

## An Evaluation of the Practicum Course of Pre-School Teacher Education Program in North Cyprus

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to evaluate the practicum course of the pre-school teacher education programs across Atatürk Teacher Training Academy (ATTA) and Girne American University (GAU). The participants of this study were composed of senior level fourth grader pre-service teachers who were enrolled in the pre-school teacher education programs of ATTA and GAU during the 2012-2013 academic years. In the research, a curriculum assessment approach was implemented. This approach is based on pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding the extents to which they actualize the objectives of the practice teaching course in a real classroom setting, and on their opinions as to how this course could be improved. Data were collected from "teaching skill scale" and an open-ended question. The results of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis revealed that pre-service teachers displayed high teaching competency level across ATTA and GAU with no statistically significant difference between. In addition, the analysis of the results derived from content analysis yielded some considerable suggestions such as extending the duration of the practicum course with richer content, enhancing the faculty-school collaboration, and reducing the theory-practice dilemma to an extent where pre-service teachers find better opportunities to practice what they have learnt in theory.

**Key Words:** Pre-school teacher education, practicum course, curriculum evaluation

### INTRODUCTION

Practicum courses provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to practice and enhance the knowledge and experiences gained via field knowledge courses, liberal education oriented courses, and professional knowledge based courses, which, in turn, can be considered to be the best place to put the theory into practice. As Kennedy (1996) stresses, during practicum, the student teachers are given the opportunity to experience and 'experiment' their knowledge and skills in an authentic teaching and learning environment. Theory and practice are inextricably connected: if we are not familiar with practical realities, we are ill-equipped to develop sound theory or teach it to others. According to Kosnik and Back (2009), recent graduates grappling with the challenges of beginning teaching are not in a good position to figure out the implications of theory, especially if they barely understood it in the first place. Practicum courses have long been considered to be the most important course across most of the nations of the world with a lot of similarities in application (Falus, 1996; Liu, 2012; Şahin, 2006; Yıldırım, 2011; Zuzovsky, 1996). In some countries, the duration of the practicum is longer whereas in some other countries pre-service teachers have to take the course every year from first year until fourth year of academy (Yıldırım, 2011).

#### *The Impact of the Practicum on Pre-service Teachers*

There is considerable number of indications mentioning the invaluable impact of practicum on the professional development of pre-service teachers (Özder, Konedralı and Sabancıgil, 2013; Kılıç and Acat, 2007; Kılınç and Altuk, 2010; Sönmez et al., 2008; Şahin, Kartal and İmamoğlu, 2013). Besides, instructors at universities accept the significant place of practicum in teacher education programs (Dereobalı and Ünver, 2009). The internship of pre-service teachers is a bilateral process, in which both parties benefit from each other (Schön, 1987).

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Practice teaching helps pre-service teachers develop their classroom teaching skills as well as help them to gain self-confidence. (Davran, 2006; Koç, 1998; Kılıç, 2004 ; Özçelik, 2012; Özder, Konedralı and Sabancıgil, 2013). As pre-service teachers' teaching skills being developed, their attitudes toward the profession and teaching, teaching self-efficacy and other profession related skills and dispositions are enhanced positively (Caires, Almedia and Vieira, 2012; Çoşkun, 2011; Hascher, Cocard and Moser, 2004; Tarman,2012).

### ***Frequently Faced Problems in Practicum***

#### ***Dedicated Credit Shortage***

The results of some of the most recent studies carried out to strengthen the practicum courses revealed that pre-service teachers enrolled in those courses requested to increase the credit and time allocated to practicum course in order to find more opportunities to practice teaching (Aydın, Selçuk and Yeşilyurt, 2007; Kavas and Bugay, 2009;Koç, 1998). Nevertheless, Chambers and Hardy (2005), as a result of their experimental study, found that increasing the credit hour and time allocated to practicum course have no positive impact on the perceptions of pre-service teachers' self-competency. As for Tokinan (2013) found that courses like "School Experience" and "Practicum" do not create any meaningful difference on the professional self-respects of pre-service teachers and attitudes toward their teaching profession. It is important to get the prerequisite courses in advance prior to taking the practicum course (Koç, 1998). When pre-service teachers started to teach at their internship schools, they must have already taken the teaching oriented courses (Eski, 1992). As Özder et al. (2013) in their research carried out in the Ataturk Teacher Training Academy, Preschool Teacher Education Program, stated that it is highly necessary to take the classroom management course prior to practicum.

