

Attitudinal Differences of Teacher Candidates towards the Teaching Profession

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to determine the differences in the attitudes of teacher candidates towards the teaching profession and the factors that influence their career choice as a teacher. This study was based on a cross sectional design. Rational screening model was used, employing mixed methods research strategy. Quantitative instruments were used to determine the attitudes of teacher candidates towards the profession, and qualitative instruments to determine the reasons for choosing teaching as a career. In terms of mixed methods design, concurrent procedures were utilized. Teacher candidates have a moderately positive attitude towards their teaching profession. However, attitude scores of teacher candidates differed significantly in terms of their year of study and this difference was especially obvious between first and fourth graders. Attitude scores of students in their final year of study were significantly lower. Attitude scores of teacher candidates differ significantly according to their departments. The highest attitude scores are shown by CT, SST, and PT departments and the lowest scores by GPC, TMH, and CEIT. In addition, extrinsic motivators are more dominant in career choice. Teacher education programs need to be revised and developed with adequate emphasis on affective dimensions. Suitable measures will have to be taken to improve the attitudes in such programs as GPC, TMH, and CEIT. Affective dimensions, such as attitude levels of the candidates towards the teaching profession, needs to be assessed through interviews. Besides, teacher education programs need to be so revised as to include and strengthen especially the affective skills of teacher candidates. For this, the employment policy must be revised and the existing quota of some undergraduate programs will have to be curtailed.

Keywords: pre service teacher education, teacher attitudes, career choice, program effectiveness

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Öğretmen Adaylarının Öğretmenlik Mesleğine Yönelik Tutumlarındaki Farklılıklar

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleğine yönelik tutumlarındaki farklılığı ve öğretmen adaylarının meslek seçimini etkileyen faktörlerin belirlenmesidir. Bu araştırma kesitsel bir çalışmaya dayanmaktadır. Tarama modeli kullanılan araştırmada nitel ve nicel verilerin birlikte toplandığı karma desen benimsenmiştir. Araştırmada nicel veriler öğretmen adaylarının mesleğe yönelik tutumlarını belirlemek amacıyla, nitel veriler ise öğretmen adaylarının meslek seçimini etkileyen faktörleri ortaya koymak amacıyla toplanmıştır. Eşzamanlı veri toplama tekniği hem nitel hem de nicel verilerin aynı anda toplanarak değerlendirilmesinde benimsenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda öğretmen adaylarının genel olarak mesleğe yönelik oldukça olumlu bir tutuma sahip oldukları görülmüştür. Ancak öğretmen adaylarının mesleğe yönelik tutumlarında sınıf düzeyine göre özellikle birinci ve dördüncü sınıflar arasında anlamlı farklar bulunmuştur. Buna göre son sınıf öğrencilerinin tutum puanları birinci sınıf öğrencilerine göre anlamlı şekilde düşüktür. Öğretmen adaylarının tutum puanları bölümlere göre de anlamlı şekilde farklılaşmaktadır. En olumlu tutuma sahip olan gruplar sınıf öğretmenliği, sosyal bilgiler öğretmenliği ve okul öncesi öğretmenliği grupları iken en düşük tutum puanına sahip olan gruplar psikolojik danışma ve rehberlik, zihin engelliler öğretmenliği ve bilgisayar ve iletişim teknolojileri öğretmenliği gruplarıdır. Ayrıca dış motivasyon kaynaklarının kariyer seçiminde daha etkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Buna göre öğretmen eğitimi programlarının özellikle duyuşsal boyut bağlamında güçlendirilmesi ve program geliştirme sürecinde bu boyuta özellikle önem verilmesi gerekmektedir. Özellikle psikolojik danışma ve rehberlik, zihin engelliler öğretmenliği ve bilgisayar ve iletişim teknolojileri öğretmenliği programlarındaki öğrencilerin mesleğe yönelik tutumlarını olumlu yönde artırma adına gerekli tedbirlerin alınması gerekmektedir. Eğitim fakültelerine başlayacak olan öğretmen adaylarının mesleğe yönelik tutumlarının duyuşsal boyutta mülakat gibi yöntemlerle tespit edilmesi gerekmektedir. Öğretmen eğitimi programlarının da mesleğe yönelik tutumları özellikle duyuşsal boyutu güçlendirecek şekilde geliştirilmesinin gerekliliği açıktır. Bunun için öğretmen adaylarının mesleğe başlama kriterleri ve süreçlerinin yeniden gözden geçirilmesi ve lisans düzeyindeki bazı programlara sınırlama getirilmesi faydalı olabilecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: öğretmen eğitimi, öğretmenlik tutumları, meslek seçimi, program etkililiği

