



THE CRITERIA THAT TEACHER CANDIDATES SUGGEST IN EVALUATION OF TEACHING PRACTICES OF LIFE SCIENCE/SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract

It has been analyzed in this study the criteria that classroom teacher candidates suggest for the evaluation of teaching practices in Life Science and Social Studies classes. The research has been in the scanning model and the study group consists of 180 3rd grade teacher candidates studying at Education Faculty, Rize University. In order for the data collection, the classroom teacher candidates have been asked according to what criteria they would like to evaluate the teaching practices of Life Science and Social Studies. The evaluation form has been used to evaluate sample teaching practices of teacher candidates in Life Science and Social Studies classes since the 2007-2008 academic year so its validity has been tested. Each academic year, the form has been re-examined and evaluated with new teacher candidates. In this way, the teacher candidates have been provided to evaluate themselves with their own criteria. In the evaluation form, there are 34 items. As a result of the research, it has been found out that the teacher candidates get prepared for the classes considering material usage, teaching approaches/methods and techniques, personal characteristics, overall planning, classroom management...etc and they expect to be evaluated with the criteria belonging these titles. Suggestions have been made in line with the findings of the study.

Key Words: Teaching Life Science, Teaching Social Studies, Teacher Candidate.

INTRODUCTION

Life Science and Social Studies courses contribute students to adapt life and to socialize. In addition, students encounter the scientific information in these lessons for the first time. These lessons are the basis of many other lessons. By virtue of these properties, Life Science and Social Studies classes have become "pivotal course". For this reason, as Guven and Ersoy (2007) stated, Life Science education received in the first term of 3rd grade and Social Studies education received in the second term of 3rd grade in the undergraduate level have an extra importance; therefore, the essence and scope of these two lessons should be well known.

The content of "Life Science Education" course is usually as follows:

The aim of the course, content, historical development of it in our country and other countries, the suitable approach, methods and techniques, analysis of the course syllabus in terms of features such as achievement, skill and concept...etc, themes of the syllabus, the distribution of the achievements that themes contain according to classes, literature reviews, resource and material use, the education of values and democracy in Life Science course, sample applications for Life Science course and the evaluation of classroom activities.

The content of "Social Studies Instruction" course is usually as follows: Area of Social Studies, characteristics, basic objectives and skills, literacy in Social Studies, basic themes and areas in the field of Social Studies, the place of the field of social studies in primary education and its history, review of social studies curriculum (achievement, skill, theme...etc), the strategy, method, technique and materials used in social studies education, sample practices related to them, democracy in social studies course, human rights and values



education, examples and comparisons from social studies course books of Turkey and other countries.

When analyzed the course contents; it has been seen such terms as examples and comparisons of the course books, use of resource and material, evaluation of classroom activities, sample practices related to strategies, methods, techniques and materials...etc. In addition to these it can also be added such items as the development of teaching tools and materials, generating objectives and actions appropriate to gradual classification, questioning skills, preparing annual unit and daily plans, evaluation of the performance, which is present in Faculty of Education Graduate Teacher Education Program (1998). This situation shows the extent of great importance of the processes based on teacher candidates' enriching the theoretical substructure with practice ability. It has been seen that the common trend in the world is to extend the teacher training period and in this context to comprehend the teaching practices at the schools as well as theoretical classes at the faculties. Because one of the basic problems in teacher training is that there has not been established a sufficient connection among content knowledge in education, pedagogical knowledge (theoretical) and teaching practices at schools (Bektas, Horzum, Ayvaz, 2010 c.f. Can, 2001). In this context, there are also instruction courses which combine theory and practice. One of these courses is Life Science instruction which takes place in the 5th term and the other is Social Studies instruction which takes place in the 6th term. The evaluation processes of teacher candidates performing in the aforesaid courses and participating in the teaching practices are also important in terms of the feedback they get from these practices. Because the constructivist approach considers the individual differences in learning, and suggests that every individual configures their present knowledge with new knowledge in a distinctive manner bringing his/her individual features foreground. Therefore, it emphasizes that teaching methods and techniques should be diversified as much as possible and also it lays stress on the requirement of offering multiple evaluation opportunities in which the students could present their knowledge, skills and attitudes in assessment (Gelbal, Kellecioğlu; 2007 c.f. MEB, 2005).

