



## Pre-service Early Childhood Education Teachers' Perception on Their Future Profession Okul Öncesi Eğitim Öğretmen Adaylarının Gelecekteki Mesleklerine Karşı Algıları

Zeynep TEMİZ<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to explore pre-service ECE teachers' perceptions of being a teacher in qualitative perspective. Particularly, pre-service ECE teachers' descriptions of their motivation in choosing this profession, their satisfaction on their profession, and their career commitment to pursuit as a teacher and finally how their attitudes changes toward ECE throughout school years were investigated. A total of 20 female pre-service early childhood education teachers who were studying at the pre-school education program in in the Faculty of Education at METU participated in the study. Five pre-service ECE teachers from each 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th semesters participated voluntarily. Semi-structured interview was conducted with pre-service teachers. All of the interviews were audio recorded then transcribed. Qualitative analysis was utilized for data analysis. Findings revealed that majority of pre-service teachers recognized that their personality best fit into teaching profession as the love of children was a part of their personality. Yet, becoming an early childhood teacher was not a career dream for the other participants as they decided to become a teacher based on their score on University Entrance Exam. Prospective teachers who choose this profession willingly are satisfied with natural outcome of teaching profession. For instance, being called as "the teacher" by children is enough to make them satisfied with their occupation. Participants believed that studying early childhood education will provide wide range of career opportunities when they graduated.

**Keywords:** Early childhood education, pre-service teachers, attitudes towards teaching

**ÖZ:** Bu çalışmanın amacı öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleğine karşı algılarını nitel perspektiften incelemektir. Özellikle, öğretmen adaylarının bu mesleği seçmedeki motivasyonları, mesleki doyumları, kariyerlerine öğretmen olarak devam edip etmeyecekleris on olarak eğitim hayatları boyunca mesleklerine olan tutumlarının nasıl değiştiğini araştırmayı hedeflemiştir. Araştırmaya, ODTÜ Eğitim Fakültesi Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programında eğitim gören toplam 20 öğretmen adayı (18 kadın ve 2 erkek) katılmıştır. İkinci, 4., 6. ve 8. yarıyılıda eğitim gören beşer öğrenci gönüllülük esasına göre katılmıştır. Öğretmen adayları ile yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ses kayıt cihazına kaydedilmiş ardından deşifre edilip nitel veri analizi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları göstermiştir ki öğretmen adaylarının çoğunluğu öğretmenlik mesleğini kendi kişilik özelliklerine uygun buldukları için seçmişlerdir. Fakat diğerleri için öğretmen olmak hayalini kurdukları bir kariyer değildir ve onları bu seçimi Üniversite Giriş Sınavında elde ettikleri puan zorlamıştır. Öğretmen adaylarından kendi istekleriyle bu bölümü seçenler öğretmenliğin doğal getirilerinden mesleki doyum elde edebilmektedirler. Örneğin çocukların 'Öğretmenim' şeklinde hitap etmesi onların mesleki doyum elde etmelerine yetmektedir. Son olarak öğretmen adayları okul öncesi eğitim bölümünde eğitim görmesinin onlara çok geniş kariyer olanakları sunacağına inanmaktadırlar.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Okul öncesi eğitim, öğretmen adayları, öğretmenliğe karşı tutum

<sup>1</sup> Asst.Prof.Dr., Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, [cimenzeynepakdag@gmail.com](mailto:cimenzeynepakdag@gmail.com)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of teaching profession is demanding due to the responsibility of the raising future generations. It includes working directly with the students, parents and colleagues. Thus, teachers are required to have various teaching skills (Krecic & Grmek, 2005). Teachers are required to provide realistic opportunities to each student to be successful both at school and life. They further contribute to the economic growth of society by teaching students the way of being productive too. As such, public schools have pivotal roles in our life because they are our major social, economical and political institutions (Abazaoğlu, 2015). Therefore, teachers' perception of their profession and public perception of teaching gain importance. As Lortie stated (1975) teachers are unique in some respect; that is, they distinguish from members of other occupation due to both the structure of the occupation and the meanings teachers attach to their work. People who are drawn to teaching could tell many reasons for their career decision. There are countless factors that effecting to decide on career. Some of them stand in the forefront; such as, values, interests, skills, capability, experiences in working life, family needs, advancement in technology, industrialization, urbanization, and social reform movement (Zunker, 2006). Lortie (1975 p.30) asserted five "attractors to teaching" that retain its currency even today: (1) desire to work with young people, (2) feeling of valuable service of special moral worth, (3) teaching offers of staying in school, (4) money, prestige, job security, (5) the attraction of working schedules and working hours. Internal factors are still more effective on choices of teaching as profession for pre-service teachers. Life as a teacher is attractive due to excitement, stimulation, and the power of influencing children's' future positively that teaching offers (Ekinci, 2017).

