

PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' REASONS FOR CHOOSING TEACHING AS A PROFESSION¹

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Abstract

The study seeks to explore prospective teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a profession. A total of 439 students studying in Gazi University Gazi Faculty of Education, Department of Elementary Education in 2010-2011 academic year participated in the study. Results revealed that prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching as a profession varied significantly depending on their having a teacher relative, the department they are studying in, and department's order of preference in University Entrance Exam. Research findings gave rise to the need for further research to examine the reasons of prospective teachers for choosing teaching as a profession.

Key Words: *Prospective teachers, Teaching profession, Elementary education, Preference*

ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ BİR MESLEK OLARAK SEÇME NEDENLERİ

Özet

Bu araştırmanın amacı öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenliği bir meslek olarak seçme nedenlerini incelemektir. Araştırmaya 2010-2011 akademik yılında Gazi Üniversitesi Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi İlköğretim Bölümünde öğrenim gören toplam 439 öğrenci katılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenliği bir meslek olarak seçme nedenlerinin öğretmen bir akrabası bulunma, öğrenim gördükleri bölüm ve öğrenim gördükleri bölümü üniversite giriş sınavında tercih sırası değişkenlerine göre anlamlı bir biçimde farklılaştığını göstermektedir. Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular, öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleğini seçme nedenlerine ilişkin daha fazla araştırma bulgusuna ihtiyaç olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Aday öğretmen, Öğretmenlik mesleği, İlköğretim, Tercih*

1. This study was presented orally at 20th National Congress of Educational Sciences held at Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, on September, 2011.

1. Introduction

Considering rapid change in the world, the existence of societies and countries bases heavily on with raising qualified individuals (Güleçen, Cüro, & Semerci, 2008). Countries' level of prosperity and creation of more qualified work force has generally been accepted to be directly associated with the prosperity and happiness of societies, their share in the civilization, and the importance and priority they give to education (Çevik & Yiğit, 2009). However, one of leading problems that today's societies face is education. Problems about teachers preserve their priority among main education problems. Teacher is one of the most important actors for teaching activities to achieve desired purposes (Özbek, 2007). Therefore, raising qualified teachers becomes a high priority for education systems. However, teachers must have a number of qualifications including guiding students (Luke, Luke, & Mayer, 2000) and planning, applying, and evaluating best teaching practices in the classroom.

Teaching profession has always been accepted as an important value in societies (Karamustafaoğlu & Özmen, 2004). Although it was accepted as a sacred profession in history, the social status of teaching profession has changed in time (Erden, 1998). Education faculties must hold the vital position in raising teachers of high quality (Günçer, 2002). Since 1994 faculties of education in Turkey have been in a reconstruction period and new departments have been opened for the purpose of raising qualified teachers. In providing high level qualities for prospective teachers raised by education faculties, examining the reasons for choosing teaching as a profession is considered to be of great importance (Tataroğlu, Özgen, & Alkan, 2011). The abilities and skills of a person emerge in primary education period. The youngsters reaching the age of university may make a random choice under the pressure of their families and environment as they haven't well been directed by educators. They are also likely to be forced to have undergraduate education not in the field they are skilled and interested. In this regard, teaching is not a profession that anyone can do instead a profession of healthy personality and character. It is nothing but underestimating teaching profession to think that those who don't perceive themselves as teachers and those who think that teaching is not a suitable profession for themselves will be good teachers (Övet, 2006).

Inquiring prospective teachers' perceptions on choosing teaching profession is accepted to be one of the important criteria in designing teaching activities. Teaching requires professionalism. Furthermore, teaching profession is closely related to personal opinions and behaviors of those who are going to perform it (Özbek, Kahyaoğlu, & Özgen, 2007). It is therefore crucial to examine prospective teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a profession. Students' attitudes towards teaching profession may be an indicator of how the teaching profession is perceived by the prospective teachers. An avenue of research to be conducted on identifying prospective teachers' attitudes towards choosing teaching profession may contribute to the efforts and policies related to raising the number of qualified teachers (Üstün, Erkan,

