

# **Opinions of Turkish Students Graduated from Faculties of Arts and Sciences about Pedagogical Formation Training**

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## **Abstract**

Training teachers is among the most important issues for many governments. In Turkey, similarly, the question of how to train teachers has been debated for years and numerous practices have been tried. One of these practices is providing pedagogical formation training to students who graduated from faculties of arts and sciences. The main aim of this study is to determine the opinions of these students about the pedagogical formation training given by faculties of education. The research was designed as a descriptive study in which scanning model was employed. The universe of the research consists of 122 students who graduated from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Kirikkale University and who are currently receiving pedagogical formation training in the Faculty of Education. The data in the research were collected using the assessment instrument developed by Gelişli (2009), they were analyzed and interpreted using SPSS 16.0 software, and finally suggestions are presented.

**Keywords:** Teacher Training, Teacher Efficacy, Pedagogical Formation Training

## **Introduction**

The leading actors in the education system are undoubtedly teachers. It is the occupation that influences the course of a society's social, political, economic, technologic and even moral development. Due to its power to shape the future, it has been the most critical and important occupation in all societies throughout the history. For this reason, all governments prioritize the questioning and constant updating of teacher training programs.

First institutions that trained teachers as we know it were established in France following the French Revolution in 1789. In Western countries such as England and Belgium, first modern

teacher schools were opened after the 1830s in parallel with the emergence of a secular education understanding (Akyüz, 1978; Öztürk, 1999). In Turkey, on the other hand, the origin of such institutions dates back to Darülmualleme (Male Teacher School) that was opened in 1848 and is regarded as the origin of today's faculties of education. In this respect, it could be argued that Turkey has had a very long-established teacher training system. This structure, the institutional foundations of which were laid 164 years ago, has developed several practices within itself following the foundation of the Republic (1923). Among them are Village Teacher Training Schools and Village Institutes that would solve the problem of literacy in rural Turkey along with Training Institutes and Teachers' High Schools that would supply specialized teachers to the secondary education in Turkey. Moreover, one of the most significant eras in the history of the Turkish Republic in terms of teacher training started with the establishment of the Council of Higher Education (Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu/YOK) in 1982. Beginning from that year, institutions that train teachers were transferred from the Ministry of National Education to universities. Teachers' Training Schools, Training Institutes and Teachers' High Schools began to train teachers first under the name of "High Schools of Education" and then of "Faculties of Education" as part of universities. In 1997, YOK felt the need to review teacher training policies. With the project called "Restructuration of Faculties of Education, all institutions that train teachers became obliged to follow a standardized program beginning with the 1998-1999 Academic Year. As part of the restructuring process, YOK decided that teaching certificate programs for secondary education branch teaching were non-practical and insufficient in terms of content and duration; and thus, it initiated non-thesis Master's programs. These programs have been executed in two forms: 3,5+1,5 years for students at faculties of education, and 4+1,5 for graduates of faculties of arts and sciences. Following this decision, all teaching certificate programs were shut down (Baştürk, 2011; Eraslan and Çakıcı, 2011; Kavcar et al., 2007).

The last change in teacher training was brought about by the decision taken by YOK general meeting in 2010. According to this, the "non-thesis Master's" education that students who graduated from a faculty other than the faculty of education receive in order to become a teacher was abolished as of the 2010-2011 Academic Year. The name and certain criteria of this program were changed, and the "pedagogical formation" program was introduced.

It could be argued that all these measures have been aimed at reducing the teacher shortage. Yes, the policies pursued have accomplished this target to a certain extent, but they have also left permanent marks that reduce the quality and respectability of the profession. Today's teacher training system should not be only a follower of contemporary developments, but it should influence these trends through its unique experiences (Baskan, 2001).

Frequent changes in the teacher training system have kept the interest in the field alive. According to Kavcar (2002), the non-thesis Master's practice is interesting and attractive at first glance. It means a graduate education for secondary education branch teaching, which could be seen as a quality-improving factor. On the other hand, the idea that this non-thesis Master's system could not provide teacher candidates with professional spirit and dedication along with motivation, which are essential in teaching, and several similar arguments paved the way for

numerous researches on the subject. It is observed that the majority of the researches on the non-thesis Master's program and the pedagogical formation program focus on; the problems that teacher candidates encounter in teacher training certificate programs and solution proposals to these problems (Kıray, 2005; Aycan, Aycan and Türkoğuz, 2005), teacher candidates' attitudes towards the profession (Gürbüz and Kışoğlu, 2007; Çapri and Çelikkaleli, 2008; Oğuz and Topkaya, 2008; Can, 2010; Eraslan and Çakıcı, 2011), their teaching self-efficacy beliefs (Acat et al., 2005), opinions of students and professors (Deniz, Görgeç and Şahin, 2005; Şahin and Balkar, 2007; Tambağ, 2007; Ünver, Bümen and Başbay, 2010), and the assessment of programs (Ünsal, 2004; Ada, Baysal and Dünder, 2005; Memduhoğlu and Topsakal, 2008; Baştürk, 2011). It is believed that all these researches have not yet fully revealed the opinions of teacher candidates receiving either non-thesis Master's or pedagogical formation training about the training program that they received.

