academicJournals

Vol. 9(13), pp. 387-391, 10 July, 2014
DOI: 10.5897/ERR2014.1734
Article Number: C1E2F3545500
ISSN 1990-3839
Copyright © 2014
Author(s) retain the copyright of this article
http://www.academicjournals.org/ERR

Educational Research and Reviews

Full Length Research Paper

Problems encountered by future teachers in community service practices course and solution offers

Yaprak Türkan Yücelsin-Taş

French Language Teaching Section, Department of Foreign Language Teaching, Atatürk Faculty of Education, Marmara University, Istanbul Turkey.

Received 3 February, 2014; Accepted 9 June, 2014

The course titled "Community Service Practices" has been taught since 2006 to 2007 academic year in all of the faculties of education in Turkey. At Marmara University, future teachers of the French Language Teaching Section of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching at the Atatürk Faculty of Education take this course in the first semester of their 3rd year. This study was conducted on 47 future teachers enrolled in the French Language Teaching Section and that have visited various institutions. In this study, qualitative research method was used and an interview form composed of 2 open-ended questions prepared specifically for future teachers was administered. The research data were collected with the technique of interview form in 2012 to 2013 academic year and the data collected were evaluated with coding method. The aim of our study is to identify the problems that future teachers encounter in the institutions that they visit, to classify these problems and to offer solutions, while determining the benefits that this practical course provides to future teachers. One of the most significant problems encountered is that the institutions do not want to host future teachers due to various reasons. Another problem is that these institutions do not sufficiently or effectively derive benefits from the competence of the volunteering future teachers. On the other hand, one of the most important acquisitions at the end of this practical course is that awareness of future teachers towards social problems is raised and the professional experience they gained is another benefit.

Key words: Community service practices, future teachers of French, problems encountered, suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

The undergraduate course titled "Community Service Practices" has been taught since 2006 to 2007 academic year in all of the faculties of education in Turkey. Each university has its own syllabus and framework including framework for the objectives, principles, rules and the code of practice. This subject was taught within its associate and undergraduate degree programs. Some studies have concentrated on measuring the effect of service-learning on future teachers' personal, cognitive and civic development (Waldstein and Reiher, 2001; Eyler, 2000; Steinke and Buresh, 2002). The others have focused on service-learning and its improvement (Kiely, 2005; McCarthy and Tucke, 1999).

The aims of this course are*, inter alia*, "to raise the

E-mail: turyaprak@yahoo.com Tel: 0090.535.880.41.83

Author agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License

consciousness of the future teachers in terms of social responsibility, to render them active in the solution of social problems, to raise their awareness about social realities, to ensure that they are in cooperation, solidarity and contact with the society, and to improve their self-assessment skill" (Marmara University, 2013: 1). The foremost objective of this practice is to contribute to prospective teachers, who will teach in different fields, to raise the awareness on social responsibility in society. Moreover, the aims towards raising awareness of the future teachers towards those in need like the blind, the orphan, the elderly, animals in sanctuaries, etc. and helping non-governmental organizations by contributing to their activities are also significant (YÖK, 2007).

Community Service Practices is a three-hour course, consisting of one hour of theory and two hours of practice. Some of the institutions and organizations, in which the activities within the framework of Community Service Practices course may be performed are listed in the related directive as follows (Marmara University, 2013: 2):

1. Public or private educational institutions attached to the Ministry of National Education, universities, libraries, public education centers, schools for the mentally disabled, schools for the visually impaired, schools for the hearing impaired, parent-teacher associations,
2. Health care institutions,
3. Directorates for social services; the centers attached to the Social Services and Child Protection Agency, orphan asylums; and other places where social service is performed, such as food kitchens or nursing homes,
4. Penitentiaries and juvenile correctional facilities,
5. Special provincial administrations,
6. Non-profit organizations, associations and foundations (Turkish Red Crescent Society, Turkish Green Crescent Society, Anti-tuberculosis Association, etc.),
7. Civil Defense and Provincial Emergency Management, fire departments,
8. International, national and local non-governmental organizations,
9. Museums, directorates of culture and tourism, historic sites and ruins, provincial directorates of environment and urban planning, provincial directorates of agriculture,
10. Animal shelters,
11. Municipalities, headman's offices,
12. Directorate General of State Hydraulic Works, water and sewerage authorities,
13. Regional Directorate of Highways, State Railways of the Republic of Turkey,
14. State Meteorological Service,
15. Organized industrial zones, other industrial sites, chambers of trade and industry,
16. Professional chambers,
17. Provincial directorates of youth and sports, sports clubs.