Introduction

Attitudes defined as mental or neural states of readiness and organized through experience or inner constructs, having a dynamic influence upon the individual's response to objects and situations are known to influence the behaviours of individuals (Allport, 1935). As attitudes are crucial to determining future behaviours, it is important that learning experiences and programs offered at teacher training institutes equip the teacher candidates with high levels of positive attitudes towards the profession. Such positive attitudes might be helpful for future teaching of teacher candidates. In this respect, positive changes in the attitudes of teacher candidates towards their profession, at teacher education institutions, may be regarded as a valuable outcome of the programs offered. Therefore, during teacher education programs at teacher education institutions, it is crucial to strengthen the positive attitudes of teacher candidates towards teaching profession.

At education faculties, programs offered are to aim at developing both cognitive and affective skills of Teacher candidates and main components of the curriculum should be designed to address these needs. However, since each faculty designs their own curriculum in Turkey based on the frameworks provided by Higher Education Council (HEC), the implementation of these programs at education faculties might slightly differ. Thus, it is crucial to analyze department wise differences for attitudes of teacher candidates at education faculties. To this end, there are a couple of salient studies conducted. In a study conducted on 1577 participants Kılınç, Watt, and Richardson (2012) examined motivations and perceptions on the teaching profession. Researchers stated that non-science departments of education faculties had higher scores in all of the motivations and beliefs about teaching. Another study conducted by Üstüner, Demirtaş and Cömert (2009) analyzed the attitudes of 593 teacher candidates from different departments towards the teaching profession. Results of the study indicate that teacher candidates from such departments as physical education and sports teaching, preschool teaching had better attitudes compared to teacher candidates at science teaching and computer education teaching departments.

As known, one of the main tasks of education faculties is to improve the affective skills of teacher candidates as well as cognitive skills. An effective way for education faculties to contribute to better attitudes of teacher candidates is towards the programs that they implement. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze teacher candidates' attitudes towards the teaching profession in terms of their year of study. By this way, the attitudes of teacher candidates could be compared to one another and this could reveal important results for not only the effectiveness of such programs but also for the measures to be implemented to better those programs. To this end a couple of studies stand out. In a longitudinal study conducted by Tok (2011), 66 teacher candidates were observed. It was revealed, as a result of the study, that teacher candidates had better attitudes in their first year of study compared to the final year. Thus, the researcher concluded that teacher education programs had a negative impact on the attitudes of teacher candidates. In another study conducted by Sullivan (2014), an assessment instrument dealing with beliefs about teaching was administered to the same group of students in 2010 and in 2012. As a result of the

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study, it was found that teacher candidates had higher levels of positive attitudes towards the teaching profession when they first enrolled the teaching programs compared to their exit.

Attitudes towards teaching profession cannot be fully explored without considering motivators that drive candidates to choose this profession. Therefore, it is important to analyze motivators while judging attitudes. Thus, in terms of the theoretical framework, this study is based on Goal Contents Theory which is one of the sub theories of Self Determination Theory.

Self Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) is defined as a macro-theory of human motivation, personality development, and well-being. The theory focuses on self-determined behaviour and the social and cultural conditions that promote it. (Ryan, Hutta, and Deci, 2008). Some important studies that led to the foundation of STD included research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Deci, 1971). Intrinsic motivation, according to Deci (1971), is an activity for its own sake because it is interesting and satisfying in itself, whereas extrinsic motivation relies on external goals or rewards.

