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## **A Qualitative Examination of the Serviceability of Teaching Practice Modifications Aimed for Special Education Teacher Candidates**

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The process of training special education teacher candidates is an issue that has been widely discussed in literature, yet there is no consensus as to the most effective method. Therefore, it is recommended that methods designed to meet the needs of special education teacher candidates with proven efficiency should be used collectively. This research analyzed the serviceability of the teaching practice process considering its strength and weaknesses based on the views of special education teacher candidates and observations of researchers.

### **Introduction**

The teaching profession has undergone recent changes in order to meet the needs arising from today's social structures and technologies, and teacher training practices have also changed to meet these needs. (Akpınar & Aydın, 2007). In 1998, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and Ministry of National Education (MEB) in Turkey established a system for Faculty-School collaboration in order to enable teacher candidates to gain experience in practice areas. Teaching Practice (TP), carried out as part of this system, is based on the attendance of teacher candidates at practice schools for six hours a week for in-class practice, and two hours a week of academic classwork at their university. School management, schoolteachers, faculty management, a TP coordinator and teacher candidates take part in the TP process (Council of Higher

Education - YÖK, 1998). TP is described as a course through which teacher candidates have the opportunity to transform the theoretical knowledge they have gained during their four-year study period into practice (Dursun & Kuzu, 2008). The fundamental objective of TP is for teacher candidates to acquire necessary competencies in teaching, including familiarizing themselves with the classroom environment, taking on teaching responsibilities, improving classroom management skills, and getting to know school routines (Ogonor & Batmus, 2006; Snoek & Zogla, 2009; Grino, Collins & Resnick, 1996; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005; Snoeg & Zogla, 2009). As in all teaching training programs, TP plays a vital role in the field of special education (Connelly & Graham, 2009).

An analysis of studies on TP reports that the studies are conducted mainly

through receiving the opinions from school teachers, in whose classroom the teacher candidates are placed during the TP (Seçer, Çeliköz & Kayılı, 2010), lecturers in charge of the TP from the Faculties of Education on (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Dursun & Kuzu, 2008) and teacher candidates (Çetintaş & Genç, 2005; Greenwood, 2001). Results of these studies suggest both problems and solution proposals the content and functioning of the TP process (Yılmaz, 2011, Işıkoğlu, İvrendi & Şahin, 2007; Seçer, Çeliköz & Kayılı, 2010; Eraslan, 2009; Çetintaş & Genç, 2005; Becit, Kurt and Kabakçı, 2009; Brownell, et al., 2005; Sindelar, Brownell & Billingsley, 2010). Recommended solutions to improve the TP process were displayed in the following paragraph.

Findings from these studies offer the following solutions for the problems arising during the TP process: (1) TP should be videotaped. Teaching instructors should watch video recordings more often (Yapıcı & Yapıcı, 2004); (2) teacher candidates should acquire experiences at different schools with varying student populations (Gökçe & Demirhan, 2005; Yapıcı & Yapıcı, 2004); (3) adequate collaboration should be built between the faculty and school (Işıkoğlu, İvrendi & Şahin, 2007; Baştürk, 2009; Aydın, Selçuk & Yeşilyurt, 2007); (4) a communication network should be established among the TP coordinators (Işıkoğlu, İvrendi & Şahin, 2007); (5) regular meetings should be held between TP coordinators and candidates, seminars should be organized, and reflective minutes should be kept (Gökçe & Demirhan, 2005; Işıkoğlu, İvrendi & Şahin, 2007); (6) collaboration between TP coordinators and teacher candidates should be strengthened (Işıkoğlu, İvrendi & Şahin, 2007; Yılmaz, 2011); (7) TP coordinators should mentor teacher

candidates regularly (Işıkoğlu, İvrendi & Şahin, 2007, Yılmaz, 2011; Sağ, 2008; Saracalıoğlu et al., 2004; Sılay & Gök, 2004; Gökçe & Demirhan, 2005; Yapıcı & Yapıcı, 2004); (8) TP coordinators should provide feedback for teacher candidates (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002; Sayeski & Scpaulsen, 2012); and (9) feedback provided to teacher candidates should be quick, personal, constructive and goal oriented (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

In a research conducted by Durusoy (2011), teacher candidates' teaching performances were periodically videotaped, and these records were shared online among the mentor teachers and faculty members. Mentor teachers and faculty members provided the teacher candidates with feedback on the teaching performances of the candidates. It was reported that the use of digital videos helped the candidates to improve their teaching competencies.

