An Evaluation of the Teacher Development Program Standards by European Teacher Candidates from Turkey, Germany, and Denmark

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to establish a vision to improve teacher education standards by way of examining the views of prospective teachers from Turkey, Germany, and Denmark. The study was carried out in three countries during the 2007-2008 academic year. The qualitative results of the research were obtained through studying the views of 150 prospective teachers and carrying out interviews with 16 students. The result of the research showed that all three countries had an applicable development program. On a more negative note, “complicated theory” was found to be emphasized. The need for more practice was strongly stated as being essential for a good teacher training program. The completion of the research took place through the discussion of quality standards in teacher education.

Key Words
Teacher Education, Quality Standards, Teacher Education in Turkey-Denmark-Germany.

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This period in time which has seen European borders continuing to disappear is also a period during in which ideas developed by social and educational studies are starting to gain scientific acceptance. It is a fact that educational systems show similarities across most disciplines. Coupled with a 60 year history of shared studies, the freedom of movement within the EU has brought to light the idea of the “European teacher.” Even taking into account national characteristics, the rules of many disciplines including mathematics, physics, and chemistry are essentially the same. However, the most important feature of this period has been that countries have been able to share and promote their own cultural and national characteristics. As a result, the cultural reciprocal influence between the triangle of school, teacher, and education that has been desired for many years by the EU has become a real possibility. This article works with prospective teachers to look at the teacher development systems. This research aims to show the way forward and contribute to their development and ensure they will receive the necessary features required in their “mission.” In order to meet the needs of the Ministry of Education system and keep up with new developments in education in Turkey, education faculties are undergoing changes as regards the professional development of teachers (Yükseköğretim Kurulu [YÖK], 1998, 1999, 2007). As much as the YÖK has defined quality standards in theory, it is striking that as yet this has not been put into practice (Taş, 2004).

Steps should be taken in order to minimize the differences in length, content, and standards that are currently present within higher education programs across the European Union. A minimum standard should be defined and further education programs should aim to reach these standards (Arslan, 2005).

The recordings of experience in different European contexts, and such shared experience as the European schools, will provide a valuable body of evidence for any future impetus. Perhaps one day, we shall be able to talk about the European teacher. Today, it still remains as a vision (Sayer, 2006).

The profession of teachers and trainers is (Zgaga, 2005):

(1) a graduate profession of an interdisciplinary nature which interlinks:
   a) a knowledge of their subject matter,
   b) a knowledge of pedagogy and andragogy,
c) the skills required to guide and support learners,
d) an understanding of the social and cultural dimension of education;
(2) A profession placed within the context of lifelong learning (in-service education and training);
(3) A mobile profession (within Europe);
(4) A profession based on partnerships (e.g. with schools etc.).

The exchange of good practices or cooperation between countries is needed today (Schratz, 2005; Zgaga, 2005). Teacher education programs of Turkey, Denmark and Germany are summarized below.

Teacher Education in Turkey
Teacher training is one of the most important subjects of educational systems. It has a great importance that directly affects the quality of education. In this context, the curriculums of the faculties that train teachers are required to be strategically regulated and cultivated. With this necessity, the programs of teacher’s colleges in Turkey have been reconstructed in 1997. Additionally, important changes have been made in the teacher training programs in the year 2006. Some innovations of the new system that have been in place since the 1998-1999 academic year are as follows (Eraslan, 2008):

1. The level of qualification of pre and primary school teachers,
2. Four-year degree programs for middle school teachers of: Foreign languages, Music, Art, Physical Education, Special Education, Computer Studies and Educational technology. For Science, Mathematics and Social Studies teachers, the option of non-thesis masters programs (3.5+1.5=5 years) and (4+1.5=5.5 years) have been developed. For the purpose of making the use of teachers for more than one branch, the application of additional branch education has been developed for teachers who will be assigned to primary schools.

The main points of the Teacher Development Program of 2006 (Eraslan, 2008) are listed below: Programs will have a ratio of 50-60% branch theory and technique, 25-30% professional teaching theory and technique, and 15-20% general cultural information. The new program has seen the end of the extra branch application as there is no longer seen as a need for this. Thus, with new programs, teachers will have more of an opportunity to study in depth their own branch. Faculties now have the authorization
to determine 30% of the components. This has led to an increase in the possibilities for elective subjects. One of the most important features of the new program is the increase in the ratio of the general culture component. This component includes subjects such as Science, History, History of Turkish Education, and an Introduction to Philosophy.

