

Full Length Research Paper

Implications of training student teachers of pre-schooling through micro-teaching activities for a classroom with mentally-disabled students

Sabahattin Deniz

Mugla University, Egitim Fakultesi, TR-48170 Kotecli, Mugla, Turkey.
E-mail: sdeniz@mu.edu.tr. Tel: +90 252 211 18 25. Fax: +90 252 223 84 91.

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The aim of this study is to explore whether there is a difference between the student teachers' opinions about in-class teaching skills before and after applying micro-teaching. This study was carried out with the participation of second-year students of the Child Development Program of a Vocational School in the full term of 2005 - 2006 academic years. The opinions of the student teachers about in-class teaching skills were obtained via a questionnaire consisting of 31 items. In the opinions of the student teachers, regarding 25 items out of 31, significant differences were observed before and after micro-teaching applications. Following micro-teaching activities, while self-confidence of the student teachers and their in-class teaching skills increased, their concerns about classroom management were observed to dissipate.

Key words: Teaching strategies, micro-teaching, children with mental disabilities, teacher training, teaching skills.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important objectives of today's teacher education systems is to equip student teachers with continuous pleasure and skill of learning rather than transferring information to them, and evoke their interests in an ever-changing and developing contemporary world around them. A teacher is someone who does not only acquires some sort of knowledge but is also capable of teaching it. Therefore, student teachers should gain practical skills such as; classroom management, communication, making lesson plans, creating a state of teaching and learning, evaluating education and students, as well as theoretical knowledge (knowledge of the field). To gain such teaching skills students are provided with practicum, special teaching methods and the skills in the teaching of special subjects.

Planning learning experiences and determining effective learning – teaching strategies in teaching settings are important for the quality of teaching. In the learning-teaching process, teaching conditions should be organized to reach pre-determined targets. In this process, content, method-technique and tools-equipment are determined. Teaching method can be defined as the

ways to be followed to guide the students towards the objectives set (Romiszowski, 1986). According to Burden and Byrd (1994), instructional strategies are the means by which the content is presented and the learning objectives are achieved. On the other hand, the teaching technique is a way of implementing a teaching method or a route to be followed in presenting the teaching materials and structuring teaching activities. In faculties or colleges where teacher student are educated, the teaching knowledge and skills obtained by student teachers and the teaching approaches adopted by them would affect students in classrooms where they would be teaching. At the same time, the teaching process requires teacher student to specialize in his subject field and obtain deep knowledge (Garet, 2001). Effective teachers have a repertoire of strategies that can be used in the classroom (Burden and Byrd, 1994). As stated by Connecticut State of Education (2007) effective instruction and improved student outcomes begin with the teacher.

Brophy and Good (1986), review numerous studies about about teacher impact on student achievement and con-

cluded that “the myth that teachers do, does not make a difference in student learning and this has been refuted”. More recent studies have noted that, the individual classroom teacher has an even greater effect on student achievement than originally thought (Sanders and Horn, 1994; Wright and Sanders, 1997). Although, teachers are provided with many opportunities concerning technology in learning-teaching process, teachers usually do not utilize these opportunities (Means and Olson, 1994).

Therefore, educating teachers about “special teaching programs” designed for children with mental disabilities, attending pre-schools (kindergarten, nursery etc.) is important. Applications taking place in centers where teacher student are educated to work in pre-schools enhance the efficiency of the teaching program. With regard to the quality of teaching, it is important for teachers to find opportunities to apply the principles and theories about any subject in the classroom setting. Akçamete (1991) states that, in an individual teaching program aiming at children with mental disabilities, freedom to select his teaching method and technique and materials should be taken into account by the teacher.

There are many methods which are considered to be effective in teacher training. For that reason student teachers are exposed to various techniques in classroom situations such as teaching in groups (demonstration, micro-teaching, group and pair work, dramatization, role play, educational plays etc) and individual teaching techniques (individualized teaching, programmed education and computer assisted teaching). It is possible to observe that in the related literature, micro-teaching technique has not been much encountered in educating teachers who will work in the schools for mentally-disabled students.