Community Service Practices course is taught in the first semester of the 3rd year, which corresponds to the fifth semester program of the French Language Teaching Section of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching at the Atatürk Faculty of Education at Marmara University. Within the scope of this course, 47 future teachers in 2012 to 2013 academic year were referred to 7 institutions to perform the required activities. The institutions concerned are listed as follows:

1. Animal Shelter of Ataşehir
2. Library of Eyüp for the Visually Impaired
3. *Fransız Fakirhanesi* (Bomonti Nursing Home]
4. Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey
5. Maltepe Nursing Home
6. Kayışdağı *Darülaceze* (Kayışdağı Hospice)
7. Dolmabahçe Palace

The aims of our study are to identify the problems that future teachers encounter in the institutions that they visit within the scope of the Community Service Practices course, to classify these problems and to offer solutions, while determining the benefits that this practical course provides to future teachers.

Table 1. Distribution of the participants in terms of gender and age.

Variables	Participants	f	%
Gender	Female	41	87.23
	Male	6	12.77
Age	18 to 20 years old	2	4.26
	21 to 23 years old	24	51.06
	24 to 26 years old	20	42.55
	27 years old and over	1	2.13

Sampling of the study

This study was conducted in the French Language Teaching Section of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching at the Atatürk Faculty of Education at Marmara University. The sample of the group was composed of the 3rd year students of the French Language Teaching Section in the 2012 to 2013, who had visited various institutions within the scope of Community Service Practices course. Since it is an effective data collection method, face to face interview with the future teachers was preferred. The interview form was administered to 47 future teachers taking Community Service Practices course in the French Language Teaching Section.

According to Table 1, 87.23% of the participants of this study are female, only 12.77% of the participants are male. Table 1 shows also the distribution of the participants in terms of age.

Table 2. Distribution of future teachers taking CSP according to the institutions visited.

Institution	Number of Future Teachers	%
Kayışdağı Darülaceze (Kayışdağı Hospice)	9	19.15
Library of Eyüp for the Visually Impaired	9	19.15
Fransız Fakirhanesi (Bomonti Nursing Home)	8	17.02
Animal Shelter of Ataşehir	8	17.02
Maltepe Nursing Home	8	17.02
Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey	4	8.51
Dolmabahçe Palace	1	2.13

METHODOLOGY

Data collection and analysis

In this study, qualitative research method was used. Qualitative research may be defined as a type of research, in which qualitative data collection methods like observation, interview and document analysis are used, and which follows a qualitative process aimed at presenting perceptions and events in their natural environment with a realistic, as well as holistic perspective. In this context, the findings reached through qualitative research were assessed by internal categorization. The data were gathered through the interview form including 2 open-ended questions which were produced for future teachers:

1- What were the problems you faced in the institutions you visited within the framework of the Community Service Practices course?
2- What benefits did you derive from the said course?

47 future teachers took part in our study. The first question of the interview form was aimed at identifying the problems encountered by the future teachers hosted by the institutions selected by the French Language Teaching Section within the framework of Community Service Practices course. The second or the last question was, on the other hand, formulated to detect the benefits that the said course provides to future teachers.

The principles identified by Patton (2002) so as to make the interview more effective were taken into consideration. In this context, questions inquired to the future teachers during the interview were revised and the required amendments were made in accordance with the answers they had given. Questions were directed to the interviewees in a colloquial way so that they could feel at ease and could answer in a more natural environment. The objectives were reminded once again to the future teachers when the given replies digress from the scope of the interview questions. Apart from this, the interviewees were not manipulated while responding to the directed questions.

The questions were answered by 47 future teachers of French Language. By informing them about the fact that their names would not be stated, receiving realistic responses from the students was aimed at. The data collected by means of an interview form was evaluated with coding method (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The coding method employed in this study had been determined with respect to the concepts inferred from the data which are one of the three coding methods referred to by Strauss and Corbin. Answers of the future teachers were coded with letter T and numbers like T1, T2, T3, etc.