The need for making modifications during the TP was also revealed in a study conducted for Teacher Training Program in Intellectual Disabilities (Ergenekon, Özen & Batu, 2008). This study examined the opinions of teacher candidates in the Teacher Training Program in Intellectual Disabilities. Teacher candidates' suggestions for improving the TP included reducing the number of teacher candidates assigned to each teaching instructor, allowing teaching instructors to present appropriate model practices, increasing the amount of observation during teaching performance, and providing more friendly, relevant, and articulate feedback to teacher candidates (Ergenekon, Özen & Batu, 2008). Although special education teacher candidates' knowledge of content and evidence-based practices has a powerful influence on the success of children with disabilities, the most significant element in a qualified

teacher training program for special needs educators is their performance during the TP process (Klingner, Ahwee, Pilonieta & Menendez, 2003). Therefore, it follows that eradicating problems that present themselves during TP will improve the quality of special education teacher candidates. In the current study, the usefulness of modifications made to the TP process are evaluated in accordance with the observations of teacher candidates and TP coordinators.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

Participants in this study included 11 teacher candidates who were fourth-year students in the Teacher Training Program in Intellectual Disabilities. Five male and six female teacher candidates between 21- 23 years of age with an average age of 22, took part. Two teacher candidates did not complete the semi-structured interview; those who participated were given nine codes in order of K1, K2... K9. While the research group included one professor and two research assistants, four other research assistants were involved to carry out their professional responsibilities in the TP process. The research assistants were trained in qualitative research methods and had 1-10 years of experience in teacher training.

#### **Research Environment**

Research was conducted in the Developmental Support Centre (DSC) at the research institute within the university where the teacher candidates were enrolled. The DSC offers individual and group education to children with developmental disability (Mental Deficiency, Down's Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, etc.) between 0-6 years of age. An average of 120 students receive education in a total of 10 groups – including five morning and five afternoon groups – and individual education in six

classrooms within the center. Out of these 10 groups, two classes belonged to two Dawn's Syndrome, two Developmental Disabilities and six Autism Spectrum Disorder. Along with educational services, the DSC offers psychological counseling and guidance for the families of children with developmental disability, and physiotherapy and educational assessment for children with physical disability.

**Implementation process.** This research was carried out during the autumn and spring terms of the academic year (September 2015- June 2016) during which the TP was conducted. The teacher candidates completed the TP, provided by their university, in accordance with the TP Guidelines. Teacher candidates were divided into three groups and submitted their files alternately to one of three research assistants each week. The TP coordinators had a meeting with the teacher candidates weekly, providing written feedback on the TP files. These meetings also included feedback regarding the overall progress of the TP, discussions related to the teacher candidates' practices, and collective decisions on teaching materials teacher candidates would design and present during a future meeting.

The researchers reviewed the progress of the TP for Teacher Training Program in Intellectual Disabilities during the autumn term through the meetings that were held among the researchers. In these meetings, data related to the reviews were gathered and recorded in meeting minutes. Objectives, roles, and responsibilities of the practice instructors were identified. Teacher candidates' files were reviewed, observations were scheduled, and meetings were set up to discuss teacher candidates' progress. Focus group meetings were held with teacher candidates to discuss their views

on various TP themes. In these video-recorded focus group meetings, teacher candidates were divided into two groups. Two researchers acted as moderators and

two researchers kept the meeting minutes. Table 1 displays themes and sub-themes resulting from the focus group meetings.

