are increasing the weekly hour of visual arts courses, building equipped workshops in place of the regular classrooms, providing more opportunities to the students with abilities by offering them additional elective art classes, and asking also questions from this area in the national exam to enter high schools.

From all these assessments, it is concluded that the internship practices lead to change in the students and their expectations in their minds. It is revealed that they have changed their minds with real practices like Teacher Training after four years of classes and that how important the practice is. In this respect, the importance of Teaching Practice and getting practice after theory are put forth (Akin, 2016: 2231).

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