European Union Desk was formed at the Education Ministry to help harmonize Turkey’s educational system with those of EU countries. It works towards the following ends: Providing Turkish citizens and their children with the best educational services, improving the exchange of educational information between the EU countries and Turkey, collecting data and documents about the educational systems of both the EU countries and Turkey, cooperation with the EU in higher education, spreading foreign language education throughout Turkey, sustaining equal accession conditions for all educational institutions, preparing children for the work world and eliminating unemployment (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2008).

Teacher Education in Denmark

Primary and Lower Secondary School Teachers: The training of teachers for the Folkeskole (primary and lower secondary schools) is provided in the form of a unified training system at colleges of education (called “Seminarium” in Danish). Teacher training programs for the primary school can be summarized as follows:

• Bachelor of education: 4 years teacher training program
• 4 core subjects
• Teaching competence from 1-10 classes
• ½ year teacher training in primary schools
• Admission level: a bachelor degree in a subject taught in the primary school or a professional bachelor degree in social education
• Nominal duration: 1-2 years depending on how much credit you get
• Teaching competence: two core subjects from 1-10 classes (CVU, 2008).

General Upper Secondary School Teachers: Upper secondary school Teachers

• Candidatus/Master degree + Pedagogy
• Pedagogy: Duration 1-2 years- Theoretical supplement of minor subject, pedagogical theory, supervised work placements, and an exam
• Teaching competence 10-12 classes (CVU, 2008).

The seminarium tradition seems, today, to be a barrier for the development of the Nordic teacher education programs into research based programs (Rasmussen, 2008).

In 2006, modules from the master study are used at few teacher training institutions as supplementary or in-service training (Sørensen, 2008). In March 2006, a new reform of the program qualifying to teach in primary and lower secondary school Folkeskole was decided upon. The reform takes effect in January 2007, and i.a. entails:
• Two or three main subjects as opposed to the present four
• A general strengthening of the natural sciences
• A general strengthening of the didactic training
• Admission requirements are tightened up, and attendance is made compulsory the first year (Eurydice, 2008)

Teacher Education in Germany

University education is affected by the level that the candidate wants to teach in the future, primary or high school for example. For primary or middle schools, at least 3.5 years of university education is deemed necessary while for vocational or gymnasium schools, this rises to 4.5 years. University education finishes with a first certificate exam which is a multi – aspect examination. Passing of this examination is seen as attainment of reaching university level or as a requirement for movement to a higher level of education. During this second phase, the prospective teacher works with a mentor with whom they may consult and takes parts in seminars reflecting on education, teaching and what they have taught. On completion, students take the second certificate exam (Froaker, 2006). This exam is comprised of 2 practical teaching observations, a thesis, and a two-hour examination (Pufahl, Rhodes, & Christian, 2006).

In Germany, the quality of education is maintained by limiting the number of candidate teachers to the limits of the Pädagogische Hochschule. Candidates have to pass two state exams in order to take up a place. This has a positive impact on the German education system. In Turkey, the
The appointment of teachers is determined only by one state examination (KPSS). The large number of graduates compared to the lower amount of appointed teachers has a negative impact on the Turkish system (Turan, 2005).

The teacher profession is a desirable job in Turkey, which is definitely not the same in Denmark. The dignity and attractiveness of this profession should be promoted in Denmark because of the lack of teachers and because of the importance of the job. The quality of teacher candidates is directly proportional with the productivity of the education. May be it comes with the money? There may be amendments in Danish teacher education system. Especially, those teachers are educated in more than one field. Therefore, this can create problems in specializing. In Turkey, there are some problems with teacher education in education faculties. The lecturers should embrace the new approaches and apply active and practical education. Educational facilities are significantly better in Denmark. The physical condition of the facilities in Turkey should be developed (Rasmussen, Yanpar Yelken, & Akay, 2008).