In this study, however, the aim is to determine the opinions of faculty of arts and sciences graduates, who attend the second term of the pedagogical formation training, regarding the pedagogical formation courses. In this respect, the study is of importance in that it will provide feedbacks to relevant parties and practitioners.

### **Aim of Research**

The primary factor for achieving the intended success in education is the quality of teachers. On the other hand, the primary factor that influences this quality is the education that teachers receive. In this respect, the issue of teacher training is an issue that is closely monitored, on which researches are frequently conducted, and regulations are made based on these researches. Research is needed in order to be able to see the positive and negative impacts of these regulations. The current research is of importance in that it demonstrates the opinions of teacher candidates about the pedagogical formation training, which is the most recent regulation.

Departing from this point, the following sub-problems are addressed in the research:

- What, according to students, is the impact of pedagogical formation courses upon their professional development?
- What are students' opinions about the programs, methods and applications of pedagogical formation courses?
- What are students' opinions about the methods, techniques and applications that professors employ in classes?

### **Method**

The research was designed in the descriptive research form. The aim in descriptive researches is to describe a given case as accurately and carefully as possible (Büyüköztürk et al., 2010). It was aimed in the research to determine the opinions of students who graduated from faculties of arts and sciences about the pedagogical formation training.

## Study Group

The research was carried out in the 2011-2012 Academic Year. The universe of the research consisted of all students who receive pedagogical formation training at Kırıkkale University. The sample was selected through “simple random sampling”. In this sampling method, each person is given the same chance of getting selected (Büyüköztürk et al., 2010). Then, the sample of the research consisted of 122 students. The departments in which students receive education were determined randomly and the assessment instrument was administered to the students in the determined departments.

## Assessment Instrument and Analysis of Data

The data required for the research were collected using the assessment instrument consisting of 25 items developed by Gelişli (2009). The items in the questionnaire were scored based on the following pattern: 4.21-5.00 Totally Agree, 3.41-4.20 Mostly Agree, 2.61-3.40 Somewhat Agree, 1.81-2.60 Partially Agree, 1.00-1.80 Disagree. Since the validity and reliability study of the assessment instrument was conducted by (2009), it was not carried out again. Gelişli (2009) found the instrument’s Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient to be 0.86, and brought the items together under three factors for structure validity. The data of the research were analyzed using SPSS 16.0 software employing frequency, percentage, t-test and one-way variance analysis techniques.

## Findings and Interpretation

### Students’ Characteristics

The distributions of the participant students with respect to gender, undergraduate major and employment status are given in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

**Table 1. Distribution of students with respect to gender**

Gender	f	%
Female	85	69.7
Male	37	30.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Of the participant students (122), 69,7% were females and 30,3% were males.

**Table 2. Distribution of students with respect to undergraduate major**

<b>Undergraduate major</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Physics	6	4.9
Chemistry	5	4.1
Biology	7	5.7
Mathematics	37	30.3
Literature	40	32.8
History	21	17.2
Sociology	6	4.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Of the participant students; 4,9% studied Physics, 4,1% studied Chemistry, 5,7% Biology, 30,3% Mathematics, 32,8% Literature, 17,2% History and 4,9% Sociology.

**Table 3. Distribution of students with respect to employment status**

<b>Employed in an Institution</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	55	45.1
No	67	57.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100.0</b>

While 45,1% of the participant students were employed in an institution, 57,9% were not.

### **Students' Opinions about the Contribution of Pedagogical Formation Courses to their Professional Development**

These opinions are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Students' opinions about the contribution of pedagogical formation courses to their professional development**

<b>Expressions</b>	<b>N</b>	<b><math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>S</b>
M1. I think that the information acquired in pedagogical formation courses will be beneficial for the profession of teaching.	122	3.62	1.18
M3. I do not think that what I learn in these courses will be beneficial for me as I will not be appointed as a teacher.	122	4.33	1.16
M4. I think that pedagogical formation courses will be of use for me in everyday life.	122	3.51	1.31
M10. I think that pedagogical formation courses are necessary.	122	3.69	1.56

M14. Pedagogical formation courses help us develop positive attitudes towards the profession of teaching.	122	3.95	1.21
M15. Curricula of pedagogical formation courses are in line with our expectations.	122	2.90	1.21
M16. I think that the knowledge and skills that I acquire in pedagogical formation courses will contribute to my personal development.	122	3.68	1.29
M18. Pedagogical formation courses teach us how to use while teaching the information and skills that we acquired in area courses.	122	3.77	1.18
M20. I feel happier in pedagogical formation classes.	122	2.94	1.30
M25. Teaching is an ideal profession for me.	122	4.19	1.16
<b>Total</b>			$\bar{x} = 3.68$

