

Teacher Trainees' Opinions about Teaching Profession Knowledge Courses in Turkey

Erol Karaca

Faculty of Education, Dumlupinar University, 43010 Kutahya, Turkey

Abstract: Opinions of teacher trainees attending secondary school education programs about teaching profession knowledge courses were investigated to determine whether or not their opinion differs according to their gender, type of teaching program, satisfaction in teaching program, general academic achievement grade averages and willingness on being teacher. The research was carried out with 242 teacher trainees attending Science and Mathematics for Secondary Education Graduate Program-Non Thesis at Graduate School of Sciences, Social for Secondary Education Graduate Program-Non Thesis at Graduate School of Social Sciences and English Certification Program in Dumlupinar University, Kutahya, in the 2006. Data which were collected through the Opinion Scale about Teaching Profession Knowledge Courses revealed that teacher trainee' opinions about teaching profession knowledge courses were positive and were significantly associated with type of teaching program, their satisfaction in teaching program and their willingness on being teacher. However, there were no significant relationships between the teacher trainees' opinions about teaching profession knowledge courses and the other variables examined.

Key words: Teacher Profession Knowledge Courses • Teaching Program • Opinion Scale • Measurement • Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

The principal duty of a teacher is to create permanent traced behaviour changes on the students in the direction of the objectives of the school and the course. Performing this duty requires both necessary subject field knowledge and teaching profession knowledge to obtain environment arrangement for forming valid learning life styles [1]. Teaching profession knowledge is known as profession formation has the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for teaching profession acquired. As indicated by Küçükahmet [2], today, slogan of 'knowing teaches' is not effective. It is necessary that the knowing how to teach their acquirements in a methodical way. Thus, it is required to have teaching profession knowledge. Moreover, it is essentially important to provide the teacher trainees to gain teaching profession knowledge as well as subject field knowledge during pre-service education [3].

It is aimed to give the necessary information and skills to gain teaching profession knowledge for teacher trainees by Teaching Profession Knowledge Courses (TPKC). TPKC are determined again to be taught at twenty teacher education programs in under graduate level and in secondary education teaching programs

shifted to graduate level, By the decision of Turkish Council of Higher Education (TCHE) on July 21st, 2006. Based on this new rearrangement, TPKC decided to be studied in teacher training programs are standard TPKC to be studied at all programs, TPKC to be studied except some of the programs and TPKC only to be studied at certain programs due to their special qualifications [4]. The students of faculty of science and/or humanities acquire the necessary knowledge and skills related to teaching profession in TPKC taking part as standard in secondary education graduate programs-non thesis and teaching certificate programs. This study is designed to investigate opinions of teacher trainees attending secondary education graduate programs-non thesis and graduated from faculty of science and/or humanities and the students of faculty of science and/or humanities attending English certificate program about TPKC.

Certainly the most effective way of teacher trainees to gain professional qualifications is preparing education programs considering the qualifications needed to be gained by the teachers [5]. However, the fact should be kept in mind that achieving the aimed success can be possible by knowing the student. For this reason, to give the teacher trainees teaching profession qualifications, which is one of the most important qualifications owned

by teachers, it is required to know teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC.

It is obvious that, teacher trainees having positive opinions about TPKC will be willing in learning TPKC's subjects and teacher trainees having negative opinions about TPKC will be reluctant in learning TPKC's subjects. It is necessary to know the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC in order to determine the factors forming and developing negative opinions for the students having negative opinion and to present the facilities producing the environment for the formation of positive opinions. Determining the opinions of teacher trainees about TPKC is essentially important for gaining effective results from TPKC, for increasing the success in these courses and for training of teachers having sufficient professional qualifications.

In literature it's regarded that studies on teacher trainees' opinions about teaching profession knowledge courses are limited. Erden [1] has conducted a study about the attitudes of teacher trainees towards teaching certification lessons with 10-itemed Likert type attitude scale. In this study conducted by Erden, it is seen that the teacher trainees' attitudes towards certificate lessons change with respect to subject fields and willing on being a teacher. Besides, Görgen and Deniz[6] have conducted a study related with opinions of teacher trainees towards teaching certificate program with questionnaire included 10-item.

