

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Teacher education in China, Japan and Turkey

Yaman Barış<sup>1\*</sup> and Aydemir Hasan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Ministry of National Education, Classroom Teacher, Malatya, Turkey.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Classroom Education, Faculty of Education, Inonu University, Malatya, Turkey.

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The aim of this study is to analyze teacher education systems in China and Japan, and compare the findings with teacher education in Turkey, thus contribute to the developments in teacher education in Turkey. The research was based on the years 2000 to 2017. Document analysis method, which is one of the qualitative data collection methods, is used in this research. Within the scope of the document review, official sources such as education ministries of the countries, internet pages of universities and internet pages of international education organizations are used; and educational policies, entrance conditions of teacher education institutions, the structure of these institutions and teacher education programs are examined. The collected data are analyzed by content analysis. In conclusion, the continuous policy changes regarding teacher training in Turkey are found to be detrimental to teacher training and prevent the implementation of research focused teacher education programs. For practice courses, both course hours and the cooperation between faculty and practice schools are found to be insufficient. The Education Bureau in China is the institution responsible for education policy, education program, teacher education and legislation. Though teacher education programs vary in different states, generally, those who have high school diploma may enter teacher education institutions after passing and practice-based evaluation system. It is found that the teaching profession is given a great importance in Japan, and that there is no specific policy in pedagogical formation education, and therefore, pedagogical formation education needs to be reviewed and updated. Turkey, China and Japan have taken inspiration from progressive education philosophy, one of the modern education philosophies, for their teacher education systems.

**Key words:** Teacher education, teacher education in Turkey, teacher education in China, teacher education in Japan.

## INTRODUCTION

Education aims to ensure the continuity of cultures through generations, as well as preparing individuals for developing universal systems. In this process, the most

important role belongs to teachers. Teaching (Gözütok, 2004) "is a profession that determines the educational needs of students and makes various decisions on issues

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: baris\_yaman44@hotmail.com.  
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such as evaluating students' performance and improving the quality of teaching". The most important aspects of teaching are loving your job and doing it sincerely. In this sense, teaching is not an easy profession that everyone can do; only the people who have a lot of love, tolerance and desire for learning and teaching are able to teach well, and since teaching requires serious academic education, it is a difficult profession. According to Ünal (2011), teacher does not only implement education program and teaching techniques, but also every mechanism that effects education system has a direct relation with teacher. The Ministry of Education law, no. 789, dated March 22, 1926, states that "the teaching is essential in education services". Akyüz (2015) stated that this law has two meanings. The first is that teaching is a profession that undertakes education and training, which is a public duty of the state, and the second is the priority and superiority of teaching in education and training services. Demirel (2012) has defined teacher as the person who works on the attitudes of students, helps students achieve predetermined learning outcomes, and ensures that students become individuals who display desired behaviors.

The purpose, structure and implementation of the education system cannot be conceived apart from the education system of the society it belongs to. In modern society, the education system has been established and developed to fulfil the expected political, economic, social, cultural and moral functions. Depending on the stages of capitalism, education system has always been reshaped in line with new social needs and is now being restructured according to global capitalism. Capitalist system has defined the economic/political aspects of education, education program, organization of educational environments, management structure, and students' entry/exit to the system, and also role of teacher in the system. Expectations from the education system also determine the identity and role of teacher, expected to play a leading role in realizing these expectations (Ünal, 2011).

In the past years, teacher was defined as the person who only relayed the information, however, in recent years, this profession gained adjectives such as education engineer, artist and expert (Güneş, 2016). These traits are brought into focus in teacher education, and thus open up new discussions. Discussions about teacher education will not lose their importance as long as it is recognized that teacher has an active role in students' success (Musset, 2010).

While all countries of the world experience problems in teacher education, developed countries have solved this problem by organizing teacher education programs in a qualified manner. However, Turkey still experience problems in qualified teacher education programs. Therefore, it is hard to say that there is an implementation of a long-term plan. It can be said that

frequent changes in teacher education programs are among the main reasons for failure. Therefore, the teacher education practices of China and Japan, two Asian countries that have international acclaim, are reviewed and compared with the practices in Turkey. In this context, the problem statement of the research is expressed as follows.