Table 4 shows that students mostly agree with the opinions regarding the “Impact of Pedagogical Formation Courses on Students’ Professional Development” ( $\bar{x} = 3.68$ ). The highest value in this factor belongs to the expression *I do not think that what I learn in these courses will be beneficial for me as I will not be appointed as a teacher (M3)* ( $\bar{x} = 4.33$ ). Students totally agreed with his item. They mostly agreed with the expression *Teaching is an ideal profession for me (M25)* ( $\bar{x} = 4.19$ ). When these two items are addressed together; it could be argued that students see teaching as an ideal profession for them, but they think that what they learn will not be of use as they believe that they will not be appointed. Students mostly agreed with the expressions *Pedagogical formation courses help us develop positive attitudes towards the profession of teaching (M14)* ( $\bar{x} = 3.95$ ) and *Pedagogical formation courses teach us how to use while teaching the information and skills that we acquired in area courses (M4)* ( $\bar{x} = 3.77$ ). It was also observed that they mostly agree with the expressions *I think that pedagogical formation courses are necessary (M10)* ( $\bar{x} = 3.69$ ) and *I think that the knowledge and skills that I acquire in pedagogical formation courses will contribute to my personal development (M16)* ( $\bar{x} = 3.68$ ). They also mostly agree with the expressions *I think that the information acquired in pedagogical formation courses will be beneficial for the profession of teaching (M1)* ( $\bar{x} = 3.62$ ) and *I think that pedagogical formation courses will be of use for me in everyday life (M4)* ( $\bar{x} = 3.51$ ). Their responses to these items indicate that students believe that pedagogical formation courses will be beneficial for both their professional and personal developments. Students somewhat agreed with the expressions *I feel happier in pedagogical formation classes (M20)* ( $\bar{x} = 2.94$ ) and *Curricula of pedagogical formation courses are in line with our expectations (M15)* ( $\bar{x} = 2.90$ ).

## Students' Opinions about the Programs, Methods and Applications of Pedagogical Formation Courses

These opinions are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Opinions about the programs, methods and applications of pedagogical formation courses**

Expressions	N	$\bar{x}$	S
M2. I think that the high number of course hours for pedagogical formation courses prevents us from taking area courses adequately.	122	3.45	1.44
M5. I think that the crowdedness of classes in pedagogical formation courses prevents us from acquiring the knowledge, attitudes and skills regarding teaching.	122	3.24	1.47
M6. I think that practical works that would endow us with teaching skills are necessary.	122	3.85	1.36
M7. I think that the variety (number), hours and credits of pedagogical formation courses are high.	122	3.43	1.43
M9. I think that contents of pedagogical formation courses cover up-to-date information.	122	4.36	1.02
M11. The instructor-centered nature of pedagogical formation courses reduces the participation in classes.	122	2.85	1.34
M23. I think that the practical works that would endow us with teaching skills are not adequately provided in pedagogical formation courses.	122	3.22	1.30
<b>Total</b>			$\bar{x}=3.48$

Table 5 shows that students mostly agree with the expressions regarding the “programs, methods and applications of pedagogical formation courses” ( $\bar{x}=3.48$ ). The highest value in this factor belongs to the expression *I think that contents of pedagogical formation courses cover up-to-date information* (M9). Students totally agreed with this opinion ( $\bar{x}=4.36$ ), which was followed by the expression *I think that practical works that would endow us with teaching skills are necessary* (M6) ( $\bar{x}=3.85$ ) with which they mostly agreed. Thus, it could be stated that formation courses include up-to-date information and that students find practical works necessary. Students mostly agreed with the expressions *I think that the high number of course hours for pedagogical formation courses prevents us from taking area courses adequately* (M2) ( $\bar{x}=3.45$ ) and *I think that the variety (number), hours and credits of pedagogical formation courses are high* (M7) ( $\bar{x}=3.43$ ). When these two items are considered together, it could be argued that students find the number of pedagogical formation course hours high and see this situation as an obstacle in front of taking area courses adequately. Students somewhat agreed with the expressions *I think that the crowdedness of classes in pedagogical formation courses prevents us from acquiring the knowledge, attitudes and skills regarding teaching* (M5) ( $\bar{x}=3.24$ ), *I think that the practical works that would endow us with teaching skills are not*

adequately provided in pedagogical formation courses (M23) ( $\bar{x}$  =3.22), and The instructor-centered nature of pedagogical formation courses reduces the participation in classes (M11) ( $\bar{x}$  =2.85).

