



Opinions and Expectations of Classroom Teacher Candidates about the Teaching Profession

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand classroom teacher candidates' teaching-related opinions and expectations, reasons to prefer teaching and wishes in life. The study is based on phenomenological method as one of qualitative research approaches. The study sample was formed through purposive and homogeneous sampling. 42 senior students (21 females-21 males) who studied classroom teaching at Mugla Sıtkı Kocman University during the academic year of 2015-2016 were asked for their opinions. The data was collected through participant biographies, semi-structured 3-item interview forms and 4-question wish lists and analyzed through content and descriptive analysis. Findings were evaluated in two themes as "teacher candidates' opinions on teaching" and "future expectations". The study results reveal that the majority of the candidates emphasize mostly disadvantages of being a teacher and criticize that teachers are assigned based on an exam, teaching has a low status, working conditions are unfair, and undergraduate education is theoretical. Regarding these findings, it is recommended that precautions to raise the status of teaching profession should be taken, working conditions of teachers should be enhanced, exams for selection and assignment should be reviewed, and undergraduate education should be both theoretical and applied.

Keywords: classroom teaching, teacher candidate, teaching profession, expectation

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Introduction

To meet the teacher requirement at every level in Turkey, young people deciding on teaching need to get a bachelor's degree from education faculties of universities. The Ministry of National Education [MoNE/MEB] is considered as the employer of teacher candidates who want to be public officials. Starting from 1980s, as a result of a new administrative approach adopted in Turkey, flexible employment model has been applied for teacher employment in public as in private sector. The Ministry employs teachers as “tenured, contracted, paid”, and it leads faculty of education graduates, whose number is increasing day by day, to be jobless, causes stress and deranges supply-demand equilibrium (Cinkir & Kurum, 2017; Soydan, 2012).

Teacher candidates to be employed by the Ministry first need to complete 4-year undergraduate study successfully and score adequately in Public Personnel Selection Examination [PPSE/KPSS]. In the probationary period, they attend vocational adjustment programs organized by the Ministry in provinces where they are appointed (MEB, 2013). According to the regulations arranging procedures and principles for the training process of those appointed as prospective teachers to public educational institutions, these teachers are subjected to training in schools where they work for the first six months of their probationary period. This period consists of “in-class, in-school and out-of-school activities together with in-service training seminars” under the responsibility of school principal and advisory teacher (MEB, 2016a). Candidates make some practices under the guidance of school administrators and advisors during this period, and in this process, provincial and district directorates of national education have various duties and responsibilities (MEB, 2016b). To take the written and oral exams organized by the Ministry, prospective teachers are expected to actually work for at least one year, and to succeed in performance evaluation exams (MEB, 2015). The first performance evaluation exam is implemented by the school administration and advisory teacher responsible for the candidate whereas the second and third exams are held in the school the candidate is appointed in (MEB, 2016a).

The purpose of the training program implemented by MEB in the probationary period is to minimize the difficulties that prospective teachers may face during the first years of profession and to increase their knowledge and skills regarding work readiness. Through this program, it is attempted to bring candidates the knowledge and skills to accommodate themselves to the profession both at school or classroom level and out of school (MEB,

2016b). Probationary period training programs have positive impacts on adaptation process of teachers who can gain new professional experiences in this process (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Tuncbilek & Tunay, 2017).

It is necessary for prospective teachers to be trained well both before service and during the probationary period so that they feel ready for the job (Beare, Marshall, Torgerson, Tracz, Chiero, 2012; Brown, Lee & Collins, 2015). Accordingly, teacher candidates need to be taught how to convey knowledge to students while they are given teaching-related knowledge and skills during their undergraduate study. It is also essential that young teachers should receive constant guidance for a long time, not only limited to probationary period, to support their adaptation process after they are appointed. They should be informed about how to adjust to the conditions of the region (school, neighborhood, students, parents etc.) and supported by MEB to solve the problems they encounter. It is because physical and social structure (socio-economic status of families, cultural structure, social relations etc.), school environment and facilities (parents, students, physical and other resources provided etc.) in each region are different.

In Turkey, new teachers are generally assigned in rural areas with a great need for teachers. When these fresh graduates are sent to places that they have no knowledge of, they can face various problems depending on the region while trying to adjust to the new cultural environment and the profession (Toker-Gokce, 2013). When prospective teachers are appointed to schools in rural areas (village, town, neighborhood etc.) and encounter several problems in the unfamiliar environment, adaptation to the living conditions may decrease the appeal of teaching. In fact, researchers discussing this issue point out, in their studies, that prospective teachers cannot overcome the problems they face during the first years of profession and have compliance issues regarding the profession, school and environment because they are inexperienced and come from different social environments (Aksoy, 2008; Basar & Dogan, 2015; Duran, Sezgin & Coban, 2011; Gomleksiz, Kan, Bicer & Yetkiner, 2010; Korkmaz, Saban & Akbasli, 2004; Sari & Altun, 2015; Taskaya, Turhan & Yetkin 2015; Yesilyurt & Karakus, 2011).

In their studies with different prospective branch teachers assigned in villages and cities, Yesilyurt & Karakus (2011) identified that those who received their undergraduate study in city centers and started working in villages, towns or multigrade classes etc. had trouble in adapting to the environment and conveying knowledge. The researchers also determined that, due to their lack of experience, these teachers had problems mostly in

communicating with students and managing classroom effectively, and complained about the difficulties of their school's physical conditions.

Adaptation process for teaching may become more compelling for classroom teachers depending on socio-economic structure of the region, school facilities and environment. Living conditions in rural areas and difficulties encountered in the education process sometimes make it hard for classroom teachers to adjust to their first school and its environment. In this regard, Korkmaz et al. (2004) point out the difficulties that the majority of newly appointed classroom teachers have in either adapting to teaching or practicing the profession successfully. Moreover, Aksoy (2008) indicates that, as different from branch teachers, classroom teachers assigned in schools with multigrade classes have to overcome various problems both at school and in its environment. Taskaya et al. (2015) state that classroom teachers working in rural areas face many more problems considering environment (transport, safety, water, sanity, inadequacy of health care), education (students and parents' indifference to education, orientation problem, teachers' lack of experience, absence of students, reluctance of teachers), personal rights (teacher circulation-appointment, warming, sheltering), and physical conditions and facilities of schools (heating, lack of equipment and training material, inadequacy of classrooms, absence or lack of toilets etc.).

