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Preconceptions of Pedagogical Formation Teacher Candidates about Practice before Teaching Practice Lesson

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ABSTRACT

The success of pedagogical formation program in which teaching skills are improved with practices apart from theoretical lessons is observed through internship of teaching Practice lessons. This lesson includes theoretical two course hours, observations and teaching experiences at schools. The requirements of this course are pre-acquisition of skills such as theoretical knowledge, planning, measurement, assessment, material development, guiding for learning and classroom management. These experiences direct the process of education and influence willingness for practice. When the issue is considered in the sense of "first lesson experience"; it is more important to determine preconceptions before the Teaching Practice. For this reason, preconceptions before teaching process of 200 (110 female, 90 male) teacher candidates who receive Pedagogical Formation Certificate Program in 2011-2012 academic year were determined through qualitative research. The participants were asked an open-ended question "Write down what do you expect about teaching at your practice school", and were given ten minutes to answer. Data were analyzed with content and discourse analyses; and transformed into judgmental statements. The cumulative frequencies of positive and negative aspects of statements were determined. The findings analyzed in terms of the relationship of the profession, preconception years and gender factors. The results showed that most of the preconceptions of teacher candidates have negative quality and under the titles of expectation, fear and knowledge. Preconceptions about fear in classroom management were observed and mostly inexperienced teachers and female teachers have preconceptions about fear.

Keywords: teacher education, teaching practice, pedagogical formation, internship, preconception, competency

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INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical Formation Education Certificate Program is organized with the aim of providing The Faculty of Arts and Sciences' graduates, who can be the basis of subject matter teaching with teaching competency. The framework of the program is determined by the Council of Higher Education [YÖK] and it lasts exactly one year consisting of two academic semesters (YÖK). When the program is analyzed, it is seen that first semester includes basic knowledge-skills courses while the second one includes theoretic and applied courses about where to use this knowledge. Teaching practice is a 5 credit course consisting of 2 hours of theoretic and 5 hours of practical lessons in schools. It is the most attention grabbing course and requires other 5 credit courses' support in practice. Teaching practice course gives an opportunity for performing knowledge, skills and attitudes to teacher candidates in schools (Efe, 2008).

In what way the course is going to be practiced is determined by the Ministry of Education [MEB] based upon the related clauses of 1739 numbered National Educational Basic Law, 3797 numbered Organization and Functions of Ministry of Education and 2547 numbered the Council of Higher Education. Because, application is performed under the supervision of institution administrator and subject matter teacher in ministerial formal education institutions and graduates are employed in these institutions. For this reason, the Ministry of Education Local School Board, the school, the headmaster and subject matter teacher are responsible for this process.

When program instructions concerning the course content applied in universities are examined, it is obviously seen that this program covers the content that teacher candidate needs both as an employee (officer) and as a teacher. (University of Kocaeli Permanent Education Center [KOUSEM], Fatih University,

Cumhuriyet University, Ege University, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University). Although content is developed according to requirement, it is more important how often teacher candidate gets a chance to test his/her experience acquired by this program in practice school. Because, mentioned theoretical framework does not always find opportunity to be put into practice on the grounds of practice school, its environment, its students and personal traits of the candidate. Heard or read information about physical conditions of schools, overcrowded classes, teacher's occupational anxiety, school management and perception of teacher most particularly trainee teacher in the eyes of children are reasons which increase the candidate's anxiety (Koç & Yıldız, 2012; Sılay & Gök, 2004; Çelikkaya, 2011).

When the researches performed in this field are analyzed, it is found out that a vast majority of them concentrates on the problems experienced in the practice process and on solution suggestions. Studies which are carried out by Sılay and Gök (2004) centers on the teacher candidates problems encountered in practice schools. According to findings, participants share a common opinion that crowdedness of classes (%59,2 of participants) and insensitivity of practice teacher (%66,7) affect this process adversely. Another study regarding teaching practice of foreign language candidates draws attention to these points along with the adverse physical condition of school: school administrators underestimate and practice teacher does not give support to trainee teacher (Kudat, 2009). An interconnected investigation conducted by Topkaya, Tokcan and Kara (2012) indicates that administrators do not spare time for trainees and practice teachers use some kind of negative expressions about professional competencies. Another research regarding the problems experienced in the field is carried out by Yeşilyurt and Semerci (2011). According to this study it is detected that teacher candidates see problems in lack of collaboration, frivolity, not feeling oneself ready, disregarding, physical condition of school, not getting used to class and school, lack of content and professional knowledge.

