

COMPARATIVE EXAMINATION OF TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS IN TURKEY, SINGAPORE, JAPAN AND ESTONIA

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Abstract

In this study, it is aimed to compare the teacher training programs of Singapore, Japan, and Estonia, which rank among the top three, with the teacher training programs of Turkey, which is in the low rank of countries. This study was conducted using screening model that aims to describe an existing situation. In this model, it is not aimed to change the situation discussed in a research, rather it aims to just observe it. The study group is consisted of current teacher training programs of these three countries. The reason of involving the programs of these two foreign countries into the study group is that students from these countries are placed in the upper quartile in international exams such as TIMSS, PISA, and PIRLS. Additionally, Japanese teachers are placed in the ranking. The Faculties of Education and Educational Sciences have been restructured in order to improve the quality of the Faculties of Education and to make them capable of responding to changing and dynamic needs. In order for teachers in Turkey to begin duty, they are first required to graduate at the level of a bachelor degree from one of teacher education programs or graduate with pedagogical formation certificate from other faculties. Students in Turkey can be put into training programs only according to their exam scores additional examinations and interviews are carried out in Singapore and Japan, which increases the chances of people in Singapore, who are more appropriate to the teaching profession from a cognitive or effective point of view. In Estonia, Some teacher related features are listed under the conceptualizations such as competence, standard, quality etc. These can be used for teacher-related different purposes such as selection, employment, rewarding, bringing to book, vocational training and development.

Keywords: Teacher training programs, countries' education systems, accreditation of undergraduate programs

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a leading role in the progress of country and transfer of the culture and values of society to next generations (Özden, 1999). The countries that have solved the quantity problem in education make a great effort to increase the quality of education. The most important factor in the increase of quality in education is a teacher (Erden, 2014). Since a qualified education can be provided with professionalist teachers, teachers should be able to continue their education and training activities successfully (Okçu and Çelik, 2011). Teacher competencies lay emphasis on the individual performance of a teacher and its

measurement. Today, teacher standards are considered together with the determination of standards for education and students as well (Connel, 2009). Some principles determined by the Council of Europe and the European Commission on teacher competence areas are as follows: collaboration, studying with information and technology, studying in society etc. The European Union considers the role of teachers, their lifelong learning and professional development, within priority areas (ETUCE 2008; EURYDICE 2006; European Commission 2005). Teaching requires accumulation of knowledge, planning process, field knowledge, advanced language skills, proximity to technological developments and the ability to use technological tools, recognize and direct students at different levels and personality (Gürten and Demirel, 2010).

Teaching requires a number of competencies and skills such as knowledge, planning process, subject matter knowledge, advanced language skills, proximity to technological developments and the ability to use technological tools, recognition and orientation of students in different levels and personality, and effective communication (Gürten and Demirel, 2010). National education in Turkey has a central management structure created with "National Education Basic Law" no. 1739. Within this framework, the Ministry of National Education took the responsibility of training personnel for education and realizing all elements of the education system in line with the requirements with the constitutional amendment after the 12th of September, 1982.

Faculties of education affiliated to the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) are responsible for teacher training. The only criterion for the selection of students in education faculties is the Transition to Higher Education examination (YGS) conducted by the Assessment, Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM). Then, they must take the Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS) and be successful to be appointed as a teacher. Teacher training in Japan is carried out in universities and other higher education institutions approved by the Ministry of Education, Science, Sport, Culture and Technology. Teacher training abroad has been mostly carried out by colleges since 1980. The content of teacher training programs was structured and organized with the Regulation on the Qualifications of Educational Personnel No. 986, which entered into force in 1999.

Teacher training programs include the stages of the selection of candidates to be trained, their training within a certain period of time and a program, the selection of prospective teachers and the training of teachers in charge (in-service training). As an important and comprehensive subject, teacher training programs have been studied by comparing them to similar programs of developed countries as well as in terms of the realities and expectations of our country (Baskan, Aydın and Madden, 2006; Demirel, 2000). Dönmez (1998), in his study on restructuring faculties of education, determined that structuring the teaching programs in the faculties of education does not meet any defensible scientific criteria and the new model is not consistent. Also, he stated that what is the criterion for initiate or terminate a program is not clear, students studying at faculty of education are prevented from receiving postgraduate education, teacher training is not carried out coherently, the field of educational sciences is ignored, and this implementation named restructuring is not actually restructuring. In this study, it is aimed to compare the teacher training programs of Singapore, Japan, and Estonia, which rank among the top three, with the teacher training programs of Turkey, which is in the low rank of countries.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Study Group

This study was conducted using screening model that aims to describe an existing situation. In this model, it is not aimed to change the situation discussed in a research, rather it aims to just observe it. The study group is consisted of current teacher training programs of these three countries. The reason of involving the programs of these two foreign countries into the study group is that students from these countries are placed in the upper quartile in international exams such as TIMSS, PISA, and PIRLS. Additionally, Japanese teachers are placed in the ranking.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Turkish Teacher Training System