Micro-teaching in teacher education

One of the techniques used to develop student teachers' teaching skills is micro-teaching. Micro-teaching is also used in training teachers of other branches. Napoli (2008) employed three micro-teaching segments in music teacher education. In her study, immediately after teaching the student teachers she filled out an evaluation form indicating four things they did well, one suggestion for improvement and effectiveness score from 1 - 10. All students in class also completed this task. But at pre-school level, it enables student teachers to get prepared for the teaching profession in a special way by taking into consideration the features of development of mental, psychomotor and social skills of the group they are to teach. The purpose of micro-teaching is to get student teachers to gain the predetermined critical teaching behaviours. This technique is important as it enables predetermined critical teaching behaviours to be gained and perceived better. Micro-teaching is an artificial form of real classroom teaching rendered in a more limited scope. It is a scaled-down model of teaching. It is essen-

tially an opportunity for pre-service teachers and experienced professional to develop and/or improve specific teaching skills with a small group of students by means of brief single-concept lessons. These lessons are recorded on videotape for reviewing, refining, and analyzing very specific teaching processes. Micro-teaching is a technique that allows the teacher to place small aspects of teaching under the microscope (Orlich et al., 1985).

In England, micro-teaching applications and the analysis of the skills acquired during these applications are widely used in teacher training (Bisset, 1999). In his study, Macleod (1987) found very little evidence concerning the ineffectiveness of micro-teaching. Although, micro-teaching is limited to theory-based research, it is argued that together with the present applications, micro-teaching applications is based on the cognitive model which bring a new dimension to future research attempts. In Turkey micro-teaching has started to be applied in some universities and private institutions as a means of pre-service and in-service training. For this reason, micro-teaching is an important aspect of the teaching application which is used to prepare student teachers for the profession of teaching. Teaching practices are still conducted in real school and classroom settings. In the beginning, it is not a very easy experience for most teachers.

For those who start doing teaching practice, the first impressions, experiences and their effects are highly important. For these student teachers who have just started their teaching practices; classroom management is a very complex issue. Therefore micro-teaching is considered to be a transition in preparing for such a classroom situation (Külahçı, 1994). According to Görden (2003), the means of micro-teaching applications in teacher training, it is aimed at helping student teachers to gain confidence and research skills. Via micro-teaching, student teachers can gain pre- and in-service teaching experiences and academic self-confidence.

Preparatory process for micro-teaching

In the application stage of micro-teaching, the duration of teaching is usually set to be 5 - 20 min and the number of students is 5 - 10. The objectives of micro-teaching are clearly explained to the teacher candidates (Külahçı, 1994). Other friends of the student teacher act as students. What is important with micro-teaching practice is not to teach some particular subject but to practice it. Stages of teaching through micro-teaching technique are implemented as follows:

- (i) A 10 - 15 min lesson plan is prepared for a predetermined subject.
- (ii) The way the lesson is carried out is videotaped.
- (iii) The lesson which is videotaped is viewed.
- (iv) The lesson is evaluated by the instructor and the group of other student teachers who have participated in

completion of the micro-teaching evaluation form.

(v) After the lesson is viewed from the video, the instructor summarizes the micro-teaching performance of each student teacher and some tips are given for the following teaching applications.

(vi) Each student self-evaluates, and

(vii) The questionnaire which is used in the beginning to evaluate attitudes towards teaching is applied once again.

Mentally-disabled children

At pre-school ages, experiences that can be learnt by doing are experiencing that are important for children. In particular, when children with mental disabilities are classified according to their training needs, it becomes important for them on what to learn and to what extent. In Turkey, in the regulations of private schools operating under the control of the Ministry of Education, children with mental disabilities are classified as "trainable, teachable and in need of clinical care". Usually, the disability of children with mental disabilities is noticed in the pre-school development period. Of such children, those who are trainable can utilize primary school education.