The criteria presented in the research are considered to be able to create a substructure for the scales to be prepared for the evaluation of teaching practice, sample instructional lectures and presentations. In this context, evaluation of the teacher candidates with the criteria they have created means also self evaluation for them. As noted above, within the scope of the curriculum it has been designed sample teaching practices by the teacher candidates as the course definitions require. These practices are one of the scales used for the evaluation of the teacher candidates. A teacher candidate should know according to what criteria he/she will be evaluated for the performance he/she presented in the teaching practices of Life Science and Social Studies classes and should be prepared considering these criteria.

For this purpose, the problem statement is; what are the criteria that teacher candidates suggest in evaluation of teaching practices of Life Science/Social Studies?

METHOD

The scanning model has been used in the research. For this purpose, 180 third grader teacher candidates studying at Education Faculty, Rize University have been questioned according to what criteria they wish to be evaluated for their teaching practices of Life Science/Social Studies courses. First, the responses have been taken individually. Later, 10 groups have been formed in each class. Groups consist of an average of 3 students in each class. In this way, the responses received from the individuals have been synthesized with the other responses within the groups. In this process, each individual has contributed to the evaluation criteria, similar criteria have been removed and better expressed ones have been selected, so the final evaluation form have been created. The evaluation forms obtained 10 pieces from each class have been reduced to a single form by reviewing them with the help of teacher candidates in the classroom environment. In this way, 6 forms, 3 from daytime schooling and 3 from evening schooling, have been created. These 6 forms have been combined to a single form by the lecturer. The above mentioned evaluation form have been used to evaluate sample teaching practices of the teacher candidates in Life Science and Social Studies courses since 2007-2008 academic year, so its validity has been tested. Each academic year, the form has been re-examined and evaluated with the new teacher candidates. In this way, the teacher candidates have been provided to evaluate themselves with the criteria they created. There are 34 items in the evaluation form.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

During the study, the teacher candidates have been asked "According what criteria do you suggest teaching practices should be evaluated in Life Science and Social Studies courses?", and the responses have been categorized under certain headings and presented on the below tables in which they have been assembled into groups.

Table 1: Criteria Those Teacher Candidates Suggest About The Use Of Material In Evaluation of the Teaching Practices In Life Science/Social Studies Courses

USE OF MATERIAL	%
Authentic and creative materials should be used during the lesson	42
The material should be hand-made, useful, original, practical, economical....etc	40
Technological substructure should be used dominantly	40
Visuals (video, photograph, animation.... etc) appropriate to child psychology should be chosen	37
Photos should be clear	35

42% of the teacher candidates suggest that teacher candidates pay attention to the usage of authentic and creative material during the sample teaching practices. 40% of them stated that instead of using hand-made, ready-made obtained or found materials without too much effort, designed with effort, carefully considered, useful, economical, and practical ones should be used. When looked at the classification, it is seen that the use of materials (40%) requiring technological substructure is not considered important as much as hand-made materials. This situation might be caused by the consideration of the substructure of future settings. It is also seen that the teacher candidates are interested in the quality of videos to be used. The necessity of selecting videos that are high definition (35%), and appropriate to the age and psychology of students (37%) comes out as a distinguishing factor. The criteria suggested in the study are thought to have been formed with the effect of Material Development course. Gunduz ve Odabasi (2004) stated in his study named "Instructional Technologies for Education of Teacher Candidates in the Age of Information and the Importance of Material Development course": According to Asan (2002), most of the teacher candidates graduate from education faculties with a limited knowledge of how to use technology in their courses. Thus, although teacher candidates took this course in their pre-vocational training, they face problems with using instructional technologies and accordingly in material development when they started their jobs. Ucar (1999) agreed with the fact that great majority of teachers have deficiency of using technology in teaching process as they have not been provided with adequate knowledge and skills related to instructional technologies in their pre-vocational training. Hizal (1989) introduced in his research that teachers are willing to use technology in general and computer in personal, however they can not use for various reasons. On the other hand, Isman (2002) stated that teachers do not use new technologies in teaching-learning processes.