### **Problem statement**

What are the differences and similarities between teacher education practices in Turkey, China and Japan?

### **METHODS**

The aim of this study is to compare teacher education systems in Turkey, China and Japan. The research was based on 2000 to 2017 years. For this purpose, the documents showing the status of these countries are examined. This study was done due to the fact that there are few studies on teacher training in China and Japan. Data collected by document analysis are analyzed with content analysis. Within the scope of the document review, the data obtained from the countries' official institutions (Education Ministries, Education Institutions, Universities etc.) and international reports are used. Document review is the analysis of written materials that contain information on the topic or fact intended to be researched (Yildirim and Simsek, 2008). Document analysis includes records, correspondence, official reports and quotations (Patton, 1987).

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Turkey**

Since the first years of Republic, the teacher education in Turkey has constantly changed. These changes are often made due to political and ideological views, rather than scientific data. Various teacher education models such as two-year education institutes, village teachers' schools, teacher colleges, as well as village institutes were used in the first teacher schools. Erdem (2015) stated that in Turkish education history, teacher education policies have constantly changed, and there were periods that in order to become a teacher, a person only needed to know how to read and write.

In Turkey, a person needs to pass the national transition to higher education exam in order to enter education faculties, the institution in Turkey responsible for teacher education. In higher education programs, the general name of the placement system, which takes into account the choice and preferences of students, is the Student Selection and Placement System. In Turkey, teacher education programs is determined by Council of Higher Education and carried out by the universities' faculties of education. The program, which was renewed in the 2006 to 2007 academic year, is still being used. A flexible regulation has been used while creating the

programs by taking into account the characteristics of each program; field and field education courses are 50 to 60%, teaching profession knowledge classes are 25 to 30%, and general culture courses are 15-20% (Council of Higher Education, 2007). Also, within the scope of practical training, the implementation of school experience and teaching practice courses are carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education.

## China

The People's Republic of China, established in 1949, is governed by the communist party and its education policies are implemented accordingly. The teacher education program consists of policies that are in line with the objectives of the party. In the Chinese education system, in 1985, local governments were given rights in basic education and training by the state-created law. It was announced in 1999 that a declaration was passed by the Chinese central committee and the state council to fully support the quality of education and to increase the reform efforts in the field of education (Sezgin, 2008). In order to work as a teacher in China, a candidate must first apply to the Bureau of Education. Teacher candidates who apply to the Bureau are either individuals who completed the teacher education program or individuals who have the necessary qualifications (NCEE, 2015). Teacher candidates should have completed a teacher training program that includes compulsory specialization courses, intensive training courses and a six-month practice course. Specialized courses aim to develop teachers' professional knowledge and skills on a subject. Teacher candidates should complete 30 to 40 credit field courses and 26 credit intensive training courses to teach most subjects at school. Class teachers are not required to take field courses, but must complete 40 h of intensive courses in three or four areas, including compulsory pedagogical courses. Subject area courses and training programs of intensified training courses should be approved by both the teacher education committees in universities and the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2011).

All Chinese citizens who are interested in education, have strong ideology and morals, have officially passed the national teacher qualification examinations, have received education and evaluated with regards to their teaching skills, can be employed as a teacher in educational institutions. According to the qualifications stated in this law, citizens who do not have formal education records should take national teacher qualification exams when applying for teaching (MOE, 2011). There are two main types of teacher education programs in China: the first one is a five-year undergraduate education program, the second is a bachelor's degree and a one-year full-time (or two-year,