According to Moleneye, children with mental disabilities who can be taught can acquire basic academic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics (Moleneye 1979, cited in Eripek, 1996). According to American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) intellectual disability is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before the age of 18 (AAMR, 2008). These children can learn self-care skills as well as basic academic skills. The student teachers being trained for the children with mental disabilities who can be taught are chosen as the participants of the present study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Purpose of the study

With the application of micro-teaching, it is believed that, student teachers studying at the Departments of Pre-school and Child Development can prepare themselves more effectively for teaching children with mild mental disabilities. In the micro-teaching application, it is possible for a student teacher to analyze his or her learning and teaching styles and to evaluate them, so that, he or she can acquire professional knowledge, skills and attitudes by watching micro-teaching presentations, making systematic observations and rearranging learning. The course aimed of training training student teachers, dealing with teaching children with mild mental disabilities, both on a theoretical and practical basis indicates that, some teaching applications and skills: such as making lesson plans, getting prepared for the lesson, making more use of special teaching techniques and methods, communication, classroom management and relationship with students (a decrease in level of

anxiety, feeling more secure) etc. can be gained more easily.

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether any changes occur in the perceptions of the student teachers, nor performing micro-teaching applications about in-class teaching skills with regard to teaching children with mild mental disabilities before and after micro teaching applications.

Methodology

According to Gibbon and Morris, pre-and post-test design can be employed with one group. When comparisons between groups are not needed in this research, design is employed. In the present study, one group of student teachers is taken and then, they are given a test before and after the application of research to see whether there are any changes in the opinions of student teachers regarding to teaching skills for mentally-disabled students (Gibbon and Morris, 1978, cited in Erden, 1995).

Sampling

The participants of the study are 34 senior female students who took the course of "The Development and Education of Children with Mild Mental Disabilities" from the Department of Child Development of a Vocational School in the full term of 2005 - 2006 academic year. They participated in this study on a voluntary basis. In addition to this course, the students are taking various subjects and lessons concerning educating disabled children with audio-visual and/or orthopedic disabilities in their training programs. The student teachers are trained for pre-school education.

Procedure

1. At the beginning of the term, before the first lesson, a questionnaire measuring "the opinions of the student teachers about the teaching skills" developed by Grgeen (2003) was given to each of the student teachers.
2. In this process, while a student teacher was presenting the lesson, other student teachers role-played mentally-disabled students in order to make this process more authentic and reliable in the course of the research. Every student was given an opportunity to do micro-teaching. Meanwhile, as a part of this course the student teachers engaged in various activities such as planning a lesson, having a theoretical background and observing course teacher in the classroom. In addition, they did teaching practicum in regular pre-schools for six hours a week.
3. Every student teacher has decided on a sub-topic so as to be prepared for micro-teaching from the educational program handbook by Van Der Kruijs and Sucuođlu (1981) (Table 1). According to Snell (1993) in the course of designing teaching processes, the skills of planning a lesson are handled as follows (Table 2): Taking these stages into consideration, sub-topics have been prepared as a daily lesson plan.
4. Whilst a student teacher was presenting the lesson she had planned, another student teacher kept a record of the time, videotaped of the student teacher and the other student teachers became members of the class. After the micro-teaching application was over, every student teacher joined the evaluation process of the presentation of every student teacher.
5. In micro-teaching applications, observation results obtained by analyzing the teaching skills of the student teachers were recorded in the micro-teaching evaluation form (Sands et al., 1996).
6. The lesson plans were designed in conjunction with the principle from easy to difficult and from abstract to concrete.
7. After the classroom discussion of each micro-teaching application, feedback-correction was given to the student teacher, by

Table 1. The course of designing teaching processes.

Physical development	exercises of becoming familiar with the body balance and walking exercises, and large and small motor movements
Basic principles of listening and speaking	understanding from which direction sound comes, distinguishing sounds and developing visual perception
Knowledge of directions and hand coordination	acquiring the ability to turn left and/or right
Using scissors	cutting and sticking paper, and improving eye-motor coordination
Getting ready for writing	attempting to draw various lines
Getting ready for reading	looking carefully, remembering connections between shapes, knowledge of letters, learning concepts and developing vocabulary
Getting ready for counting	becoming familiar with numbers and learning them

Table 2. The skills of planning a lesson.