#### ***Insufficient Faculty – School Collaboration***

According to the results of researches, it is an important dimension to increase faculty – internship school cooperation (Çetintaş and Genç, 2005; Dursun and Kuzu, 2008; Kılıç, 2004; Kocadere and Aşkar, 2013). Likewise, if there is no sufficient level of interaction among the teacher educator, tutor, and the pre-service teacher for the purpose of providing necessary amount of effort and contribution for the materials and other stuff, there is a significant difference observed between the opinions of pre-service teachers and tutors regarding the materials and corresponding artifacts of the lecture to be performed (Seçer, Çeliköz, and Kayılı, (2010). According to a study pursued by Koç and Yıldız (2012), it was found that pre-service teachers' experiences of problems such as planning, instruction, classroom management inconsistency are all due to the way the practicum course was planned and organized; pre-service teachers prefer to use direct lecturing method, question-answer method and discussion method instead of using materials to help students better comprehend the subject matter; and that school administration and tutor do not provide the necessary academic and technical support to pre-service teachers throughout their internship process. As pre-service teachers incline, "internship school tutors and administrators can not be a good model of a competent teacher" (Tokinan, 2013). In addition, students who are enrolled in practicum requested from faculties to plan the course in such a way that would enhance interaction between all segments of the course and provide sufficient feedback regarding individual progress of every pre-service teacher during the process and by the end of the process (Adey, 1997; Maynard, 2000; Paker, 2008). Goodlad (1990) notes that pre-service programs are often so fragmented that student teachers are reduced to "filling a large handbag with discrete bits and pieces of know-how" (p. 225). He maintains that teacher education must be guided by a clear concept of teaching and learning (Goodlad, 1994). Tom (1997) similarly decries the fact that teacher education typically involves "detailed study of a myriad topics" (p. 213). Although the job definitions and responsibilities of the school tutors were clearly defined and informed by official letters researches (Azar, 2003; Can, 2001; Demircan, 2007; Eraslan, 2008; Kiraz, 2002;Kudu, Özbek and Bindak, 2006; Leask, 1995; Özmen, 2008; Paker, 2005; Saratlı, 2007; Silay and Gök, 2007; Tang, 2003) have shown that there were some problems and obstacles for school tutors to do their jobs in advance. The major problem was defined as the lack of interaction between pre-service teachers and tutors, where tutors could not

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provide enough feedback on the progress of pre-service teachers regarding their professional development and deficiencies in classroom teaching. According to faculty instructors, there was very little face-to-face interaction among the tutors and pre-service teachers and the interaction between them was shallow and insufficient.

### ***Preschool Teacher Education System in TRNC***

The issue of teacher education was taken over by private universities and Ataturk Teacher Academy, which is a public institution, in the TRNC. However, in order to become primary school teacher at public schools that directly belong to the government, one must be graduated from Ataturk Teacher Academy.

### ***Ataturk Teacher Academy***

Ataturk Teacher Training Academy was established in 1937. It was required to be an ATTA graduate to become an classroom teacher or pre-school teacher at the public schools in TRNC (Öğretmenler Yasası; madde: 16). Ataturk Teacher Academy is a higher education institution and produces pre-school teachers and primary school teachers for the government oriented schools in the TRNC. There is only one main department named "Teaching Profession Education Department", under which there are two programs named "Classroom Teacher Education Program" and "Pre-school Teacher Education Program" in the ATTA. Pre-school Teacher Education Program was established in 2004-2005 academic year. The curriculum of this program was designed in parallel with the norms and standards set by the Board of Higher Education in Turkey. Pre-school teacher education program covers 168 credits of courses. For someone to be enrolled in this program must be successful from a two stage of an entrance exam. Every year 50 candidates were selected for those two programs approximately from 600 applicants.