In their study on adaptation and socializing process of prospective classroom teachers, Duran et al. (2011) determined that these teachers had environment-related adaptation problems such as sheltering and being deprived of the city life they were used to, and then, being far from technology and technological developments, social activities, family and friends, failing to communicate with locals and nourishment. As for adaptation to institutional culture and socialization, the problems were mostly related to basic and preliminary training process, communication with parents and perceiving institutional specialties. Moreover, Sari and Altun (2015) asserted that novice classroom teachers did not know how to increase student motivation.

These results are important to understand what kind of problems newly appointed branch or classroom teachers encounter. In this matter, Basar and Dogan (2015) and Gomleksiz et al. (2010) underline that prospective teachers who have problems in their first year and fail to solve them can lose their motivation and faith in the profession. Considering that problems in teachers' first years may determine whether they will stay in the profession or not (Karge, 1993; Quaglia, 1989), it can be stated that teachers failing to handle the

present problems will not perform teaching voluntarily, which may cause young people to have concerns about choosing teaching as a profession.

In order for young people to choose teaching, arrangements to make teaching more appealing can contribute to solutions. While deciding on this, it may be helpful to consider how teacher candidates perceive teaching and what they expect from the profession and future. Improvements to be made can positively affect productivity, motivation and attitude of young people who have chosen or will choose teaching as a profession. From this viewpoint, in this study, it was intended to investigate teaching-related opinions and expectations of senior classroom teaching students to make teaching a more desirable profession for a powerful career and to improve its standards.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to understand the teaching-related opinions and expectations of teacher candidates who are senior students in classroom teaching, their reasons to prefer teaching profession and what they want from life within the bounds of possibility. Depending on this purpose, answers to the following problems were sought:

1. What do teacher candidates think about the profession of teaching in Turkey?
2. What are their reasons for choosing teaching as a profession?
3. What are their suggestions to make teaching more appealing for young people?
4. If they had the opportunity, what would they change in their lives?

Method

Since it is aimed to identify how individuals perceive phenomena regarding issues they experience, what they understand and how they experience it, the study design is based on phenomenological method as a qualitative research approach (Merriam, 2014; Punch, 2014).

Participants

In the study, homogeneous sampling, one of non-probability (purposive) sampling techniques, was utilized to select the participants. Since homogeneous sampling aims to focus on the subject to be researched, reduce diversity and simplify analysis, a small and homogeneous group is taken as the sample (Yildirim & Simsek, 2018). The study sample consisted of 42 senior students (21 females - 21 males) studying classroom teaching at

Mugla Sitki Kocman University during the academic year of 2015-2016. In Table 1 below, general information on the teacher candidates participated in the study is presented.

Table 1. *General Information on Teacher Candidates*

No-Gender	Age	Desired Department/Job
S1-M	23	Psychological Counseling and Guidance
S2-F	22	Fine Arts - Painting
S3-F	22	Classroom Teaching
S4-F	22	Acting
S5-F	22	Psychological Counseling and Guidance
S6-F	22	Classroom Teaching
S7-F	23	Classroom Teaching
S8-F	22	Social Services
S9-F	21	Classroom Teaching
S10-F	21	Nursing
S11-M	21	Classroom Teaching
S12-F	22	Classroom Teaching
S13-M	23	Classroom Teaching
S14-M	22	Classroom Teaching
S15-F	21	Classroom Teaching
S16-F	21	Classroom Teaching
S17-F	23	Classroom Teaching
S18-M	21	Classroom Teaching
S19-F	21	Classroom Teaching
S20-M	22	Classroom Teaching
S21-F	20	Architecture
S22-M	23	Psychological Counseling and Guidance
S23-F	21	Acting
S24-F	24	Classroom Teaching
S25-M	22	National Defense (Soldiering)
S26-F	23	Psychological Counseling and Guidance
S27-F	21	Classroom Teaching
S28-M	22	Classroom Teaching

S29-M	22	Classroom Teaching
S30-F	23	Psychological Counseling and Guidance
S31-M	22	Classroom Teaching
S32-F	22	Practice of Law
S33-M	23	Classroom Teaching
S34-M	22	Classroom Teaching
S35-M	23	Classroom Teaching
S36-M	22	Classroom Teaching
S37-M	23	Classroom Teaching
S38-M	22	Psychological Counseling and Guidance
S39-M	22	Classroom Teaching
S40-M	22	Classroom Teaching
S41-M	22	Classroom Teaching
S42-M	23	Classroom Teaching

As seen in Table 1, each participant remained anonymous and was given a sequence number from 1 to 42, next to the numbers, letters indicating participants' gender (M for males, F for females) and numbers for age were added. Based on this, for instance, 22-year female attending the study as the 6th wanted to study classroom teaching.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher. Before the interviews with the participants, items in the form were examined through literature review by two academicians who were experts in their field, and their intelligibility was tested. Teacher candidates who supported the study voluntarily were informed about the purpose of the study before starting the interviews.

Interviews with teacher candidates in the study sample were held twice as at the beginning and end of 2015-2016 academic year. Before each interview, it was emphasized to be important that teacher candidates should answer the questions in the form frankly.

In the first-round interviews, participants were requested to write their answers for the three open-ended questions in order to reveal their opinions on teaching and their reasons to prefer the profession. These questions were as follows:

1. Evaluating as a career choice, what do you think about teaching in Turkey?
(advantage-disadvantage)

2. Can you give some information on your reasons to prefer teaching as a profession?
3. What are the things you would like to be done in order to encourage the young to prefer teaching as a profession?

In the second-round interviews, teacher candidates were requested to tell their autobiographies and answer the questions in the Wish List. Autobiographies can contribute to understand how individuals experience and see their lives (Kakuru & Paradza, 2007). They can also help individuals give more meaning to their lives by making personal feelings and experiences more clear, and serve for others to see the individual's different features that have not been recognized yet (Atkinson, 2004). Furthermore, autobiographies can help people think more deeply about themselves and overcome the possible negativities in the future (Yang, 2008). They are used in educational studies to see how teachers evaluate their lives as an individual and their careers as a professional, and to understand their attitudes, behaviors and feelings towards professional practices (Goodson, 1997). Wish List, which is one of the non-test techniques on telling about oneself and composed of incomplete sentences and questions, is a preferred method to reveal unmet needs, undisclosed feelings, hopes and expectations of kids or young people (Karatas & Yavuzer, 2015).

