

0345

The Views of Prospective Teachers about Their Study Skills and Habits

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Background

Study habits or methods is a topic that is always a current issue and thus attract attention. One of the most important reasons for this is that a relationship is considered to exist between individuals' study habits and their academic achievement. The basic study skills can be described in the following way: "Basic study skills are simple, commonly used strategies, such as highlighting and taking notes. The effectiveness of study strategies depends on the thought involved in making decisions about what is important enough to highlight, include in notes, or use in organizing ideas (Moreland, Dansereau, & Chmielewski, 1977; J.Wiley & Voss, 1999; cited in Eggen & Kauchak, 2001, p.339)". As can be seen, students' study habits and attitudes have a broad range and many factors such as attitudes towards teachers, study methods, views towards homework, expectations from education, library use styles, arranging the study environment, relationships with parents and friends can be counted within this broad range. Students are generally advised to develop themselves about their study habits.

Research Questions

This study aims to determine prospective teachers' study methods and habits and their perceptions of this topic. The following questions were also examined: (1) What are prospective' views about study methods and habits? (2) Do prospective teachers' study methods and habits differ according to the gender variable? (3) Do prospective teachers' methods and habits differ according to the field of study that they pursue?

Methods

In this descriptive study, the researcher developed a questionnaire based on the related literature. The questionnaire was composed of several sections and administered to a total of 336 prospective teachers enrolled in different departments in the faculty of education in Turkey as a pilot study. The data obtained was subjected to reliability analysis (corrected-item total correlation). With the final arrangements, the 44 items on study methods in the beginning decreased to 25 items. The calculation for 25 items yielded a very high reliability coefficient ($\text{Alpha} = .8336$). The final version of the questionnaire was applied to 226 prospective teachers. 138 (61.1%) of the participants were female and 88 (38.9%) were male. Three independent questions were also included in the questionnaire. Statistical procedure was applied for quantitative data whereas content analysis was performed for qualitative data.

Frame

Related literature shows that more than one factor constitutes students' study skills and these skills shape individuals' study habits. Zimmerman (1998; cited in Gettinger and Seibert, 2002) indicates that although students are expected to apply study skills while completing homework or preparing for tests, teachers typically devote little time to providing explicit instruction in such skills. Steveler, Hoeglund and Stein (2003) investigated study strategies of academically successful students ($n=285$). The study showed that there is a relationship between certain study strategies and academic success is a compelling argument for students to hone their study skills. Similarly, Niemi (2002) investigated study habits of Nigerian university students ($n=441$) and found that students devoted a reasonable length of time into reading; some students used memorization technique. Bay, Tuğluk and Gençdoğan (2004) investigated study skills of university students ($n=773$). According to the results, no difference was found on the gender variable regarding possession of study skills among students. Although significant favourable differences were found on the class variable among senior students,

these differences were also found significant among students at different departments. Sansgiry, Bhosle and Sail (2006) conducted research to examine factors such as academic competence, test competence, time management, strategic studying, and test anxiety, and to identify whether these factors could distinguish differences among students, based on academic performance and enrollment in the experiential program. The researchers mainly found that academic performance was significantly associated with factors such as academic competence and test competence.

As can be seen from studies, this issue becomes more important to research into the quality of life at faculties for students' academic and personal development. In this respect, this study can be considered to have important contributions to developing concrete suggestions and collecting students' opinions, while it aims to generate a general idea about prospective teachers' study method and habits.

Research findings

The results of the study can be summarized as follows: (1) prospective teachers study most to achieve success. This result suggests that they focus on a success-oriented study method. (2) The study method that prospective teachers employ the least is individual study. This result shows that they prefer group study and other study methods to individual study. (3) Prospective teachers view their study methods to be at an "effective" level in general. This result shows that they are content with their own study methods. (4) A statistically significant difference was found between genders regarding the views towards study methods [$t_{(219)} = 6.32, p < 0.05$]. (5) A significant difference was found between their fields of study regarding their views towards study methods [$t_{(219)} = 2.66, p < 0.05$].

Although the generalizability of the results of this study is limited because it was conducted in one university with a limited number of participants, it is thought that it can shed light on the topic. In order to obtain more generalizable results, new research with a larger universe and sample can be conducted. Robinson et al. (1994) note that "We all need to be more sensitive to the nature of the students' behaviors and how that impacts on their academic achievement." In this respect, new developments on this topic could be facilitated considering the views of prospective teachers about study methods and habits. In the university education, effort is made towards training teachers to equip them with a rich foundation in knowledge and background for the teaching profession. The results of this study may contribute to related literature regarding forming an idea about prospective teachers' study methods and strategies.