The entrance exam is composed of two levels as written and oral sections. The written exam is made of Mathematics, Turkish Language, Science, Social Science, and English language sub tests. Those who are successful from the written exam are then taken to oral exam to be examined on their behaviors, attitudes and suitability to the program on the basis of a set of criteria (bylaw of Entrance Examinations of ATTA). The state of being of teacher candidates are evaluated during the oral examination by means of interviews including some critical questions about their attitudes toward teacher profession. The students who pass the oral examinations are the one who hold positively high attitude toward teacher profession (Özder, Konedralı and Zeki, 2010). The duration and the content of the practicum courses in the specified teacher education programs were defined as follows (Atatürk Öğretmen Akademisi, 2004):

Practicum courses provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to put their theoretical knowledge in to practice in real classroom environments. The practicum courses that begin by the third year of the program cover 50 working days. The instructors as well as their schools tutors throughout the academic year directed pre-service teachers enrolled in the practicum courses. The experiences pre-service teachers gain during their practicum process were being evaluated and discussed every Friday. Every pre-service teacher prepares a portfolio including the whole process and progress with their problems solved and experiences gained and they orally present this portfolio by the end of the practicum.

### ***Program in Early Childhood Education at Girne American University***

GAU was founded in 1985 and is recognized by Turkish Higher Education Council. The university is home to seven faculties and around 7000 students (DPÖ). The Department of Early Childhood Education is a teacher training program that started to admit students in the 2008-2009 Academic Year. The curriculum consists of theoretical and practical courses oriented towards the development, psychology and education of children aged 0-6 years. The Practice Teaching course is given in two semesters and its content is presented below:

To define the daily tasks which has to be done in the school, prepare a daily plan, implement the plan, control the undesired behaviours of student, fill the self-evaluation form, prepare a portfolio. To prepare a daily plan for each week, implement the plan, evaluate the implementation (both the teacher from the school and the student), do proofreading of the plan and implement the plan according to the proofreading results and prepare a portfolio. This course is taken by students in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semesters. Pre-service teachers visit practice schools one day a week during these semesters. In Atatürk Teacher Training Academy (ATTA), on the other hand, practice teaching is a course taken in the final four semesters. Students visit practice schools for 20 workdays in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 30 workdays in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. In this respect, it could be argued that practice teaching is taught more in ATTA both in terms of the number of courses and the duration allocated for practice.

### ***Significance of Research***

In this study, the “Practice Teaching” courses included in the curricula of Programs in Early Childhood Education in Atatürk Teacher Training Academy and Girne American University were evaluated based on 4<sup>th</sup> grade students’ opinions. This course is an important course that amalgamates theory and practice in teacher training programs. This study is of significance, because it addresses the impact of such an important course upon pre-service teachers’ acquisition of teaching qualifications and the problems encountered in practice. Through this evaluation, solid findings were obtained for the improvement of the course.

### ***Aim of Research***

The aim of this study was to specify the opinions of pre-school pre-service teachers who take the practice teaching courses in ATTA and GAU about the course of teaching practice. Around this general purpose it was asked the opinions of teacher candidates about the evaluation of themselves in terms of instructional process in teaching practice course and what do they suggest for the improvement of this course.

## **METHOD**

In order to evaluate the “practice teaching” courses taught in ATTA and GAU, both qualitative and quantitative data were used. In this respect, the mixed method was employed in the study (Patton, 2002: 247). In the research, a curriculum assessment approach was implemented. This approach is based on pre-service teachers’ beliefs regarding the extents to which they actualize the objectives of the practice teaching course in a real classroom setting, and on their opinions as to how this course could be improved.

### ***Study Group***

The study group of the research consisted of 18 fourth-grade pre-service teachers attending the Program in Early Childhood Education (PECE) at ATTA and 37 fourth-grade pre-service teachers attending PECE at GAU. The “Teaching Skills Scale” was administered to the entire study group, whereas open-ended questions were asked to ten pre-service teachers from each school.

### ***Collection of Data***

Data of the research were collected using a scale developed by the researchers. Besides, an open-ended question was also asked to the participants regarding the improvement of the practice teaching course.