In this study, autobiographies of teacher candidates were requested for investigation to understand how they evaluate their lives and what they expect from the future. Besides, to reveal situations (expectations, goals etc.) that candidates could not express or tell in their autobiographies, the researcher demanded to evaluate their responses to 4 open-ended questions in the Wish List to compare two kinds of data. These questions were as follows:

1. If you had a lot of money, what would you?
2. If you had every opportunity, what profession would you like to choose?
3. If a fairy told you to wish anything, what would your top three wishes be?
4. To be happy in the profession of teaching, what changes would you like to see?

Data Analysis

While analyzing the data in the study, which is based on qualitative research and investigates opinions of senior students in classroom teaching program, '*content and descriptive analysis methods*' were utilized (Yildirim & Simsek, 2018). In qualitative studies, descriptive analysis can be used to describe demographic features and different aspects of participants, to summarize one's autobiography and so on (Miles & Huberman,

1994). In content analysis, the data obtained are examined more thoroughly and concepts, categories and themes explaining these data are found. During the data evaluation, codes are created from the facts and events repeated often or emphasized by the participants, and from related data (codes), specific concepts (categories); from concepts, themes are reached. In this way, the content of participants' opinions is presented to the reader systematically (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The content of opinions expressed by teacher candidates in this study was merged under codes, basic concepts and themes through content analysis. While their perspectives were reflected through descriptive analysis, participant codes as "S1, S2, S3..." were used in each theme, and comments from their autobiographies were quoted.

In the data analysis, first, responses in the first and second interviews, then, the expressions of 42 participants in the interview forms were examined considering legibility. After expressions presenting participants' opinions during each interview were read carefully and analyzed on question basis, coding was performed under the themes revealed. To present opinions systematically; frequency and percentages of themes and codes were calculated and organized in tables.

Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure validity and reliability in this study, four criteria used in qualitative research were considered, these were "credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (internal reliability) and confirmability (external reliability)" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility (internal validity)

For internal validity in qualitative research, it is evaluated how effective the study is in revealing the fact studied and the process followed while reaching the research results. The researchers should dwell on whether they present realistically the facts and events they think to have understood in this process (Silverman, 2016). There are certain strategies to meet this criterion. To describe the situation in which the study is realized, the participants and themes in detail is one way to ensure credibility because detailed descriptions enable readers to interpret explanations and make it easy to decide on applicability of the findings in similar situations (Creswell, 2014). Another way is to give information about the characteristics of participants while reporting the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In order to increase credibility in this study, information on participant features was included, and a descriptive language was used while presenting participant opinions in themes.

Transferability (external validity)

Repeatability of research results in similar situations is related to the concept of validity. As, in qualitative studies, it is not possible to create an environment similar to the one in which the research data is obtained, it is necessary to look for transferability (Patton, 2014). To meet this criterion, data is described in detail, and direct quotations are included in qualitative research (Yildirim & Simsek, 2018). In this study, opinions of teacher candidates on the subject were quoted while presenting the data in detail to ensure transferability (external validity). As opinions of teacher candidates were presented descriptively in each theme, codes as ‘S1’ were used at the end of the quotations to indicate the participant.

Dependability (internal reliability)

For dependability (internal reliability) in qualitative research, all the findings obtained need to be presented to the reader without interpretation or generalization (Meriam, 2014). The data obtained should be interpreted by relating accuracy and consistency (Denzin & Giardina, 2011). In order to ensure dependability (internal reliability) in this study, participants’ responses about career choices, reasons and profession-related expectations at the beginning and end of the academic year were compared constantly, narrated accurately and consistently, and shared with the reader without being interpreted or generalized.

Confirmability (external reliability)

In order to ensure external reliability in qualitative studies, the results need to be reflected objectively so that participant opinions will be represented accurately (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, it is necessary to specify clearly the participants and data resources evaluated within the scope of the study, and to report research results transparently (Connelly, 2016). For this criterion to be met, as researchers make their position clear, they should introduce the social environment and process with the individuals from whom they obtain data, and define assumptions of the conceptual framework that they use in data analysis (Yildirim & Simsek, 2018). The researcher, in this study, was attentive to reflect opinions of teacher candidates transparently, and to adopt an objective attitude while presenting the results.

The role of the researcher

Researchers, in qualitative studies, should define their role during the research clearly and try to understand and present participants’ opinions and thoughts in a proper way to reflect them accurately (Punch, 2014). In this study, the researcher endeavored to develop an empathetic viewpoint during the interviews held at the beginning and end of the year and

exhibit an attitude-free from personal opinions and prejudices during both data collection and analysis processes so as to truly reflect opinions and expectations of the participants.

Findings

The findings of this study are evaluated in two themes as “teaching-related opinions and future expectations of teacher candidates” (Figure 1). In each theme, comments of teacher candidates are cited as evaluations are made under subcategories.

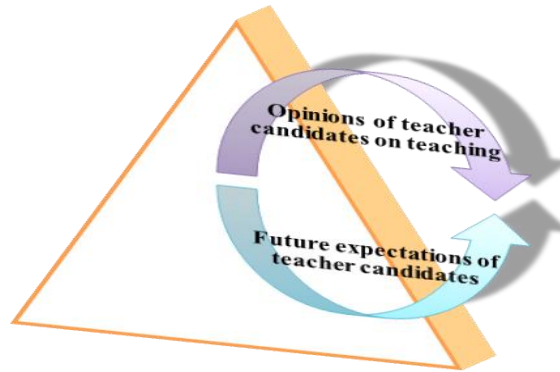


Figure 1. *Evaluation of teacher candidates' opinions*

Opinions on teaching profession

Opinions of teacher candidates on teaching were investigated under two subheadings as “opportunities that teaching offers” and “reasons to choose teaching as a profession”.

Opportunities that teaching offers (a)

Opportunities offered by teaching were evaluated in two sub-dimensions as “advantages and disadvantages of the profession” (Table 2).