Table 1

*Themes and Sub-Themes Obtained from The Analysis of Focus Group Meetings*

Views on Practice Feedback	Views on Observations	Views on Preparing Lesson Materials	Views on Writing Lesson Plans
-Feedback on video recordings	-Making observations through one-way mirror	- Lack of information in creating materials	- Need for a common core lesson plan template
-Written and face-to-face feedback	- Increasing the number of observations	- Need for a guidebook for creating materials	- Lack of information on writing lesson plans
-Feedback provided immediately after observation	- Immediate written and verbal feedback after an observation	- Models of presenting materials	- Need for receiving more feedback during the phase of writing lesson plans

Analyses, observations, and needs obtained from the focus group meetings during the autumn term led the researchers to make some additions and

modifications to the spring TP. These additions and modifications are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Modifications and Additions in TP Program*

Autumn Term Consulting Service	Spring Term Modified Consulting Service
Weekly alternated file submission	Weekly alternated file submission
Written feedback on files	Written feedback on files
Written feedback on writing programs (behavior modification, self-care ability)	Seminars, written and face-to-face feedback regarding concept and social skills in writing programs
Weekly planned practice meetings	Weekly planned practice meetings and feedback on video recordings
Material design (approval process and assessment)	Material design (approval process and assessment)
Classroom observation	Observation through one-way mirror
Feedback for observation on weekly meeting	Feedback immediately after an observation

After areas of improvement identified during the autumn term where addressed, TP resumed during the spring term. During weekly meetings, teacher candidates and supervisors watched

videotaped lessons. Videos were paused at intervals to engage in discussion about how the lesson could have been improved and to reflect on teaching performance. This allowed teacher candidates to make a

self-evaluation while other candidates had the chance to approach these performances with a critical eye. Next, TP coordinators and three observer participants (by pairing with an active coordinator every week) met with individual teacher candidates to provide verbal and written feedback on videotaped lessons and review their files. The other candidates were also given the opportunity to be present at these meetings and listen to the feedback given to that individual teacher candidate. In other words, after the modifications had been made to the TP, feedback was provided in small groups, where the all candidates in the group had the chance to observe their friend's feedback; whereas previously, the feedback on the teacher candidates' files were given individually.

One other change made to the spring TP was the addition of organizing seminars. Teacher candidates stated they needed their coordinators to provide training on writing a teaching program and lesson plan, so the practice coordinators created a template for a lesson plan including all required steps and ran two seminars on writing and practicing a program for concept and social skill teaching programs. These seminars provided information about writing a lesson plan and the instruction methods to be used in the lesson plan components, along with lesson plan templates and examples of effective teaching practice. Candidates were required to participate in one of the seminars during the spring term. Additionally, the TP coordinators observed the teacher candidates' planned lessons through a one-way mirror. Immediately after the observation, they provided candidates with written and verbal feedback.

### **Research Model**

This study used a descriptive method. A descriptive research method is

a type of qualitative data analysis that includes outlining and interpreting the data, collected through various data collecting techniques and in accordance with predetermined themes (Creswell, 2012). In this research, a descriptive method was used in order to determine the participants' opinion through focus group meetings and semi-structured interviews. These meetings and interviews were conducted in two different terms and a descriptive research method was chosen for an in-depth discussion on the themes obtained from these interviews.

The modifications and reorganizations made to the TP were determined in accordance with efficient TP models cited in the literature as well as the needs identified by teacher candidates during focus group interviews (Kudu, Özbek & Bindak, 2006; Brock & Carter, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2014). According to Kruger & Casey (2000), focus group discussions are described as planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment based on the questions predetermined by a relevant expert. At the end of the modified TP, teacher candidates' opinions regarding the progress in the TP were gathered with the use of semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured interviews, some predetermined questions are constructed in advance, and these questions are asked of all participants in the same order (Berg, 1998). During the research process, the data gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed with the use of an inductive approach for qualitative data analysis.

Data resources for this research included (a) TP Guidelines, (b) focus group discussions conducted with teacher candidates, (c) written records of videotaped weekly meetings held with

teacher candidates, (d) written records of the semi-structured interviews regarding the TP in the spring term as well as comparison of the two terms.