### ***Development of the Teaching Skills Scale***

A teaching skills scale was developed in order to determine the extents to which pre-service teachers find themselves proficient in classes that they taught as part of the practice teaching course. The scale consists of 16 items, which were in a 5-point Likert form: “Very Proficient (5),

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Proficient (4), Partially Proficient (3), Poorly Proficient (2), Not Proficient (1)”. Before developing the scale, the relevant literature had been reviewed and then a forum consisting of 20 items had been developed. This forum was presented to two experts’ opinions. In line with these experts’ suggestions, three items were removed and thus the scale got its final form with 16 items.

In line with the data obtained in the research, the scale’s Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) reliability coefficient was found to be 0.89. Before factor analysis, KMO and Barlett’s tests were performed. It was observed that the KMO value is ,797 and the Barlett’s test was significant ( $X^2 = 367,841$ ,  $p < .000$ ). These results suggested that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Through Principal Components Analysis and Varimax Rotation technique, it was observed that the items of the scale fell under four main sub-scales, which accounted for a total variance of 64,341%. In the literature, the lower limit for this value is accepted as 40% (Kline, 1994). The eigenvalues of and variances explained by the sub-scales, are (i) 5,830 and 36,341%, (ii) 2,064 and 12.899%, (iii) 1,281 and 8,005% (iv) 1,120 and 6,998%, respectively.

Factor analysis results show that the scale consists of four dimensions. The relevant literature was reviewed and two curriculum development specialists were consulted in order to define these dimensions. The result is the following:

- 1.Ensuring student participation (7 Items) (Barkley, 2010).
- 2.Content knowledge (3 Items) (Shulman 1986; 1987).
- 3.Classroom management (3 items) (Barnes, 2006).
- 4.Planning and executing teaching (3 items) (Dick and Carey, 1996).

**Table1.** Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Sub-Scales and Correlation Coefficients between Them

Factors	X	S	1	2	3	4
1.	4,0779	,59655	-	.381*	.583**	.340*
2	3,9091	,77368		-	.382*	.565**
3	3,8848	,68858			-	.401**
4.	3,9515	,70977				-

\* $p < .05$   
 \*\* $p < .01$

Table 1 shows all sub-scales’ standard deviations and mean values as well as correlation coefficients among them. In order to determine the relationship between the sub-scales, Pearson product moment correlation analysis was conducted. Correlations range from .340 to .583. All of these correlation coefficients indicate that there are significant correlations between significant dimensions. The total score for the 1<sup>st</sup> dimension sub-scale is 3.92 (S=.53), whereas it is 4.06 (S=.54) for the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3.99 (S=.45) for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 3.81 (S=.47) for the 4<sup>th</sup>. These show that there exists a positive correlation between the sub-scales.

Table 3 shows the scale’s and sub-scale’s reliability coefficients.

**Table2.** Reliability Coefficients of the Teaching Skills Scale and Its Sub-Scales

Dimensions	Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
1. Ensuring student participation	0,840
2. Content knowledge	0,774
3. Classroom management	0,777
4. Planning and executing teaching	0,706
Total	0,879

Whereas the subscales’ Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficients range between 0.707 and 0.840; it was found to be 0.879 for the entire scale (Table 2). These values show that the scale is highly reliable.

The open-ended question is the following: “What are your suggestions for the improvement of this course, in light of problems that you experienced during the Practice Teaching course?”

**Analysis of Data**

The quantitative data obtained for the first sub-problem were analyzed through weighted mean. Each item was scored from Not Proficient (1) to Very Proficient (5), and arithmetic mean was calculated. Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were performed in order to check whether the data belonging to both groups’ exhibit normal distribution or not. It was found that they were not normally distributed (Field, 2007). For this reason, in order to reveal whether there existed significant difference between the groups’ opinions, Mann Whitney U test, which is used for analyzing non-parametric data, was performed. On the other hand, in the analysis of qualitative data obtained for the second sub-problem, “content analysis” method was used. The following stages were followed in the content analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Bryman, 2012:289-307):

- 1.Categories were formed based on pre-service teachers’ responses.
- 2.Themes belonging to categories were formed.
- 3.Frequencies and percentages of these themes were calculated.