Planning and getting ready for the lesson	introduction to lesson(attracting attention, motivation, informing about targets and behaviors of the lesson, passing the lesson)
Classroom management and relationship with students	Determining classroom behaviors and rules and controlling unaccepted student behaviors.
Using methods of teaching	Applying group and individualized teaching techniques for the target group of students
Implementing teaching process	Considering students' performance presenting teaching process appropriate for the target group of students, presenting stimulating materials, tips, giving reinforcement, providing participation in the lesson, final summary, re-motivation, closure
Evaluation	feedback and correction

watching the records from the video. Then, the course teacher summarized the criticism and evaluations for each micro-teaching practice.

8. And then each student teacher performed a self-evaluation.

9. At the end of the term the same questionnaire was completed again by the same group of student teachers.

Data collection tools

In order to collect data a questionnaire developed by Grge (2003) to measure "*The Opinions of Student Teachers about Teaching Skills*" was used. It is not a questionnaire to measure the opinions of a specific department or group in teacher education. There are 31 items in the questionnaire. The pre-test Alfa reliability of the questionnaire is 94; post-test Alfa reliability is 91. The questionnaire has been applied at the beginning and at the end of the term to the 34 participants who are all female student teachers studying at the Department of Pre-school Child Development. The questionnaire items have been responded to be the student teachers by marking one of these: strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1).

Analysis of the data

In order to see whether there are significant differences between the results of the pre-test and the post-test, the data have been analyzed by means of SPSS package program. For the analysis, the Paired-Samples t test has been used.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether any

changes have occurred in the opinions of the student teachers about in-class teaching skills with regards to teaching mentally disabled children after micro teaching applications. For this purpose, the "t" test results based on the results of the pre and post test applications which are inclined towards the views and opinions of the student teachers have been presented in Table 3.

According to the findings shown in Table 3, before micro-teaching applications, the mean score of the student teachers' opinions about in-class teaching skills is $\bar{X} = 88.852$; after the applications, the same score has been found to be $\bar{X} = 123.09$. A significant difference is observed in the opinions of the students before and after taking the course ($t = -6.544$, $p < 0.05$).

According to the findings shown in Table 4, significant differences are observed between the opinions of the student teachers before and after they have been exposed to the course of "*Training and Development of Children With Mental Disabilities*" with regard to the items "1, 5, 6, 8, 11, 19". These findings can be claimed to be the outcomes of the fact that, the courses involved in this program are based mostly on application and individual experiences. Another reason of these findings might have been the fact that they presented the lesson in an artificial classroom environment and they were watched and observed by their peers and course teacher. The items "2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31" reveal significant differences in the opinions of the student teachers before

Table 3. T-test analysis with regards to total pre-test and post-test scores obtained for the opinions of the student teachers concerning acquiring teaching skills by means of micro-teaching relating to the training of mentally disabled children in pre-school instructions.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Pre-test	34	88.852	24.872	-6.544	.000
Post-test	34	123.09	16.701		

$p < 0.05$

and after acquiring teaching skills through micro-teaching practices.

The opinions of the student teachers about the items "2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 24, 25" are in the category of "undecided" before taking the course but they have selected the option of "disagree" after taking the course. According to these findings it might be argued that, as a result of micro-teaching applications, the anxiety level of the student teachers concerning the ability to answer the questions either about the topic or other issues, completing the lesson in the set time frame, correcting the errors taking place whilst teaching, being fluent in the process of teaching, managing the classroom effectively, being ready for the role of a teacher, feeling confused and feeling anxious whilst teaching in front of the students, using clear language whilst teaching, forgetting what to say, and using appropriate methods and techniques to get the students to achieve the targets have reduced. It can be said that, as a result of the activities done during this course they built up their self confidence in teaching skills. In a study carried out by Wragg (1984), it is stated that students want their teachers to make clear explanations and to be good listeners.

The findings obtained also comply with the finding of the study by Kūlahçı (1994) claiming that micro-teaching technique brings positive results in terms of providing student teachers with classroom management skills. Moreover, micro-teaching applications can be said to help inexperienced student teachers to cope with noise, students having difficulty in learning, getting bored with the lesson and other negative factors in naturally formed classrooms. This application makes it possible for student teachers to feel more relaxed during the teaching process and to be less anxious about classroom management. In a study carried out by Jobling and Moni (2004), they used action-based on teaching and learning experiences that included observations and a micro-teaching project to assist pre service teachers to develop students' awareness, knowledge, confidence and practical skills for teaching individuals with learning problems and disabilities.