Teacher training programs in Turkey is designated by the Higher Education Institution (HEI) and carried out by the faculties of education. Teacher training programs were updated by HEI in 2006, and the faculties were notified to put the new program into practice. As well as educational psychology and education history became compulsory courses; education philosophy and education sociology became optional courses (YOK,

2007, p.65-67). It was stated that the updated programs overlapped with the sizes of teacher education programs in EU countries. To become a teacher in Turkey, it is sufficient to have a bachelor's degree and be successful in the written and oral exams held at the end of the year. Any age limit is not required to become a teacher in Turkey. During the teaching period; an observation for one day a week in the second semester of the third-grade, and practice for one day a week in both semesters of the fourth-grade are carried out. The courses in which only theoretical information are given are included in the first two years of education period.

The students of other fields who haven't participated in any teaching program in the faculty of education, but who want to teach in the post-graduate period, can apply to the Ministry of National Education to become a teacher, having completed the pedagogical formation certificate programs offered by various universities. In order for teachers in Turkey to begin duty, they are first required to graduate at the level of a bachelor degree from one of teacher education programs or graduate with pedagogical formation certificate from other faculties. Teacher candidates must be successful in the Public Personnel Selection Examination (PPSE) and document it in order to work in public schools. This exam is a proficiency exam that teacher candidate should take to apply to the personnel cadre. The candidates who get high scores in the exam apply to MNE, and wait for an appointment. In addition to the university exams, no different evaluation process is applied to teacher candidates, in the selection process of teacher candidates. It is seen that the individual development-oriented paradigm is adopted during teacher education, but teacher training is continued in the practice, and teacher training through pedagogical formation courses is effective in this process. Mostly inflected models are used in teacher training, which leads to uniformity. Within the context of the teaching practice; it is seen that the hours of practice are reduced, the teachers of practice are reluctant and the connection established between faculty members and teachers of practice is weak. For this reason, problems arise in terms of course contents and teaching materials (Aksoy, 2013).

The final arrangement decision on the teacher training process was taken at the 15.06.2016 dated Higher Education Executive Committee. The Faculties of Education and Educational Sciences have been restructured in order to improve the quality of the Faculties of Education and to make them capable of responding to changing and dynamic needs. In this context, the arrangements such as the collection of primary and secondary educations under a single section, in mathematics and science training, and the establishment of new departments under the Department of Educational Sciences have been made (TEDMEM, 2016). The School Experience and Teaching Practice and Seminar courses are the applications that provide the development of teacher candidates, based on their own experiences, and that they are attached importance in many countries abroad (OECD, 2005; Özcan, 2013).

3.2. Singapore Teacher Training System

In general, teacher training systems in the world are divided into two groups (Barber and Mourshed, 2007). In the first approach followed by countries like Singapore, students are accepted to pre-service education programs, the number of teachers needed is taken into consideration and students in required number are accepted to these programs. Students usually are directly employed after graduation from these program students. It has been done highly selectively in the admission of students to these programs. While students are selected for pre-service programs, both competitive exams, and interviews or sample course expressions are used, and as well as students' academic knowledge, their interest in teaching, professional familiarity, and communication skills are measured. Students admitted to programs in Singapore often receive free education and even a salary. In the second approach, general criteria are used in the selection of students and surplus teacher candidates are generally admitted to these programs (Barber and Mourshed, 2007). In this approach, an extra selection process is also operated in the employment process, as the surplus teacher is trained. From the perspective of teacher training policy in Singapore, one-third of those students made the best grades are selected. In Turkey, the selection is made from a group of students at a moderate level and even from those at lower levels, in some teaching professions. From a pedagogical point of view, Singapore's course contents have been created more intensively (Erbilgin and Boz, 2013). There are also two fields of specialization in Singapore. Teaching internship in Turkey can be fulfilled only in the second semester of 3rd grade, and in 4th grade. The graduation average does not matter in respect to the appointment. Students in Turkey can be put into training programs only according to their exam scores additional examinations and interviews are carried out in Singapore and Japan, which increases the chances of people in Singapore, who are more appropriate to the teaching profession from a cognitive or effective point of view. It has been stated that due to a large number of students taking university entrance exam in Turkey, the application of examination methods such as interview is not appropriate in our country (Eraslan, 2009).

The main factor underlying Singapore's success is the teacher training policies aimed at improving teacher

quality. Noteworthy improvements have been made in this country for both the selection and training of teachers. In Singapore, the factors such as the reputation of the teaching profession within the community, paying salary to teacher candidates during their education period, and highness of teacher salaries cause talented young people to select this profession. In addition, teachers are encouraged to work devotedly and rewarded with various bonuses, at the point of providing students to gain aimed acquisitions. Thus, the increase in the motivation of teachers has been made and rapid steps are taken in the road to success by means of dedicated teachers. Accordingly, the practices aiming to improve teacher quality rather than reducing the number of students in the classroom are focused on investments in education. It is thought that every manager brings a new perspective and progress to school. Therefore, interscholastic transfers of the managers are periodically carried out. In Singapore, educational leaders with a broad vision are acknowledged as the most important contributors to the educational success of the country (Levet and Yazıcı, 2014).