In the interpretation of qualitative data, the responses given to the open-ended question were used, too. Codes were used instead of respondents’ names while presenting responses: Each pre-service teacher was given a number (e.g. pre-Service Teacher 1 [PT1]).

**FINDINGS**

***Pre-service teachers’ levels of feeling proficient in terms of “Teaching Skills”***

**Table 3.***U Test Results on Pre-Service Teachers’ Levels of Seeing Themselves Proficient In Terms of “Teaching Skills”*

	School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean R	Sum of R	U	p
Ensuring student participation	GAU	37	3,9961	,66453	27,05	1001,00	298,000	.528
	ATTA	18	4,1111	,45057	29,94	539,00		
Content knowledge	GAU	37	3,9550	,65810	27,76	1027,00	324,000	.870
	ATTA	18	3,9444	,82644	28,50	513,00		
Classroom management	GAU	37	3,8198	,69653	26,69	987,50	284,500	.374
	ATTA	18	4,0556	,38348	30,69	552,50		
Planning and executing teaching	GAU	37	3,9189	,75115	28,08	1039,00	330,000	.957
	ATTA	18	3,8889	,84017	27,83	509,00		

As Table 3 shows, students attending both ATTA and GAU see themselves proficient in the teaching practices performed as part of the Practice Teaching course. In the significance test conducted for all the 16 items in the scale, no significant difference emerged between the opinions of pre-service teachers attending the two different schools. Pre-service teachers from both of the schools see themselves proficient most in “the skill of providing additional teaching by identifying students’ imperfect learnings” and “the skill of creating the appropriate environment to motivate students to learning”. On the other hand, they feel least proficient in the skills of “judging the accuracy of the course content” and “developing teaching instruments suitable for learning”. The biggest differences between two schools were observed in the items 11, 15 and 1. While the differences in the items 11 and 15 were in the favor of ATTA pre-service teachers, the difference in the item 1 was in the favor of GAU pre-service teachers. However, these differences are not statistically significant.

*Pre-Service Teachers' Opinions on the Improvement of the "Practice Teaching" Course*

**Table 4.** *Pre-Service Teachers' Opinions on the Improvement of the "Practice Teaching" Course*

CATEGORY	THEME	ATTA		GAU		OPINION
		f	%	f	%	
Duration of practice	Shortage of time	5	20	3	9	<i>I think the number of practice teaching hours should be increased</i>
	Number of practice teaching courses	6	24	2	6	<i>I think the number of courses that I teach in practice schools should be increased</i>
Cooperation (School-Faculty)	<i>Insufficient guidance to pre-service teachers by teachers</i>	1	4	2	6	<i>We do not get any support or guidance from in-service teachers in practice schools</i>
	<i>School managers' negative behaviors towards pre-service teachers</i>	-	-	1	3	<i>School managers do not give attention to us</i>
	<i>Lack of communication between pre-service teachers and professors</i>	2	8	3	9	<i>No regular communication can be made with professors during the "Practice Teaching" course</i>
	<i>Cooperation between pre-service teachers and in-service teachers during practice</i>	4	16	2	6	<i>We cannot cooperate with in-service teachers in practice schools</i>
	<i>Lack of knowledge sharing during the practice course</i>	1	4	4	12	<i>I do not get sufficient information regarding what to do at the stage of observation and assessment conducted during the practice course.</i>
	<i>Incongruence between the plan and the teaching activity</i>	2	8	6	18	<i>We experience inconsistencies and problems in teaching plans throughout teaching practices and necessary regulations are not made</i>
	<i>Pre-service teachers' participation in classroom management</i>	1	4	3	9	<i>During the practice teaching process, I become distanced from the teaching and learning process in classroom management.</i>
	<i>Shortage of materials and teaching activities</i>	1	4	3	9	<i>Planned teaching activities cannot be performed due to the lack of materials in the practice school.</i>
	<i>Complexity of the conventional teaching approach and discipline codes</i>	-	-	2	6	<i>Excessive disciplinary rules implemented by school upon pre-service teachers during practice teaching create problems in the observation process.</i>
	<i>Irregularity of classroom structures</i>	-	-	3	9	<i>The teaching process desired to be actualized in practice schools cannot be actualized due to the irregularity of classroom structures.</i>

As the table 4 demonstrates, pre-service teachers attending both schools demand an increase in the duration and number of the practice teaching course.