Micro teaching applications give student teachers positive learning experiences and develop individual teaching skills by making it possible for student teachers to develop individual teaching strategies. Before taking

the course, the student teachers have selected the option of "undecided" with regard to the 3rd item; however, after taking the course, they have selected the option of "strongly agree" with regard to the same item. According to this finding, it can be claimed that before taking the course the student teachers did not have enough knowledge as well as skills regarding which materials should be utilized within teaching children with mental disabilities and how to use these materials in the teaching-learning process. After taking the course student teachers' skills relating to the use of the materials in the classroom are observed to make progress and their concerns about not being able to plan how to teach dissipate.

While the student teachers selected the option of "disagree" to item 22 on the questionnaire before taking the course, after taking the course their choice has shifted to "agree". In item 28 the reverse was observed as "agree" at first and "disagree" at the last. According to this finding, while student teachers thought that they could not experience any difficulties in teaching at students' levels, they began to feel difficulty and anxiety after the course. In addition, while student teachers were not in favour of taking help from others before the course, it turned out to be positive after the course. Student teachers' accumulated knowledge and experiences regarding the teaching of mentally-disabled students can support the idea that they are encouraged to feel comfortable and motivated in their teaching experiences. Micro-teaching applications have made the student teachers more aware of how to attract student's attention and maintain interest within the lesson, so they have helped the student teachers to relieve their concerns about these issues.

Before taking the course, the student teachers have selected the option of "agree" with regard to the items 13, 20, 21, 29, 30; they select the option of "disagree" after taking the course. According to these findings, it can be claimed that before this application the student teachers have thought that the teaching practices are not necessary; they give importance to group interactions for the fear that they may lose the control of the lesson, and they maintain that they may not be patient enough and control their emotions during the lesson. However, they have stated that teaching in the classroom is enjoyable. Initially, the student teachers thought that teaching was

Table 4. Item by item pre- and post "t" test results of the questionnaire aiming at gaining the student teachers teaching skills required to teach mentally disabled children by means of micro-teaching technique.

No	ITEMS	Mean		Std. Deviation		df	t	Sig (2-tailed)
		Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test			
1.	They do not know how to start the lesson.	3.79	3.97	1.066	0.999	33	-0.692	0.494**
2.	The idea that students will ask and I may not be able to answer their questions worries me.	3.32	4.14	1.147	0.925	33	-2.893	0.007*
3.	To worry about the fact that they may get confused while using the teaching materials and tools in the classroom.	2.64	4.23	1.203	0.923	33	-5.664	0.000*
4.	To worry about what to prepared for the lesson may finish in the middle of the lesson.	3.11	4.08	1.297	1.055	33	-3.486	0.001*
5.	The idea of presenting a lesson in front of students makes me anxious.	3.50	3.88	1.376	1.066	33	-1.132	0.266**
6.	To be anxious for the fear of not making some mistakes while teaching	3.41	3.47	1.209	1.107	33	-0.177	0.861**
7.	To be anxious for the fear of not knowing how to correct possible mistakes that may occur.	3.23	3.97	1.129	.940	33	-2.743	0.010*
8.	Being worried about that the lesson might be criticized.	3.23	3.61	1.207	.953	33	-1.321	0.196**
9.	To be anxious for the fear of not knowing how to react to the irrelevant questions	3.00	4.02	1.302	.834	33	-4.093	0.000*
10.	To be anxious for the fear of not sustaining fluency throughout the lesson	3.20	4.11	1.409	.844	33	-3.138	0.004*
11.	To be anxious for the fear not to know how to treat a student constantly causing trouble in the classroom	3.35	3.82	1.368	.936	33	-1.676	0.103**
12.	To be anxious for the fear not to have the control in the classroom.	3.08	4.11	1.356	.844	33	-3.273	0.002*
13.	The idea of teaching seems to be something enjoyable to me.	4.02	2.32	1.218	1.551	33	4.589	0.000*
14.	They do not feel there are ready for the role of a teacher	2.29	4.26	1.243	1.886	33	-5.905	0.000*
15.	We feel anxious for the fear that we may not adjust the pitch of my voice and speed of my speech.	4.11	3.02	1.235	.946	33	-4.925	0.000*
16.	We feel anxious for the fear that we may get confused while teaching.	3.02	3.73	1.167	1.024	33	-2.626	0.013*
17.	The idea of teaching in front of the students worries me.	2.79	4.17	1.493	.869	33	-4.262	0.000*
18.	I feel anxious for the fear that I may not form correct sentences.	2.64	3.97	1.228	.937	33	-4.853	0.000*
19.	When the time to teach comes closer, I feel that I have to learn more.	3.47	2.76	1.419	1.498	33	1.569	0.126**
20.	We wish we would not have teaching practices at all.	1.85	4.20	1.351	1.365	33	-6.235	0.000
21.	For the fear that they might not control the class, they avoid starting group discussions in the classroom.	2.41	4.11	1.305	.844	33	-5.522	0.000*
22.	They are worried about not being able to lower my level to the students' level	4.38	2.41	1.309	.9211	33	-6.778	0.000*
23.	They are worried about not being able to draw students' attention and interest to the subject	2.41	4.41	1.233	.743	33	-7.007	0.000*
24.	They are worried about forgetting what to tell while telling the lesson	3.00	3.70	1.101	.938	33	-2.805	0.008*

