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PRE SERVICE TEACHERS' REASONS TO ATTEND KPSS PRIVATE COURSES

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the reasons for teacher candidates to attend private KPSS courses. 30 teacher candidates who attend Gazi University Department of Primary School Teaching as seniors were interviewed to determine the reasons to attend KPSS courses. In this study, interview technique from the qualitative research methods was used. Findings indicated that teacher candidates' only expectancy from KPSS courses is passing this exam. In addition, it is understood that teacher candidates need educational sciences courses most, they worry about being appointed and they do not believe that KPSS is an exam which selects best teachers.

Keywords: KPSS (Personnel Selection Exam for Public Sector), Pre Service Teachers, Private Courses, Student, Classroom Teacher

ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ ÖZEL KPSS KURSLARINA GİTME NEDENLERİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışma öğretmen adaylarının özel KPSS kurslarına gitme nedenlerini belirlemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Bu amaçla Gazi Üniversitesi Sınıf Öğretmenliği bölümü son sınıfına devam eden 30 öğretmen adayıyla görüşülerek KPSS kurslarına gitme nedenleri belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma tekniklerinden görüşme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen verilerden; Öğrencilerin KPSS kurslarına yönelik tek beklentilerinin bu sınavı aşmak olduğu belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca öğretmen adaylarının en çok eğitim bilimleri alanında kursa ihtiyaç duydukları, atanma kaygısı yaşadıkları ve KPSS sınavının iyi öğretmenleri seçen bir sınav olduğuna inanmadıkları belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: KPSS (Kamu Personeli Seçme Sınavı), Öğretmen Adayları, Özel Kurslar, Öğrenci, Sınıf Öğretmenliği

1. INTRODUCTION (GİRİŞ)

In Turkey, students ranging from primary education to any level in educational system have to enter a variety of examinations conducted by OSYM (Student Selection and Placement Center) and MEB (Ministry of National Education) to get a better education or to work in public institutions. OKS (Student Selection and Placement Exam for Secondary Education Institutions) conducted by MEB at the end of the primary education; OSS (Student Selection Exam; YDS (Foreign Language Examination); KPDS (Foreign Language Exam For Civil Servants); TUS (The Internship Selection Examination for Medical Doctors); LES (Selection Examination for Graduate Studies) are some examples of these examinations prepared by OSYM. KPSS (Personnel Selection Exam for Public Sector) is also prepared by OSYM.

This examination was originally called as KMS (Central Elimination Examination for Institutions) in 2001 when it was firstly conducted; and in 2002, it started to be conducted under the name of KPSS, and pre service teachers are appointed by being subjected to this exam. In KPSS which is implemented in four sessions, pre service teachers undertake two sessions including the parts of "General Culture", "General Competency", and "Teaching Profession Knowledge". Pre service teachers are obliged to answer the questions related to the fields of Atatürk's Principles and Reforms, Basic Citizenship Knowledge, current and socio-economic issues related to Turkey and the world, Main Turkish Civilizations and Geography of Turkey under the scope of the "General Culture" test; the fields of Turkish Language Grammar, Reading Comprehension and Mathematics under the scope of "General Competency" test, and lastly the fields of Developing Programs in Education, Measurement and Evaluation, Development and Learning and Counseling under the scope of "Teaching Profession Knowledge" test.

A Historical Perspective for Teachers' Appointment in Turkey (Türkiye'de Öğretmen Atamalarının Tarihsel bir Perspektifi)

Teachers' appointment in Turkey was implemented without examination until 1985. Since that time, teachers' appointment had been implemented with examination till 1991. Special field knowledge, general culture and general competency has formed the contents of this examination. In 1991, although all the participants entering the examination in 12 fields were appointed, the quota could not be met. Upon these developments, the requirement for teachers to enter the examination was abolished as a result of the decisions taken in 1992. Since 1993, teachers who did not take the lessons of Teaching Profession Knowledge of the profession of teaching were appointed to the profession of teaching without examination. In the 1996 - 1997 education year, another practice was adopted; to meet the teacher vacancy, thousands of teachers were appointed on condition that they had any bachelor's degree without Teaching Profession Knowledge (Ertan, 2002). In 1997 - 1998 education year, 40-day formation courses for the profession of teaching were arranged to meet the teacher vacancy in the country, and the appointments of teachers were fulfilled without any examination by selecting from the graduates of faculty of education and the candidates having taken this formation courses. In 2001, an examination system was required because of the increase in the number of the graduates of faculty of education.

