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The impact of the unforeseen factors on the teaching practice of student teachers

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Abstract: The intricacies confronted with teaching skills of student teachers of English may arise from a variety of sources. Knowing about teaching is different from performing teaching. Student teachers may find teaching English demanding, even though they theoretically know about the main goals of the teaching. This study investigated the impact of the unforeseen factors on the teaching practice of student teachers. A descriptive study was conducted with the participation of 154 student teachers at a Turkish university. In the study, the effects of the teacher training related issues such as motivation, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and teaching strategy awareness were investigated. On the whole, the study suggests that teacher training is not merely to introduce theoretical knowledge, but to incorporate convincing suggestions about the unforeseen teacher or teaching related concerns into the training process.

Keywords: *student teachers, motivation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, teaching strategies*

1. Introduction

Training competent teachers of English for using innovative and supplementary approaches that are essential for their professional development is the main goal of teacher training programs. In English language teacher education, the support is commonly provided for increasing content knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge (Liu, 2013; Shulman, 1987). Student teachers are taught theoretical field notes for gaining content knowledge; they are taught linguistic knowledge in order to manage language skills development, and they learn pedagogical knowledge for performing the teaching practice.

Teacher learning is not viewed as transforming knowledge and theories into practice, but rather as constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes (Burns & Richards, 2009). In other words, teachers' expertise can be promoted through individual skills and knowledge development during teaching profession implemented in the classroom events of school-based contexts (Tsui, 2009). In this respect, the teacher has the responsibility of theorization of practice through collaboration in social settings for gaining professional consciousness, knowledge, and development (Johnston, 2009).

Professional development is the key component of teacher training. Additionally, professional learning policies and applications that are the focal points of teacher training may cause alterations in teachers' learning outcomes and professional learning experiences. As for English language teacher (L2) education, the embedded values and attitudes in the classroom in teacher education programs impose the theoretical knowledge on student teachers for professional diploma, and those imposed notions are negotiated and conceptualized in schools where they work as teachers (Borg, 2003). Thus, they learn how to cooperate with other teachers and use teaching strategies for being effective in front of the student (Zeichner, 2003). If a good teacher is the most important factor for fostering student learning, though there are as yet no established common criteria for identifying expert teachers, how can a good teacher be trained in teacher training process? For building the ongoing commitment to the profession, numerous factors effecting teaching capability need to be examined for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of student teachers. Motivation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and teaching strategy awareness are among the unforeseen factors (Brown, 2007). Therefore, pertaining to the significance of these factors in teacher training, the present study attempted to explore a special perspective for examining the student teachers' perception of themselves.

Motivation and language teacher

Motivation is an affective factor that deserves crucial concern in education, since it leads to progress and success (Brown, 2007). Motivation is shaped by the individual's orientation type, either instrumental or integrative or both (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The degree of motivation is also interrelated with the individual's goals, expectation, age, prior knowledge, cultural and social milieu (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2012). The types of motivation which are shaped by the type of orientation and individual related factors are defined in two categories: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation (Brown, 2007); the former type of motivation is increased through externally-driven sources, and the latter is fostered by means of internally-driven sources. If a language teacher is ready for being a member of teaching community and for committing herself/himself to the teaching profession, the teacher may be assumed to be motivated and engaged in teaching activities intrinsically.

Self-esteem and language teacher

Teachers who teach to a group of learner are responsible not only for students 'learning but also for their own teaching processes. The responsibility of language teachers may be beyond the standard expectations, as they are expected to teach the topic in the target language competently. For such capability, they need to have high level of self-esteem -that is the belief in one's own capabilities to successfully perform any activity. The degree of self-esteem is interrelated with the performance of the individual (Brown, 2007). Moreover, self-esteem is also among the factors fostering motivation. Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998, p.257) claim that the highest human priority is the need for self-acceptance; therefore, when an individual is demotivated, s/he shows a lack of interest to the subject matter. Demotivation may cause to lose commitment and interest for the professional behavior (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2012). It is also claimed that high level of self-esteem may bring about motivation, thus leading to the development of personal professional identity (Cadman & O'Regan, 2006). Regarding the importance of self-esteem, fostering student teachers' self-esteem degree needs to be among the primary concerns of language teacher education.