& Akman, 2004). A detailed literature review indicates that the number of studies focusing on prospective teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a profession seems limited (Aydın, 2011; Boz & Boz, 2008; Bozdoğan, Aydın, & Yıldırım, 2007; Çapri & Çelikkaleli, 2008; Çermik, Doğan, & Şahin, 2010; Çevik & Yiğit, 2009; Erdem & Şimşek, 2000; Eskicumalı, 2002; Eş, 2010; Gürbüz & Sülün, 2004; Gürbüztürk & Genç, 2004; Hacıömeroğlu & Şahin Taşkın, 2010; Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 1997).

In the present study, we seek to understand prospective teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a profession. Findings may well contribute to an understanding of the reasons for preference of teaching as a profession. Analyses from this study can also reveal how prospective teachers' perceptions on the preference of teaching profession differ according to different variables such as gender, having a teacher relative, the department in which they are studying, family monthly income level, high school that prospective teachers graduated from and departments' order of preference in University Entrance Exam.

2. Method

Participants

A total of 439 prospective teachers of 4th grade studying in Gazi University Gazi Faculty of Education, Department of Elementary Education, Elementary Social Sciences Education, Elementary Science Education, Elementary Mathematics Education, and Primary School Education participated in the study. 302 (68.8%) of the participants are male and 137 (31.2%) of them are female. 147 (33.5%) prospective teachers study in Primary School Education, 114 (26%) of them study in Elementary Social Sciences, 90 (20%) of them study in Elementary Science Education and 88 (20%) of them study in Elementary Mathematics Education.

Instrumentation

“*Reasons for Choosing Teaching as a Profession Questionnaire*” developed by Övet (2006) was used to determine the reasons for choosing teaching as a profession. The scale is comprised of 31 items answered on a rating scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). According to expert opinions, the internal reliability coefficient decided to be used in the questionnaire was found to be .86.

Data Analysis

Research data was analyzed by using SPSS 17.0 package program. Arithmetic mean, frequency and percentages of the range of prospective teachers' perceptions are presented in Table 1. Independent sample t-test was performed to test whether prospective teachers' perceptions differ significantly according to gender and having a teacher relative. One-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether prospective

teachers' perceptions differ significantly according to family monthly income level, high school that prospective teachers graduated, departments in which they study and department's order of preference in University Entrance Exam. Considering the homogeneity of variances, LSD and Tamhane's T2 tests were also performed to determine in the favor of which variables significant differences occur.

3. Findings

The mean, frequencies, and percentages of prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession are given in Table 1. We present only 11 most-frequently-rated items in Table 1.

Table 1. The distribution of prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing the teaching as a profession

	The Expressions in the Scale f	Totally Agree		Agree		Not Decided		Disagree		Totally Disagree		\bar{x}
		%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	
<i>I have chosen it,</i>												
1	Because it is the most appropriate job for me.	91	20.7	139	31.7	84	19.1	76	17.3	49	11.2	3.33
2	Because I believe it will make me happy.	81	18.5	150	34.2	71	16.2	96	21.9	41	9.3	3.30
3	Just to be able to get a higher education	50	11.4	59	13.4	49	11.2	153	34.9	128	29.2	2.43
4	Willingly and intentionally	115	26.2	139	31.7	69	15.7	68	15.5	48	10.9	3.46
5	To contribute to development and welfare of the society.	103	23.5	162	36.9	79	18.0	62	14.1	33	7.5	3.54
6	Because I believe that it is a job that can be done by anybody.	37	8.4	86	19.6	82	18.7	110	25.1	124	28.2	2.54
7	Coincidentally	53	12.1	79	18.0	44	10.0	111	25.3	152	34.9	2.47
8	Because I believe that I can contribute to education.	94	21.4	174	39.6	72	16.4	56	12.8	43	9.8	3.50
9	Not for being unemployed	40	9.1	104	23.7	60	13.7	115	26.2	120	27.3	2.61