- In 2001, the complete content of the lessons is not given in the school teachers were subjected to an examination under the name of KMS (Central Elimination Examination for Institutions). In the years 2002 - 2003, this practice has continued under the

name of KPSS. Today, preservice teachers have to pass a two - session exam period to achieve these examinations (Arslan & Eraslan, 2006).

2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE (ÇALIŞMANIN ÖNEMİ)

Despite the fact that it is very new to Turkey, KPSS, which has leaded to many private courses to be initiated, has caused an unfair income area in this field and waste of a great deal of economical source. It has been observed that there is a big demand for these private courses rapidly spreading throughout the country. The demand of a person with a bachelor's degree to attend a course for preparing an examination evaluating the people in knowledge base has formed the focus point of this study.

3. METHOD (YÖNTEM)

A total of 30 students studying their last year at Gazi University, in the Department of Primary Education participated in this study. In this study, of the Qualitative Research Techniques, "Interviewing Technique" was used. Six open ended questions have been determined by the researchers with the aim of collecting data with the interviewing method. The qualitative data collected by the help of these questions have been analyzed through "Descriptive Analysis".

4. FINDINGS (BULGULAR)

The findings reached as a result of the descriptive analysis of the data collected through interviewing method are as follows.

Students were asked how and how much contribution they provide from the knowledge they obtain in KPSS private courses; and many of them have given similar answers. A large proportion of the students have expressed that the knowledge they obtain via courses are completely directed to the examination. Students expressing their views in this direction have shown its reason in that the knowledge they obtain from courses are too theoretical, and they do not take any training in how they use this knowledge in practice. The views of some students with these thoughts are as follows:

- "As a preparation for the examination, I tried to study by myself, but not by attending these courses. But with this method, I could not solve the KPSS questions. I understood better when the teacher in the course explained the topics with examples, jokes and solved questions. I could solve the questions now. But, as we learnt only the question types and how to solve them, I do not think that the knowledge I obtained from the course will contribute to my profession of teaching."
- "I do not believe that the knowledge obtained will contribute to my profession of teaching. Because the teachers in our school did not have the sufficient ability, I had to attend a private course. I do not believe that this knowledge will be of use to me."
- "I do not think that it will contribute. Because, an education only at the level of knowledge is given... However, I believe that I did not learn well in the school, for example in the lecture of "Teaching Methods". Due to these courses, now I am aware of lots of information in this field."

Two people have explained that the knowledge they have obtained from the KPSS courses is beneficial to them. One's justification is as follows:

- "I think that the knowledge I obtained in KPSS courses will be beneficial in terms of educational sciences. In the school, as I

did not attach importance to these lessons, I did not listen and study consciously and efficiently. Because, I was not aware of the fact that these lessons would be so beneficial to me in the future. I attend KPSS courses willingly. As I think that the knowledge I obtain here will be beneficial to me in the examination, I listen to the lectures willingly. Therefore, I am trying to learn these better.”

- “Whereas I think that these KPSS courses will contribute a lot in the field of educational sciences, I do not believe that it will help so much in the fields of general competency or general culture. Our point of view to the students has changed due to the knowledge we obtain in “Development and Learning.”