I think the number of practice teaching hours should be increased”and “I think the number of courses that I teach in practice schools should be increased.

Insufficient cooperation between the faculties and practice schools is a subject that pre-service teachers from both schools emphasized on. The pre-service teachers' opinions are as follows:

We do not get any support or guidance from in-service teachers in practice schools, School managers do not give attention to us, No regular communication can be made with professors during the "Practice Teaching" course" and We cannot cooperate with in-service teachers in practice schools.

The most important problem encountered by pre-service teachers is the incongruence between theory and practice. They do not fully understand what they are supposed to do in practice schools. This is evidenced by the following quotes of the pre-service teachers:

I do not get sufficient information regarding what to do at the stage of observation and assessment conducted during the practice course. We experience inconsistencies and problems in teaching plans throughout teaching practices and necessary regulations are not made. During the practice teaching process, I become distanced from the teaching and learning process in classroom management. During the practice teaching process, I become distanced from the teaching and learning process in classroom management. Planned teaching activities cannot be performed due to the lack of materials in the practice school. Excessive disciplinary rules implemented by school upon pre-service teachers during practice teaching create problems in the observation process. and The teaching process desired to be actualized in practice schools cannot be actualized due to the irregularity of classroom structures.

### **Conclusion**

Students attending both ATTA and GAU see themselves proficient in the teaching practices performed as part of the Practice Teaching course. This finding is in parallel with those of other studies (Caires, Almedia and Vieira, 2012; Çoşkun, 2011; Hascher, Cocard and Moser, 2004; Özkılıç, Bilgin and Kartal, 2008). Based on the findings obtained, it could be argued that pre-service teachers attending both schools see themselves proficient in terms of teaching skills. It could be inferred, then, that the courses on teaching formation that these pre-service teachers take in their schools are effective in combining theory and practice. Besides, it could also be argued that their motivation for practice teaching is high.

Although the duration of practice teaching is longer at ATTA compared to GAU, no significant difference was found in pre-service teachers' self-evaluations in terms of teacher skills. Therefore, it could be argued that duration is not a factor in this sense. This finding is in parallel with those of other studies (Chambers and Hardy, 2005; Tokinan, 2013).

Pre-service teachers attending both schools demand an increase in the duration and number of the practice teaching course. This finding is in parallel with those of other studies (Koç, 1998; Kavas and Bugay, 2009; Aydın, Selçuk and Yeşilyurt, 2007). They explain the reason of this as follows:

Although the theoretical dimension is also of importance, what really matters is the practical side. We get to experience on how to behave in a real classroom setting (PT3).

Insufficient cooperation between the faculties and practice schools is a subject that pre-service teachers from both schools emphasized on. This finding is in parallel with those of other studies (Çetintaş and Genç, 2005; Dursun and Kuzu, 2008; Gökçe and Demirhan, 2005; Kılıç, 2004; Kocadere and Aşkar, 2013). Practice activities are negatively affected by the lack of



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communication among pre-service teachers' with in-service classroom teachers, school managers and professors.

Classroom teachers do not see us as real teachers and do not want to establish communication with us. They keep complaining about business of their schedules and lack of time to cover all subjects (PT8).

Problems like the too long duration of the pre-school education program or lack of time to cover all subjects may be reasons that teachers propose. However, the real reason is their abstention from sharing knowledge and experiences. The reason lying behind this might be their failure to constantly renew themselves or lack of self-confidence. However, practice teachers and pre-service teachers should mutually benefit from each other (Schön, 1987). It is seen that school managers do not receive support to render pre-service teachers more successful in practice. This may stem from the fact that their opinions are not taken in the process. Besides, expectations of school managers from pre-service teachers may be difference from those of faculties.