Table 4. Contd.

25.	They don't know what kind of demonstration I will use while presenting the subjects requiring application.	2.88	4.05	1.200	.814	33	-5.048	0.000*
26.	They don't know what kind of reinforcement that could give the students who directly contribute to the subject.	2.41	4.23	1.209	.889	33	-6.551	0.000*
27.	They are worried about not being able to communicate with students	2.32	4.32	1.342	1.036	33	-6.016	0.000*
28.	I hesitate to get help from others.	2.32	4.26	1.364	.898	33	-5.842	0.000*
29.	They are worried about not being able to be patient while teaching.	2.41	4.11	1.351	.879	33	-5.422	0.000*
30.	They worried about not being able to control their emotions while telling the lesson.	2.50	4.05	1.212	.919	33	-5.824	0.000*
31.	They do not know how to end the lesson.	2.50	4.32	1.212	1.093	33	-6.789	0.000*

* In these items, significant differences are observed.

** In these items, no significant differences are observed.

$p < 0.05$

an enjoyable experience. They also formed an idea that although, it was enjoyable, it was a demanding process after the presentations they made during the application. It can be claimed that through micro-teaching, positive changes have been observed in the opinions of the student teachers towards teaching skills.

It is observed that micro-teaching applications can play a significant role in enhancing the student teachers' knowledge about teaching children with mild mental disabilities and these applications can provide them with opportunities to use their pedagogical formation skills. Student teachers trained to work in pre-schools also improve their self-confidence and communication skills with others and they also develop better understanding of themselves and others, so they could behave in line with this developed understanding (Marlow, 1986). Moreover, micro-teaching applications can be claimed to have been effective on increasing the student teachers' knowledge about what aspect of presentation to use whilst dealing with subjects requiring application. This result is especially important as the sampling consists of student teachers studying at the Department of Pre-school Child Development and Education because these student teachers will be expected to have their students acquire social and emotional skills as well as psychomotor behaviours. Therefore, micro-teaching applications can also be claimed to have been effective with regard to the student teachers' controlling their emotions and opinions whilst teaching in an actual classroom setting.

Before taking this course the student teachers have selected the option of "disagree" with regard to the items 23, 26, 27, 31, after taking the course their choice has become "strongly disagree". According to these findings, it can be argued that student teachers regard themselves as adequate in knowing what kinds of reinforcement to use, how and where to use rewards; as they see

themselves capable enough to have natural conversations, with their students and are capable of knowing how to end the lesson before and after taking the course. This may be the result of the fact that, the student teachers have had the opportunity to interact with the pre-school children in real classroom settings as they are attending pre-schools in the framework of their teaching practicum. In addition, they have graduated from vocational high schools which provide education about child development.