Data resources of the practice were based on weekly meetings and meeting minutes. During these weekly meetings, which were held on the last day of practice of every week, general feedback was provided related to the teaching performance of the teacher candidates. Performance was evaluated based on video recordings, and problems and solutions related to the TP were

discussed. These weekly meetings were videotaped, and instructors held meetings amongst themselves to evaluate the progress of the TP and the teacher candidates at the end of the weekly meetings. During these meetings, one of the instructors kept the meeting minutes. The teacher candidates were asked to assess the efficiency of the spring term TP and to compare it with the autumn term during the semi-structured interviews. These interviews were videotaped. The questions in the semi-structured interview are described in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Semi-Structured Interview Questions*

Questions
1. What differences do you observe in terms of supervision when you compare the first and second terms of the TP?
2. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the first term?
3. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the second term?
4. What do you think about your observations?
5. What do you think about your TP coordinators?
6. How do you find the changes in lesson plan template?
7. Some modifications were made to the feedback through the discussions we carried out after the observation; how do you think these modifications on your file feedback were?
8. Some modifications were made to the weekly meetings; do you think these modifications were efficient?
9. Your TP coordinators ran seminars for social skills and concept teaching; do you think these seminars were efficient?
10. What do you think about the material designing (approval process and assessment) maintained during the TP?

### **Data Analysis**

Voice and video recordings were transcribed by three researchers. Data obtained from these transcriptions were analyzed using a descriptive method. According to Yıldırım & Şimşek (2005), descriptive analysis is a type of qualitative

data analysis that includes outlining and interpreting the data collected through various data collecting techniques and in accordance with predetermined themes. Steps of descriptive analysis follow a quadruple order. In the first step of this phase, the researcher creates a

framework for data analyses based on interviews and observations, research questions, and conceptual levels of the research. Next, themes under which the data will be arranged and presented are organized. In this step, it is important to bring data together in a meaningful and rational way. Following this step, the researcher describes the organized data, using citations when needed. At the end of this process, the researcher disseminates the data, explaining cause and effect relationships among the data that support and strengthen the interpretations made.

#### **Creating and coding categories.**

Two researchers independently read all the collected data and created descriptive categories. Categories were compared, and those identified by both researchers were used in the study.

#### **Findings**

##### **Weekly Planned Practice Meetings**

During the spring term, ten lessons were videotaped and meetings were held regarding these lessons. The shortest of these meetings lasted 29 minutes and the longest 103 minutes, with the average meeting lasting 61 minutes. A total of 609 hours of videotaped lessons were recorded during the TP process. During these meetings, the candidates were provided with feedback on their teaching practice or given information about their future practices. Videotaped lessons were evaluated and teacher candidates were provided with suggestions related to observed inadequacies.

Video records were gathered after the interviews, and 10 meetings were analyzed by examining and classifying the teacher candidates' questions. 86 questions regarding situations faced by the teacher candidates were established. These questions were classified under four main themes: (1) the functioning of the

internship (15 questions), (2) the content of the internship (32 questions), (3) the calendar of the internship (17 questions), and (4) materials to be designed within the scope of the internship (19 questions). Three questions were classified under the title of "other" since they were irrelevant.

One of these four themes, related to the content of the internship, was divided into four subtitles. These subtitles were identified as writing a lesson plan, practicing the lesson plan, evaluating the practice, and identifying the objectives. Out of 32 questions covering the content of the practice, 14 questions were related to identifying objectives, 10 questions were related to practicing a lesson plan, five questions were related to writing a lesson plan, and three questions were related to assessment of the practice.

The second main theme, identified as the functioning of the TP, was divided into five subtitles. These subtitles included submitting practice documents, continuity in the practice, providing feedback on the teaching performances of the teacher candidates, and establishing communication and functioning of teaching processes. Seven out of 15 questions belonging to this theme were related to the submission of practice documents, four to the feedback of the teaching performances of the teacher candidates, two to the functioning of teaching processes, and one to establishing communication.