Considering the limited number of studies on teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC in Turkey, this study was conducted to determine opinions of teacher trainees attending secondary school education programs about TPKC and it is hoped that it will contribute to the existing literature on this subject. An attempt was made to answer the following questions:

- What are the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC?
- Do the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC differ according to their gender, type of teaching program, satisfaction in teaching program, general academic achievement grade averages and willingness on being teacher?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Procedure: OSATPKC was administered to the teacher trainees in the study group within a one-week period in the autumn term of the 2006–2007 academic years. The purpose of the study was explained to the teacher trainees

and they were asked to read the instructions. The teacher trainees completed the questionnaires independently in approximately 25 minutes.

Participants: Participants were 240 teacher trainees attending Science and Mathematics for Secondary Education Graduate Program-Non Thesis at Graduate School of Sciences, Social for Secondary Education Graduate Program-Non Thesis at Graduate School of Social Sciences and English Certification Program in Dumlupınar University, Kütahya, in the 2005. Sixty-four of participants (26.67%) were from Science and Mathematics for Secondary Education Graduate Program-Non Thesis at Graduate School of Sciences, 81 (33.75%) were from Social for Secondary Education Graduate Program-Non Thesis at Graduate School of Social Sciences, 95 (39.58%) were from English Certification Program (ECP). One hundred and fifty-seven (65.40%) were female and the remaining 83 (34.60%) were male. 183 of the participants (76.25) were satisfied to be in TPKC program and the remaining 57 (23.75%) were unsatisfied to be in TPKC program. General achievement grade average of fifty-two of participants (21.67%) was between 2.00-2.49, one hundred and twenty-five of participants (52.08%) was between 2.50-2.99, fifty-three of participants (22.08%) was between 3.00-3.49 and the remaining 10 (4.17%) was between 3.50 and 4.00. Ninety-five of participants (81.25%) were willing on being teacher and the remaining 45 (18.75%) were unwilling on being teacher. All the university students in the sample are Turkish citizen and participated in the study voluntarily.

Data Collection: In this study, the Opinion Scale about Teaching Profession Knowledge Courses (OSATPKC), developed to determine teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC by making use of the method that finding inferences from the reactions given to a series of sentences or adjectives and interferences made in the subject of opinion measuring, was used [7].

The OSATPKC consists of two sections. The first part is the form relating to demographic and personal information, consisting of items about the gender of teacher trainees, the type of teaching program, the satisfaction in teaching program, the general academic achievement grade averages and willingness on being teacher. The second part includes 24 expressions related to opinions about teaching profession knowledge courses on a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 5 choices, from 1=strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree [8].

The OSATPKC was administered to 242 teacher trainees in the study group. Two questionnaires were omitted, because they were not filled out according to the instructions. Factor analysis was conducted in order to check the construct validity of the scale. A scale having 16 items consisting of three factors was developed as a result of the factor analysis. Factor analysis is a statistical data reduction technique used to find latent variables or factors among observed variables. In other words, if research data contain many variables, factor analysis can be used to reduce the number of variables. With factor analysis a small number of factors can be produced which are capable of explaining the observed variance in a larger number of variables. The reduced factors can also be used for further analysis [9,10].

Twenty-four items to which Principal Components Analysis was applied were collected under 4 factors whose eigenvalues are higher than 1.00. Therefore, OSATPKC can be accepted with a maximum of 4 factors. However, as the opinions of the teacher trainees are determined as three-factored, the scale is referred to as being three factored. Cumulative variance explained by three factors is 51.83%. According to the Principal Components Analysis, eigenvalue of the first factor is 8.03 and the variance it explains is 33.46%, for the second factor the results are 2.76 and 11.51% and for the third factor, 1.64 and 6.85%, respectively. This finding shows that three factors determined as important factors explain the majority of cumulative variance in the items and the variance related to the scale.

Having higher variance rates after factor analysis results in a stronger factor structure of the scale [11,12]. In social sciences, the variance rates changing in the range of 40% and 60% are accepted as sufficient [13]. According to this criterion, items 5 and 13 were extracted from the scale. In the factor analysis, the items with a factor load value higher than .45 are taken [14]. According to this criterion, items 14, 16, 17 and 19 were extracted from the scale. It is observed that the remaining 18 items come under the first factor and first factor load values vary between 0.47 and 0.75. The variance of items in the scale is between 0.46 and 0.84.