Educational development is one way through which Turkey enhances progress towards its social goals and prepares itself for the European Union membership. A major effort to upgrade the Turkish educational system was made through a multi-phased comprehensive reform of the sector introduced during the 1990s. One part of this reform, perhaps most crucial to the long term effectiveness of other developments in education was a transformation of the approach to teacher education (Grossman, Onkol, & Sands, 2007). Integration into the EU evokes new systemic changes in Turkish education. All this process of transferring teacher education to universities was parallel to the trends in the European countries (Clay & George, 2000). Four themes have been given in teacher education in last decade in Turkey; the shift away from the educational disciplines, the shift towards school-based approaches, and the emergence of more centralized forms of accountability of teacher competence (Güven, 2008). Teacher training system in Turkey has been revised with new innovations and approaches to teaching within the framework of faculty-school partnership provided by a protocol signed by the National Ministry Education (MEB) and Council of Higher Education (YÖK, 1998). Since 1998, teaching practice schools and spe-
cialist teachers who guide student teachers in aspects of school life and teaching have been given great attention (Demircioğlu, 2005). The requirements of standards and accreditation studies in education were adopted and teacher training programs were revised in accordance with the developments in the world (Deniz, & Sahin, 2006). The teacher of the future should be a professional who is competent at his/her study subject area and at methodology, teaching, and teaching techniques (Callahan, Clark, & Kellough, 1995). When Sağlam and Kürüm (2005) analyzed the structural reforms in teacher education since 1970 in Turkey and EU countries, these items can be summarized as follows (Sağlam, & Kürüm, 2005, Eurydice 2002):

- Teacher education has been put into the higher education system and the duration of the education has been lengthened.
- The universities handled the teacher education mission and scientific researches came into prominence.
- The joint model is being used in the pre-primary and primary education and sequential model is being used in the secondary education. In addition, the ratio of vocational knowledge relating to teacher profession is enhanced.
- To get the desired quality in teacher education, standard developments and accreditation have been in focus.

This research was conducted with prospective teachers from the Department of Foreign Languages (English). All over the world, language teaching is seen as a preferable profession. For example, in Turkey this is a popular profession as borne out by the fact that foreign language departments in universities require a high score for admissions (Aydoğan, & Çilsal, 2007; Kirkgöz, 2007; Tercanlioğlu, 2006).

Foreign language education has a large role to play if the EU is to achieve its aims (Tok & Arıbaş, 2008). Some of the characteristics necessary to carry foreign language instruction in Europe into the 21st century are as thus:

1. An educational program that combines both academic theory and practical application
2. The continuous development of in-house training services related to teaching techniques
3. Working with a mentor and valuing of the teaching profession
4. An awareness and experience of differing cultures
5. A period of time spent working in the country where the foreign language is spoken as mother tongue
6. Training in the field of foreign language teaching techniques
7. Training in information technology to be applied pedagogically in the classroom
8. Training in the field of methods to learn how to learn
9. Development of strategies for independent language learning
10. Development in the field of observation and inspection

There is a wide variety of literature available for the appraisal of teacher foundation programs (Arslan, 2000; Lawless, Smith, Kulikowich, & Owen, 2001; Vaughn, Everhart, Sharpe, & Schimmel, 2000). In today’s modern world, the role of technology in education is an important point of discussion and as such has been at the forefront of recent research (Betrus, 2000; Brennan, 2000; Cuckle, & Jenkins, 2000; Duhaney, 2001; Duran, 2000). Aside from this, the standards of teacher foundation programs and educational staff (Bayülken, 1999; Taş, 2004), experts (Oser, 1998), prospective teachers, (Bayülken, 1999; Ok, 1991; Taş, 2004; Williams, & Alawiye, 2001), and those teachers already working in the area (DeRousse, 2000; Taş, 2004) whose views were analyzed (Bayülken, 1999; Taş, 2004) are further examples of research in this area. On the other hand, research has also been taken to define standards for foundation programs in Turkey and to determine to what extent these standards are being reached (Bayülken, 1999; Erişen, 2001; Ok, 1991; Taş, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to compare the teacher development programs of Turkey, Denmark, and Germany with the aid of the views of prospective teacher candidates from these countries. It is desired to achieve a common standard for teacher training programs in these countries and thus raise standards and cooperation.
Method

The research that yielded qualitative data was a descriptive study (Karasar, 1995). Candidate teachers’ views were obtained through questionnaires and interview. Qualitative research techniques were used in order to gain depth knowledge in the study (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2005, p. 2; Marshall, & Rossman, 2006, p. 2).