	The Expressions in the Scale f	Totally Agree		Agree		Not Decided		Disagree		Totally Disagree		\bar{x}
		%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	
<i>I have chosen it,</i>												
10	Because I believe that it is a sacred profession.	97	22.1	160	36.4	86	19.6	54	12.3	42	9.6	3.49
11	Because I think that I have the requirements of this occupation.	101	23.0	162	36.9	89	20.3	56	12.8	31	7.1	3.56

As can be seen from Table 1, 39.6% of prospective teachers “agreed” the item “I chose it because I believe that I can contribute to education”, 36.9% of them “agreed” the item “I chose it to contribute to development and welfare of the society”, 36.9% of them “agreed” the item “I chose it, because I think that I have the requirements of this occupation”, 36.4% of them “agreed” the item “I chose it, because I believe that it is a divine occupation”, 31.7% of them “agreed” the item “I chose it willingly and intentionally”, 34.2% of them “agreed” the item “I chose it because I believe it will make me happy” and 31.7% of them “agreed” the item “I chose it because it is the most appropriate job for me. 34.9% of prospective teachers stated that they “disagreed” the item “I chose it just to be able to get a higher education”, 25.3% of them “disagreed” the item “I chose it coincidentally”, 25.1% of them “disagreed” the item “I chose it not to be unemployed” and 53% of them “disagreed” the item “I chose it because I believe that it is a job that can be done by anybody”. According to these results, it is possible to say that the majority of the prospective teachers chose the teaching profession intentionally. Table 2 illustrates the comparison of prospective teachers’ perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to gender variable.

Table 2. The comparison of prospective teachers’ perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching as a profession according to “gender” variable

Gender	N	\bar{x}	S	sd	t	p
Female	302	94.88	17.95	437	-.829	.41
Male	137	93.36	17.42			

As can be seen from Table 2, there was no significant difference between prospective teachers’ perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to “gender” variable [$t(437) = -.829, p > .05$]. In other words, prospective teachers’ perceptions on choosing teaching profession didn’t vary significantly according to gender variable. Table 3 presents findings about the comparison of the perceptions of prospective teachers on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to “having a teacher relative” variable.

Table 3. The comparison of prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to "having a teacher relative" variable

<i>Teacher Relative</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{x}	<i>S</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Yes	300	97.07	16.39	437	4.45	.00
No	139	88.65	19.30			

Table 3 indicates that there was a statistically significant difference in favor of those with teacher relatives [$t(437) = 4.45, p < .05$]. In other words, prospective teachers' perceptions on choosing teaching as a profession varied significantly according to having a teacher relative variable. Table 4 indicates ANOVA results of the perceptions of prospective teachers on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to "department in which they are studying" variable.

Table 4. The ANOVA results of prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to "department in which they are studying" variable

<i>Source of Variance</i>	<i>KT</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>KO</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Significant Difference</i>
Between groups	3466.731	3	1155.577	3.722	.01	Social Sciences- Science
Within group	135062.904	435	310.489			Mathematics-Science
Total	138529.636	438				

As can be seen from Table 4, there was a significant difference between prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching as a profession and "department in which prospective teachers study" variable. Tamhane's T2 test was performed to detect between which departments the significant differences among teachers' total points occur. It was clear that prospective teachers from Elementary Social Sciences Education and Elementary Mathematics Education had more positive attitudes towards teaching profession than prospective teachers from Elementary Science Education. Table 5 shows ANOVA results of the perceptions of prospective teachers on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to "family monthly income level" variable.

Table 5. The ANOVA results of prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to "family monthly income level" variable

<i>Source of Variance</i>	<i>KT</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>KO</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between groups	2248.155	3	749.385	2.392	.07
Within group	136281.480	435	313.291		
Total	138529.636	438			

Table 5 mirrors that there was no significant difference between prospective teach-

hers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession and "family monthly income level" variable [$F(3, 435) = 2.392, p > .05$]. Table 6 mirrors ANOVA results of the perceptions of prospective teachers on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to "high schools that prospective teachers graduated from" variable.