15 questions about the calendar of the TP, which was the third main theme, were divided into four subtitles – meeting process, calendar of the file submission, overall calendar of the TP, and practice calendar. seven out of these 15 questions were related to practice calendar, six to the calendar of file submission, and two to the overall calendar of the TP.

The fourth theme, identified as the materials to be used within the TP, were



divided into three subthemes. These subthemes were classified as identifying the content of materials, designing, and assessing practice materials. 10 out of the 19 questions in this theme were related to designing practice materials, six were related to identifying the content of practice materials, and three were related to assessments of practice materials.

37.20% of the questions asked by the teacher candidates fell under the content of the TP, 22.09% designing materials, 19.77% practice calendar, and 3.49% "other". 84 out of 86 questions asked by the teacher candidates were appropriately answered. The answers to these 84 questions were classified under 4 titles: approving, correcting, explaining, and guidance. 43 of the answers were categorized as explaining, one as

approving, 15 as correcting, and 11 as guidance.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

This section includes teacher candidates' answers for the semi-structured interview questions prepared by the researchers. There was a total of 204 minutes of recording in the semi-structured interviews. The shortest of these interviews took 20 minutes and the longest took 26 minutes. The documentation of these interviews is a total of 159 pages and 4118 lines. The answers given by the teacher candidates regarding the modifications to the supervision service were analyzed and identified as belonging to one of six categories (see Table 4).

Table 4  
*Themes Identified in The Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews*

Themes	Subthemes
1. The characteristics of the practice coordinators	
2. Planned observations	2.1 Increase in the number of observations 2.2 Use of a one-way mirror 2.3 Feedback immediately after the observation
3. Weekly meetings	3.1 Feedback on videos 3.2 Feedback on files
4. Modification to lesson plan template	
5. Seminars	
6. Process of designing materials	6.1 Approval process 6.2 Process of production 6.3 Process of assessment

**Characteristics of Practice Coordinators.** With the answers given to the semi-structured interview questions, the teacher candidates indicated that the practice coordinators established open lines of communication with the candidates on various issues by being accessible at any time, reading out the files in the presence of the candidates, providing the candidates with an opportunity to watch their videotaped teaching practices and with access to feedback in the candidate groups, and being consistent in their feedback.

Teacher candidate K5 said: *"They were friendly towards us...everyone was accepted as they are. And feedback provided by each coordinator was different from one another. Briefly, having been evaluated with different perspectives improved us."* (p. 20, line 497)

**Planned Observations.** After the focus group meetings, teacher candidates suggested the number of observations should be increased, observations should be done through a one-way mirror, and face-to-face and written feedback should

be provided after a lesson. Some modifications were made to the planned observations conducted within this context. While there were four observations in the first term, the second term included a total of 10 observations. During the first three of these observations, teacher candidates were provided with feedback only. On the remaining seven observations, teacher candidates were graded and provided with feedback. Observations were conducted through a one-way mirror in order not to disturb the classroom. After the observations, the teacher candidates were provided with written feedback regarding the observations, along with the detailed descriptions of the written feedback through face-to-face meetings.

**Increase in the Number of Observations.** The TP coordinators increased the number of observations by making additions to the existing observations. During these extra observations conducted in the spring term, the candidates were not graded but assessed. The observations in the spring

term were conducted based on the scoring criteria of observation evaluation rating scale included in the TP Guidelines. The teacher candidates described the increase in the number of observations as a positive contribution. They stated that frequent observations reduced their anxiety levels they felt while being observed, helped them consider observations as more of a natural process and focus on how they could improve themselves rather than having grade anxiety.

Teacher candidate code K4 said: *"...I mean, except for that, since we were observed more frequently, our stress levels caused by the observations lowered significantly. I mean, it is also better in terms of the children."* (p. 10, line 133).