According to goal contents theory, one of the five sub theories of STD, some of the goals that individuals have are more likely to lead to wellbeing than others. Certain goals such as community support, personal growth, and the formation of close relationships are called intrinsic (Kasser and Ryan, 1996). These goals facilitate autonomy, and competence. On the other hand, some other extrinsic goals are related to gaining wealth and improving reputation. These goals often hinder autonomy, and competence. Thus, such extrinsic goals impair wellbeing and learning (Kasser and Ryan, 1996). Individuals, according to goal contents theory, who more rely on extrinsic goals, are especially concerned with money and status whereas people who rely on intrinsic values more rely on relationships, personal development, and community. Thus, intrinsic values are directly related to personal fulfilment and developing the community (Ryan and Deci, 2013).

In this study, motivations of teacher candidates towards choosing the teaching profession are analyzed based on the intrinsic versus extrinsic drives that were put forward by the theory of goal contents. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were determined as meta themes and teacher candidates' perspectives to choose the profession were analyzed under these two broad meta themes.

In a salient study on teaching motivations, researchers analyzed the different motivational factors for Australian teacher candidates (Richardson and Watt, 2006). In the study, the Australian FIT-Choice sample included 1653 pre service teachers, from undergraduate Bachelor and graduate entry programs. Across the sample as a whole, highest rated motivations for teaching were teaching abilities, the intrinsic value of teaching, and the desire to make a social contribution. The lowest rated

motivation was choosing teaching as a ‘fallback’ career. As a result of the study, it was found that teacher education candidates were aware that the demands were high, and returns low.

Another study conducted by Watt and Richardson (2012) focused on how teaching motivations differed across different groups of beginning teachers, and how teaching motivations were relevant to other important factors. The FIT-Choice scale was used in the study. It was found that ability motivations and intrinsic value were highly important, except interestingly, in the Chinese and Turkish settings. Career choice was less based on individual interests and abilities in a collectivistic culture such as China, or a developing nation such as Turkey in which more basic needs such as job security had primacy, on which the Turkish sample indeed scored highest.

Many of these studies suggest that further studies on attitudes be carried out on larger samples comprising various programs. Based on these suggestions, this study was taken up with a large study group and many teacher education programs. In addition, the present study focused not only on analyzing the relationship between teacher education programs and attitudes, but also on identifying the reasons why teacher candidates choose the teaching profession as a career.

In Turkey, teacher candidates appear to have lately developed a negative attitude towards teaching profession consequent to frequent interventions in teacher education policy implementation. Besides, thousands of graduates waiting to be appointed to government schools, and the simultaneous increase in negative propaganda by the media towards the profession might have contributed to this attitudinal change. Therefore, it is necessary to determine and evaluate teacher candidates’ attitudes towards teaching profession periodically. Furthermore, determining whether teacher education programs at teacher education institutions promote a positive attitude towards the teaching profession will help in assessing the effectiveness of those programs.

The Aim of the Study

The objective of this study is to determine the differences in the attitudes of teacher candidates towards the teaching profession and the factors that influence their career choice as a teacher. To achieve this objective, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Do the attitudes of teacher candidates towards the teaching profession differ because of year of study, department, and year of study in relation to department variables?
2. What are the factors that influence teacher candidates in choosing teaching profession as a career?
3. What is the point of view of teacher candidates regarding an alternative career choice?

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Method

Model of the Research

This study was based on a cross sectional design. As the objective of this study was to unravel the state as it is, rational screening model was used, employing mixed methods research strategy. Quantitative instruments were used to determine the attitudes of teacher candidates towards the profession, and qualitative instruments to determine the reasons for choosing teaching as a career. In terms of mixed methods design, concurrent procedures, in which the researcher converges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem, was utilized. In this design, the investigator collects both forms of data at the same time during the study and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results (Creswell, 2003).