part-time) master's degree in education programs. Since the Chinese government does not fully define the pedagogical training process in these programs, teacher training institutions differ in this aspect. However, all teacher education programs include a supervised practice course. Sometimes these institutions support the teacher education program by providing short-term lessons for teachers who need in-service training at the request of the Bureau of Education (Leung et al., 2015). Prior to 1994, primary and high school teachers received education only in normal schools, normal colleges and regular universities. In 1994, *the teacher education law* replaced the normal education law and the teacher education policy has changed. Thus, regular colleges and regular universities are no longer the only institutions that train teachers. Education-related courses, graduate credit programs and training teachers from kindergarten to high school level have become the responsibility of all colleges and universities (Tsong et al., 2015). The Chinese Government provides teachers with the necessary training permits to improve their professional qualifications. In addition, the government works to ensure the professionalism of teachers, to develop teacher competencies and provide an experimental foundation within the framework of the common professional development (EDB, 2008).

It is observed that the structure of teacher education institutions in China has changed at certain time intervals. The Education Colleges, which had been teacher education institutions for many years, were merged in the mid-1990s and the Hong Kong Education Institute was established, providing both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Since 2004 to 2005 academic year, all teachers are required to complete a master's degree. Teacher candidates currently receive education in one of the three multi-program universities or the Hong Kong Open University (Orakçı, 2015).

## Japan

In Japan, the education policies are created according to the recommendations of the Central Education Board and advisory boards of teacher training, lifelong learning, education program, higher education institutions and technology (MEXT, 2008).

In Japan, a student is admitted to the teacher education program after passing a two-stage exam. The first of these is implemented throughout the country and the second one is implemented by universities. Teacher education is provided in two ways, namely, education with diploma in universities or departments of universities, and certified education in other faculties (Semerci, 2000). In order to enter teacher education institutions, students must take the exam held by the National University Entrance Examination Center. This

exam is held once a year in different regions and is prepared for the same education program. The scores determine the teacher education program and the university that student can enter (Orakçı, 2015). A teacher certificate is required to be appointed as a teacher in Japan. In order to work in kindergartens and primary schools, a general teacher certificate is required, and in order to work in secondary schools and high schools, a certificate from a certain field is required (Erdoğan, 2015; Ginshima and Matsubara, 2015). For the competences that should be gained in the teacher education program in Japan, Hokkaido University of Education has set the following standards: teaching-learning ability, guidance skills, classroom management, educational counselling, community relationship, clinical practice and collaboration skills. Other universities have developed similar standards. Especially the PISA results raised the issue of teacher competences more (Fukumoto, 2009). Universities organize their own teacher education programs. However, the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports, Culture and Technology certifies the courses and supervises the content of the courses and the course subjects at the faculty (Abazaoğlu, 2014). Teaching practice is an important element in teacher education; it was limited to 2 weeks according to the related law; however, after 2005 it is generally implemented for 3-5 weeks. Primary and secondary school teacher candidates are also required to do a one-week internship (NCEE, 2018).

## DISCUSSION

The teacher education program in Turkey is determined by the central government. It can be said that continuous policy changes have a negative effect on teacher education. In China, teacher education policies are generally determined by the Education Bureau but they may vary according to the states. Japan is similar to Turkey with regards to teacher training programs. In Japan and Turkey, teacher education institutions are education faculties. Students enter these faculties through entrance exam for higher education. This exam is carried out in Japan in two stages. The first stage is implemented throughout the country and the second stage is implemented by universities. In Turkey, teacher education programs are determined by Higher Education Council and carried out by the faculties of education. The structure of teacher training institutions in Japan is similar to Turkey. However, it is seen that it gives less practical education. In China, although it differs according to the states, the requirement to be graduated from high school and to take the national exam is common; apart from that, the teacher training institutions can make their own exams. In other words, after graduating from high school and passing an application-based evaluation system, it is

possible to enter teacher education institutions. In addition, it is found that teacher education programs differ according to the state in China. Turkey and Japan, in teacher training programs include courses on general culture, field knowledge and professional knowledge. In China, teachers should complete a teacher education program that includes compulsory specialization courses, intensive training courses, and six months of practice. In addition, China, focusing on the quality in teacher education requires the teacher candidates to complete a master's degree. It is also seen that there are different teacher education institutions under the administration of local education authorities of each province.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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