Table 6. The ANOVA results of prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to "high schools that prospective teachers graduated from" variable

Source of Variance	KT	sd	KO	F	p
Between groups	1716.093	3	572.03	1.819	.14
Within group	136813.54	435	314.51		
Total	138529.64	438			

As can be seen from Table 6, there was no significant difference between prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession and "high schools that prospective teachers graduated from" variable [$F(3, 435) = 1.819, p > .05$]. Table 7 indicates ANOVA results of the perceptions of prospective teachers on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to "department's order of preference in the University Entrance Exam" variable.

Table 7. The ANOVA results of prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession according to "department's order of preference in the University Entrance Exam" variable

Source of Variance	KT	sd	KO	F	p	Significant Difference
Between groups	2752.888	2	1376.444	4.420	.01	Rank 1-8.- Rank 9-16 Rank 1-8.- Rank 17-24
Within group	135776.748	436	311.415			
Total	138529.636	438				

According to Table 7, it is clearly seen that there was significant difference between prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession and "department's order of preference in the University Entrance Exam" variable [$F(2, 436) = 4.420, p < .05$]. According to LSD test results, it seems clear that prospective teachers who preferred teaching as a profession between 1-8. order in the University Entrance Exam ($\bar{x} = 95.95$) had more positive attitudes than those between 9-16. ($\bar{x} = 91.41$), and those between 17-24. preference orders ($\bar{x} = 88.43$).

4. Results and Discussion

This study supports the notion that most of the participants chose teaching profession intentionally and willingly. This finding is parallel to some other research

findings (Aydın, 2011; Boz & Boz, 2008; Bozdoğan et al., 2007; Tataroğlu et al., 2011). Another important finding from this study is that over half of the students perceive teaching profession as the most appropriate profession for them. In addition, approximately half of the participants oppose that teaching profession could be done by anybody. It may well be referred from this finding that students think that being a teacher requires some qualifications. This finding is consistent with another finding of the study that more of 60% of participants agree that they have chosen teaching as a profession just because they have the necessary requirements. Another interesting finding from the study is that one of the most important reasons for prospective teachers for choosing teaching as a profession is to be able to contribute to development and welfare of the society. This finding denotes that participants are sensitive to social development and well-being. It is also clear from study findings that prospective teachers have various reasons for choosing teaching as a profession. Other studies conducted to determine the reasons for prospective students for choosing teaching as a profession found out that job guarantee (Gürbüz & Sülün, 2004), love for kids, job security, length of vacation time (Eskicumalı, 2002), university exam result, family and environmental impact (Ubuz & Sarı, 2008) were among reasons for choosing teaching as a profession.

This research also concentrates on differences between prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession and their gender. Results indicated that gender is not an effective variable in prospective teachers' reasons for choosing teaching profession. In other words, the fact that prospective teachers are from different genders do not make any changes in their attitudes towards teaching profession. This finding is in line with the findings of many other researches (Aydın, 2011; Eş, 2010; Gürbüztürk & Genç, 2004; Hacıömeroğlu & Şahin Taşkın, 2010) while some other research have different findings (Akpınar et al., 2006; Kaya & Büyükkasap, 2005; Oral, 2004; Sayın, 2005). In another study, it was also found out that female prospective teachers chose teaching profession more intentionally and intentionally than male prospective teachers (Övet, 2006). Findings of another study indicated that female students' answers for the question "If you had another chance would you choose teaching profession again" were mostly "Yes", while the rate of male students' positive answers were low (Çermik et al., 2010). In our opinion, one of the potential reasons for why gender doesn't play an important role in choosing teaching profession may be that gender is not a discriminating factor in teaching profession.

Another purpose of this study is to examine whether prospective teachers' perceptions on teaching profession differ significantly according to having a teacher relative variable. Research findings indicate that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of prospective teachers in favor of those who have teacher relatives. This finding refers that prospective teachers with teacher relatives have more positive attitudes towards teaching profession than those without teacher relative. This finding is supported by some other research findings (Boz & Boz, 2008; Çevik & Yiğit, 2009).