All of the students asked in which of the fields they need to take courses in the scope of the KPSS (General Culture, General Competency and Educational Sciences), have put the field of educational sciences into the first rank. Of these students, six of them have also expressed that they need to take courses in field of general culture, and twenty four of them in general competency, as well as educational sciences. A sub-question has been asked for the reasons why they take the courses once more although they received training related to these fields in their schools; and students' answers can be categorized in 4 groups:

- a) The complete content of the lessons is not given in the school. Students have explained that they come across with many things for the first time in the private courses but they do not learn in the school. One of these students has given the following striking answer:

- “I have understood that the education given to me in my school is not sufficient for passing the KPSS when I attend to the private courses. If I had been given the sufficient education in the school, I would not have to attend KPSS courses. We do not learn all the topics of which we are responsible in KPSS examination in the school. Because, we already do not learn the content of the lessons completely. Although I always attend the classes in the school, there is difference between the lessons I take in my school and I take in private course.”

- b) The lessons of educational sciences are explained by the students in the faculty. Some students have explained that generally the students themselves explain the lessons of educational sciences in the school. Again in terms of these students' explanations, the productivity of these lessons are at low levels. A student of this opinion gives the following striking explanation:

- “In the school, in most of the professional lessons, we, the students, prepare and explain the lessons (or just read our presentations). We just explain and pass. We prepare slights just to address the eyes. If someone asks a question related to the topic at the end of the presentation, it is impossible for me to answer. And for this reason we feel the necessity of taking courses, especially in Educational Sciences.”

- c) The lessons in the fields of General competency and General Culture are given in the first years of university. Students have expressed that they forget many details related to these lessons which they take in the first years of their university education (1st and 2nd grades) when they come to the last years. These students find the private courses beneficial in terms of their reminding the details.

d) *Motivation*. Some of the students have expressed that they can actually get prepared without attending a private course. But the same students have reported that there has been a pressure on them because of the fact that almost all of their friends attend a private course, and so they feel as if "they will not get prepared well without attending one". They have expressed that they are motivated better in the courses, and they study more because of the competition atmosphere in the course.

When the 4 groups above are evaluated in general terms, it can be reached that the students attending KPSS courses find the education of the schools significantly insufficient for such an examination. For the aim of getting prepared to KPSS, which evaluates on the basis of knowledge, the reasons of the pre service teacher to attend a private course rather than getting prepared to it by himself/ herself have been asked to pre service teachers. Most of the students have stated that they are inadequate -especially in the field of educational sciences- and they attend to private courses because of the fact that they can not deal with it by themselves. A few students have given very striking answers to this question. One of them is as follows:

- "Actually we are also embarrassed to attend the private courses. However, we have hesitated to attend a private course or not. But, we felt it necessary to attend a private course for the field of educational sciences. It is really embarrassing to attend a private course both for us and for our lecturers giving the courses. Because, most of our lecturers in the courses come from the institutions training the pre service teachers, that means they are already our instructors. The question; "Considering that these instructors are giving an education of high quality, why do they not give it in our schools" should be asked.

The reasons of the remaining students to attend a private course can be summarized as follows:

- a) Instead of studying lessons by reading, being explained by someone (lecturer) is better and necessary.
- b) It is possible to study regularly due to the private course.
- c) Private courses serve as a guide for the examination; they give some clues, such as what is more important, or which parts should be attached less importance. Private courses follow a method based on the examination technique.
- d) Somebody's explaining the topic helps us save time, and gives us the possibility to ask whatever we do not understand. A student's interesting answer is as follows:

"Another person's explaining the topic saves our times and we get the opportunity to ask if we do not understand. But in the opposite situation, that is, if we studied just by reading from the books, there would be nobody to ask what we do not understand. But in the private courses, we have the opportunity to ask whatever we do not understand till we understand."

Opinions of students have been consulted on the issue of *how the method of employing teachers and the criteria should be*. Almost all of the students think that KPSS is not the true criterion for appointing teachers. It has been determined that opinions of the students are divided into two main groups in suggesting alternatives to KPSS. The pre service teachers taking place in the first group have stated that the number of the teachers trained should be as the number needed in the country. Thereby, KPSS will be no longer required. They also express that more qualified teachers will be trained since the number of students in the faculties decreases.