Early childhood educators can support the overall physical, emotional, and cognitive development of children and help each child to be ready to face the future (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997). Throughout the world, governments have steadily invested in early childhood education recently to expand supply, improve quality, and assure accessibility of supplementary services (Kammerman, 2000). The growing interest in early childhood education, however, is not reflected in training of and promoting ECE teachers. Currently, early childhood teachers are less likely to become directors and inspectors than their elementary school counterparts in France (OECD, 2004a) and they get low salaries, poor or non-existent benefits, long working hours, poor working conditions, limited access to training, and few opportunities for advancement in United Kingdom (OECD, 2000). Moreover, in Germany ECE is being separated from higher education institutions where school teachers are trained, which results in a low level of college education. A further consequence is that early childhood education has little representation in higher levels, with only five professors in the whole university system since students in the field of ECE study at the lower secondary stage at a type of school which emphasizes vocational rather than academic education (OECD, 2004b). The situation is not different in Czech Republic. ECE teachers are not required to complete bachelor degree and they just complete four years of training (15 to 19 years) in the secondary pedagogical schools. Moreover, their wages are low and coincides only 76% of a primary teacher's salary (OECD, 2001).

It seems that working in this field still has low professional status within the community. ECE teachers have relatively insufficient income level and working conditions despite the highly demanding responsibilities, and physical and emotional exhaustion caused by their jobs (Goelman & Guo, 1998). However, ECE teachers are luckier than their counterparts in the world and other teachers in primary and secondary grade teachers in Turkey with some respects. Firstly, ECE teachers are required to get bachelor degree to work in public schools. This is same for primary and secondary school teachers also their salary is same with those teachers working in other fields. Secondly, Ministry of National Education (MONE) hires more ECE teachers than other teachers each year. The recruitment procedure will be explained in detailed in following parts.

Student teaching is accepted as one of the most important components for the preparation of prospective teachers (Graham, 2006; Poulou, 2007; Ramazan & Yılmaz, 2017; Oh, Ankers, Llamas, Tomyoy, 2005). It takes a significant role in preparing student teachers for their future profession since they actively process information during field experience (Cwick & Benton, 2009; Wasserman, 2010; Ramazan & Yılmaz, 2017). In this sense, their perception of teaching gains importance. Attitudes are mental tendencies ranging from positive to negative on evaluations of objects (Fabrigar, McDonalds, & Wegener, 2005). There are several quantitative studies in Turkey investigating pre-service teachers' attitudes, and perceptions towards teaching profession (Argun & İkiz, 2003; Aslan & Akyol, 2006; Özgür, 1994; Tanrıöğen, 1997; Üstün, Erkan & Akman, 2004; Üstün, 2005; Zembat & Bilgin, 1996). All of the studies used questionnaires in which teachers were asked to rate a series of possible cases that they might encountered in their teaching life. On the other hand, the current study involved a in-depth interview with each participant and gave them opportunity to reflect what they have experienced in their teaching life. In doing so, the current study have provided a broad range of opinions about potential circumstances of teachers.

This study aims to explore pre-service ECE teachers' perceptions of being an ECE teacher in qualitative perspective. According to Knowles (1975) teachers' motivation increase to learn as long as they are aware of their purpose. Besides, they became more capable of using what they learn in a long run. Second, people have tendency to develop responsibility for their lives to be more self-directed. Lastly, current educational trends enforce learners to be more initiative in their own learning process in order to protect them experiencing anxiety, frustration, and failure. Teaching as a profession is mainly motivated by intrinsic rewards rather than extrinsic rewards; thus, teachers are not just motivated with more money. Teacher satisfaction is beyond advancement and extrinsic rewards. Teachers measure their satisfaction in moments or instances of involvement with students (Quagliga, Marion, & McIntre, 2001). Teachers employ certain professional rules, attitudes and standards that will help them their teaching practice through their teaching career (Saban, 2002). As such, this study particularly focus on pre-service ECE teachers' descriptions of their motivation in choosing this profession, their satisfaction on their profession, and their career commitment to pursuit as a teacher and finally how their attitudes changes toward ECE throughout school years were investigated. Moreover, the impact of ECE training on these perceptions was investigated by including pre-service early childhood teachers with different years of study in the ECE program.