This study also investigates whether prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession differ significantly according to the department they are studying in. Results demonstrate that prospective teachers who are studying in Elementary Social Sciences and Elementary Mathematics have more positive attitudes towards choosing teaching profession than those in Elementary Science Education. This finding is parallel to several research findings (Bodur, 2006), however, it is on the contrary to the findings of some other research (Çapri & Çelikkaleli, 2008; Hacıömeroğlu & Şahin Taşkın, 2010; Oral, 2004; Övet, 2006).

One of the purposes of this study is to find out whether prospective teachers' perceptions on reasons for choosing teaching profession alter significantly according to their families' monthly income variable. Research findings mirror that there is no significant difference among the perceptions of prospective teachers according to their families' monthly income. This means that prospective teachers' families' income level doesn't affect their perceptions on choosing teaching profession. It can be referred from this finding that students from different economical backgrounds study in education faculties. A number of research findings (Aydın, 2011; Çermik et al., 2010; Güleçen et al., 2008; Övet, 2006; Özbek et al., 2007) are similar to this study. However, other research (Çevik & Yiğit, 2009; Hacıömeroğlu & Şahin Taşkın, 2010) found that prospective teachers' perceptions on choosing teaching profession differ significantly according to family monthly income variable. These complex findings calls for more research on discovering reasons for prospective teachers choose teaching as a profession.

This research also examines whether high schools that prospective teachers' graduated change their perceptions on choosing teaching as a profession. Findings demonstrate that prospective teachers' perceptions on choosing teaching as a profession do not differ significantly according to this variable. This finding is parallel to some research findings (Övet, 2006). This finding is also interesting in that Anatolian Teacher High Schools' primary aim is to prepare students for teaching profession. It has already been known that these schools' educational programs include a number of lessons and instructional activities related to teaching profession. Therefore, students from these schools are thought to be more prone to teaching profession. However, this is not supported by research findings of this study. One reason for why prospective teachers' perceptions on choosing teaching as a profession do not differ according to high schools that they graduated may be that these students have no other choice, but being a teacher. In a study conducted (Yong, 1995), it was put forward that 15% of prospective teachers had chosen teaching profession as a result of the fact they had been obliged to and that they hadn't had any other choices but being a teacher.

The study also aims to determine whether prospective teachers' perceptions on choosing teaching profession differ significantly according to department's preference order in the University Entrance Exam variable. Results indicate that there is a significant difference in favor of those who chose teaching profession in the 1-8th preference

order compared to those who chose it in their 9-14th or 15-24th preference orders. In the light of this finding, it can be claimed that those who chose teaching profession in their initial preferences in university entrance exam have more positive attitudes towards teaching profession. While this finding is in line with the findings of some research (Akpınar et al., 2006; Oral, 2004), it is inconsistent with the findings of some other research (Çevik & Yiğit, 2009; Karamustafaoğlu & Özmen, 2004). On the other hand, in another research (Üstün et al., 2004), no statistically significant difference was found between preference ranks. This result doesn't support the research findings. The reason for prospective teachers who choose teaching profession in initial preferences in the University Entrance Exam have more positive attitudes towards teaching profession may stem from their eagerness and their being satisfied with studying in a department they want more. In other words, it is more possible for these students to be happier with studying in a department in education faculty and this may affect their attitudes towards teaching profession positively. Moreover, these students are expected to become more motivated and prepared for teaching profession.

5. Suggestions

First of all, necessary importance should be given to vocational guidance in secondary schools and the importance of choosing a profession and information about some professions should be explained to the students by school administration and the people responsible for guidance. As a second, the importance of teaching profession for the society should be pointed out by teacher training institutions and authentic experiences with which the prospective teachers can have the pleasure of being teacher should be made possible for them. Moreover, factors related to students' choosing teaching as a profession should be examined carefully and thoroughly. Population of this study is limited to Gazi University Gazi Faculty of Education. Other studies may be carried out in different universities and different departments such as English Language Teaching, History Teaching, or Philosophy Teaching.

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