Along with these researches, there are studies in which expectations and preconceptions regarding teaching practice are examined. Previous researches point out that candidates have "reasonable expectations" from practice school (Oral & Dağlı, 1999). In the same study, it is detected that in terms of major variable, Physical Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) candidates have lower level of expectation compared to Social Sciences (History, Geography) candidates. There is a research carried out by Yeşil and Çalışkan (2006) on what students expect from school experience course and to what extent these expectations are met. According to this study, it is observed that while candidates are in high expectations, the level of meeting expectations is notably low. According to research, a big difference is seen between the expectation level of affective field skills including teacher-student personality, practice teacher and administrator collaboration, geniality, toleration and sincerity and the meeting of this expectation. Yet another study seeking for concerns associated with teaching practice is done by Çelik (2008). Çelik is of the opinion that anxieties are categorized under the titles such as personal, communicative, assessment, exterior, course preparedness, education. Besides, he infers that personal factors cause the highest anxiety and uneasiness. Çelikkaya (2011) carries out anticipations research and concludes that expectations of candidate teachers from practice teacher, students and administrators are not met satisfyingly. It stands out that expectations of female candidates are met at the lower level compared to male candidates. Bektaş and Ayvaz (2012) have done a research related to expectations, too. They come to the conclusion that candidates have expectations from practice teacher in fields such as sympathy, toleration, objectivity, collaboration and equalitarian way of treatment. They detect that Turkish subject matter teacher candidates have expectations with a lower level frequency compared to other majors.

Purpose

Field study indicates that there are numerous researches about the problems encountered in the course of teaching practice both in undergraduate education and Pedagogical Formation Education Certificate Program. There is a need for a more detailed study concentrating on what influence the general attitudes and behaviors with regard to practice process. Within that period, the environment's features', candidate's expectations' and personality traits' being in line with each other enables the attitude to evolve in a positive way, by which way candidate will behave positively as expected (Ünlü, 2004). Therefore, the detection of candidates' expectations and opinions related to practice school and its constituents gains importance in our research.

With the thought that these expectations and opinions can change due to different variables, in the study answers are looked for the following questions as sub-problems these questions are looked for an answer: (i) Do opinions differentiate qualitatively? (ii) Under which categorical headings are the opinions gathered? (iii) Do opinions change according to gender factor? (iv) Do opinions vary according to the factor of major? (v) Do opinions vary according to work experience factor?

METHOD

Research Design

While qualitative research design and data classification are used in investigation phase, content and discourse analysis technique is used in assessment phase. Because it is known that personal opinions about problems sometimes can be put into words in an indirect way and through discourses (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). For classification, analysis and interpretation of data, frequency and percentages are used.

Participants

200 teacher candidates (90 male,110 female) from 6 different majors, Mathematics ($n=20$), Physics-Chemistry-Biology ($n=23$), Literature ($n=46$), Social Studies ($n=47$), Foreign Language ($n=39$), Philosophy ($n=25$) who are studying Pedagogical Formation Education Certification Program at Fatih University in 2011-2012 education period take part in this survey.

Data Collection

As a data collection tool, question survey method is used with an open-ended question "what do you expect from practice school?". It is requested that opinions are written in 10 minutes. Data collection tool is designed bidimensionally as "personal details" (independent variables) and "views" (dependent variables). "Personal details" inform about major, professional experience and gender. Work experience is diversified with "available" and "non available" options. Existence of experience is limited by gaining regardless of "one to one education, small group education or class education, uninterrupted at least 3 months teaching means you are experienced."

Classification and Analysis of Data

Among the obtained data, whereas the ones having judgmental and expectation qualified are listed unchanged, expressions of judgment and expectation are created with the help of discourse and content analysis. Such statements involved in surveys as "I know practice teacher will underestimate me ", "students do not like incoming teachers" qualitatively classified as "negative information", grouped as "Professional collaboration"; statements such as "headmaster should orient me to atmosphere" classified as "expectation" grouped as "school management"; "it is a fact that students can pull a prank on me because I am a trainee" classified as "fear", grouped as a "student status"; "what can I do in case mischievousness of students goes on during course hours worries me " this kind of statements classified as "anxiety" grouped as "class management."