More specially, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the factors that affect pre-service teachers' decision to become an ECE teacher?
2. What are the sources of pre-service teachers' satisfaction upon their future profession?
3. How pre-service teachers attitude change towards teaching profession during teacher education program?
4. What are pre-service teachers' career pursuit plans?

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Teacher Training Program

This study was conducted in the Department of Elementary Education in the Faculty of Education at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara, Turkey. Language of instruction is in English in METU. When this study was conducted the Department of Elementary Education offers B.S. degrees in three undergraduate programs: Elementary Mathematics Education, Elementary Science Education, and Early Childhood Education. The Department of Elementary Education aims to help pre-service teachers to develop positive attitudes towards teaching and equip with the essential skills for their future profession. All three programs are four-year programs that aim “to develop teachers with a sound understanding of how children learn” who are “confident in using technology; capable in problem-solving; attentive to human rights, democracy, and ethics” (METU, 2009). The programs in the department emphasize critical thinking, personal reflection, and professional development of pre-service teachers. The ECE program focuses on educating early childhood education teachers with a good self-image, an outgoing personality, a sense of humor and an interest in helping children to achieve a positive image of their own (METU, 2009). The ECE program had required three semesters of teaching practice courses at the fifth, seventh, and eighth semesters. A practice room designed as an ECE setting for drama, art, and project work activities in the department.

Teacher education programs in Turkey recruit pre-service teachers through a multiple choice centralized Entrance to Higher Education Examination (EHEE) which is held only once a year. High school graduates are required to take this exam in order to attend a university. Candidates who take the exam receive their exam score and rank the programs they want to study based on their scores. The most fundamental factor in Turkey is Entrance to Higher Education Examination (EHEE) since the only way to enter university is to get higher score from EHE examination. In 2017, 2.265.844 students applied the EHE examination and just 422.950 got the opportunity to enter university (OSYM, 2017). There is a huge gap between applicants of EHE examination and the students who found chance to enter university. Teacher education programs recruit their students in this system as well.

### 2.2. Participants

A total of 20 female pre-service early childhood education teachers who were studying at the pre-school education program in in the Faculty of Education at METU participated in the study. Their age range was quite similar in semester that they are studying: 18-19 for 2nd semester, 19-21 for 4th semester, 20-21 6th semester and 21-24 for 8th semester. Sixteen preservice teachers were graduated from Anatolian Teacher High School and rest of them graduated from Vocational High Schools for girls. All them them are coming from middle socio ekonomik status. Five pre-service ECE teachers from each 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th semesters participated voluntarily. Participants had field experiences in their 5th, 7th, and 8th semesters. Field experience took place one day each week and comprised observations and participation of in-class activities. Although first practicum course Teaching Experience is mainly based on observation pre-service teachers cannot remain non-participant observer because of children interest. Thus, ECE students generally engage in teaching activities earlier than other teaching students. In 7th, and 8th semester they had Teaching Practicum I and II courses and they take all responsibilities of class. They prepare their own activity plans and apply in class with children (Higher Education Council, 2006). They carried on field experience in private schools at the first two practicum courses and they gained experience in public schools at the last practicum course. All of the schools have similar characteristics and were located in Ankara and served middle and high income level parents. In order to prevent possible

confusion quotations were represented as “Part. 2 sem.” where “2” is referred to participants number and 2nd is referred the participants’ semester. The quoted participant expressions were selected as representative of the perspectives or experiences stated for a specific issue.