Participants

The study was conducted at one of the most crowded and oldest public universities in Turkey, Ankara University. The university is located in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. All the participants in the study were teacher candidates from the departments at the faculty of educational sciences during the academic year 2014-2015. As the aim was to reach all undergraduate students, no further sampling was considered necessary. The participants who willingly contributed to this study included 216 participants of 1st grade, 225 participants of 2nd grade, 236 participants of 3rd grade, and 215 participants of 4th grade. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the participants.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Participants

	1st grade			2nd grade			3rd grade			4th grade		
	m	f	s	m	f	s	m	f	s	m	f	s
Classroom Teaching	10	38	48	6	41	47	9	41	50	9	31	40
Pre School Teaching	9	23	32	4	28	32	5	38	43	4	27	31
Computer Education and Instructional Technology	16	18	34	14	25	39	7	24	31	18	24	42
Teaching Mentally Handicapped	10	22	32	7	23	30	19	18	37	15	16	31
Guidance and Psychological Counseling	11	21	32	8	33	41	7	26	33	8	33	41
Social Sciences Teaching	15	23	38	15	21	36	22	20	42	10	20	30
Total	71	145	216	54	171	225	69	167	236	64	151	215
TOTAL	892											

Data Collection Instrument

The data collection tool comprised two sections. In the 1st section, an information form, together with two open ended questions, was used to gather information about the participants and the reasons behind their choosing teaching as a career. The 2nd section used Attitude Scale towards the Profession of Teaching (ASTPT), originally developed by Üstüner (2006). The scale developed by Üstüner (2006) is a single dimension Likert type scale with 5 points; it consists of 34 items, 24 positive and 10 negative. In terms of present study, the internal reliability coefficient was calculated as $\alpha=.967$. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to the scale since it was a previously validated scale. The goodness of fit index (GFI) of the items was presented in Table 2.

Table 2

The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) of the Items

Fit Index	Findings to the scale
NFI	0.96
NNFI	0.96
CFI	0.96
GFI	0.60
AGFI	0.55
RMSEA	0.08
SRMR	0.062
χ^2	1005.05
df	525

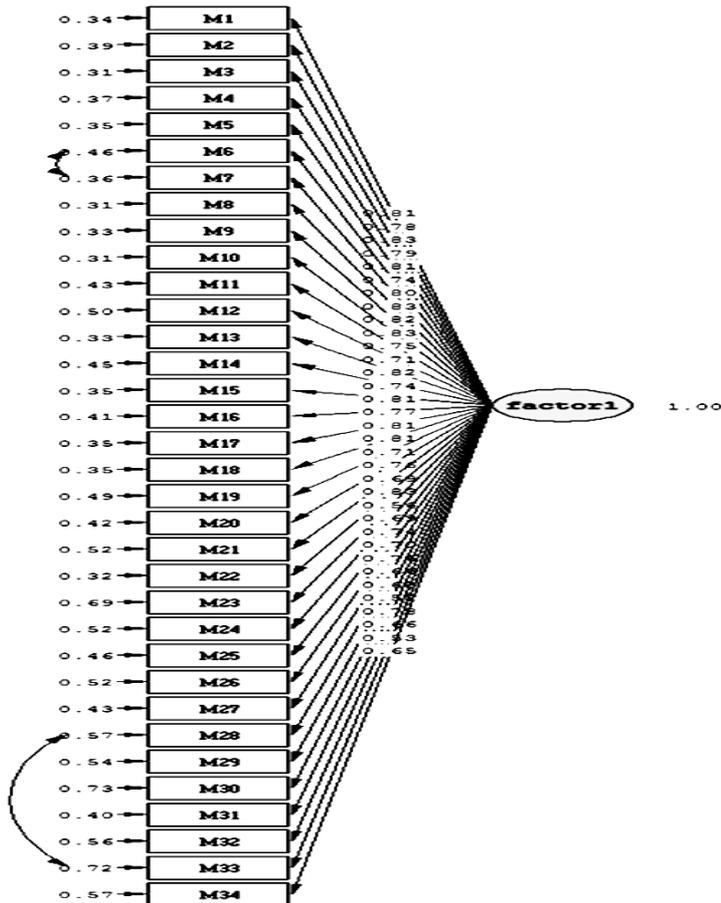
As seen in Table 2, Chi-square test is significant ($\chi^2/df = 1, 91$).The goodness of fit index (GFI = 0.60), the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI = 0.55), the normed fit index (NFI = 0.96), the non-normed fit index (NNFI = 0.96), the comparative fit index (CFI= 0.96) are all indicating good fit. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.08), as well as the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.06) also indicate good fit. Furthermore, the overall model fit statistics in LISREL is within the generally accepted thresholds and suggests an acceptable goodness-of-fit. As a result of this analysis, it was observed that results indicated good fit (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 2001; Schermelleh-Engel and Moosbrugger, 2003). Road scheme of the items to the scale was shown in Figure 1.