3.3. Japan Teacher Training System

In Japan, the bachelor degree is not enough for teacher candidates to start their profession (Atanur Başkan, Aydın and Madden, 2006). In Japan, a student is admitted to teacher training program through a two-phased exam. The first phase of the exam is carried out throughout the country, and the second phase is carried out by universities. Teacher training is provided in two ways, including training with a diploma, carried out in the faculties or departments of education of universities and training universities, and certified training carried out in other faculties (Semerci, 2000). In Japan, the candidates take an exam after completing six-month internship period, and the successful ones are entitled to teach as a regular teacher (Ergun and Ersoy, 2014). Schools are highly selective in both admissions to the school and recruitment progress, teacher candidates need to be successful in the National Entrance Examination in order to attend teacher education programs (Mete, 2013).

Temporary certificates are valid only in the provinces where they are provided, and those who have this certificate are appointed as assistant teachers. In Japan, a general teaching certificate is required to work in kindergartens and primary schools, and a certificate taken in a certain area is required to work in secondary and high schools. Besides, the issue of these certificates also varies according to school levels. The graduates of two-year high schools receive a temporary certificate for high school teaching, and first-class certificate for kindergarten, primary and secondary school teaching. Those who complete four-year higher education become entitled to receive a second-class certificate for high school teaching, and one class certificate for second grade, kindergarten, primary and secondary school teaching. Postgraduate candidates become entitled to receive a first-class certificate for high school teaching (Güvenç et al., 1990). Vocational education is placed importance in the training of secondary school teachers. Basic teacher training consists of three categories: In addition to pedagogy, psychology and vocational field courses; optional courses for educational sciences are also available (Keskinbiçak, 2015). Teachers attend in-service training activities organized at national, local and municipal levels. This training includes courses, seminars, undergraduate completion, and postgraduate education (Semerci, 2000).

3.4. Estonia Teacher Training System

Estonia has one of the most powerful educational systems among OECD countries, with results above the average of PISA 2015. The education in Estonia has received influential results from international evaluations of learning outcomes since 2003. The results of the international exams (PISA, TIMSS, and TALIS) have made a great impact. The education in Estonia is a very valuable asset. Being educated has been accepted as a very important social value. Another issue that Estonia attaches importance can be said to be the self-determination of teacher and the connection he/she established with students. No teacher change is seen in 1-3th grades. The same class teacher is often tried to give a lesson in 1-6th grades. This is due to the fact that not separating a pupil at primary school level from his / her teacher before passing to secondary school is considered significant. Educators are trying to argue for child-centered education ideals, and highlight equality problems in the education system.

Many countries have made reforms on their teacher training programs in the last century, especially in the last quarter. Estonian teacher training is at postgraduate level (ETUCE 2008; European Commission 2005; TNEE, 2000). It is seen that the professional experience duration of teachers in Estonia is greater than or equal to ten years (Jakobson, 2007; Little and Pridmore, 2004). Estonia is among countries where primary school teachers receive education at postgraduate level (ETUCE-European Trade Union Committee for Education /Avrupa Sendikalar Konfederasyonu Eğitim Komitesi, 2008). In Estonia, Some teacher related features are listed under the conceptualizations such as competence, standard, quality etc. These can be

used for teacher-related different purposes such as selection, employment, rewarding, bringing to book, vocational training and development (Şişman, 2009).

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

When teacher training system in Turkey is compared to that in the countries such as Singapore, Japan, and Estonia, it is seen that the student selection process, and teacher training system in Turkey should be redesigned, reviewing from technical and academic aspects and analyzing the systems in the developed countries.

It can be suggested for instructors to be sufficiently in communication with teacher candidates, and provision of instructor staff that will provide individual support to teacher candidates at the level they need.

The teaching programs courses, being implemented in Turkey, should be reviewed on the basis of the categories such as general knowledge, field knowledge, and professional knowledge of teaching.

The interrelated ratios and weights of course categories should be changed in favor of general knowledge, and professional knowledge of teaching courses. Special emphasis should be laid on practice in the training of teacher as well.

It can be suggested for teacher candidates to learn to visualize teaching and teaching by concreting, in order to be effective and efficient in their professional lives.

Considering the quality problems in teacher education and difficulties encountered in employment; more comprehensive professional exams are considered necessary for measuring the field information for each branch.

The practice exams where teacher candidates exhibit their live professional performances can be made and the field experts selected from universities can be appointed as jurors in these exams. Through such exams, it can be tested whether the personal characteristics and skills of the candidates (using the language correctly, having the language of the field, communication skills, etc.) are appropriate to the nature of the teaching profession.

It may be suggested that those who want to be teachers are graduates of the departments of faculties other than the Faculty of Education, can be directed to the programs through which they can have two diplomas (Double Majors), instead of Pedagogical Formation Education Certification Programs.

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