In Principal Components Analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found as .89. A KMO test is carried out to inspect the sufficiency of distribution for factor analysis and tests whether partial correlations are small or not. A value of KMO higher than .80 is evaluated as "excellent". In this research KMO value was very good. Also Barlett test result of 2077.71 ($p < .01$) indicates that factor analysis is suitable for variables.

As the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC are determined with three factors, a rotation process was performed using the varimax technique to find the items having high relations with the factors and to interpret the items easily [10]. After rotation, items 8 and 22, having low variance were extracted from the scale and 16 items remained. Factors are named for the meanings which the items include. In the first factor there are 10 items and this factor is named 'The Opinions about the Denial of TPKC'. The second factor, named 'The Opinions about the Believe in Importance of TPKC' consists of 3 items. The third factor, named 'The Opinions about the Enjoying TPKC' consists of 3 items.

After application, distribution of scale total scores was investigated. Because there are 16 items in the OSATPKC, the lowest possible score is 16.00 and the highest possible score is 80.00 and the range is 64.00. The lowest score obtained from the scale scores was 16.00; the highest score was 80.00 and the range, 64.00. It was found that the scale contains a significant part of the range expected and calculated that the scale average was 55.13, the median was 56.00 and the standard deviation was 11.44, the Skewness coefficient was -0.643 and the Kurtosis coefficient was .845. The total average score related with the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC teachers towards TFL -consisting of 16 items- was 3.45. These values show that the distribution of the scale scores is very similar to the normal distribution.

The arithmetical mean was between 2.73 and 4.26 and the standard deviation was between 0.89-1.30. When the findings of the item analysis, performed in order to evaluate the discerning efficiency of the items in the scale, were examined, it was seen that the item-total correlation was at a high level, varying between 0.41-0.70. This finding shows that each of 16 items has discerning efficiency. The internal consistencies of the three subscales were 0.89, 0.90 and .68. The overall reliability coefficient was .90. These values prove that the scale is reliable.

RESULTS

To determine the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC, a One-Sample t-test was applied and tested the difference between the expected total mean ($M = 48.00$) and the mean obtained from the OSATPKC ($M = 55.13$). The results indicate that there is a significant difference between the expected total mean and the mean obtained from the OSATPKC ($t_{(239)} = 9.658$, $p < .000$). According to this finding, the mean obtained from the OSATPKC is

significantly higher than the expected total mean ($M=7.13$, $p<.000$). So, it can be said that the teacher trainees agree mainly with the items related with opinions about TPKC and have positive opinions about TPKC.

One aspect of our analysis was whether or not the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC varied according to gender ($N=83$, $M=53.95$, $SD=12.32$ for male teacher trainees and $N=157$, $M=55.76$, $SD=10.94$ for female teacher trainees). Independent-samples t test revealed no significant difference between the male and female teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC ($t_{(238)}=1.164$, $p>.01$).

It was also examined whether or not the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC varied according to type of teaching program ($N=64$, $M=57.97$, $SD=9.03$ for the teacher trainees attending Science and Mathematics for Secondary Education Graduate Program-Non Thesis, $N=81$, $M=54.62$, $SD=13.78$ for the teacher trainees attending Social for Secondary Education Graduate Program-Non Thesis and $N=95$, $M=53.66$, $SD=10.42$ for the teacher trainees attending English Certification Program). One-Way ANOVA revealed no significant difference among the groups ($F_{(2,237)}=2.876$, $p>.05$).

It was also identified that the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC differed in terms of satisfaction in the teaching program ($N=183$, $M=56.18$, $SD=11.24$ for the teacher trainees who were satisfied to be in teaching program, $N=57$, $M=51.77$, $SD=11.54$ for the teacher trainees who were unsatisfied to be in teaching program). The results of Independent-Samples T-Test showed that there was a significant difference between the opinions of the teacher trainees who were satisfied to be in teaching program and teacher trainees who were unsatisfied to be in teaching program ($t_{(238)}=2.570$, $p<.05$). According to the results, the opinions of the teacher trainees who were satisfied to be in teaching program were significantly higher than the opinions of the teacher trainees who were unsatisfied to be in teaching program ($M=4.41$, $p<.05$).