Research Subjects: This research was carried out in the autumn of 2007-2008 at the education faculty of Mersin University in Turkey, the Holbaek Seminerium in Denmark, and Hildesheim University in Germany. These universities were chosen as a result of the researcher having previously attended seminars therein under an Erasmus project. Sixty five prospective teachers from Turkey, 33 from Denmark, and 52 from Germany were chosen in order to obtain data to make a comparison between the three countries. This research makes use of “criterion sampling” and “convenience sampling” (Krathwohl, 2004, p. 148; Ritchie, & Lewis, 2003, p. 78-80; Yıldırım, & Şimşek, 2000, p. 73). All teacher candidates were given a questionnaire (150). Candidates gave written answers to the items on the questionnaire. For the interviews, a total of 16 students from each of the three countries were selected.

Data Collection and Analysis: In all three groups, the language used for data collection was English. Both open-ended questions and interviews were employed. For the open-ended questions, this research used “Qualitative Contents Analysis.” The data were analyzed in three steps. These are Category definition, Exemplification, and Codification Regulation which were stated before the research began (Mayring, 1996). These questions were reviewed by six experts who have Ph.D degrees to ensure content validity. The latest form of the questions’ contents was developed based upon the expert suggestions. The research sought answers to the following:

1. What are the positive sides of your teacher training program in your department?
2. What are the negative sides of your teacher training program in your department?
3. What are your offers for a better teacher training program?
4. What are the skills of a qualified teacher according to you? And do you have these skills?
5. What are the quality standards of a college/faculty/seminerium of education?

6. Do you think that your college/faculty/seminerium carries these standards? Explain with reasons.

The collected data were examined one by one and coded. Content analysis was carried out and frequency tables were produced on the basis of the coded data. Inter-rater reliability method was used to ensure the reliability of results. To ensure the reliability of the research, the reliability formula defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) and coefficient correlation defined by Spearman were used (Atılgan, Kan, & Doğan 2006, p. 114; Yanpar, 1997). The reliability was computed as high. In order to ensure the validity of the questions, expert opinion was sought and piloting was carried out. All research methods were explained in detail (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 134-135; Yıldırım, & Şimşek, 2006, p. 265). The data were coded by two experts.

Findings

Teacher candidates’ responses on positive features of the applied teacher training program in their departments are given below:

We can see that the code for “practice” was an often chosen concept. This was followed by “qualified academics.” In Germany, the second most chosen concept was that of “visiting schools.” In all three countries, applied education was defined as a positive feature.

Teacher candidates’ responses about negative features of the applied teacher training program in their departments are given below:

In all three countries, the most highlighted concept is “complicated theory.” In Turkey, the most emphasized response was that of “assignments” and this was followed by “strict instructors.” In Germany, the most stressed negative feature was “crowded classrooms.”

With teacher candidates from all three countries, “more practice” was identified as the most important feature of a good teacher development program. In Germany, the most stressed feature was “small groups.” Crowded classrooms are seen as undesirable. Previously, the German group had identified crowded classrooms as a negative factor. In Germany, the second most chosen response was “a balance between theory and practice.” This was stressed by teachers from both Germany and
Turkey. In Denmark, “more social activities” was the most stressed. In Turkey, after “more practice,” “tolerant/friendly instructors” was the most stressed. Previously, they had stressed “strict instructors” as a negative feature. It can be concluded that candidate teachers believe that instructors should be both tolerant and friendly.

The candidates from all three countries stressed “patient” as being a key feature of a teacher. In Denmark, the most stressed was “well-educated” which was followed by “understanding.” In Turkey, the most stressed were “patient” alongside “friendly and “well-educated.” In Germany, “patient” was followed by “friendly.”

The most stressed feature of a high quality faculty of education from the three countries was deemed as “qualified instructors.” In Germany, the most stressed was “small groups,” followed by “good feedback.” They stressed the need for instructors to provide feedback to candidates. German teacher candidates also stressed “library” and “financial support.” Candidates should have access to a good library. Financial support was also seen important. In Denmark, the most stressed feature after “qualified instructors” was “technological equipment” and “a nice atmosphere.” In Turkey, the most stressed feature of a high quality faculty was seen as “technological equipment” followed by “qualified instructors,” “good physical conditions,” and “practice.”

All three countries felt that their teacher development programs were not of a high enough standard. Eighty seven candidates stated “no” compared to 49 stating “yes.” In Turkey, the most stated positive aspect was “qualified instructors;” on the negative side, “a lack of standards” and “no technological equipment” were stated. In Turkey, a certain percentage believed that standards were of a high enough quality. In Denmark, there was an even split between those who saw standards as acceptable and those who did not. This was followed by “no practice.” Candidates in Denmark desired more application of theory. In Germany, alongside those who felt standards were not acceptable, “crowded classrooms” was cited.