Table 2: Criteria That Teacher Candidates Suggest For the Evaluation of the Teaching Practices In Life Science/Social Studies Courses Related To Using Teaching Approach/Method and Technique

TEACHING APPROACH/METHOD AND TECHNIQUES	%
5e model of structuralism should be used	86
Intelligence areas should be taken into account	83
Collaborative learning/group work should be used	82
Drama should be used	79
Concept mapping should be used	78
Six-hat technique should be used	71
Alternative assessment and evaluation techniques should be used	69
Direct instruction should not be used unnecessarily	64
Brainstorming technique should be used	53
Case study technique should be used	52
Concept cartoons should be used	52
Other techniques should be used	28

It is revealed from the study that teacher candidates consider intelligence fields (83%) which they learn in the content of multiple intelligence theory and especially 5e model of structuralism (86%). According to the teacher candidates, other methods and techniques to be in the sample teaching practices are cooperative learning, drama, concept maps, six hats method, alternative assessment and evaluation technique, brainstorming, case study, concept cartoons and other techniques. The information teacher candidates received in theoretical part of the lesson has effect on the techniques they prefer. It can be asserted that the techniques which the lecturers frequently stressed have been reflected in the criteria that teacher candidates have suggested. Moreover, teacher candidates prefer to use direct instruction technique necessarily and in a well-balanced way. The great majority of teachers who believe the necessity to use cooperative learning can be considered as an indication of structuralism and 5e model acquisition. Faculties and educational institutions are expected to develop the opportunities of mutual cooperation and interaction, which will enable teacher candidates that received pre-service training to learn methods, techniques and approaches employed in schools today. The teacher candidates getting educated to become teachers ought to be given the opportunity to practice new methods and techniques. This can be effectively realized through using strategies based on cooperation with a sense of exploratory approach (Shantz, trans. Gokce, Demirhan, 2005). Studies are encountered in the literature revealing that drama and alternative assessment and evaluation methods have been used by the teachers frequently (Alaz, Yazar, 2009).

Table 3: The General Criteria That Teacher Candidates Suggest About Personal Characteristics in Evaluation of Teaching Practices of Life Science/Social Studies

CHARACTERISTICS	%
Should have approach and style open to criticism	63
Should manage to draw attention by using oral language (tone of voice...etc) and body language (mimic, gesture...etc) effectively	61
Should establish communication with the students successfully	59
Should use Turkish effectively	47

Teacher candidates suggested that those who are open to criticism (63%), who are successful to use body language (61%), who can establish communication with the students effectively (59%), and who can use Turkish effectively (47%) should get higher marks from the applications. As Caliskan and Yesil (2005) mentioned in their study, body language is one of the means of establishing communication. The teaching profession carries a quality which requires communication skills, especially use of body language effectively. Use of body language is critical to the successful conclusion of training which a process of communication is. "Being open to criticism" is discussed in "Complementary Professional Qualifications" among teacher qualifications.