It was also examined whether or not the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC varied according to their general academic achievement grade averages ($N=52$, $M=55.13$, $SD=8.86$ for the teacher trainees whose general academic achievement grade averages were between 2.00-2.49, $N=125$, $M=55.82$, $SD=12.27$ for the teacher trainees whose general academic achievement grade averages were between 2.50-2.99, $N=53$, $M=53.34$, $SD=12.26$ for the teacher trainees whose general academic achievement grade averages were between 3.00-3.49 and $N=10$, $M=56.00$, $SD=7.97$ for the teacher trainees whose general academic achievement grade averages were between 3.50-4.00). One-Way ANOVA

revealed no significant difference among the groups ($F_{(3,236)}=.602$, $p>.05$).

Finally, it was also identified that the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC differed in terms of willingness on being teacher ($N=195$, $M=56.58$, $SD=11.30$ for the teacher trainees who were willing on being teacher and $N=45$, $M=48.84$, $SD=9.91$ for teacher trainees who were unwilling on being teacher). The results of Independent-Samples T-Test showed that there was a significant difference between the opinions of the teacher trainees who were willing on being teacher and teacher trainees who were unwilling on being teacher ($t_{(238)}=4.233$, $p<.01$). According to the results, the opinions of the teacher trainees who were willing on being teacher were significantly higher than the opinions of the teacher trainees who were unwilling on being teacher ($M=7.74$, $p<.01$).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TPKC are very important to train teacher trainees having professional qualifications. Knowing the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC is essentially important in terms of obtaining professional qualifications of teacher trainees and teachers. Besides, knowing the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC would contribute to the following aims which involve the evaluation of the suitability of the objectives with the students' needs, making studies to provide more meaningful and attractive lessons.

The findings from this study show that the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC are positive and their opinions about TPKC are significantly associated with their satisfaction in the teaching program and willingness on being teacher. However, there are no significant relationships between the teacher trainees' opinions about TPKC according to their gender, type of teaching program and general academic achievement grade averages.

In literature, this result is in parallel with the findings of the study conducted by Erden [1] about the attitudes of teacher trainees towards teaching certification lessons. It has also been determined in the aforementioned research that the teacher trainees' attitudes towards teaching certificate lessons change with respect to willingness on being teacher. On the contrary, according to the findings of the research conducted by Grgeç ve Deniz [6], there is no significant correlation between willingness on being teacher of teacher trainees and their opinions about teaching certificate program.

Besides, the results of the research conducted by Deniz [15] show that teaching certificate programs which teacher trainees attended are not effective in liking teaching profession.

The results of this research show that there was no significant difference between the attitude levels of the male and female teacher trainees towards TPKC. In literature, this result is in parallel with the findings of the study conducted by Erden [1] and showing that there was no significant difference between the attitude levels of the male and the female teacher trainees towards TPKC. In contradistinction to results of Erden research, in the research conducted by Görgen ve Deniz [6], it is determined that there is a significant difference between the opinions of the male and female teacher trainees towards teaching certificate program. It has been found out in the research mentioned that the male teacher trainees have positive opinion about teacher certificate programs for liking teaching profession. On the contrary, the female teacher trainees have negative opinion about teacher certificate programs for liking teaching profession.

The findings obtained from this study show that the scale is valid and reliable for the data obtained from the study group. When repeating the reliability and validity studies and comparing the analysis, it was realized that having similar features in a form including all teachers in different branches is also important for determining the structural validity. Furthermore, besides the significant statistical differences between the means of the groups compared in the analysis, it is necessary to conduct group comparison analysis in different groups with the other variables as teacher trainees' motivation levels, entrance scores to the program, lecturers speciality areas, service year of the program related with the opinions about TPKC when the practical significance is taken into account. Therefore, a number of studies should be conducted in all of the programs under faculties of education, by using the "Opinion Scale about Teaching Profession Knowledge Courses" and the findings obtained should be compared with the findings from this research.

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