### 2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study was gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Participants were selected from each 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th semesters students. Class size was approximately 40 for each class. Researcher decided to choose 5 students from each class as it is manageable number for this kind of qualitative study. Participation was completely voluntary. Researcher first announced the study then evaluate voluntary students characteristics as their demographic and SES characteristics quatie similar. Researcher only look their cumulative grade point average (CGPA). Pre-service teachers having average CGPA were selected for this study. The purpose of the interview was to get specific and in-depth information from five pre-service ECE teachers. . Before carrying out the current study interview protocol was developed based on related literature. Then, two instructors from early childhood education department and a teachers having five years teaching experience in public school investigated the interview questions. They commented minor revision on interview questions. After reviewing interview protocol researcher began to make interviews.

There were 12 open-ended questions which were designed based on related literature. Probing questions were also asked to explore the emerging issues during the interviews. The interviews took 30-45 minutes in average and all interviews were audio-recorded. In order to comfort all of the participants during the interviews researchers indicated that there were no correct answers for the interview questions and their ideas are the only matters for this study. In total 20 pre-service teachers were interviewed upon the factors that affect their decision to become a teacher, their perceptions of satisfaction on their profession, attitude changes toward their profession, and their career pursuit plan. Sample questions for interview protocol is presented below on Table I:

**Table 1:** Sample Questions for Interview Protocol

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How did you decide to become a teacher? What was the main factor effecting your decision?
Are you satisfied with your career choice? Why?
Does your attitude was changed after involving in ECE teacher education program?
Do you think you will work as an ECE teacher for long times? Does it make you happy? What motivates you to continue as a teacher?

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The first step in qualitative analysis begins with having a general impression of the data and seeking patterns in in pages of interviews or field notes. In order to condense our data we need a conceptual framework or research questions. Data analysis is an inescapably selective process and in this study research questions enlighten our way to select and create more meaningful piles of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher read all the texts several times and took notes. Then formed preliminary codes and highlight the significant statements of participants. The literature on pre-service early childhood education teachers’ perception on their future profession revealed considerable amount

of codes for the analysis. Once codes were determined it was easier to categorize data set. When categories were created themes appeared as the following step. The first theme was the deciding to become a teacher, the second theme was satisfaction on their profession, the third theme was attitudes toward ECE throughout school years, and finally the fourth theme was career commitment. Codes and categories are presented below on Table II.

**Table 2.** Coding Themes and Categories

Themes	Categories	Codes
Deciding to Become a Teacher	Love of children/profession	Childhood dream
	Entrance to Higher Education	Passion for teaching new generation
	Examination score	Location of university
	Parents pressure	High school type
Satisfaction on Their Profession	Feeling of being teacher	Making difference in children's' life
		Increasing importance of ECE
		Taking practicum course
Attitude Changes towards ECE	Taking practicum course	Teaching is harder than initial expectations
		Increasing awareness
		Being positive as gain experience
Career Pursuit	Several opportunities	Firmly decided to be a teacher Planning to change in future
	Being teacher at first	
	Teaching might be overwhelming in time	

Certain strategies was followed to ensure thrustworthiness in this qualitative study. Firts of all the present study utilized following formula to measure percentage agreement among the two coders.

$$\text{Reliability of coding: } \frac{\text{Number of coding}}{\text{Total number of segments coded}}$$

All interviews were coded individually by the researcher and the second coder. Then, they came together and compared their codings and they reached a total consensus. Another strategy to validate result of this study is replicability. It refers to recording the exact methods, rules, and procedures so that another researcher can do the same thing and draw the same conclusion (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1996; Merriam, 1998). In so doing, researcher aimed to provide detailed information about the process to enable other researchers to repeat the current study. Finally, in order to comfort all of the participants during the interviews, researcher ensured the confidentiality with consent forms of ethics committee. Yet, most of the participants hesitate to sign the consent form as they were not get used to sign this kind of document. Researcher explained the purpose of consent form briefly then they accept to sign it.

### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1. Deciding to Become a Teacher

Ten out of 20 participants stated that becoming a teacher was their childhood dream and they rated this program willingly in the Entrance to Higher Education Examination (EHEE). They have been deciding to become an ECE teacher in advance because of their passion for dealing with children.