Thus, list is categorized qualitatively as expectation, anxiety, fear, negative information. As for field, these are the categories: Personal, Professional Collaboration, School Management, School Status, Student's Status, Class Management and Parent Collaboration.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings are given below according to sub-problems and discussed considering the results of previous researches.

Table 1: *Numeric Data Related to Teacher Candidates.*

Gender	n	%
Female	109	54,5
Male	91	45,5
Experience		
Yes	67	33,5
No	133	66,5
Majors		
Mathematics	20	10
Physics-Chemistry-Biology	23	11,5
Literature	46	23
Social Sciences	47	23,5
Foreign Language	39	19,5
Philosophy	25	12,5
TOTAL	200	100

When data analysis in Table 1 is done, it is seen that participants consist of nearly half and half male and female (91 male, 109 female). In terms of work experience %33,5 of the participants experience at least 3 months of teaching previously. What it indicates is that despite candidates have experience in this field before, they train a systematic education, after and above all they call for a competency certification. Published resolution which determines the ones who can be appointed as a teacher by General Management of Teacher Educating and Development says that graduates of Science and Literature faculty

can work in formal education institutions which are linked to Ministry of National Education on the condition they have certification of pedagogical formation education.

Table 2: *Categorical Data Related to Preconceptions.*

Preconception Categories	F			%
	Female	Male	Total	
Personal	62	56	118	22,77
Professional Cooperation	24	30	54	10,42
School Management	24	20	44	8,49
School Status	19	10	29	5,59
Student Status	66	57	123	23,74
Classroom Management	83	64	147	28,37
Parent Cooperation	3	0	3	0,57
TOTAL	281	237	518	100

When the data presented in Table 2 are analyzed, it is observed that the teacher candidates have seven distinct groups of opinions about the practice school. The vast majority of opinions are in the fields of Classroom Management ($f=147$) and Student Status ($f=123$). In a study carried out by Çelik (2008), on the other hand, it is found out that the anxieties and concerns are gathered under personal, communicative, evaluation, exogenous, course preparation and teaching headings. It is determined that, among these categories, the personal factors are the utmost source of anxiety and restlessness. In our study, on the other hand, the personal category is expressed in the third place as a cause to anxieties and preconceptions. The opinions developed in the field of parent cooperation which we reckon among the school stakeholders, as can be understood from the table as well, has a low level of frequency. When evaluated with the understanding of modern education, the role of parent in education and training is important. In spite of that, the teacher candidates' not conceiving it as a subject of problem stems either from the idea that the parents will not cause any problem or from the lack of information about what kind of problems they may cause.

Table 3: *Major Accordingly Distribution of Categorical Data Related to Preconceptions.*

Majors	F								
	N	Personal Cooperation	Professional Cooperation	School Management	School Status	Student Status	Classroom Management	Parent Cooperation	Total
Mathematics	20	9	4	4	2	10	12	0	41
Phy-Chem-Bio.	23	11	4	3	3	14	17	1	53
Literature	46	20	19	11	11	27	38	1	127
Social	47	28	11	11	7	28	28	0	113
Foreign Language	39	33	10	7	5	28	30	0	113
Philosophy	25	17	6	8	1	16	22	1	71
TOTAL	200	118	54	44	29	123	147	3	518

When the values presented in Table 3 are examined, it is observed that Literature, Social and Foreign Language subject matter teacher candidates have a higher level of anxiety and fear, as compared to others. Once paid attention, it is seen that the candidates from quantitative majors express more anxiety, fear and negative information containing opinions compared to the ones from other majors. It can be understood from this result that quantitative subject matter teacher candidates feel more confident thanks to their majors and they have the belief that they can easily handle the problems likely to occur. Likewise, in a study carried out long ago by Oral and Dağlı (1999), it is detected that the candidates having major in Physical Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) have a lower level of expectation than the ones having major in Social Sciences (History, Geography). The obtained result has also been confirmed by this research as well. Even though the result obtained from the study carried out by Bektaş and Ayvaz (2012) seems to contradict with our research's results by stating that Turkish Education subject matter

teacher candidates have low frequency of expectations, the data's being parallel to each other in more than one major makes our research's results reliable. The vast majority of social sciences' being verbal qualified and dependent on teacher-student relationship, student participation's and student's affective field abilities' playing an important role in classroom tasks make this concern right. As opposed to this, the quantitative majors' being dependent upon proof and the teacher's knowledge and skill to a great extent, can be seen as the reason to low level of anxiety and the candidates' feeling self-confident.