It can be seen that error variances of all items are all below 0.90. Thus, although item numbers 6- 7 and 28 -33 looked to measure similar constructs, they had to stay in the scale as separate items since they do not cause a decrease in the Chi-square value and since all indices signify good fit.

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Figure 1

Path Diagram of the Items to the Scale



Data Collection Process

For data collection, permission was obtained from the University's ethical committee and the Dean's office. Data was collected during 2014-2015 spring semester at Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, from six different departments. Data collection was based on voluntary basis and implementation of data collection instrument lasted approximately 15 minutes for each participant.

Analysis of Data

Quantitative data

Data gathered through ASTPT was analyzed through parametric statistics such as MANOVA and ANOVA. The effect size for the statistical findings was also calculated.

Qualitative data

The data gathered through the two open ended questions was analyzed using content analysis method. During content analysis, two meta themes as intrinsic and extrinsic motivators were determined and sub-themes were identified through coding. The coding process was administered by a qualitative analysis expert. An inter coder reliability analysis was conducted, based on the codes and sub-themes were obtained during content analysis. The formula of Miles and Huberman (1994), Reliability= [Agreement / (Agreement+Disagreement)] x 100, was used and inter coder reliability between the researcher and the expert was found to be 89%. Qualitative data results were presented using both descriptive statistics and the quotations extracted from the responses of participants. Names of the participants in the study were kept confidential and in their place alternate names were used in presenting the quotes.

Results

This section presents the results for each research question separately.

Influence of Year of Study on Determining Attitudes towards Teaching Profession

Table 3

Attitude Changes, Year of Study-Wise

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P
Between Groups	25815,475	3	8605,158		
Within Groups	684458,871	888	770,787	11,164	.000
Total	710274,345	891			

As shown in Table 3, attitude scores of teacher candidates differ significantly among the year of study. It can be observed that the total mean (\bar{x} =130, 27) is well above the scale’s mean score (\bar{x} =102). The highest mean score (\bar{x} =135, 50) belongs to the 1st graders, and the lowest (\bar{x} =121, 44) to the 4th graders. According to the results of the Fisher test, carried out to identify the source of difference among the groups, significant differences were found between 1st and 3rd graders in favour of 1st graders, between 4th graders and 1st graders in favour of 1st graders, between 4th graders and 2nd graders in favour of 2nd graders, and between 4th graders and 3rd graders in favour of 3rd graders. In other words, the attitude scores of 1st graders are significantly higher than those of 3rd graders and the scores of 4th graders significantly lower than those of all the other three grades.

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Influence of Department on Determining Attitude towards Teaching Profession

Table 4

Attitude Changes, Department-Wise

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P
Between Groups	9657,641	5	1931,528	2,443	.033
Within Groups	700616,704	886	790,764		
Total	710274,345	891			

Attitude scores of teacher candidates differ significantly among departments. The high mean scores belong to Classroom Teaching (CT) ($\bar{x}=134,54$), Social Sciences Teaching (SST) ($\bar{x}=132,59$), and Preschool Teaching (PT) ($\bar{x}=132,39$), and low mean scores to Guidance and Psychological Counselling (GPC) ($\bar{x}=126,51$), Teaching the Mentally Handicapped (TMH) ($\bar{x}=126,65$), and Computer Education and Instructional Technology (CEIT) ($\bar{x}=127,52$) departments. Significant differences were also found between GPC and CT, CEIT and CT, TMH and CT. In all the three instances, the mean scores of CT department are significantly higher.