Table 2. *Teaching-related opinions*

Teaching profession	Female	Frequency (f)	Male	Frequency (f)
Advantages		21		19
It offers the opportunity to see different places	-		S1	1
Professional satisfaction is high	S2, S6, S7, S8, S12, S16, S19, S21, S23	9	S13, S18, S28, S29, S33, S36, S37, S38, S41, S42	10

Working hours are convenient	S3, S4, S5, S7, S9, S15, S16, S19, S21, S23, S26, S27	12	S11, S14, S20, S28, S31, S34, S35, S40	8
Disadvantages		45		35
The number of appointments is low	S5, S8, S15, S16, S24, S26, S30	7	S1, S11, S31, S33, S41	5
The number of graduates is high	S3, S8	2	S1	1
The status of teaching as a profession is low	S2, S7, S10, S12, S17, S19, S25, S27, S32	9	S11, S13, S14, S28, S29, S31, S33, S35, S39	9
Teachers are appointed based on an exam	S3, S4, S9, S15, S17, S19, S21, S26, S27	9	S11, S28, S31, S38, S41	5
Financial benefits are inadequate	S4, S6, S10, S21, S24, S30	6	S11, S28, S33, S35, S40, S41, S42	7
Working conditions are unfair	S4, S8, S9, S10, S21, S30, S32	7	S11, S33, S41, S42	4
Teacher training programs are changed constantly	S5	1	-	-
Undergraduate education is theoretical	S5, S7, S8, S15	4	S14, S20, S25, S31	4

It is observed in Table 2 that teacher candidates emphasize the disadvantages (females, f=45; males, f=35) of teaching more than the advantages (females, f=21; males, f=19). It appears that they find teaching advantageous because “they think that professional satisfaction is high” (females, f=9; males, f=10), and “working hours are convenient” (females, f=12; males f=8); and only one male candidate (S1) indicates that “it offers the opportunity to see different places”.

Considering the opinions on disadvantages, teacher candidates make criticisms such as “teachers are appointed based on an exam” (females, $f=9$; males, $f=5$), “the number of appointments is low” (females, $f=7$; males, $f=5$), “the number of graduates is high” (females, $f=2$; males, $f=1$). In addition, they state reasons like “the status of teaching as a profession is low” (females, $f=9$; males, $f=9$), “financial benefits are inadequate” (females, $f=6$; males, $f=7$), “working conditions are unfair” (females, $f=7$; males, $f=4$), “undergraduate education is theoretical” (females, $f=4$; males, $f=4$), and only one female candidate (S5) complains that teacher training programs are changed constantly.

When evaluated in percentage (Figure 2), compared to males (advantage 47%, disadvantage 44%), female candidates expressed more opinions on both advantages (53%) and disadvantages (56%) of teaching. When genders are evaluated within themselves, it is revealed that males mostly mentioned advantages whereas females mentioned disadvantages. Relevant comments of some teacher candidates are presented below.

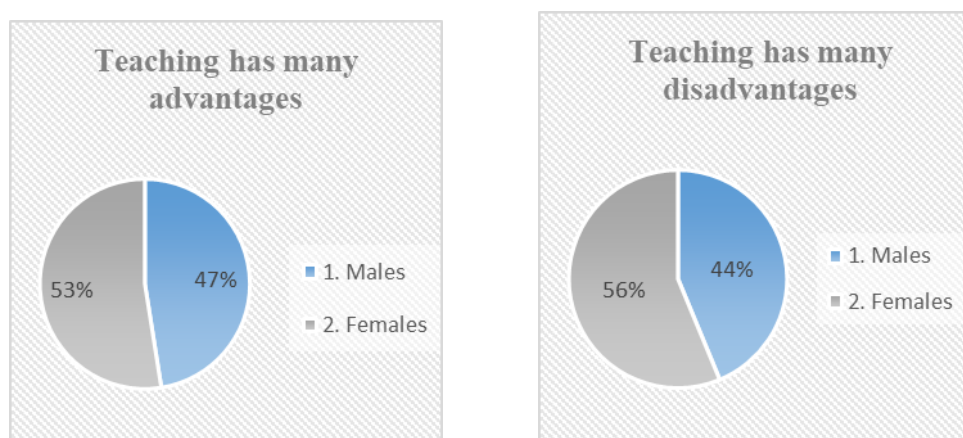


Figure 2. *Opinions on advantages and disadvantages of the profession*

“I used to love my class teacher very much. I think I can do this job as I also get on well with kids. I consider teaching positively in terms of social respectability. As long as you improve yourself, this profession ensures satisfaction. However, we are anxious about not being appointed after graduation as we think we won’t be able to perform the job. As we study for the exam, we cannot spend enough time with friends in our last year. They should equip and improve us, and guarantee employment upon graduation. They should also improve working conditions” S8

“Teaching is hard as it requires taking care of children all the time. Also, you may be appointed to village schools, and you have to work under difficult conditions. It does not

apply to other professions. However, it also has advantages like teaching kids something and preparing them for the future.” S9

“It is necessary that conditions of teachers should be improved, salaries should be increased and brought to the level of doctors’. In this way, candidates with the highest scores in the exam may choose teaching like medicine. If smart students prefer teaching, they can raise quality individuals.” S11

“In Turkey, teaching is mostly seen as comfortable, easy and having fewer working hours. Even if that’s true, it is difficult to become a teacher because KPSS exam and problems in appointments disincline teacher candidates.” S26

Reasons to choose teaching as a profession (b)

Why candidates choose to be teachers were investigated in four sub-dimensions (Table 3).

Table 3. *Reasons to choose teaching as a profession*

Reasons to choose teaching as a profession	Female	Frequency (f)	Male	Frequency (f)
My exam score was enough to be a teacher	S9, S17, S24, S30, S32	5	S1, S11, S14, S22, S28, S36, S42	7
My parents wanted me to be a teacher	S2, S3, S5, S17, S26, S30, S32	5	S20, S22, S25, S35, S39	5
I think teaching fits my personality	S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S12, S15, S19, S21, S23, S24, S26, S27	14	S1, S11, S13, S14, S18, S25, S29, S33, S34, S37, S38, S40, S41	13
I want to be useful to society	S6, S7, S16, S19, S23, S27, S30	7	S1, S18, S33, S35, S36, S37, S38	7

As seen in Table 3, teacher candidates find teaching profession appropriate because “they think teaching fits their personality” (females f=14, males f=13), “they want to be useful to society” (females f=7, males f=7), and “their families wanted them to be teachers” (females f=5, males f=5)”. Regarding these results, it can be stated that candidates decide on

teaching considering their characteristics, scores in the exams, social benefits, and family demands. In Figure 3, where females are represented in gray and males in blue, reasons for choice of profession are examined in percentage.