Self-efficacy and language teacher

Self-efficacy has been defined as having the sense of confidence in person's ability to succeed in specific situations (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is directly related with the level of self-esteem and motivation (Bandura, 1997; Brown, 2007; Dörnyei, 2005). It is claimed that self-efficacious teachers are enthusiastic and eager to teach (Bıkmaz, 2004). Teacher efficacy may be formed by prior learning experiences and events in classrooms (Knapp, 2013). Self-efficacious teachers may also be good models for students; thus, teachers who have high level of self-efficacy while teaching may be able to improve their students' cognitive development so as to develop the sense of efficacy about their capabilities and teaching strategies.

Teaching strategy awareness and language teacher

Teaching strategy that is potentially intentional behavior is the choice of a technique or method for approaching while teaching. Kumaravadivelu (2006) outlines the teaching strategies into two categories: macro-strategies that is a broad guideline generated on the base of teachers' classroom procedures and micro-strategies that are designed for implementing in the classroom regarding the objectives of a specific macro-strategy. The objectives of macro-strategies are designed for maximizing learning opportunities, minimizing perceptual mismatches, fostering language awareness and learner autonomy, raising cultural awareness, activating intuitive heuristics, contextualizing the input; micro-strategies are conditioned for the possibility, particularity, and practicality of macro-strategies regarding learners' needs, lacks, and expectations (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2005). Thus, the purpose of using those strategies is to construct a post-method pedagogy in order to be able to teach language regarding the conditions of the context. By using these strategies, teachers behave both as creators of learning opportunities for their learners and users of learning opportunities created by learners (Birjandi & Hashamdar, 2014).

2. Materials and Methods

The study is descriptive in nature. Survey method was used to gather research data.

Purpose

The aim of this study was to explore the unforeseen factors effecting the professional development of the student teachers of English, since student teachers' beliefs and reflections on their positions may be considered as an integral part of teacher education process. Based on the mentioned purpose, the following research questions were designed and answers were sought to the questions:

1. How motivated are student teachers for teaching profession?
2. How do student teachers perceive themselves in terms of
    a) self-esteem
    b) self- efficacy?
3. How efficiently do student teachers use teaching strategies?

Participants

This study was carried out with the participation of 154 student teachers attending English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at a Turkish university. The fourth year student teachers who were recruited from three classes participated in the survey. The participants were exposed to consent process and they accepted to participate in the survey voluntarily.

Instruments and data analysis

For data collection, a motivation questionnaire, the Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale (RSES), the General Self-Efficacy Scale, and a teaching strategy questionnaire designed by the researcher were used. The Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale (RSES) is a 10-item Likert type scale which measures individuals' global self-esteem. The scores of scale range from 0-30: scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem. The scale is available at http://www.wwnorton.com/college/psych/psychsci/media/rosenberg.htm.
The General Self-Efficacy Scale -a 10-item psychometric scale was used to assess self-beliefs of the student teachers. The scale is available at http://userpage.fu.berlin.de/health/selfscal.htm.

3. Findings

The first data set was collected by means of a questionnaire designed by the researcher to investigate the motivation levels of the student teachers for teaching profession. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Motivation levels of student teachers

Items	*Strongly agree %*	*Agree %*	*Undecided %*	*Disagree %*	*Strongly disagree %*
Teaching allows me to experience the respect learners	43	52	-	5	-
I love teaching	67	21	-	12	-
Teaching makes me learn more about teaching	30	56	11	3	-
I like conveying knowledge to learners	24	74	-	2	-
Teaching promotes learning	14	51	4	9	22
I like finding solutions to problems in education	19	46	12	15	8
I know I am respected as a teacher	17	56	17	10	-
Teaching makes me happy	42	58	-	-	-
Teaching gives me an opportunity for developing my personality	28	42	14	11	5
Teaching makes me feel better	44	47	9	-	-
Teaching gives me an opportunity to respect myself	34	41	16	9	-
Teachers earn satisfactory salary	7	34	25	29	5
I like working hours of teachers	78	12	-	10	-