**Use of A One-Way Mirror.** Results obtained during the focus group meetings held at the end of the autumn term revealed that the teacher candidates felt pressure to maintain control of the class during the observations. They indicated that this increased their anxiety while being observed. In line with this finding, practice coordinators observed the teaching performances of the teacher candidates through a one-way mirror during the spring term. The teacher candidates did not know on which session their instructors observed them. They believed observations conducted through a one-way mirror helped them maintain class control, and lowered their anxiety level for observations.

Teacher candidate coded K5 said: *"We were more relaxed when we were observed from outside the classroom compared to the previous observations. We also maintained more control over the children, and our stress levels were reduced."* (p. 5, line 103).

**Immediate Feedback After Observation.** Another finding gathered from the focus group meetings was that

observation feedback provided during the weekly meetings was not effective and useful for the teacher candidates due to the long duration of time (the duration between the observations and weekly meetings varied between three or four days) between an observation and meetings. The duration between the observations and weekly meetings varied between three or four days. Therefore, the candidates were given immediate written and verbal feedback on their teaching performances.

Teacher candidates indicated that immediate feedback given in face-to-face situations after an observation, followed by written feedback including additional clarification was more efficient. The also pointed out that they needed more positive feedback to enhance their motivation.

**Weekly Meetings.** The weekly planned practice meetings were part of the spring term TP. During these meetings, teaching candidates watched a videotaped teaching performance of a candidate, who used a different activity and method every week, and feedback was provided throughout the video. File feedback was provided face-to-face to the teacher candidate whose file was reviewed along with three other candidates in the practice coordinator's room. Following face-to-face feedback, coordinators held meetings where all the teacher candidates were allowed to listen to the feedback. The category of weekly planned practice meetings was divided into three sub-themes, and the answers given by the teacher candidates were analyzed.

**Feedback on Videos.** Analysis of the TP revealed that the teacher candidates needed opportunities for self-evaluation. To address this need, the practice coordinators watched the videotaped teaching performance of one of the teacher candidates along with the

practice group. The teacher candidate whose video was watched was asked to make a self-evaluation and evaluate the other teacher candidates. Practice coordinators detailed the teacher candidate's strengths and failings in the videos, and discussed them with the teacher candidate.

Teacher candidates pointed out that they found watching a video of a friend's performance to be efficient in terms of their teaching practice. They stated that practice videos contributed to their improvement in teaching in terms of observing various activities, methods, techniques, and class dynamics. They indicated that they had the chance to correct their mistakes based on the feedback provided. They also pointed out that practice videos offered a different perspective on their classroom activities allowing them to ask the question, "How could I improve an activity?"

Teacher candidate K7 said: *"Sir, this was overall a good practice. Either yours or another friend's video was watched, or we saw the mistakes in the practice, driving lesson from them. For us, it was more effective."* (p. 111, line 2831).

**Feedback on Files.** Teacher candidates stated that they found face-to-face feedback on their files to be constructive and prevented misinterpretation (for example, teacher candidates may misunderstand what is written on the feedback provided by their coordinators). They indicated that listening to the feedback provided for the other candidates' feedback was also useful for them.

Teacher candidate K2 said: *"It was definitely useful and I added the corrected version to my file following the feedback provided every week. I am still wondering how I could not see some of my mistakes. It was definitely useful!"* (p. 28, line 591).

Teacher candidate K6 said: *"Receiving feedback worked better for us. There may have been some misconceptions on the written feedback since we were not in a face-to-face situation. And we could not solve this problem. When we discussed these in a face-to-face situation, these misconceptions were minimized. Also, I can say that listening to our friends' feedback was useful for us."* (p. 101, line 2592).

**Modification to Lesson Plan Template.** Teacher candidates stated that the lesson plan template created for the TP in the spring term made their work much easier; they found it articulate, comprehensible, practical, and efficient. Since the lesson plan templates on the TP Guidelines were written in general terms, we tailored each section to our research adding a title for each section and fill them according to our research theme.

Teacher candidate K3 said: *"The template of daily plan was very good. I had no difficulty about it. At least, we knew what were supposed to do. There was a format and we thought what we would fill it with. What we needed to do was clear. I presented a lesson last week. We thought of what we needed to do this week. This made our work much easier."* (p. 22, line 483).