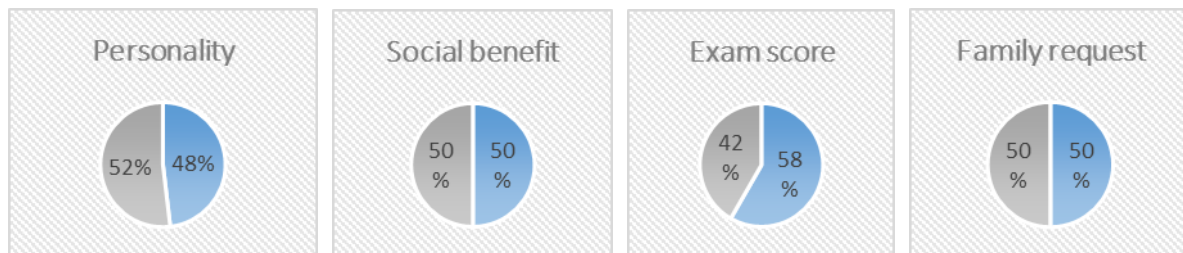


Figure 3. Teacher candidates' reasons to choose teaching as a profession

When evaluated in percentage, it is revealed that female candidates prefer teaching program considering their personality first (52%), then, social benefits (50%) and family requests (50%), and finally, exam scores (42%). As for males, they enrolled in teaching program by evaluating social benefits (50%) and family requests (50%) equally; however, the reason was mostly the adequacy of their exam score (58%). Unlike females, males (48%) did not primarily focus on personality. Relevant comments of some candidates are cited below.

"I cannot think of another profession that touches hearts and changes lives, and I cannot imagine myself in a profession other than teaching." S8

"I chose this profession because it was the best option based on my exam score. Also, I thought it's suitable for me (as a female) because working hours are convenient." S9

"I spent my childhood in a village; naturally, I went to a village school. Then, I studied at teacher training high school in the district. I couldn't get the score I wanted in the exams as I didn't pay attention to lessons. I wouldn't be in this program if I had scored higher. However, it doesn't mean I'm not pleased. I believe I will be a good teacher." S11

"I'm a graduate of teacher training high school. I chose it because it is the most appropriate profession for my personality. I talked to the guidance counselors at school and made my decision. Teaching should not be chosen for financial benefit. Young people should be led to this profession considering their interests and abilities." S18

"That I like kids, and I like teaching something to kids is the reason for me to choose this profession. Teaching is a sacred job. Teachers are the most important people after parents in raising individuals. For a better world, humanity needs equipped and idealistic teachers because they play an important role to bring in human values properly." S27

Expectations of teacher candidates for the future

Future expectations of candidates were investigated under two sub-dimensions as “what they expect while choosing teaching (under existing conditions)” and “what they would like to do or change if they were given the opportunity (facing personal facts)” (Table 4).

What they expect by choosing teaching profession (Under existing conditions)

In the first-round interviews, what kind of expectations that teacher candidates have, under the present conditions, regarding their profession choice was inquired. When comments of the candidates were analyzed, it was revealed that they had some expectations before being appointed (pre-service) and after entering the profession (in-service) (Table 4).

Table 4. *What they expect while choosing teaching profession*

Expectations	Female	Frequency (f)	Male	Frequency (f)
Pre-service	35		31	
The quota of education faculties and appointments should be balanced	S3, S5, S7, S8, S30	4	S1, S29, S31, S33	4
KPSS should be a one-session exam	S4	1	-	-
Appointment system based on KPSS should be ended	S3, S7, S8, S9, S15, S21, S26, S27, S32	9	S1, S11, S18, S25, S29, S38, S41	7
Personal characteristics should be considered in teacher selection	S4, S12	2	S18, S29	2
Teacher training institutions should care about values education	S4	1	S14, S18, S29	3

Education in teacher training institutions should be based on practice instead of theory	S5, S7, S8, S15	4	S14, S20, S25	3
Teachers who can duly perform their job should be trained	S2, S5, S7, S8, S10, S12, S15, S17, S24, S27, S32	12	S1, S11, S14, S18, S20, S22, S25, S29, S33, S36, S37, S40	12
Preferences and opinions of young people should be respected in profession choice	S2, S6	2	-	-
In-service		20		15
Working conditions should be improved	S8, S17, S30, S32	4	S11, S18, S38, S41, S42	5
Salaries of teachers should be increased	S4, S6, S15, S17, S21, S24, S30	7	S11, S14, S28, S41, S42	5
Prestige of teaching should be raised	S7, S8, S9, S10, S17, S19, S21, S30, S32	9	S13, S18, S20, S28, S29, S33, S41	5

As it can be seen in Table 4, teacher candidates have more expectations considering their profession choice in the preservice period. For most candidates (females, f=12; males, f=12), “teachers who can duly perform their job should be trained”. Then, they state, in the following order, that “appointment system based on KPSS should be ended (females, f=9; males, f=7); “the quota of education faculties and appointments should be balanced” (females, f=4; males, f=4); “education in teacher training institutions should be based on practice” (females, f=4; males, f=3), “personal characteristics should be considered in teacher selection” (females, f=2; males, f=2); and “teacher training institutions should care

about values education” (females, $f=1$; males, $f=3$). As distinct from these, one female (S4) expects that “KPSS should be a one-session exam”, and two females (S2, S6) express that “preferences and opinions of young people should be respected in profession choice”.

As for in-service expectations, candidates would like, first, the prestige of teaching to be raised (females, $f=9$; males, $f=5$); second, salaries to be increased (females, $f=7$; males, $f=5$); and third, working conditions to be improved (females, $f=4$; males, $f=5$).

Considering the percentages, it is observed that female candidates (pre-service 52%, in-service 57%) have more expectations compared to males (pre-service 48%, in-service 43%). Besides, when genders are evaluated within themselves (Figure 4), male candidates (48%) have higher demands for pre-service and female candidates for in-service (57%).