Teachers have satisfactory vacation time	34	56	4	6	-
Teaching is the easiest occupation to implement	25	23	5	27	20
Being in a school environment is secure	35	39	21	5	-
Teaching gives me an opportunity to meet a lot of people	67	33	-	-	-

As displayed in the table, most of the student teachers felt they were motivated for teaching profession. As regards the type of motivation, it was detected that they were intrinsically motivated for the profession. They declared they loved teaching and became happy while teaching and conveying knowledge to students. Additionally, they thought that they could get the opportunity of self-development and access more knowledge through teaching; the results also indicated that they respected themselves and felt themselves better because of the teaching profession. Although they proclaimed the positive aspects of teaching profession, they thought teaching was not an easy occupation through which they could earn satisfactory salary.

In the survey, the Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale (RSES) was administered to the student teachers in order to check the level of self-esteem which was assumed to be an important affective factor for the performance and motivation of the individual. The findings are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Self-esteem scores of the student teachers

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	15	33	70	36
I feel that I have a number of good qualities	31	61	42	20
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	35	77	38	4
I am able to do things as well as most other people	54	42	38	20
I feel I do not have much to be proud of myself	24	59	44	27
I take a positive attitude toward myself	65	34	31	24
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	32	31	47	44
I wish I could have more respect for myself	15	32	65	42
I certainly feel useless at times	19	27	71	37
At times I think I am no good at all	29	30	41	54

According to the frequency results of the self-esteem scale (RSES), most of the participants (106) did not feel that they were a person of worth; in addition, they were inclined to feel they are a

failure (112), did not have much proud of themselves (83), and felt useless themselves at times (108). Therefore, most of the student teachers got below 15 points and were assigned with low esteem. Of those participants, 92 believed they had a number of good qualities, felt having capabilities to do things as most other people (96), took positive attitude toward themselves (99), and respected themselves (106), since they thought they felt good at all (96). By getting the scores between 15 and 25, they were evaluated as having high level of self-esteem in some aspects.

In the study, self-efficacy levels of the student teachers that were presupposed to be affecting their capability of teaching as an unforeseen factor was measured by means of the General Self-Efficacy Scale. The results were calculated and displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Self-efficacy scale

	Not at all true %	Hardly true %	Moderately true %	Exactly true %
1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough	-	21	36	43
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want	11	19	61	9
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals	-	16	66	18
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events	3	47	27	23
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations	7	7	33	53
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort	1	12	36	51
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities	4	22	45	29
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions	5	7	58	30
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution	2	8	59	31
10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way	8	16	53	23

The findings of the self-efficacy scale, which was used to investigate the efficacy degree of the student teachers in terms of their personal beliefs about coping with the problems, displayed that the student teachers had high degree of self-efficacy. Most of them declared that they could cope with the demanding problems when they devoted the necessary effort. They confirmed that if they had trouble at any occasion, they could feel themselves competent enough for finding solutions. Most of them believed they could keep calm and felt themselves confident for coping with the problems due to their own resourcefulness.

Having high degree of motivation, self-esteem, and self-efficacy was assumed to be influential while shaping the personality and behaviors of the student teachers. However, those factors might not be the mere indications of being a good teacher. Teaching strategies awareness

can also be evaluated as the focal indication of being a good teacher. In order to examine whether they felt themselves competent enough in teaching issues, the student teachers were questioned about their awareness of teaching strategies. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Teaching strategies awareness of student teachers