Table 4: The General Criteria That Teacher Candidates Suggest In Evaluation of Teaching Practices of Life Science/Social Studies

GENERAL	%
Misinforming should be avoided	44
Up-to-date samples from immediate surroundings should be used by following the principle of induction	37
Students should be brought in acquisition concepts completely	34

Teacher candidates, during sample teacher practices, suggest that misinforming should be avoided (44%), principle of induction should be followed (37%), and students should be brought in acquisition concepts completely (34%). These results correspond with the study of Kosterelioglu and Kosterelioglu (2008) in the literature. In the study aforesaid, being aware of the readiness of the students and following the principle of induction are the factors which have been observed in relation to teacher candidates' level of professional competence acquisition. Avoiding misinforming is another criterion of teacher qualifications (otmg.meb.gov.tr).

Table 5: The Criteria That Teacher Candidates Suggest About Planning In Evaluation of Teaching Practices of Life Science/Social Studies

PLANNING	%
The content of acquisition and the content subject should be corresponding with each other	65
Lesson plan should be clear, understandable and attentive	61
Time should be used effectively and successfully	48
There should not be redundant repetition	43
The subject should be associated with previous/ following lessons and other lessons	40

As seen in Table 5, teacher candidates mentioned about correspondence of the acquisition with content of plan, plan's being clear and attentive, using time successfully, plans allowing reasonable amount of repetitions and taking care of associations during evaluation of teaching practices. Research findings correspond with teacher qualifications specified by Ministry of Education and Council of Higher Education (CHE) within the scope of (SVET) Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System.

Table 6: The Criteria That Teacher Candidates Suggest About Classroom Management In Evaluation of Teaching Practices of Life Science/Social Studies

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT	%
Classroom control should not be neglected	69
Students should be active rather than the teachers	47
Reward, feedback and reinforcement should be used in time and effective	45
Every student should be given voice	39
The level of students should be analyzed	31

Teacher candidate lay stress on the necessity of classroom control, students' being active rather than the teachers, timing and quality of reward, feedback and reinforcements, trying to give to ever student, being aware of the level of students. Kuguoglu (2004) reveals out in his study classroom teacher candidates have a moderate-level classroom management by stressing the importance of classroom management.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher candidates care about preferring handmade materials to those which have technological substructure, and also care about them to be useful, economical, original in their lectures. They want the visuals to be clear and appropriate for the psychology of the students. In this context, it might be suggested to give them computer courses about how to use internet for this purpose.

Teacher candidates, who think that they should make preparations for the lessons considering 5e model of structuralism and intelligence fields, have included cooperative learning, drama, concept map, the six hats method, alternative assessment and evaluation techniques, brainstorming, case study, concept cartoons, and other techniques in the group of method and techniques which should be used. In this sense, as the importance of bringing the students in contemporary approach, method, and techniques in the theoretical part of the course have been highlighted once more, it might be suggested to allow more time to these above mentioned techniques.

Teacher candidates described being open to criticism, using body language and Turkish successfully, communicating with students successfully as factors which increase the success. For this reason, it might be suggested to give teacher candidates support about communication, body language, efficient listening and speaking before and after pre-service education. During sample teaching practices, teacher candidates suggested not to misinforming, follow principle of induction, to bring students in acquisition concepts completely, and to have them to be appropriate to the level of students. In terms of discovering the levels of the students, it might be suggested that some regulations which enable teacher candidates to have school



experience course simultaneously should be done.

During the evaluation of teaching practices, teacher candidates mentioned that acquisition to correspond with the content of plan, the plan to be open and attentive, successful use of time, the plans to include reasonable extent of repetition and to be careful with the associations are more successful. In this context, it might be suggested to recognize the program deeply and to rehearse for sample teaching practices.

Teacher candidates lay stress on the necessity of paying attention to the classroom management, making students active instead of themselves, timing and quality of reward, feedback and reinforcements, trying to give voice to all students. This emphasis, in the image of the teacher candidate's achievement is important because it indicates the location of classroom management. Thus, classroom management courses should include sample applications developed for unusual situations which might be encountered in the lessons.

It might be suggested to pay attention to the research during studies of scale development, and also review and comparison of application evaluation criteria from teacher's and lecturer's point of view.

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