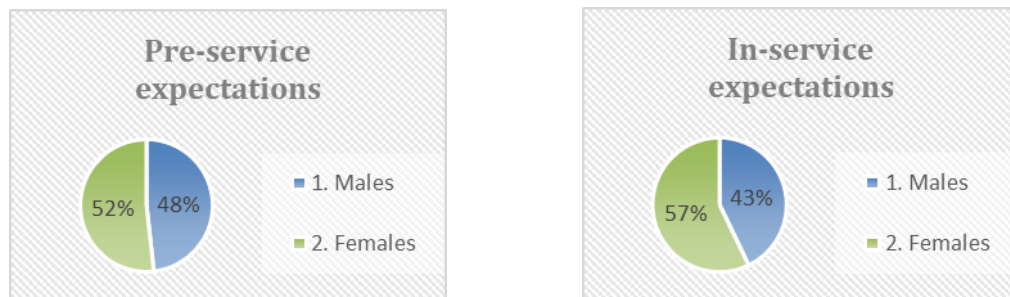


Figure 4. Pre-service and in-service expectations of teacher candidates

Comments of candidates on profession choice and expectations are cited below.

“I wish to be appointed as a teacher without KPSS. I’d like more applied courses in the faculty. I’d also like teachers to be supported for difficulties they face while working. I want to be a good teacher, create awareness and change something.” S8

“There should be less theoretical and more applied courses in the program, and the profession should be made more appealing.” S20

“Students should be trained at universities based on the need, and employment should be guaranteed after graduation. Teaching should be given due importance. People who really love this job and understand its importance should be appointed.” S29

“Teaching should be valued as it deserves, at least as much as law and medicine. Teacher training should be given more importance. Improvements should be made in terms of quality and duration. For instance, in Finland, teacher training takes 8 years while it takes 4 years in Turkey, and it shows that we don’t care enough about it.” S32

What they would like to do or change if they were given the opportunity (facing personal facts) (b)

Under this title, responses to “if you had a lot of money, what would you do?” and “if a fairy told you to wish anything, what would your top three wishes be?” are evaluated as “*personal wishes*”; and responses to “if you had every opportunity, what profession would you like to choose?” and “to be happy in the profession of teaching, what changes would you like to see?” as “*professional wishes*” (Table 5).

Table 5. *What they would like to do or change if they were given every opportunity*

What they'd want if they had opportunity	Female	Frequency (f)	Male	Frequency (f)
Personally		55		39
To make their family happy (materially and spiritually)	S2, S3, S5, S7, S10, S16, S17, S21, S30	9	S11, S13, S18, S22, S34, S35, S36, S40	8
To change where they live (country/city)	S2, S5, S15, S16, S19, S27	6	-	-
To study different subjects/ improve themselves	S3, S6, S16, S23, S26, S30	6	S1, S20, S25, S35	4
To help others (materially and spiritually)	S3, S4, S7, S8, S15, S16, S17, S23, S30	8	S11, S18, S29, S33, S35, S37, S40, S42	8
To change personal characteristics	S3, S4, S8, S10, S15, S26	6	-	-
To change physical characteristics	S19, S27, S30	3	S11, S14, S18, S29	4
To meet personal needs	S5, S7, S9, S10, S12, S15, S19,	11	S11, S18, S22, S29, S33, S34,	9

	S21, S23, S26, S27		S35, S36, S41	
To live in a fair world	S5, S7, S8, S24, S30, S32	6	S14, S25, S29, S31, S41, S42	6
To travel the world	S6, S16, S19, S21, S23, S32	6	-	-
Professionally		61		56
To do a job they love	S2, S3, S4, S6, S12, S15, S16, S17, S21, S23, S24, S26, S30, S32	14	S1, S18, S20, S22, S25, S29, S31, S35, S36, S40, S41, S42	12
To have a profession with a high financial gain	S4, S23, S24, S30	4	S11, S25, S27, S29, S36, S37 S42	7
To have a profession with a high prestige	S15, S32	2	S24, S33, S40	3
To set up their own business	S2, S4, S19, S23, S24, S27, S30	7	S1, S11, S18, S20, S29, S37, S41, S42	8
That inadequate teachers should be retired or dismissed	S12	1	S39	1
That professional standards of teachers should be raised	S12, S21, S30,	3	S20, S40, S41, S42	4
The incomes of the teacher should be increased	S6, S30	2	S24, S41, S42	3
That teaching should be valued more	S7, S9, 019	3	-	-

That teaching is performed with love by everyone	S31	1		
That KPSS exam should be abolished	S3,S7,S8,S9,S10, S15,S21,S24,S26	9	S1, S11, S14, S25, S29, S31, S38	7
That conditions of schools should be improved	S7, S21, S30	3	S42	1
That places of education should be places of love	S4	1	-	-
That appointments should be ensured	S26, S27, S32	3	S31, S41	2
That everyone is appointed to their hometown	S23	1	-	-
That equal/fair education is ensured for everyone	S5, S7, S8, S16, S17,S23,S24,S32	8	S20, S31, S33, S34, S36, S40, S41	7

As it is observed in Table 5, what teacher candidates want most is to meet their personal needs (females, f=11; males, f=9), then, to make their family happy (females, f=9; males, f=8), to help others (females, f=8; males, f=8), to live in a fair world (females, f=6; males, f=6), to study different subjects or improve themselves (females, f=6; males, f=4), and to change their physical appearances (females, f=3; males, f=4). Furthermore, some females, as distinct from males, have different wishes such as to change where they live (city or country) (S2, S5, S15, S16, S19, S27), to change their characteristics (S3, S4, S8, S10, S15, S26) and to travel the world (S6, S16, S19, S21, S23, S32).

As for their professional wishes or dreams, they want to do a job they can love (females, f=12; males, f=12), to set up their own business (females, f=7; males, f=8), to have a high-income profession (females, f=4; males, f=7), and to have a high-status profession (females, f=2; males, f=3). These findings suggest that some candidates could not choose their dream job but had to make a decision considering the existing conditions.

Regarding the responses to the question of what changes they would want to happen to be happy in the profession of teaching, it is inferred that teacher candidates would like

that KPSS exam is abolished (females, f=9; males, f=7), everyone receives equal/fair education (females, f=8; males, f=7), working standards of teachers are enhanced (females, f=3; males, f=4), teacher salaries are increased (females, f=2; males, f=3), conditions of schools are improved (females, f=3; males, f=1), appointments are ensured (females, f=3; males, f=2), and inadequate teachers are retired or dismissed (females, f=1; males, f=1). In addition, three female candidates (S7, S9, S19) state that teaching should be valued more, one female (S4) thinks that places of education should be turned into places of love, another one (S23) would like that everyone is appointed to their hometown, and only one male (S31) wishes that teaching would be performed with love by everyone.