	Teaching strategies	Agree %	Undecided %	Disagree %
1	I can use immediate changes in teaching	21	40	39
2	I prefer interacting with students while teaching	25	37	38
3	I can allow opportunities for the student to learn more about things	27	41	32
4	I try to make positive statements about students' performance	48	31	21
5	I explain goals and objectives of the lesson	30	48	22
6	I plan for my lesson regarding the needs of students	58	29	33
7	I try to listen to students' ideas	53	26	21
8	I reward students after they have finished the task	45	27	28
9	I use checklists to evaluate students	13	41	46
10	I ask for clarification when I do not understand what is said	18	39	43
11	I like cooperating with students	35	28	37
12	I prefer guiding students to learn by questioning	48	29	23
13	I want to establish trust as a teacher	83	3	14
14	I keep teacher portfolio	18	42	40
15	I monitor myself while teaching	15	58	27
16	I evaluate my teaching process	32	41	23
17	I try to increase the student's experience for learning	53	30	17
18	I try to give corrective feedback for students' output	68	7	25
19	I notice students' feelings about my teaching performance	30	36	34
20	I try to use praise for students' performance	55	17	28
21	I encourage students to determine their own learning expectations	72	3	25
22	I try to design projects for students in order to benefit personally	10	45	45
23	I usually express the importance of learning	81	-	19
24	I discuss my teaching performance with students	10	38	52
25	I design activities regarding the expectations of students	79	5	16
26	I encourage students to build confidence	16	49	35

27	I encourage students to continue learning outside the classroom	37	41	22
28	I try to understand the learning conditions of students	74	23	3
29	I evaluate the outcomes of my teaching	47	24	29
30	I try to increase the motivation level of my students	88	12	-
31	I try develop appropriate materials regarding the needs of students	76	8	16
32	I teach the lesson in a logical and coherent sequence	69	14	17

In Table 4, the responses about teaching strategies of the student teachers are presented. The questions were designed to evaluate the teaching strategies awareness of the student teachers by focusing on the components of teaching settings: students, the lesson, and the teacher. For the questions about students, most of them thought that they were not capable enough to implement the necessary strategies in some respects such as interacting and cooperating with students, allowing opportunities for students to learn by questioning, evaluating students' performance by the use of checklists in a positive manner, and encouraging students for building confidence. On the other hand, most of the student teachers stated that they would listen to students' ideas, use praise for the classroom performance, give corrective feedback, increase students' motivation level, and encourage them to set learning goals and objectives. As for the planning the lesson and teaching stages, they declared that they would plan the lesson and design the activities/materials regarding the needs and expectations of students. The student teachers also admitted that they felt themselves capable enough for teaching the lesson in a logical and coherent order by focusing on the importance of learning. However, they did not feel themselves proficient enough to make immediate changes in the sequence of the lesson design as consistent with the goals of the lesson. Moreover, they admitted that they could not design projects as supplementary activities; and, depending on this, they did not believe they would encourage students to continue learning outside the classroom. When they were questioned about the evaluation and assessment of the teaching process, they declared that they would not keep portfolios for evaluating their teaching progress and teaching outcomes, monitor the teaching process, discuss with students about their teaching performance for getting reflection on teaching; still they felt themselves eager to establish trust as a teacher.

4. Discussion

This study, which aimed to investigate the unforeseen factors effecting teaching competence, was designed by identifying the degree of motivation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and teaching strategy awareness of the student teachers of English. While designing the study, it was assumed that since teachers of English should teach the subject matter in English, the nonnative teachers of English may need to have high level of motivation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and teaching strategies awareness to perform teaching profession successfully to cope with the teaching issues appropriately. In this respect, it was anticipated that investigating teachers' subject knowledge may not alone be satisfactory to evaluate their quality as teachers, but their perceptions of themselves as teachers need to be explored as well. Depending on the attempt of the study, the findings of the study will be discussed around the research questions.

The answer to the first question "How motivated are student teachers for teaching profession?" was sought by means of a motivation questionnaire; the results indicated that the student teachers felt themselves motivated enough for teaching profession and had positive emotions about the teaching profession. In this sense, it was recognized that the commitment to teaching profession is interrelated with the sentimental side of the student teacher which fosters intrinsic motivation (Brown, 2007; Dörnyei, 2005). The responses of the participants also indicated that teaching profession might lead to self-development and boost the individual respect. However, they declared the negative aspects of teaching profession by referring to the unsatisfactory salary and workload of the profession. These negative aspects of teaching profession may damage the student teachers' enthusiasm and motivation toward the profession.