Professors should constantly monitor pre-service teachers and give feedbacks accordingly. Pre-service teachers reported that professors do not fulfill this task effectively and this is why they experience many problems in practice schools:

Pre-service teachers want to be in constant communication with professors in the process of practice teaching. It is of utmost importance for them to receive feedback and corrections from professors in order to be able to overcome problems that they experience while practicing teaching. Other studies on the subject similarly point out that the most important duties of professors are providing pre-service teachers with constructive and positive feedback and allocating adequate time for them (Adey 1997; Azar, 2003; Kocadere and Aşkar, 2013; Leask 1995; Maynard 2000). Below are examples from pre-service teachers' opinions:

There should be someone to whom I can convey problems that I experience during practice teaching and from whom I can get guidance support. This person is the professor in my department. However, I almost never get to talk to him (PT2).

I want to show my course plans to my professor; it is very important for me to receive feedback or corrections from him. Also, I experience problems in terms of teaching methods for certain courses. For example, I would like to discuss with my professor what methods I should use for students who struggle in initial writing and reading; but this is nearly impossible (PT9).

These findings are in parallel with those of other studies (Azar, 2003; Can, 2001; Demircan, 2007; Eraslan, 2008; Kocadere and Aşkar, 2013; Kiraz, 2002; Kudu, Özbek and Bindak, 2006; Özmen, 2008; Paker, 2005; Sılay and Gök, 2007; Saratlı, 2007; Tang, 2003). The school managers do not prefer to communicate with pre-service teachers. The reason of this may be caused by the fact that the school managers do not consider communication as a responsibility. Kocadere and Aşkar, (2013) has found similar results indicating that school managers view communication as the responsibility of teachers.

GAU pre-service teachers expressed more complaints on this issue. Another significant problem stems from the inconsistency between the curriculum development taught in university and the course plan prepared by the in-service classroom teacher. The reason of this is the lack of coordination between the faculty and the school. Yet another problem is the absence in reality of classroom settings taught to pre-service teachers in university. This problem is marked especially by the lack of teaching materials primarily because pre-service teachers practice teach at public schools. Secondly, pre-service teachers may be incompetent in developing teaching materials.

The most important problem encountered by pre-service teachers is the incongruence between theory and practice. They do not fully understand what they are supposed to do in practice schools. GAU pre-service teachers expressed more complaints on this issue. This might

have stemmed from the fact that GAU is less experienced in teacher training compared to ATTA. Another significant problem stems from the inconsistency between the curriculum development taught in university and the course plan prepared by the in-service classroom teacher. The reason of this is the lack of coordination between the faculty and the school. Yet another problem is the absence in reality of classroom settings taught to pre-service teachers in university. This problem is marked especially by the lack of teaching materials primarily because pre-service teachers practice teach at public schools. Secondly, pre-service teachers may be incompetent in developing teaching materials. In the study carried out by Kiraz (2002), pre-service teachers mentioned problems experienced with in-service teachers especially in terms of guidance for developing course plans and materials.

### CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

The pre-service teachers, enrolled in both universities addressed in the research, see themselves as highly proficient in terms of “Teaching Skills” in their teaching practices. Significant difference was not found between these groups in terms of their perceptions. Findings show that GAU and ATTA students complain about the limited duration of practice teaching, and thus they want this duration to be extended. Moreover, they reported problems that they were not adequately guided by in-service teachers, that their communication with professors was not enough, that cooperation was lacking during practice, and that school managers exhibited negative behaviors towards them. They feel that the practice teaching course was not fully effective due to reasons such as the lack of knowledge transfer during the course, the inconsistency between teaching practices and course plans, the lack of their participation in classroom management, the complexity of activity evaluation forms, the insufficiency of materials and teaching activities, the complexity of conventional education approach and discipline code, and the irregularity of classroom structures. The effectiveness of the practice teaching course will be improved if a healthy cooperation is established between institutions that train teachers and practice schools and, this way, common objectives are set more clearly. Based on the above findings the following recommendations can be made:

1. The number and the duration of the teaching practice should be increased.
2. The coordination between school and university should be improved. The school administration and the class teachers should have positive attitudes towards teacher candidates and, the school and the university administrators should firstly be in cooperation with each other.
3. The responsibilities of the school principal, class teacher, faculty members and teacher candidates should clearly be stated and they should all be informed about their responsibilities.

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