Influence of Department on Determining Attitude towards Teaching Profession

Table 5

MANOVA Results for Year of Study and Department Variables

Group	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	f	p	Effect size
Year of study and department	20906,397	15	1393,760	1,846	,025	,031
Error	655272,493	868	754,922			
Total	15848060,000	892				

According to MANOVA results, year of study and department variables together had a significant effect on attitude scores of teacher candidates and the effect size signified a moderate effect on attitudes. To further determine the effect on different departments in terms of year of study, ANOVA test was utilized. According to ANOVA, the attitude scores of teacher candidates at GPC, CEIT, and SST programs do not differ significantly among years of study, while those at PT program do. The results of LSD test reveal significant differences between 1st graders and 4th graders in favour of 1st graders, and between 3rd graders and 4th graders in favour of 3rd graders. In other words, the mean attitude score of 4th graders is significantly less than that of 1st and 3rd graders. In addition, the attitude scores of teacher candidates at PT program differ significantly among years of study. The mean attitude score of 4th graders is significantly less than that of all the other three grades. Likewise, the

attitude scores of teacher candidates at TMH program differ significantly among years of study. The results of LSD test reveal that the mean attitude score of 4th graders is significantly less than that of 1st graders.

Reasons for Teacher candidates’ Choosing Teaching Profession

Results regarding the reasons for choosing teaching profession are presented for each program of study. The number of responses from participants in this section is different from the total number of participants (892), because not every participant responded to open ended questions. The number of participants who responded to the open ended questions is denoted by “f”. Table 6 lists the extrinsic and intrinsic motivators that determined the career choice of teacher candidates.

Table 6

Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivators That Influenced Teacher candidates

Meta Themes	Extrinsic motivators	Intrinsic motivators
Sub Themes	Scores of university entrance exam	Personal characteristics and
	Influence of family or social environment	Desire to work with children
	Working and employment	Desire to be beneficial to society

First open-ended question

In GPC program, 108 participants responded. Among them, 61% (f=66) stressed extrinsic motivators, and only 39% (f=42) stressed intrinsic motivators. Zeynep, a 4th grader, explains her point of view as follows, in her own words:

“Teaching is an easy going job and there are a lot of holidays in a year. Besides, we can easily find job in a government school, as compared to other departments. We can be appointed to government schools even by getting lower scores in the KPSS exam. We can also be hired as psychological counsellors, and so we don’t have to work as teachers.”

In CEIT program, 125 participants responded. Among them, 64% (f=80) stressed extrinsic motivators whereas only 36% (f=45) stressed intrinsic motivators. For this program, extrinsic motivators are thus more dominant in career choice. A 3rd grader explains his point of view thus, in his own words:

“I graduated from a computer program of a vocational high school. For this reason, extra scores are added to my overall score in the university exam. If I were more successful in mathematics at high school and if we had better teachers, I would definitely choose an engineering program, but my scores were good enough only for enrolling in this program.”

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In PT program, 110 participants responded. Among them, 44% (f=48) stressed extrinsic motivators whereas 56% (f=62) stressed intrinsic motivators. For this program, intrinsic motivators are thus more dominant in career choice. A 2nd grader, Sinem, explains her point of view thus, in her own words:

“I chose teaching profession, because I like teaching and learning. Besides, I like to improve my skills all the time. I think that I will be helpful to my students. Even if I had another chance, I would choose the same profession.”