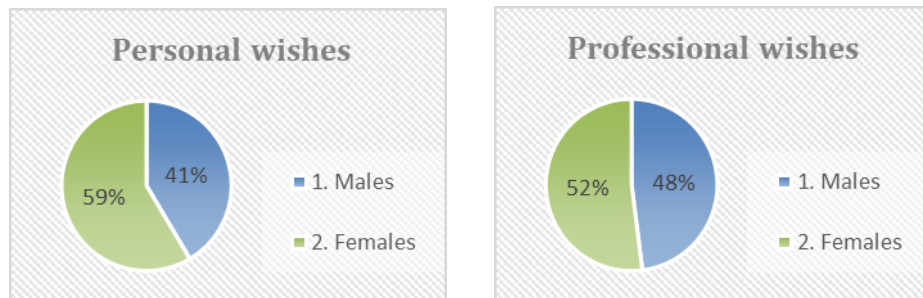


Figure 5. What teacher candidates would want if given the opportunity

It can be inferred from Figure 5 that, compared to males (personal 41%, professional 42%), female candidates have more personal (59%) and professional wishes (52%) and higher expectations. When evaluated on gender basis, females have more personal wishes whereas males have more professional ones. Comments of some teacher candidates on what they would like to change personally and professionally are cited below.

“I’d like to have a store with books only. I’d like to sell them; I mean I wanted to be a shopkeeper. I’m an emotional person. If I had the chance, I’d like to make people I love happy. I also would like to live in a quite coastal town with my bike and fishing rod.” S18

“I’d want to change where I live. I’d like places of appointment to be changed, and everyone to be appointed to their hometowns, where they are used to living.” S23

“I want to be a teacher but if I had the chance, I’d choose the department I want at a private university. I’d be a psychologist. It’s not that I don’t want teaching but I want to be a psychologist more. I wish that there were no employment problems after graduation. An obligation like KPSS does not make teacher candidates happy but exhausted. I have a feature... I always make plans but I never put them into actions by making very good excuses. I’d want to change that.” S26

"I chose classroom teaching at Mugla University. I'd want to say that my aim was to be just like my class teacher and realize my dreams, but unfortunately, it's not. To be honest, for the first two years, I still didn't feel belonged to this program. Theoretical courses, instructors giving assignments all the time... It was too boring. But then, applied courses were like medicine, and the internship was my milestone. I felt teaching, and I thought it fit me. Applied courses like physical education, science and visual arts contributed to my change of heart, but if I had the chance, I'd choose to be a lawyer." S32

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study where qualitative approach was adopted, it was aimed to understand the teaching-related opinions and expectations of teacher candidates who are senior students in classroom teaching, their reasons to prefer teaching profession and what they want from life within the bounds of possibility. Results obtained were evaluated in two themes as "teaching-related opinions" and "future expectations of teacher candidates".

Teaching requires responsibility and sacrifice (Özbek, Kahyaoglu & Özgen, 2007). The conditions that individuals are in may cause their anxiety levels to increase and the individuals to become hopeless (Poch, Esperanza, Villar et al., 2004). Employment after graduation, investigation of circumstances leading individuals to a profession and compelling them professionally (Williams & Forgasz, 2009) may provide insight to create conditions for candidates to find teaching appealing. This study reveals that teacher candidates emphasize disadvantages of teaching, described as a profession requiring sacrifice and responsibility, over its advantages. When it comes to the reasons for teaching to be advantageous, candidates think that professional satisfaction of teaching is high, and working hours are convenient. Only one male thinks that teaching is advantageous because "it offers the chance to see different places". Regarding disadvantages, candidates have criticisms such as "teachers are appointed based on an exam, the number of appointments is low, and the number of graduates is high". They also state that "teaching has a low status, its financial benefits are inadequate, working conditions are not fair, and undergraduate education is theoretical".

According to Hacıomeroglu and Taskin (2010) and Ubuz and Sari (2008), personal characteristics are important for profession choice, and teacher candidates who say that they love kids and teaching find it appropriate as a profession. Boz and Boz (2008) and

Tataroglu, Ozgen, and Alkan (2011) state the reasons for candidates to prefer teaching as love for their childhood teacher and love for the field.

The evaluation in percentage reveals that female candidates, compared to males (advantage 47%, disadvantage 44%), expressed more opinions both for advantages (53%) and disadvantages (56%) of teaching. The evaluation within genders presents that males mention advantages whereas females mention disadvantages more. Nayir & Taneri (2013) identified that among the reasons of female candidates for choosing the profession, personal characteristics come first, and “working conditions and contribution to society” are respectively effective in their decisions; male candidates have the same reasons, but realizing their dreams is also a factor.

When candidates’ reasons are evaluated overall, it is observed that they find it appropriate to choose teaching because “they think it fits their personality; they want to be beneficial to the society, and their families want them to be teachers”. Regarding these results, it can be stated that teacher candidates decide to choose teaching as a profession by considering personal characteristics, exam scores, social benefits and family guidance.

To be effective in teaching, teachers are expected to have positive attitude towards teaching. Some teacher candidates in this study indicate that teaching “fits their personality” and helps them “be useful to society”, which can be interpreted as positive attitude. Bulut and Dogar (2006) and Cakir (2005) present that teacher candidates generally have positive attitudes towards the profession, and Karacaoglu (2008) asserts that their sense of competence for teaching is at a high level.

This study reveals that female candidates prefer teaching program considering their personality first (52%), then, social benefits (50%) and family requests (50%), and finally, exam scores (42%). Males enroll in teaching program by evaluating social benefits (50%) and family requests (50%) equally, but the reason is mostly the adequacy of their exam score (58%). Unlike females (52%), personality is not their primary concern (48%).

According to Bursal and Buldur (2016), females have more positive future expectations related to profession, and as Pektas and Kamer (2011) state, females look at teaching more positively. Moreover, Capri and Celikkaleli (2008), Oral (2004) and Seker, Deniz, and Gorgen (2005) identify that gender has an important effect on candidates’ belief incompetence, and similarly, it differs in favor of females. Furthermore, Besoluk and Horzum (2011) and Cermik, Dogan, and Sahin (2010) determine that personal reasons are

effective in choices of females. The study conducted by Özsoy, Özsoy, Özkara and Memis (2010) reveals that a great majority of candidates choose teaching consciously, and decision of females are at a higher level than that of males in idealism, consciousness and assurance.