Results

The subjects of this research and sub-topics were defined as educational programs, lecturer, and infra-structure. Data were coded according to these topics. In all three countries, applied education was defined as a positive feature. In all three countries, the most highlighted concept
was “complicated theory” as negative feature. Teacher candidates from all three countries identified “more practice” as the most important feature of a good teacher education program. The candidates from all three countries stressed “patient” as being a key personal feature of a teacher. The most stressed feature of a high quality faculty of education from the three countries was deemed as “qualified instructors.” All three countries felt that their teacher development programs were not of a high enough standards.

The results of this research show that in the English teaching department in Germany, active education is taken into consideration but that crowded classrooms represent a problem to the application of theory. Turkey faces a similar position, although application appears to be at the forefront, in reality theory based lessons are in the majority.

The research showed that regarding physical and technological facilities in teacher development establishments Denmark was in a very positive position. Both Denmark and Germany placed great emphasis on practical application within their programs. It is seen that Turkey is in a transitional period relating to the introduction of a new system in the 2000s. Accreditation has started to gain importance. Faculties have taken on board the notion of common standards. However, the lack of practical application is striking. In Denmark, entry requirements to faculties of education are low because the teaching profession is not seen as desirable. One reason for this is the problem of discipline.

In conclusion, candidate teachers stressed that the achievement of an active education system is determined by the quality of the teacher development system and the characteristics of its instructors. The results of this search showed differences between the three countries. Thus, in order to achieve the goal of becoming “European teachers” it is necessary to swiftly move from the theory of a common program to put it into practice while remaining faithful to national characteristics. These standards may be listed under the following headers: Good physical conditions, positive characteristics of candidates, financial aid, a democratic system for participants, good technological facilities, the presence of guidance and social facilities, and the characteristics of the educational program (active, activity based, reflective thinking etc.). When we look at research carried out on the standards of teacher-training, Poulson (2001) studied the branch knowledge and educational politics of primary school teachers. The importance of branch subject knowledge
was stressed. Secondly, *teachers’ personal characteristics* are an important factor in determining one’s teacher skills. On an emotional level, these characteristics affect education. Mead (2004) looked at the influences of personal, social, health education and basic citizenship on education. Value education was given special importance. The *characteristics of educational staff* is one of the most stressed attributes. The most sought after attributes for educators are branch expertise/knowledge and teacher vocational knowledge and skills. A faculty that develops teachers must be a model for them.

Prospective teachers talking about teacher development programs stress the need for the *practical* over the theoretic. Morken, Divitini, and Haugalokken (2007) worked upon the need for practice-based education. The effect of technology on education is very important. A number of studies stress the need for good education in this area (Betrus, 2000; Brennan, 2000; Cuckle, & Jenkins, 2000; Duhaney, 2001; Duran, 2000). Delfino and Persico (2007) looked at both face to face and online training in this area. Sime and Priestly (2005) took the views of teachers regarding information and communication technology. Burchell and Westmoreland (1999) looked at the reactions of students to the application of *basic competency education*. The research termed these as the benefits of educational standards. For example, the following of students personal development, testing and assessment, the provision of feedback both written and oral on the education process and the likes of preparation of reports for the student’s family for the purposes of reflective education—self-assessment and self-evaluation etc. It was stressed that the characteristic of an educational program determined its standards. It was stated that such a development would also play a part in increasing standards and the development of program evaluation. Stevens, Hodges, Gibbons, Hunt, and Turvey (2006) recommended that as part of the transformation in education, prospective teachers have to learn to be *reflective*.

It is believed that the present cooperation between members can be increased and strengthened and the speed upon the road to becoming “European Teachers” heightened. An in depth comparison of all qualitative and quantitative research developments may be carried out. Prospective English teachers may take place on exchange programs in order to develop their formation and take on the role as leaders for teachers from other disciplines. More cooperation with other countries
should be encouraged in order to further spread the learning of English and other foreign languages. The necessary importance should be given to foreign language learning within education. International quality standards should be determined and practical applications carried out according to these standards. Comparative international research may be carried out on prospective teachers from different branches.
References/Kaynakça