In CT program, 132 participants responded. Among them, 58% (f=76) stressed intrinsic motivators, whereas 42% (f=56) stressed extrinsic motivators. Intrinsic motivators are thus slightly more dominant in career choice. A notable finding from this program is that ‘love towards children’ was emphasized as the intrinsic motivator. A 3rd grader, Sude, explains her point of view, in her own words, thus:

“I love children so much. Playing with them, teaching them, and sharing time with them are very enjoyable. They are our future and I love helping them.”

In SST program, 123 participants responded. Among them, 62% (f=76) stressed extrinsic motivators, whereas only 38% (f=47) stressed intrinsic motivators. Extrinsic motivators are thus dominant in career choice. A 3rd grader, Deniz, explains her point of view thus, in her own words:

“To tell the truth, I chose this profession because of my score in the university exam. Unfortunately, in our country, the evaluation system is not aligned with skills or competencies of students, but is used to eliminate maximum number of students through a multiple choice test. If I had another chance, I would have liked to be a journalist.”

In TMH program, 125 participants responded. Among them, 65% (f=81) stressed extrinsic motivators, whereas only 35% (f=44) stressed intrinsic motivators. Extrinsic motivators are thus clearly dominant in career choice. A 2nd grader, Zuhul, explains her point of view thus, in her own words:

“I graduated from a vocational high school for girls, so I got extra scores in the university exam. I didn’t have many options because education was terrible in high school. If, by any means, I had a chance, I would definitely have chosen faculty of law.”

Thus, overall 723 participants responded to the first open ended question and among them 56% (f=407) stressed extrinsic motivators whereas 44% (f=316) stressed intrinsic motivators for choosing teaching as a career.

Second open-ended question

From GPC program, 98 participants responded. Among them, 66% (f=65) stated that they would not think of choosing another department or career and that they are happy with their program. On the other hand, 34% (f=33) of them stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession.

From CEIT program, 118 participants responded. Among them, 71% (f=84) stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession, whereas 29% (f=34) stated that they would not think of choosing another department or career and that they are happy with their program. Notably, while the number of participants, who stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession, was 56% in the 1st grade, it was 78% in the 4th grade.

From PT program, 105 participants responded. Among them, 61% (f=64) stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession, whereas 39% (f=41) stated that they would not think of choosing another department or career. Notably, while the number of participants, who stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession, was 53% in the 1st grade, it was 67% in the 4th grade.

From CT program, 125 participants responded. Among them, 61% (f=76) stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession, whereas only 39% (f=49) stated that they would not think of choosing another department or career and that they are happy with their program. Notably, while the number of participants who stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession was 45% in the 1st grade, it was 78% in the 4th grade.

From SST program, 103 participants responded. Among them, 69% (f=71) stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession, whereas only 31% (f=32) stated that they would not think of choosing another department or career. Notably, while the number of participants, who stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession, was 58% in the 1st grade, it was 71% in the 4th grade.

From TMH program, 109 participants responded. Among them, 61% (f=67) stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession, whereas only 39% (f=42) stated that they would not think of choosing another department or career. Notably, while the number of participants, who stated that they would have preferred to choose another profession, was 46% in the 1st grade, it was 70% in the 4th grade.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Research results of this study indicate that the teacher candidates have a moderately positive attitude towards their teaching profession. However, it was observed that attitude scores of teacher candidates differed significantly in terms of their year of study and this difference was especially obvious between first and

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fourth graders. Previous research yields interesting results in terms of differences in teacher candidates' attitude. The belief that attitudes are resistant to change is borne out by numerous studies, which show that it is either impossible or very difficult to change them. Üstüner, Demirtaş and Cömert (2009), Boger and Boger (2000) and Sullivan (2014) argue that teacher education programs do not have an effect on changing the attitudes of teacher candidates. As teacher education programs last for four years in Turkey, it is generally expected that they would bring about a positive change in the attitudes of students. On the contrary, the present research results show that the attitude scores of students in their final year of study were significantly lower. This finding is in conformity with that of Tok (2011), who found that the attitude scores of teacher candidates were significantly higher in the 1st grade than those in the final year. Similarly, Uğurlu and Polat (2011) assert that attitude scores of teacher candidates decrease through final year of study. In the present study, the qualitative results support the quantitative results in that the number of teacher candidates, who confessed that they would have chosen another profession, was higher in their final year of study. This could be because of different variables, such as concerns for employment, KPSS (public personnel selection) exam, or funding and financial support. However, the mission of teacher education programs should be to improve affective traits, besides imparting cognitive skills.