Table 4: *Preconceptions' Positiveness and Negativity Distribution According To Candidates' Gender.*

Preconceptions' Qualification	F			%
	Female	Male	Total	
Positive	17	15	32	6,17
Negative	264	222	486	93,82
TOTAL	281	237	518	100

In Table 4, it is observed that the female teacher candidates ($f = 281$) express opinions containing anxiety, fear and negative information with higher frequency when compared to the males ($f = 237$). It is stated in Figure 1 in a more comprehensible way how the opinions range categorically in accordance with the gender factor. When Çelikkaya's (2011) detections about the fact that female teacher candidates' expectations related to Teaching Practice course are met at a lower level compared to male ones are taken into account, gender factor can still be evaluated as a problem in effective teaching.

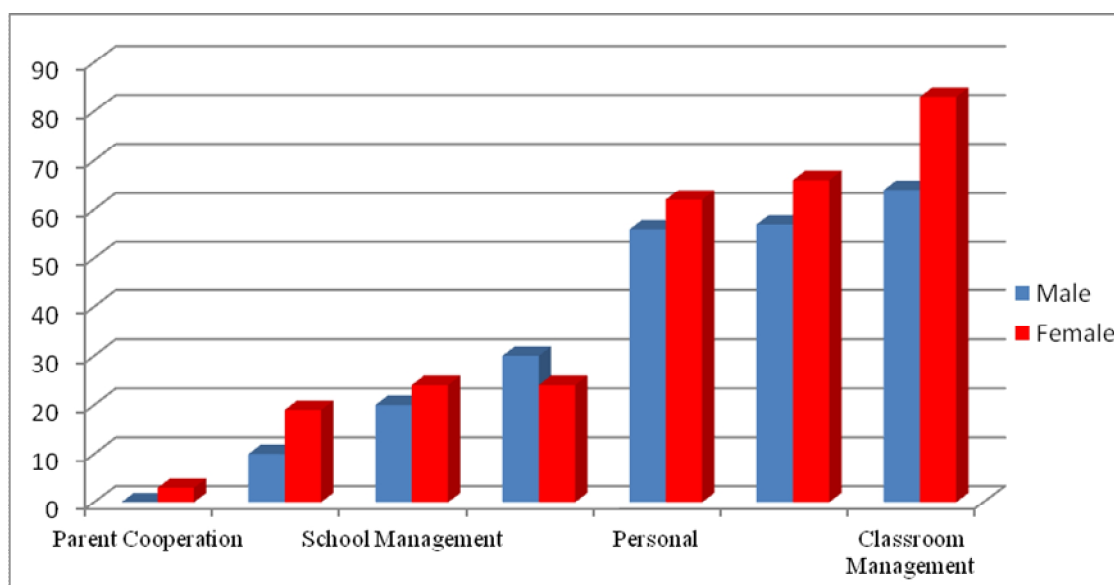


Figure 1. Preconceptions' categorical distribution chart in accordance with gender factor.

In order to boost these assessments, the results of Yildirim's (2007) research on female university students' having a higher risk perception compared to male ones can be demonstrated as well. All three studies assert that females have a much more insecure image of themselves compared to males, because of the gender perception in Turkey.

Table 5: *Preconceptions' Qualitative Distribution In Accordance With Candidates' Professional Experience*

Experience	N	F							
		Expectation		Anxiety		Fear		Negative Information	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Mathematics	20	0	2	8	5	5	5	5	11
Phy-Chem-Bio.	23	3	3	7	5	10	8	12	5
Literature	46	0	4	10	21	10	45	3	34
Social Courses	47	2	8	12	17	10	36	12	16
Foreign Language	39	3	3	8	22	15	33	11	18
Philosophy	25	1	3	4	11	18	19	7	8
SUB TOTAL		9	23	49	81	68	146	50	92
FINAL TOTAL	200		32		130		214		142

The qualitative distributions of the candidates' opinions and the frequency distributions of these distributions in accordance with the professional experience are presented in Table 5. The results of the research demonstrate that a vast majority of teacher candidates have anxiety ($f = 130$), fear ($f = 214$), and negative information ($f = 142$). These results obtained from the research make reasoned clarifications of the results obtained by Silay and Gök (2004) Kudat (2009), Topkaya, Tokcan and Kara (2012), Yeşilyurt and Semerci (2011) related to the problems experienced in the process of Teaching Practice; and Oral and Dağlı's (1999), Yeşil and Çalışkan's (2006), Çelikkaya's (2011), Bektaş and Ayvaz's (2012) sorts and characteristics of the expectations related to Teaching Practice. Likewise, as also stated by Ünlü (2004), most of the negative behaviors and problems experienced are related to one's preconceptions and expectations with regard to the field. If a program development is performed in order to eliminate the anxiety, fear and negative information emerging through the research, the evaluation that preconceptions will evolve in a positive direction and the problems experienced during the practice will reduce can be carried out.