That females feel themselves suitable for the job personally may be related to social structure of Turkish society. As a matter of fact, teaching, especially classroom teaching- is considered more as a female profession in Turkish society, and families associate their daughters with classroom teaching more as classroom teachers are sacred like mothers, and childrearing is generally expected from women.

Faculty of education students in Turkey can have future and employment anxiety due to employment policies of the Ministry. A relevant study reveals that faculty of education students are more concerned about being employed compared to medical students (Özen, Ercan, Irgil & Sigirli, 2010). In addition, as faculty of education students have to get a high score in KPSS to be appointed, they have difficulty and may even have psychological problems. The concern for KPSS increases anxiety and despair of candidates considerably (Tumkaya, Aybek & Celik, 2007). That teachers feel competent professionally can affect student success and quality of education positively (Guo, Connor, Yang, Roehrig & Morrison, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate individually the beliefs of teachers considering how they find themselves in teaching (Cho & Shim, 2013). At this point, it may be useful to evaluate viewpoints and expectations of undergraduate students studying in the faculty of education in the hope of being a teacher besides examining how they find themselves professionally, and what concerns or drives them to despair.

As the study reveals, in order to choose teaching as a profession, candidates mostly expect that “teachers to duly perform their job should be trained”, and put an emphasis on the importance of pre-service training. Furthermore, some candidates propose that “appointment system based on KPSS should be ended, the quota of education faculties and appointments should be balanced, education in teacher training institutions should be based on practice instead of theory, personal characteristics should be considered in teacher selection, and teacher training institutions should care about values education”. A small number of candidates suggest that “KPSS should be a one-session exam, and preferences and opinions of young people should be respected in profession choice”.

When it comes to the expectations of the candidates after going into the profession (in-service), they would like, first, the prestige of teaching to be raised; second, salaries to be increased; and third, working conditions to be improved. On the other hand, considering the

percentages, it is observed that female candidates (pre-service 52%, in-service 57%) have more expectations than males (pre-service 48%, in-service 43%). Besides, on gender basis, males (48%) have higher demands for pre-service and females for in-service (57%).

Variables that are beyond individuals' control and cannot be changed easily by their attempts (age, gender, income, profession, working conditions, family, status etc.) are considered among the variables expressing personal well-being even though they are not the variables expressing happiness in every way (Brief, Butcher, George & Link, 1993).

In this study, responses to "if you had a lot of money, what would you do?" and "if a fairy told you to wish anything, what would your top three wishes be?" are evaluated as "*personal wishes*"; and responses to "if you had every opportunity, what profession would you like to choose?" and "to be happy in the profession of teaching, what changes would you like to see?" as "*professional wishes*".

As regards to wishes of teacher candidates, if they were given every opportunity, what they want most is to meet their personal needs, then, to make their family happy, to help others, to live in a fair world, to study different subjects or improve themselves, and to change their physical appearances. It is also observed that some females, as distinct from males, have different wishes such as to change where they live (city or country), to change their characteristics and to travel the world.

As for professional wishes or dreams, they want to do a job they can love, to set up their own business, to have a high-income profession, and to have a high-status profession. These findings suggest that some candidates could not choose their dream job but had to make a decision considering the existing conditions.

In their studies with teacher candidates, Aksu, Engin-Demir, Daloglu et al., (2010), Anilan and Anilan (2014), Bursal and Buldur (2013), Cermik, Dogan and Sahin (2010) realize that teaching profession is not ideal for some candidates enrolled in teaching program. Yesilyurt and Karakus (2011) assert, in their study, that the great majority of teacher candidates have the same opinion on that the field they have chosen fits their personality; nevertheless, if they were given the chance, they would study economics, medicine, engineering, and as for branch, they would choose math, Turkish and geography.

Responding to the question of what changes they would want to see to be happy in the profession of teaching, teacher candidates state their demands such as that "KPSS exam is abolished, everyone receives equal/fair education, working standards of teachers are

enhanced, teacher salaries are increased, conditions of schools are improved, appointments are ensured, and inadequate teachers are retired or dismissed”. Additionally, some females would like that “teaching is valued more, places of education are turned into places of love, everyone is appointed to their hometown”, and only one male wishes that “teaching would be performed with love by everyone”.

When personal and professional wishes are examined in percentage, it is observed that compared to males (personal 41%, professional 42%), females have more personal (59%) and professional wishes (52%) and higher expectations. Based on gender evaluation, females have more personal wishes whereas males have more professional ones.

Recommendations

At the end of the study, it was revealed that the majority of teacher candidates mostly emphasized disadvantages of teaching, and criticized that teacher appointments were based on an exam, teaching was a low-status profession, working conditions were unfair, and undergraduate education was theoretical. Based on these findings, it is recommended that precautions to raise the status of teaching as a profession should be taken, working conditions of teachers should be enhanced, exams for selection/placement and appointment should be reviewed, and undergraduate education should be both theoretical and applied. Considered as the employer of teachers in Turkey, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) determines the criteria for training and working of teachers. Through various implementations such as “tenured, contracted, paid”, the Ministry also employs teachers who lacks a degree from the faculty of education but attends a pedagogical formation program. However, different employment practices creating disunion in terms of status affect young people adversely. Moreover, that individuals who are not from the field are appointed as teachers by receiving formation education, and quotas of education faculties and the number of appointments are not balanced causes future anxiety in teacher candidates studying at faculties of education. It has been identified, in this study, that teacher candidates have worries about appointments because of the existing problems. Regarding this finding, in order for teacher candidates to be confident about the future, solutions to ensure supply-demand equilibrium in teacher employment of Turkey can be suggested.

In studies to be conducted through “qualitative, quantitative and mixed research design”, researchers can reveal attitudes and expectations of both teacher candidates who study different branches (classroom teaching, preschool teaching, Turkish language teaching, science teaching etc.) in teacher training faculties and prospective teachers who

have just started the profession. Understanding attitudes and expectations of young people can be a guide to improve policies for teacher training and appointment. These research findings can also provide insight for what needs to be done to make teaching more appealing.

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