The results of this research also show that the attitude scores of teacher candidates differ significantly according to departments. The highest attitude scores are shown by CT, SST, and PT departments and the lowest scores by GPC, TMH, and CEIT. These results support the findings of the study conducted by Üstüner, Demirtaş and Cömert (2009) in which CEIT department showed the lowest attitude score. The present study showed a significant difference between CT and three other departments, GPC, TMH, and CEIT, in favour of CT. CT program is one of the cornerstone programs of education faculties; so, high attitude scores signify optimistic prospects for teaching profession. It is heartening to note that CT program, unlike other programs, showed that 41 % of teacher candidates cited the desire to work with children as their intrinsic motivator. This may explain why they have higher attitude scores. On the other hand, teacher candidates of GPC program emphatically cited working and employment conditions as their extrinsic motivators. The participants of this group stated that they love their profession, but their love is more for psychological counselling as a separate discipline. This might explain why they have the lowest attitude scores. Participants in TMH and CEIT programs stated that most of them graduated from vocational high schools and got extra scores in the university exams. This might explain why they have lower attitude scores. Qualitative results also strengthen this inference in that 70% and 78% of 4th year students of TMH and CEIT programs respectively confessed that they would have chosen another profession. Numerous teacher candidates in both these programs confessed that they would have chosen a more popular career, such as law, but because of their low scores they could enroll themselves only for the faculty of education.

The results relating to attitudes in terms of year of study in relation to departments show that attitude scores of 4th graders are below those of 1st and 3rd graders in PT department, below those of all the other three grades in CT department, and below those of 1st graders in TMH department. Attitude scores of 4th graders are thus significantly below those of 1st graders.

As regards the reasons why teacher candidates chose teaching as their profession, results show that extrinsic motivators are more dominant. 56% (f=407) of participants stressed extrinsic motivators whereas 44% (f=316) stressed intrinsic motivators for choosing teaching as a career. Among six different departments, only CT and PT programs showed a more intrinsic inclination towards choosing the teaching profession.

Therefore, in selecting teacher candidates to education faculties, affective dimensions, such as attitude levels of the candidates, needs to be assessed through interviews and candidates with higher attitude levels need to be given priority. Besides, teacher education programs need to be so revised as to strengthen the affective skills of teacher candidates. To accomplish this, each faculty needs to align its teaching methods and evaluation criteria with not only cognitive, but also affective skills. The lower attitude scores of students, especially the fourth graders, need to be carefully analyzed and appropriate corrective measures initiated. For this, the employment policy must be revised and the existing quota of some undergraduate programs will have to be curtailed. Furthermore, in terms of departments, appropriate corrective measures must be taken to improve the attitudes of teacher candidates at GPC, TMH, and CEIT.

This study suggests that, extrinsic motivators play a more dominant role in career choice. As Moran et al. (2001) and Wang and Fwu (2001) suggest, intrinsic motivators need to be strengthened and teacher candidates equipped with intrinsic drives. To accomplish this, financial status of the teachers needs to be improved and policies to strengthen the profession's prestige in the public eye need to be implemented. As changes in attitudes are closely related to social changes and developments, research on attitudes needs to be continual.

Participants of this study comprise all voluntary teacher candidates at the faculty of educational sciences at Ankara University, Turkey. Although the data set is very large, it represents the data gathered from a university. Thus, further research could be implemented by comparing data from many other countries. Finally, this study was based on a cross sectional design- not a longitudinal one. Further study could be implemented using a longitudinal design analyzing the same students throughout all four years at education faculties.

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