Table 6: *Preconceptions' Categorical Distribution Details.*

Preconception Categories	F		%
	Total		
Personal	118		22,77
Self Insufficiency	46		8,88
Self Self-Confidence	34		6,56
Self Ignorance	20		3,86
Communication Skills	15		2,89
Comprehension	1		0,19
Self Disorder	1		0,19
Self Personality	1		0,19
Professional Collaboration	54		10,42
Colleague's Indifference	37		7,14
Colleague's Insulting	13		2,50
Colleague's Collaboration	3		0,57
Professional Simplification	1		0,19
School Management	44		8,49
Headmaster's Pressure	22		4,24
Headmaster's Indifference	22		4,24
School Status	29		5,59
Student Status	123		23,74
Student's Discipline	72		13,89
Student's Indifference	31		5,98
Student's Level	16		3,08
Number of Students	4		0,77
Classroom Management	147		28,37
Classroom Management	136		26,25
Classroom Size	5		0,96
Classroom's Acceptance	3		0,57
Classroom's Physical Condition	2		0,38
Disjointedness	1		0,19
Parent Collaboration	3		0,57
TOTAL	518		100

A superficial explanation of data in Table 6 has been made before. However, the data analysis regarding to which category particularly anxiety, fear, and negative information should belong and to which sub fields of each categories they should belong is much more meaningful. Therefore, based upon the data in Table 6, the category data with highest frequency are presented in Figure 2, in a comparative way, as the column chart.

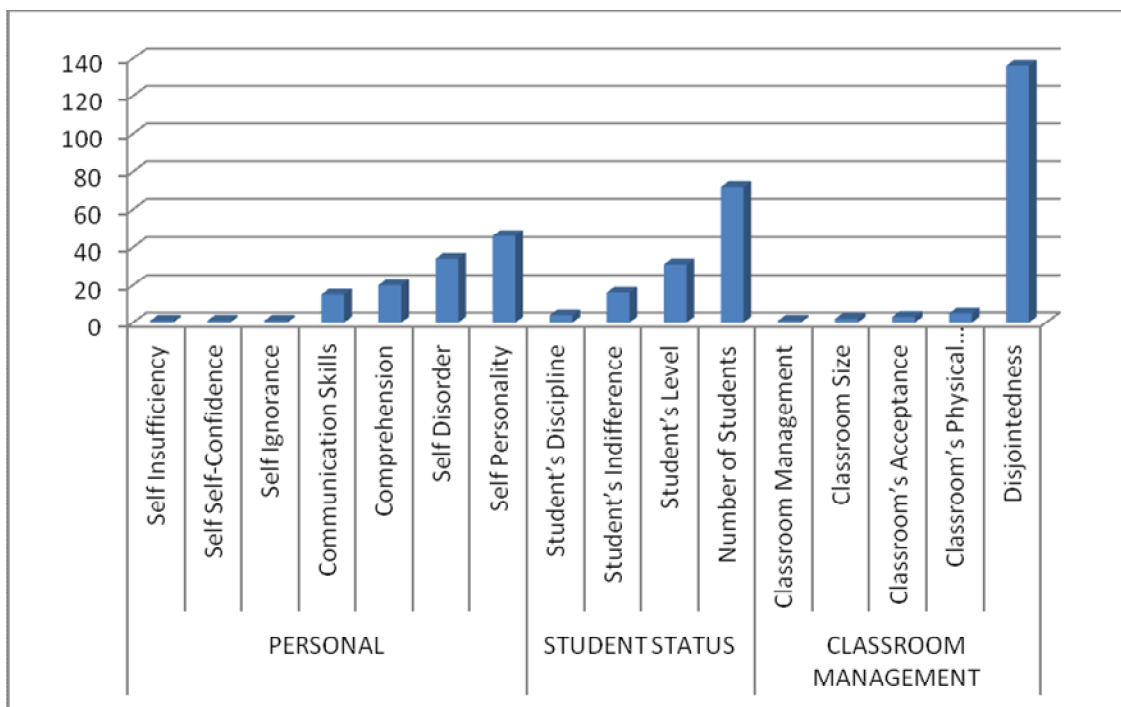


Figure 2. Comparative column chart of the opinions having the characteristics of anxiety, fear and negative information with "the highest frequency" in three categories.