**Students’ Opinions about the Methods, Techniques and Applications that Professors Employ in Classes**

These opinions are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Opinions about the methods, techniques and applications employed by professors in classes**

Expressions	N	$\bar{x}$	S
M8. Attitudes of professors who teach pedagogical formation courses towards the course reduce the productivity of the course.	122	3.77	1.18
M12. I think that professors consider our opinions and suggestions in pedagogical formation courses.	122	3.44	1.22
M13. Attitudes of professors of area courses towards pedagogical formation courses negative affect our motivation in these courses.	122	3.26	1.41
M17. Pedagogical formation courses are taught by experienced professors who are experts in their fields.	122	4.39	.91
M19. The strategies, methods and techniques that professors employ in pedagogical formation courses increase the productivity of the course.	122	4.12	1.16
M21. Professors of pedagogical formation courses value us.	122	3.28	1.36
M22. Professors of pedagogical formation courses value our professional fields.	122	3.54	1.21
M24. The equipments used by professors of pedagogical formation courses increase the productivity of the course.	122	4.32	.95
<b>Total</b>			$\bar{x}$ =3,76

Table 6 shows that students mostly agree the expressions regarding the “Methods, techniques and applications employed by professors in classes” ( $\bar{x}$  =3.76). the highest value in this factor belongs to the expression *Pedagogical formation courses are taught by experienced professors who are experts in their fields* (M17). Students totally agree with this expression ( $\bar{x}$  =4.39). Students also totally agree with the expression *The equipments used by professors of pedagogical formation courses increase the productivity of the course* (M24) ( $\bar{x}$  =4.32). On the other hand, they mostly agree with the expression *The strategies, methods and techniques that professors employ in pedagogical formation courses increase the productivity of the course* (M19) ( $\bar{x}$  =4.12). Thus, it could be argued that the courses are taught by experienced professors who are experts in their fields using necessary equipments and appropriate strategies, methods



and techniques. Students mostly agree with the expression *Attitudes of professors who teach pedagogical formation courses towards the course reduce the productivity of the course (M8)* ( $\bar{x}=3.77$ ). They also mostly agreed with the expressions *Professors of pedagogical formation courses value our professional fields (M22)* ( $\bar{x}=3.54$ ) and *I think that professors consider our opinions and suggestions in pedagogical formation courses (M12)* ( $\bar{x}=3.44$ ). They somewhat agree with the expressions *Professors of pedagogical formation courses value us (M21)* ( $\bar{x}=3.28$ ) *Attitudes of professors of area courses towards pedagogical formation courses negative affect our motivation in these courses (M13)* ( $\bar{x}=3.26$ ).

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

The conclusions drawn in this study, which was aimed at determining the opinions of faculty of arts and sciences students about the pedagogical formation training, can be expressed as follows:

The participant students mostly agreed with the expressions about the impact of pedagogical formation courses on their personal and professional development. Students see teaching as an ideal profession for themselves, but they believe that what they learn in formation courses will not be of use for them as they do not believe that they will be appointed as teachers. On the other hand, they stated that the information and skills acquired in classes will contribute to their personal and professional development. Besides, they reported that the curricula of pedagogical formation courses meet their expectations to a medium extent (Table 4). In the study conducted by Gelişli (2009) on the opinions of students at faculties of vocational and technical education about the pedagogical formation training, similarly, students reported that the information and skills that they acquire in courses positively contribute to their personal and professional development, and that they see teaching as an ideal occupation. Moreover, in the study carried out by Eraslan and Çakıcı (2011), the attitudes of pedagogical formation students towards the profession of teaching, and it was found that students have positive attitudes in general, and that they actually prioritized faculties of education in university entrance exams.

It was determined that students mostly agreed with the opinions regarding the programs, methods and applications of pedagogical formation courses. They reported that courses involve up-to-date information and the practical works are necessary. On the other hand, they find the number of courses and the class hours for these courses as too much, and this situation prevents them from learning area courses adequately (Table 5). It was observed that students mostly agreed with the expressions regarding the methods, techniques and applications employed by professors in classes. Students reported that the courses are taught productively by experienced professors who are experts in their fields using necessary equipments and appropriate strategies, methods and techniques. Moreover, students stated that professors of pedagogical formation courses value students' professional fields and consider their opinions and suggestions. However, they also stated that professors' attitudes towards courses reduce the productivity of courses. Finally, it was observed that the attitudes of professors of area

courses towards pedagogical formation courses decrease students' motivations to a medium extent (Table 6).

The following suggestions could be offered based on the findings of the research;

- The pedagogical formation trainings of students of faculties of arts and sciences, who are of importance as part of the teacher training policy, should be planned well.
- Professors who will teach pedagogical formation courses should be experts in their fields and should possess all the required qualities.
- To examine the regulations made regarding the teaching of pedagogical area knowledge, studies should be carried out with wider samples and thorough analyses should be presented.

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