**Seminars.** Teacher candidates suggested the need for training in order to get more knowledge of the programs they would prepare. Other suggestions included providing template programs and sharing practice models. Thus, two researchers ran seminars on teaching concept and social skills. These seminars included model programs and model practices along with the methods and techniques used for designing programs.

The teacher candidates pointed out that these seminars served as a reminder of their knowledge from

previous years, materialized what they needed to do from practice models, and eased the program designing process.

Teacher candidate K4 said: *"I think that the seminar was definitely useful for teaching concept and social skills. If I hadn't taken it, I believe I could not possibly have written the program. I was hesitant about how I would present social skills and concept teaching. I can say that I learned which method would be presented in a more efficient way and what needed to be done."* (p. 44, line 994).

#### **Process of Designing Materials.**

Seven candidates suggested that they needed more theoretical knowledge on designing materials – in terms of selecting appropriate materials for the subject matter and characteristics and needs of students, and choosing affordable and durable materials. They also pointed out that designing their first material in cooperation with their mentor teachers would contribute to their learning process of material designing. Two candidates stated that designing materials improved their creativity; they enjoyed the designing process and gained a great deal of knowledge regarding materials. However, they pointed out that designing materials required certain abilities, and taking theoretical merely would not be sufficient in this regard.

**Approval Process.** Teacher candidates stated that receiving further supervision regarding the approval of their material choice during weekly meetings would be beneficial to them. Teacher candidates stated that they also needed classroom discussions about materials, and these discussions needed to be on whether or not the materials fit to the objective of the planned lesson. They also highlighted the significance of the fact that the materials would meet the needs and personal characteristics of the students with special needs.

Teacher candidate K4 said: *"But maybe we could have discussed more in detail during the approval process. We could have discussed how we could make them and use them. But I believe our time was limited for all these."* (p. 18, line 445)

**Material Production Process.** Some teacher candidates suggested that the practice coordinators should supervise the candidates in terms the durability of materials during the two weeks of material production process. According to the TP Guidelines, the durability of a teaching material means that the material is produced with substances that are durable enough to be used in more than one class. Also, the materials should remain intact for the inappropriate use of materials by the students with special needs, such as being thrown or smashed.

Teacher candidate K7 said: *"We could have discussed about the stages in the meeting..."* (p. 110, line 2817).

**Assessment Process.** The teacher candidates stated that the teaching materials, which they designed, were examined in great detail by the coordinators. They said that the teaching materials were assessed considering several aspects, such as the functionality, durability, and affordability of materials, quality of the substances used in materials. The coordinators also assessed whether or not the teacher candidates took sufficient care during the designing process of the materials. The candidates pointed out that they would receive less negative criticism on the assessment process if a more detailed examination of materials is conducted during the approval process.

Teacher candidate K5 said: *"Sir, materials were examined in detail. But we could have learned more if we looked at it from a broader perspective. Yet the time was limited."* (p. 24, line 649)

In conclusion, the teacher candidates stated that the supervision support provided during the modified TP were useful and played a role in enhancing their motivation in the process of the TP.

### **Discussion**

According to the examination of the findings, the questions asked by the teacher candidates to the practice coordinators in video recordings revealed the areas in which teacher candidates felt they needed understanding, clarification, and support. The majority of questions asked by the teacher candidates during the meetings were related to the content, functioning, and calendar of the TP. The TP process includes practice guidelines outlining these components; however, findings from this research reveal that these guidelines did not provide a sufficient amount of explanatory knowledge. Although the findings were gathered during the second term of the TP, this research reveals that teacher candidates still had questions regarding the functioning, content, and calendar even after they had performed TP during term one. These findings suggest the necessity for creating an introductory booklet or guidelines providing operationally defined information on the process, content, and practice calendar of TP.