The pre service teachers in the second group, however, have denoted to the requirement of an exam for appointing teachers. But, they have stated that the exam should be different from the existing Personnel Selection Exam for Public Sector (KPSS). According to those students, the exam to be applied should have two characteristics: It should be an adequate exam both for measuring the level of knowledge and for evaluating the skills of teaching of the students. The dramatic answer of one of the students in the second group is as follows:

- An exam should be applied at the end of each year to evaluate that year. After the fourth year, a general evaluation exam should be applied. In my opinion, KPSS is not an examination to evaluate. It is not more than an exam at the level of knowledge. I have encountered with ones who succeeded in KPSS and appointed as a teacher, but unable to recite. Thus, not only their knowledge, but also their skills of teaching should be evaluated. For instance, a general performance evaluation composed of theory and practice can be applied at the end of each year. At the end of the fourth year, appointments should be done regarding the opinions of the instructors which performed the evaluation. For my part, the best way to evaluate a teacher is to observe and evaluate him in the natural place that is in the class, without making him/ her aware of it. As appointments are fulfilled like that, there will be no more need for KPSS courses and undesired incidents caused by teachers in primary schools can be avoided.

Students have been asked to compare the training they took in the faculty and the private courses, and their evaluations have been gathered on which one is more efficient. Almost every student argues that the training they take in the courses is only efficient in a cognitive level. According to them; as the courses are private institutions, the instructors working there make extra efforts to educate. But faculties are not into cognitive grounds like them.

- "Comparing both of them is impossible. The training we take in our faculties is useful for us to teach. But the KPSS courses are also necessary in terms of the examination. The courses mostly train in a cognitive level. But the faculty trains better in affective and psychomotor domains. However, there is a plenty of knowledge we should get that is not touched on neither in faculty nor in courses. For example; school management, handling or official correspondences...etc."

"The faculty is more efficient than the private courses in every aspect except obtaining the required score for being appointed. Because, there are more facilities for individual development such as social activities, libraries and the like in the faculties than the courses."

5. CONCLUSION (SONUÇ)

Astonishing findings, as summarized above, have been collected in this study which has been performed in order to search the reasons why pre service teachers take private courses for KPSS.

It is obvious that the only expectation of the students from KPSS courses is to pass the exam. Since, none of students agree on contributions of the KPSS courses to performing their job, profession of teaching.

The field students most need to take courses is "Educational Sciences". Students do not pay enough attention to these courses while taking them in the faculties of education and they recite these

courses themselves. These can be defined as main reasons leading to that situation. With no doubt, the role of instructors can not be denied here. Similar findings are seen in Kaya & Büyükkasap's (2005) study. Findings of a case study which is conducted at Atatürk University with 36 physics teacher candidates also indicated that teacher candidates complain about the deficiency of the education they took at the faculty. Factors such as motivation, getting experienced for the exam and competition can be listed as the reasons of most of the students to prefer these courses which give an education in a cognitive level. In the studies by Gençay & Gençay (2005) and Kaya & Büyükkasap (2005), teacher candidates expressed that KPSS exam creates a lack of motivation and a situation of anxiety for them. Moreover, Kaya & Büyükkasap's study found that 83 % of teacher candidates experience appointment anxiety.

All of the students we have interviewed are of the same opinion that the existing KPSS is unable to select competent teachers successfully. As the reason for this, they point to the exam's being only in a cognitive level. Instead, most students emphasize in different ways on the requirement of an exam not only for evaluating in cognitive level, but also determining the performance of teaching. Ergün's (2005) study on 860 teacher candidates' support the students' views. Ergün (2005) suggested that KPSS should comprise more questions which evaluate teacher candidates' specific competencies in their subject area better. Furthermore, Yüksel (2004) pointed out the importance of the evaluation of field information and suggested this part in KPSS to be expanded.

While comparing the efficiency of the training they take in the faculty with the one in the courses; the students express that the training in the courses is more efficient in order to pass the exam, however the training they take in the faculty is more efficient for their profession. They have the opinion that the practical training, their internships and their observations they take in the faculty are more useful in their profession of teaching.

NOTICE (NOT)

Bu çalışma "8th International Conference On Education" kongresinde sözlü bildiri olarak sunulmuştur.

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