Prior to this application the student teachers have selected the option of "disagree" with regard to item 15; their choices have turned to "undecided" later. This finding shows that whilst the student teachers' anxiety level concerning adjusting their volume and pitch of their voice is comparatively high before, after it has decreased and become neutral. Later, within in-class interactions, clear language and understandable use of language are necessary for effective learning to take place. According to Gordon (1993), the teachers who have acquired effective listening skills facilitate learning. Çakır (2000); Kūlahçı (1994) support the effectiveness of micro-teaching applications in helping student teachers to acquire professional skills (knowledge, skills, attitudes, habits, behaviours etc.) before starting their teaching careers.

In our study, the means of micro-teaching applications has been made possible for the student teachers to feel pedagogically and psychologically more developed in terms of getting to know children with mild mental disabilities and evaluating them. Besides that, they have been able to improve their teaching skills. According to Demirel (2002), micro-teaching applications in which student teachers make presentations of the lesson such as videotaping it, re-watching the videotaped lesson repeatedly and discussing what is absent and reconsider-

ing what to do and being exposed to intensive feedback will help to develop teaching skills more effectively.

RESULTS AND SUGGESTION

According to the results obtained from the study, it can be argued that micro teaching applications bring about positive changes within the opinions of the student teachers towards teaching skills. This application also enables student teacher to develop awareness for learning and teaching processes in a classroom setting. The pedagogical implications of this application can provide the student teachers with a kind of an interactive environment where they can share their opinions and thoughts regarding classroom practices. In so doing, they learn how to control their feelings, adjust their voices, manage smooth transitions between the activities, evaluate student questions and give feedbacks and adopt appropriate methods and approaches according to student's needs and expectations. In this respect, Lee and Wu (2006) found out five reasons for success with micro-teaching technique in teacher education. They are better assessment of personal teaching styles, more sharing of one teaching and more concrete feedback and more effective involvement of experienced teachers.

The skills gained at the end of micro-teaching applications and recognized in the findings are mostly those which are amongst the teaching skills required within the learning-teaching process. The student teachers will be vocational high school graduates as they are attending a vocational college, which provides them with further training based on the one they acquired at high school, but within these institutions the students are not exposed to comprehensive training, about how to teach the children with mild mental disabilities. For this reason, they are experiencing some conflicts in their opinions. This situation may be due to not having a comprehensive level of knowledge and skills on educating children with disabilities. By means of micro-teaching applications professional skills, proficiency of field, pedagogical proficiency and in-class or out of class proficiency, learning and individual proficiency can be gained. As stated in the study by Jobling and Moni (2004) pre-service teachers felt that their knowledge and skills were inadequate and believed they were unprepared to teach students with special needs.

According to Holigan (1997), there is a high correlation between the classroom performance of the teacher and his theoretical knowledge about the subject. One-to-one interactions of the student teachers with their teachers during the teaching practice periods support their commitment to socialization, and intellectual and professional principles. Yeung and Watkins (2000) also state that teaching skills, gained during teaching practices will have some positive influences on the development of student teachers' professional success and self-efficiency. Furthermore, in a study carried out by Liston et al. (2006)

new teachers say the theoretical grounding learnt in teacher preparation does not equip them sufficiently for the demands of daily classroom life. Additionally, Klinzing (2002) suggests that such procedures as micro-teaching in pre-service and in-service education can lead to positive and long term effects on transferring this experience into professional practices.

The education of children with mild mental disabilities is in the "special education" category; therefore, in all the training programs aimed at training teachers to work in the education of children in need of special training, acquisition of teaching skills should be supported with micro-teaching applications. This may contribute to the efforts to train qualified teachers to work in the field of special education. Via micro-teaching applications, teachers can be adequately prepared for the teaching profession with regard to cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning. As stated by Smith (2007) the teacher candidates were asked to design high level inquiry-based tasks and maintain the level of these tasks as they engaged their peers in similar micro-teaching activities. In teacher training programs experience of micro-teaching applications by student teachers in "theoretical and applied" part of teaching activities, real-life like design of the teaching-learning environment, objective evaluation which may have positive effects on the acquisition of teaching skills by student teachers. In particular, providing the student teachers with the opportunity of self-evaluation by means of videotaping the lesson and the immediate feedback and correction process can help student teachers to see their weaknesses and strengths. As a result they can improve their weaknesses by building up professional self-confidence.

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