Two studies based in Turkey (Aydın, Selçuk & Yeşilyurt, 2007; Baştürk, 2009) suggest that teacher candidates do not receive sufficient supervision from TP coordinators alone, and that they experience difficulty in accessing the information regarding the TP process. McNamara (1995) suggests that the most efficient and reliable source of information are the TP coordinators. In this study, the candidates stated that the TP process was conducted transparently by the coordinators in terms of the fact that the TP coordinators read out the files and

watched the videos of teacher candidates' teaching performance in the company of other teacher candidates, all candidates had access to coordinators' feedback, and the coordinators displayed a consistent approach displayed while providing feedback.

Another need reported by teacher candidates was increased observations of their teaching. Teacher candidates pointed out that the increased number of observations lowered their anxiety related to being observed, they began considering observations as more of a natural process, and they focused on how they could improve themselves without having grade anxiety. Literature findings also support the use of frequent observations and observation feedback to teaching candidates (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Observations of teacher candidates during the TP process were used as a method for grading students; therefore, teachers were observed using a one-way mirror to reduce observation anxiety. Considering the fact that the Turkish cultural and educational systems include a traditionally authoritarian structure, teacher candidates in Turkey may feel anxious since they consider their TP coordinators as representatives of traditional authority rather than as experts who will contribute to their improvement. The fact that the observations are conducted for grading purposes may strengthen this authority anxiety.

One of the most significant adjustments made during the modified TP process was a comprehensive feedback model that included video feedback, written feedback, and verbal feedback. Video feedback allows teacher candidates to engage in self-evaluation and reflection and makes a significant impact on teacher candidates' teaching performance (Abrahamson, 2010; Brock & Carter, 2013;

Durusoy, 2011; Watson & Williams, 2004). Feedback that is provided to teacher candidates in written and verbal forms simultaneously also has a positive effect on the candidates' teaching performance (Sayeski & Polsen, 2012; Schmidt, Urban, Luiselli, White & Harrington, 2013). It's reported that the immediate feedback given after an observation is more effective than delayed feedback (Erbaş & Yücesoy, 2002). Written feedback is reported to have limitations, such as handwriting not being neat and clear, and the potential of misunderstanding the comments (Walker, 2009). It is suggested that all these feedback and supervision models be combined and used together (Sayeski & Polsen, 2012; Schmidt et al., 2013; Junqueira & Kim, 2013). Periodic meetings with teacher candidates that allow them to exchange ideas, discuss needs and weaknesses, and talk about problems encountered in TP are also important (Gökçe & Demirhan, 2005; Dursun & Kuzu, 2008; Barretsen & Watt, 2014).

Another addition made to the TP was the seminars organized for teaching concept and social skills. Transforming theoretical knowledge acquired during university coursework into practice during the TP process is difficult (Yapıcı & Yapıcı, 2004). Kudu, Özbek and Bindak, (2006) suggests the need for courses, seminars, and workshops during TP. This study reveals that the teacher candidates had limitations for remembering the theoretical knowledge that they gained during the previous terms and transforming it into skills. When they were supported through seminars, they performed more efficiently in TP. Yuan

and Lee (2014) suggest that it is significant for teacher candidates to attend in-service trainings and seminars regarding their inadequacies in terms of their vocational development to develop a confident attitude towards their profession. Teacher candidates make better progress when seminars are supported with video models (Brock & Carter, 2013).

The findings of this study indicate that devising materials remains a significant insufficiency. Perhaps one of the most important limitations of this study is that the teacher candidates stated that they could not receive adequate supervision, which would provide them with sufficient instructive and corrective feedback during the phases of designing, producing, and scoring materials. Future research could include an original study focusing on designing, producing, and evaluating materials in TP.

Although the findings from this research reveal that the modifications conducted during the TP served their purpose, generalizability of the results of this research is limited compared to a TP process conducted in a real state school or a special education unit. The reason for this is that the research was limited to a small group of students, conducted within the Developmental Support Centre at the university rather than at any Turkish state school. The unit where the TP was conducted is a type of laboratory school, and a limited number of teacher candidates attended the TP. However, the findings show consistency with the problems and solution proposals revealed in literature, and they provide evidence to support making modifications to TP lessons based on participants' views.

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