*“I have decided to become early childhood teacher so long ago before entering EHEE. I have already loved children so much. My purpose was definitely ECE” (Part.10 4<sup>th</sup> sem.).*

*“I am very much affected with my childhood and I loved my ECE teacher. It is classic but I love children” (Part.4).*

Even for one participant, becoming an ECE teacher was a strong desire that she studied ECE after studying another profession:

*“I graduated from department of financial management in 2002. Then I thought that I won't be happy in this field. If I live in this world only one time, I should work in the occupation which I love most. I entered EHEE again and I chose ECE” (Part. 16 8<sup>th</sup> sem.).*

One of the participant rated ECE rather than law school which has higher score than ECE also it is more prestigious than ECE.

*“I was so clear and eager when I decided to become an ECE teacher. I was not confused about my decision. My brother did not speak with me because he wanted to me to rate law school in EHEE but I rated ECE at first. I am not regretful or complainant. I always feel comfortable in this field” (Part.18 8<sup>th</sup> sem.).*

While most participants prioritized their love of children in making their career choice, some participants developed a more global perspective on their choice of occupation:

*“I like dealing with people. I would like to see changes on people what I made immediately. I would like to work with people rather than substance. If you would like to change something in a country in a basic level, you should start to zero point” (Part. 7 4<sup>th</sup> sem.).*

Becoming an early childhood teacher was not a career dream for the other 10 participants. Findings revealed that the Entrance to Higher Education Examination score was an important factor in some participants' career choices. Although these participants wanted to rate other programs, their score was not high enough and they eventually rated ECE program:

*“I entered EHE examination expecting to study medicine. Until I got the score I wanted to study medicine then I got 340 and I could not enter any of the medicine school. Studying ECE was not my aim. I have recognized such a profession but I have not even thought it. As I said, I was not thinking become a teacher. The most important thing to make this decision was to score of EHE examination” (Part.11 6<sup>th</sup> sem.).*

Sometimes selection of career relies on external factors; such as, parents' wish and location of school:

*“I have never thought to study in this field. Actually, it was an obligation for me. I got 350 so I was just able to rate Istanbul law school but my father did not let me go to Istanbul and said “you will study in Ankara and you will become a teacher.” I have never thought about teaching [as a profession].” (Part. 8 4<sup>th</sup> sem.).*

High school type also affects choice of profession in Turkey since students are placed into universities both considering their scores on *EHE examination* and their school type. Students graduated from vocational high schools get extra point on *EHE examination*. However, they are not allowed to select program other than their department in vocational high school.

*"I graduated from Anatolian Vocational High School for Girls and there was no choice for me other than the ECE. I was not happy with my department then I decided to rate ODTU as it was the best option among other universities (Part. 2 2<sup>nd</sup> sem.)."*

The *EHE examination* score was also interacting with other factors such as being a teacher of any content and studying at a specific university regardless of the program of the study:

*"I was planning to become math teacher after that, my score did not meet my expectation and that was my second time. I thought whether I am capable of this job then I said it could be. I am not the kind of person claiming that I am born to teach young children" (Part. 19 8<sup>th</sup> sem.)."*

*"When I got my score on EHE examination, I thought that ECE could be an alternative. I wanted to study business and my parents wanted to me to become Turkish or literature teacher. Then ECE was getting attractive between them because of this university" (Part. 20 8<sup>th</sup> sem.)."*

### 3.2. Satisfaction on Their Profession

Prospective teachers are satisfied with natural outcome of teaching profession. For example, being called as "the teacher" by students is enough to make them satisfied with their occupation for all of the participants even if they did not choose their profession willingly. Participants who were taking field experience course expressed an emotional satisfaction for their future career after interaction with the children. P 7 expressed that:

*"I just went to field experience one day per week. When I was leaving school, all of the children hugged me and they said we love you. It was so wonderful. It is an emotionally satisfying job. Children recognized, loved and attached me such a short period of time. It is so beautiful. Think of that I would be a teacher for whole week. That is the striking thing. It satisfies emotionally" (Part. 7 4<sup>th</sup> sem.)."*

P 16 just satisfied with being a teacher:

*"The first time children called me as a teacher I was so happy. I was so happy because they called me as a teacher. .... Every moment spending with children makes me happy" (Part. 16 8<sup>th</sup> sem.)."*

Having a sense of power to shape children's future was also a source of satisfaction as they all plan to make a difference and be satisfied with the accomplishment in their profession. They believe that affecting a child positively would improve whole society:

P 20 satisfied when he saw what he made on children. He noted that:

*"Think of an architect. He is drawing a plan. He is laying the foundation somehow. He is building. I think, we are going to effect growing individual and new generation at first". (Part. 20 8<sup>th</sup> sem.)."*

How they were treated in practicum schools influenced pre-service teachers' satisfaction on their prospective profession. They need guidance and appreciation from mentor teacher and administrators on their practice with children. Receiving appreciation helped P12 to feel more satisfied with his possible future career:

*"I was so many times glad to becoming teacher. Especially, when I was field experience school administrator thanked to me sincerely. She said you are really good teacher and you are going to be really good educator. I was so happy. Even if I won't be teacher I am going to be good father"* (Part.12 6<sup>th</sup> sem.).

ECE gain importance day by day all over the world and Turkey is not an exceptional. P 19 delightful with this advancement not just being teacher. She stated that:

*"People perception of ECE has changed for five years. ECE institution used to be nursery school. Advertisements on ECE proves increasing importance of ECE"* (Part. 18 8<sup>th</sup> sem.).

### 3.3. Attitude Changes towards ECE

Field experience helps to pre-service teachers to feel comfort for entry of teaching profession. Seventeen participants stated that their attitude has changed dramatically. Magnitude of this change increases in upper grade since as they studying in ECE their experiences are also grow. Most of the participants emphasized that being ECE teacher is harder than they thought. P5 explained her attitude changes toward ECE:

*"It has changed so much... I thought that it will be easy but it is more difficult also it is better than what I expect before"* (Part. 5 2<sup>th</sup> sem.).

P6 explained how her awareness improves in the course of time:

*"It was seem like enjoyable at that time but I am aware that we are doing serious job because our failure will affect children's life; hence, we must be more careful"* (Part. 5 4<sup>th</sup> sem.).

Pre-service teachers also feel safe in the field of ECE as they gain experience and equipped with essential knowledge of child development.

P 20 represented his attitudes changes toward teaching with following words:

*"I was in situation that I did not know what to do for a while but I have solution now. Teaching can be considered difficult to do but it is easy field for experienced people. I don't think that I will experience difficulty to work"* (Part. 20 8<sup>th</sup> sem.).

Another participant also delightful with her progress in this field:

*"I was nervous at first. I was afraid of failure with children. I am not anxious about it now. I find myself successful in teaching. I recognized that I am progressing at least I covered. I better communicate with children. I am developing I mean my knowledge has increased; thus, I have less anxiety"* (Part. 16 6<sup>th</sup> sem.).

### 3.4. Career Pursuit

It is difficult to get teacher position in public schools because of different dynamics related with higher education and policies. There are more than 90 Faculties of Education in Turkey and their graduate students outnumber Ministry of National Education's (MONE) teacher needs every year (Üstüner, 2004). Participants were also asked what kind of job they can do after graduating from university and they offered so many opportunities. 18 participants out of 20 stated that studying in early childhood education will provide wide range of career opportunities when they graduated. Table 2 shows career opportunities that participants offered in descending order. In addition to Table 2 participants stated many occupation such as English teacher, special education teacher, drama teacher, being a manager in a school, working in UNESCO or UNICEF's projects, opening a school.

**Table 3:** Prospective Teachers' Career Opportunities

Academician	8
Child's Publication	6
Design including toys or instructional materials	6
Advisor	4
TV Producer	4
Advertising Business	3

Although prospective teachers believed that there will be lots of opportunities when they graduated from university, they prefer to work as a teacher at least at the beginning. P1 noted that:

*"No! I want to become teacher. I would like to work in public or private school"* (Part. 1 2<sup>th</sup> sem.).

*"I think that teaching is most appropriate one for me. I think I will be able to do it... my future profession is teaching"* (Part. 2 2<sup>th</sup> sem.).

P7 highly delightful her career choice and really excited about future plans; however, she complained about people's lack of knowledge about her career opportunities:

*"When the first time I started this program someone said that "if you had studied hard you would be able to study in sociology". Whereas score of sociology is lower than ECE and there are no career opportunities for sociology. I mean if I am a sociologist, I am a nothing. People don't know this. They don't have knowledge about it"* (Part. 7 4<sup>th</sup> sem.).