The second question is about the student teachers' perception of themselves in terms of self-esteem and self-efficacy which are indispensable components of teaching profession. Language teachers who have low self-esteem, can be very critical about their own knowledge (James, 2001). The findings of the RSES indicated that the student teachers did not perceive themselves as having high self-esteem in some respects, though they believed they had a number of good qualities and capabilities which led to respect themselves. The results of the General Self-Efficacy Scale, on the contrary, displayed that they had high degree of self-efficacy while coping with the problems because of their resourcefulness and the devoted efforts. Regarding the results of both scales, it may be supposed that the ones who had low level of self-esteem might have had high level of self-efficacy, though self-esteem and self-efficacy may seem to be complementary components of each other (Bandura, 1997; Brown, 2007; Dörnyei, 2005).

Moreover, it is stated that the degree of self-esteem is a kind of catalyzer for motivation and professional development (Cadman & O'Regan, 2006); nevertheless, the study findings displayed that the student teachers had low degree of self-esteem, but high level of motivation. This may be due to their belief about their capabilities and their feelings about the teaching profession. In other words, being a teacher of English might have made them feel good and motivated, but they might not have recognized and internalized their capabilities well. Another reason may be that the scale (RSES) was used to measure global self-esteem, not task self-esteem. If their task self-esteem degree were to be measured, consistent results would be obtained. Therefore, the study showed another important aspect of self-esteem; that is, global self-esteem may not be interrelated with other affective factors. Whatever reasons lie behind the low self-esteem level, as Horwitz (2008) declared, self-esteem check is necessary for recognizing how the individual feels about themselves. The data set about the self-efficacy levels of the participants also showed that they had high degree of self-efficacy; the results are consistent with the degree of motivation of the student teachers as Bandura (1997) and Dörnyei (2005) stressed. The results confirm the findings of the previous studies; for instance, in a study by Bıkmaz (2004), it was concluded that self-efficacious teachers generally felt themselves enthusiastic and eager for teaching.

The answer to the third question "How efficiently do student teachers use teaching strategies?" was sought by a 32-item questionnaire. The results indicated that the student teachers were aware of the teaching strategies both at macro level and micro level (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). They declared they felt themselves component enough to apply macrostrategies in terms of planning the lesson, setting their goals and objectives, contextualizing the input for the learner. In most of the macro strategies, they reflected positive responses. As for the microstrategies, they felt they could design the activities regarding the needs and expectations of students and make assessment appropriately, although some microteaching strategies such as fostering students to

build confidence, interacting with them, and allowing opportunities for them were found to be challenging for the student teachers. Depending on these results, it is possible to state that the student teachers' motivation level and self-efficacy degree for teaching are supportive for developing suitable teaching strategies.

Based on this survey results, some suggestions can be proposed for teacher trainers. The particular focus of the data analysis suggests that there are some unforeseen factors effecting and shaping student teachers for the teaching profession; therefore, such factors need to be investigated to discover the causes of their teaching flaws. Offering opportunities to student teachers to recognize their current situation as prospective teachers in terms of self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, and strategy use in teacher training programs may be helpful to treat their weaknesses. Additionally, they may be directed to discover and appreciate their strengths about teaching issues for helping them localize their professional knowledge. Teacher trainers, thus, may promote professional learning. It seems reasonable to deduce from this survey that the affective factors and teacher development are interrelated. On the whole, the study suggests that teacher training is not merely to impose theoretical knowledge, but to incorporate convincing evidence about the unforeseen teacher or teaching related concerns into the training process. For further research other individual factors which cannot be foreseen easily such as self-confidence, anxiety, tolerance, attitude, etc. should be investigated in order to make student teachers recognize their affective domains that shape their teaching competence.

5. Conclusion

The attempt in this descriptive study was to discover the unforeseen factors shaping student teachers' teaching competence. The results indicated that in some respects, student teachers may be motivated and have high level of self-esteem as well as self-efficacy, but in other respects they may not have. Accordingly, it was concluded that their macroteaching and microteaching strategies awareness may also be shaped not only by theoretical knowledge but also by their affective domains. The predominant understandings of the study may allow teacher trainers to bring together both foreseen and unforeseen factors into training process and to have student teachers to be alert about their teaching weaknesses and strengths.

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