FINDINGS

Before analyzing the obtained findings of our study, the distribution of the future teachers with regard to the institutions they visited is given in Table 2.

In Table 2, the numbers and percentages of the future teachers hosted by each institution within the framework of Community Service Practices course were provided. The institutions hosting the highest numbers of future teachers (nine students each) are Kayışdağı Hospice and Library of Eyüp for the Visually Impaired, while Dolmabahçe Palace at the bottom of the list hosted only 1 future teacher. Taking the percentages into consideration, it is observed that the numbers of future teachers visiting these institutions are not distributed evenly. Among the reasons underlying this finding are the fact that future teachers' opinions were taken into account in the selection of the institutions and that they had the opportunity to choose the institutions they preferred subsequent to the approval of the administration of the Section concerned. In fact, future teachers are offered the opportunity to choose the institution that they prefer to visit together with the course coordinator, seeing that participation of the future teacher in Community Service Practices in a field, which he/she is interested in, will increase his/her success. Future teachers learn through active participation in this course (Ohn and Wade, 2009).

Problems encountered

The problems that the future teachers encountered in the institutions that they visited within the framework of Community Service Practices course may be classified under five major titles. One of the most significant problems encountered in Community Service Practices is that the institutions do not want to host future teachers due to various reasons. Another problem is that these institutions do not sufficiently or effectively derive benefits from the competence of the volunteering future teachers. Since certain institutions are located far from the city center, the problem of transportation arises. Moreover, due to the fact that future teachers follow other courses in the faculty while visiting institutions for Community Service Practices course, difficulties are experienced while setting visiting hours suitable for both the institution and the future teachers. As a result of the insufficiency of the devices in some of the above mentioned institutions,

technical problems are experienced.

A vast majority of the future teachers having participated in this study (33 participants) stated that the institution they visited did not prefer hosting them since they were considered to cause extra work load. Some of the future teachers complained as follows:

"The institution did not want to host us" T12. "They considered future teachers as extra work" T23.

Besides, more than half of the voluntarily participants of this study (30 participants) stated that they were not given sufficient work in the institutions they visited, for example they were not allowed to take care of the elderly in a sufficient manner in some nursing homes, because these institutions did not believe these future teachers were competent. Some of the future teachers stated:

"Most of the institutions did not effectively derive benefits from our competences" T34. "We went to the institution and we did nothing" T41.

Nearly half of the participants (22 participants) complained about the location of the institution they visited, which was far from the city center, and stated that they experienced a transportation problem.

"It takes 2 hours to go to the institution" T5. "The institution was far from the city center" T8. "I had always transportation problem, because the institution was so far from my house" T22.

Some of the participants (12 participants) pointed out that they had difficulties in reaching a mutually agreed timetable.

"Setting visiting hours suitable for us was problematic" T6.

In addition, a few participants (6 participants) stated that they encountered technical problems in certain situations in the institution they visited, as in the case of Library for the Visually Impaired, since they were recording audio-books.

"I had technical problems frequently in my institution" T3.

Benefits that future teachers derive from community service practices

Some of the important benefits of this practical course are that it creates awareness of social problems, they acquired the habit of volunteering, and that their sensitivity towards human suffering has increased.

"There is a positive correlation between the acquisition of social responsibility of the prospective teachers and the Community Service Practices Course" T24.

All of the participants of this study stated that the course Community Service Practices had been a considerably useful and important experience for both personal and professional perspectives. What is more, they underlined the fact that they found the opportunity to see different aspects of life and pointed out the importance of the happiness and serenity that it gives for being able to help others.

"This course is purposeful in terms of establishing relationships and solidarity with the individuals who constitute the society" T45.

Besides, nearly all of the participants of the study stated that these activities should integrate into one's lifestyle, and that they would continue volunteering in non-governmental organization in the future. A great majority of the participants (34 participants) underscored several times the joy that resulted from better understanding problems of the people with disabilities and the elderly and being able to help them even in a limited fashion. According to T17,

"There is a meaningful relationship between the aforementioned course and the problem solving skills of the teacher candidates for the problems they encounter in society".