There are also some participants who don't want to work as a teacher because of its difficulties. P19 may exaggerate these difficulties:

*"It's impossible. I mean, I wonder someone's psychology after retiring this job. As I said before it's a very difficult job"*. (Part. 19 4<sup>th</sup> sem.).

They emphasized that love of children and profession is not enough to provide qualified education as long as teachers have sufficient knowledge on child development. Besides, pre-service teachers are well aware that teaching young children could be challenging jobs as they addressed teachers need to be patient to stand out against all those difficulties.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In this study pre-service teachers stated that their personality best fit into teaching profession as the love of children was a part of their personality. The other path was formed by the context and the factors. Entrance to Higher Education Examination (EHEE) score and family pressure became the determinant of the choice of occupation most of the those who thought that they could be “a” teacher also rated ECE program based on their EHEE score.

Pre-service pre-school education teachers who chose teaching based on their desire, interest and abilities developed more positive attitude towards teaching young children compared to pre-service teachers who choose teaching due to job security and family pressure (Aslan & Akyol, 2006). Kaynak et al. (2015) found that pre-service teachers’ classes that they enrolled in field practice played a significant role on their affinity of children. As pre-service teachers spend more time with children, their views on children tend to change positively and accordingly their likings of the children increase over time. Experienced teachers have higher sense of efficacy than the preservice teachers. Steady increase in teacher efficacy with the years of teaching experience is expected in teaching profession (Kotaman, 2010). It was same in this study throughout the school years participants develops more positive attitude towards teaching young children.

Jolango and Isenberg (2000 p.12) described twelve goals of possible best early childhood educators: ‘understanding child development, positive outlook on children, families and teaching, understanding teacher influence over children’s lives, concentrating on becoming best teacher, taking risk as a part of learning process, adapting flexibility, acquiring specialized knowledge and skills, learning to use material, seeking collaboration with the community, using problem solving strategies, pursuing professional development’. Two main components of ideal teacher take priority among all: “professional knowledge” including expertise on curricular task and knowledge of subject taught and an “appropriate personality” including politeness, modesty, and understanding (Arnon & Reichel, 2007). Lortie (1975) stated that teachers need to commitment to the care and education of young children to achieve those goals. Despite the lack of larger packages of money, prestige, and power usually found in other occupation. Participants’ description of good teachers has revealed little variation. Pre-service teachers gave dual importance for both professional knowledge and personality characteristics.

Most of the teachers leave profession within the first five years of service (Ingersoll, 2001). Teacher attrition is high both in US and European countries because of lack of support, difficulties of classroom management, job dissatisfaction and pursuit of better career opportunities (Everton et al, 2007; Sumsion, 2002; Saban, 2002). Although pre-service teachers in this study were eager to work as a teacher they accepted that working as a teacher in a long run might be exhausting.

Teachers do not work in the profession in which they had invested four years of college study. Considering the time, effort, and money invested by the individual in becoming a teacher, attrition causes both a waste of money and human capital. Thus, teacher retention does not just provide monetary savings, more importantly; it would provide savings in our children's educational future. A motivated and experienced team of teaching professionals directly correlates with an improved educational system because teacher attrition is disruptive to the education of students (Jalongo & Heider, 2006; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). Teacher attrition is not an issue in Turkey but we are struggling bigger problem than teacher retention. Teacher burnout might cause more severe problem teacher retention since children are trapped with someone who actually do not want to be in that class (Buyukbayraktar & Temiz, 2015). This study showed that pre-service teachers who have extraordinary motivation to perform teaching profession planned to work as a teacher. Participants having high or moderate motivation for teaching looked for other career options. All of the participants claim that having good English and technological

skills make them superior compared to other university graduates as METU technology oriented university serving education in English.

#### **4.1. Limitations and Further Research**

The present study was conducted with pre-service teachers studying at METU. As such, pre-service early childhood education teachers' perception on their future profession might be specific to METU as it is technology oriented university serving education in English. Although it was not the aim of this study to reach a generalization as a qualitative study, conducting similar studies with other universities graduates might shed light on pre-service teachers' perception on teaching profession. Another point to underline is that this study was limited to self-reports of the participants. Observing pre-service teachers in practicum schools could bring a comprehensive understanding of what they had experienced and how perceive teaching profession.

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