It is understood that the utmost fear, anxiety and negative information containing opinion is developed in the Classroom Management ($f = 147$) category which has the densest frequency. In another category, the Student Status ($f = 123$), it is seen respectively in the fields of student's discipline ($f = 72$), student indifference ($f = 31$) and at student level ($f = 16$) that the utmost fear, anxiety and negative information containing opinion is developed. It is understood that in Personal ($f = 118$) category, another highly opined category, the utmost fear, anxiety and negative information containing opinion is developed in the sub-fields Self Insufficiency ($f = 46$), Self Self-Confidence ($f = 34$), Self Ignorance ($f = 20$) and Communication Skills ($f = 15$). On the other hand, though at lower levels, fear, anxiety and negative information containing opinion's having developed in Colleague's Indifference ($f = 37$), School Management ($f = 44$) fields, sheds light on the problems experienced while professing and where to focus on teacher education.

The assessment of the classroom's being crowded (59.2% of the participants) as a negative factor in Sılay and Gök's (2004) research on this area, Yeşilyurt and Semerci's (2011) findings regarding the problems of Teaching Practice as not feeling oneself ready, not being able to get accustomed to school and classroom can be evaluated as factors that have immediate effects on the teacher candidate's classroom management and student handling abilities. In this field again, Yeliz and Çalışkan's (2006) and Bektaş and Ayvaz's (2012) findings about affective area expectations', which shape the classroom management and teacher-student relations, being met at a low level, and Çelikkaya's (2011) detection that the expectations related to the students are not met are largely in line with the results of this research.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, by examining the teacher candidates', receiving pedagogical formation training, opinions about the practice school, the following conclusions have been reached and some suggestions have been presented:

- Teacher candidates' opinions about practice school qualitatively have characteristics of expectation, fear, anxiety and negative information. Candidates have reported fear qualified comments at most. It should not be underestimated that Teaching Practice, qualified as the last check before being appointed to the profession, is affected highly by these sort of negative attitudes. Generally pedagogical formation education program, specifically course content should be improved so as to remove negative expectations, fear, anxiety and negative information.
- The opinions are gathered categorically under Personal, Professional Collaboration, School Management, Classroom Management, Parent Collaboration categories.

When categorical headings that cover gathered opinions are taken into consideration, it is obvious that they are about candidate's school, profession and almost every field concerning him/her. Therefore, it is inevitable that teacher training programs be developed in the direction of enhancing class management, student and personal skills. If it is considered that candidates have fear and anxiety about themselves as well, it will be useful to increase the contents about personal growth and presentation skills. When looked from the practice's shareholder's point of view, the roles of school administration and practice teacher should be strengthened, making it more charming for practice teacher and school administration should be authorized directly.

- Negative comments are made more by females than males. Gender still plays a role as an important variable in the professing of teaching profession.

It is observed that female candidates feel more desperate in case they face with unwanted situations such as handling problems, managing the process, coping with possible pressure and disabling treatments than male ones. In order to enable proper professing of the profession, both course contents and organizations should be arranged so as to destroy gender factor, and new arrangements should be self-confidence and communication skills stimulating, especially for female candidates.

- Preconceptions are observed more in Literature, Social Studies and Foreign Language majors when compared to other majors.

Teacher candidates should be informed more about practice field in Literature, Social Studies and Foreign Language majors that have common features. In order to enhance their self-confidence and presentation skills, microteaching practices should be increased.

- Compared to the teacher candidates with professional experience, the ones without it have more fear, anxiety and negative information about the practice school.

It is known that the opinions are influenced by the factors such as lack of information and the lack of previous experience, both relating to the field. When this factor is evaluated in terms of whether it is still effective or not, it is obvious that the effect of the factor still continues. For this reason, in order for the preconception, -fear and anxiety related to the practice field- to be reduced, it is going to be more effective to increase the numbers of pre-professional practice, school visits, meeting with colleagues, parents and students.

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