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Community Service Practices course is a considerably important activity for both personal and professional development of future teachers. Interestingly, similar results were obtained in the study conducted by Kaya (2013). However, problems have been identified as a result of this current study. In this study, we endeavored to find out the most significant problems and classified them under five major titles. On the basis of the findings solutions have been suggested to overcome these problems. One of the problems is that the institutions do not prefer hosting future teachers for various reasons. Frequent communication with the responsible person in the related institution or meeting him/her before referring future teachers to the institution may minimize the reluctance to engage.

Another problem is that these institutions do not sufficiently or effectively benefit from the competence of the volunteering future teachers. In order to solve this problem, first a needs analysis should be conducted, and the qualifications of the related future teacher should be considered with a view to match their competence to the job. We are of the opinion that, in this manner, both the institution and the future teacher may work more

effectively. The problem of transportation was raised in connection with commuting to certain institutions. In order to solve this problem, when matching with future teacher, location of the institution should be taken into account. Institutions with easier transportation should be considered first.

It is acknowledged that future teachers while visiting institutions for Community Service Practices, they also have other subjects to content with. For this reason, setting suitable visiting hours was raised as a problem. In order to overcome this problem, it might be possible to design a weekly schedule for the 3rd year students in conjunction with the institutions to suit both parties. In certain institutions, the insufficiency devices resulted in technical problems. For example, since audiobooks are recorded in the Library for the Visually-Impaired, technical equipment is needed. For this reason, before referring future teachers to such institutions, it is necessary to establish available equipment that will match the number of referrals. In this manner, excessive number of future teachers could be diverted to other institutions. Provided that these problems are taken into consideration and solved accordingly, Community Service Practices course is thought to be more beneficial for future teachers.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we have endeavored to identify the problems that future teachers enrolled in the French Language Teaching Section of the Department of Foreign Language Teaching of Atatürk Faculty of Education at Marmara University encounter in the institutions that they visit within the scope of the Community Service Practices course, and to offer solutions to these problems. Future studies conducted with a higher number of participants and with a wider scope would contribute significantly to the solution of these problems in a more illuminating manner. In conclusion, it is thought that, despite the present problems, Community Service Practices course is considered important in terms of the personal and professional development for future teachers and that such educational activities should be supported.

Conflict of Interests

The author have not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

Eyler J (2000). What do we most need to know about the impact of service-learning on student learning? Michigan J. Commun. Service Learn. [Special Issue], pp.11-17.

Kaya B (2013). Social Studies Teacher Candidates' Views on the Community Service Practices Course. Isman A, Sexton C, Franklin T, Eskicumali A, (Eds.). Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci. 106: 2419-2425.

Kiely R (2005). A Transformative Learning Model for Service-Learning: A Longitudinal Case Study. Michigan J. Commun. Service Learn. 12(1):5-22.

Marmara University Istanbul (2013). Directive for Community Service Practices Course. http://dosya.marmara.edu.tr/www/mevzuat/yeni/topluma_hizmet_uygulamalar_dersi_yonergesi_v03.pdf Retrieved on 20 November 2013.

McCarthy A, Tucke M (1999). Student Attitudes Toward Service-Learning: Implications for Implementation. J. Manage. Educ. 23:554-573.

Ohn JD, Wade R (2009). Community Service-Learning as a Group Inquiry Project: Elementary and Middle School CiciConnections Teacher's Practices of Integrating Historical Inquiry in Community Service-Learning. Soc. Stud. pp.200-211.

Patton MQ (2002). Qualitative research and evaluation methods. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage.

Steinke P, Buresh S (2002). Cognitive outcomes in service-learning: Reviewing the past and glimpsing the future. Michigan J. Commun. Service Learn. 8(2):5-14.

Strauss AL, Corbin J (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park. CA: Sage.

Waldstein F, Reiher T (2001). Service-Learning and Students' Personal and Civic Development. J. Exp. Educ. 24:7-13.

YÖK (2007). Öğretmen yetiştirme ve Eğitim Fakulteleri (1982-2007) (Öğretmenin universitede yetiştirilmesinin değerlendirilmesi). Ankara: Yuksekoğretim Kurulu.