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OKULÖNCESİ ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ ÖĞRETMENLİK MESLEĞİNE İLİŞKİN TUTUMLARI*

*ATTITUDES OF PRESCHOOL TEACHER CANDIDATES
TOWARDS TEACHING PROFESSION*

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Şafak ÖZTÜRK AYNAL

OMÜ Eğitim F.Okul Öncesi Eğitimi

Abstract

Occupation is one of the most significant elements of one's life. As in the choice of partners, it is not arbitrary or temporary; on the contrary, it is a concept which covers and characterizes the whole life. In Turkey, with the growing focus on preschool education, the individuals who will serve in this field should show more sensitivity to their professions fore, choosing a profession requires rational thinking and decision making. Due to these reasons, the aim of this study is to determine the attitudes of teacher candidates regarding teaching profession from the point of view of different variables. The study was taken place at Ondokuz Mayıs University Teachers' College in 2010-2011 year of education and 181 first and fourth grade preschool teaching program students participated in it. In order to obtain the data of the research scanning method entitled "Determination of Attitude Towards Teaching Profession" was used which was developed by Çetin (2006) . During the analysis of the research data SPSS 15.0 program and the necessary statistical methods were used to analyze the data of the research. At the result of the

* Bu makale Crosscheck sistemi tarafından taranmış ve bu sistem sonuçlarına göre orijinal bir makale olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

research it is understood that the attitudes of teacher candidates change according to participants' class level and graduation of high school. In generally, it is proved that the attitude of the candidate teachers to their profession is positive.

Key Words: Teaching Profession, Attitude, Teacher Candidates

Öz

Meslek, bir insanın yaşamındaki en önemli öğelerden birisidir. Tıpkı eş seçiminde olduğu gibi öylesine ya da geçici süreliğine tercih edilecek bir olgu değil, tersine insanın hayatı boyunca yer eden ve artık onunla özdeşleşen bir olgu durumundadır. O nedenle, meslek tercihi yapılırken gerçekten çok iyi düşünerek karar vermek gerekir. Ülkemizde özellikle son yıllarda okul öncesi eğitime verilen önemin artmasıyla birlikte bu alanda öğretmenlik yapacak olan kişilerin mesleklerine daha hassasiyet göstermeleri ve önem vermeleri icap etmektedir. Bu gerekçeden yola çıkarak bu araştırmada da çocuğun eğitiminde bu kadar önemli yeri olan okul öncesi öğretmenliğine yetişecek olan okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının kendi mesleklerine bakış açılarını değerlendirmek hedeflenmiştir. Ana amacı, okul öncesi öğretmenliği programında okuyan birinci ve son sınıf öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleğine karşı olan tutumlarını tespit edebilmek olan bu çalışmaya 2010 - 2011 eğitim-öğretim yılında Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi İlköğretim bölümü okul öncesi öğretmenliği programının 1 ve 4. sınıfında okuyan toplam 181 öğretmen adayı katılmıştır. Tarama yönteminin kullanıldığı araştırmanın verilerinin toplanması amacıyla Çetin (2006) tarafından geliştirilmiş olan "Öğretmenlik Mesleğine Yönelik Tutum Belirleme Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Araştırma verilerinin analizinde SPSS 15.0 programı yararlanılmış ve gerekli istatistiksel teknikler kullanılarak, araştırmanın verileri analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonucunda öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleğine yönelik tutumlarının okudukları sınıf ve mezun oldukları liseye göre anlamlı olarak değiştiği tespit edilmiştir. Ancak genel anlamda tutum ölçeğine verilen yanıtlarda çalışmaya katılan öğretmen adaylarının mesleklerine olan tutumlarının olumlu olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okul öncesi öğretmen adayı, öğretmenlik mesleği, tutum

Introduction

Today, scientists view education as a social system and agree that this system comprises three basic elements: student, teacher, and educational programs. Given that the most significant element of the society is the individual, the most significant element of education is the teacher. For the future of the society and the country, the importance of teachers and the teaching profession should be emphasized. For, the teaching profession directs nations' destiny (Aydın, 2009) just as in the words of Atatürk, the great leader and the master teacher:

"Teachers, the republic's devoted teachers and educators, you will raise the new generation. And the new generation will be your product. The value of the product will correspond with your talent and devotion. The Republic requires protectors who are strong in terms of mind, knowledge, science, body and character. Raising the new generation in this way is in your hands" (cited in Aydın, 2009, p. 205.).

Occupation is one of the most significant elements of one's life. As in the choice of partners, it is not arbitrary or temporary; on the contrary, it is a concept which covers and characterizes the whole life. Therefore, choosing a profession requires rational thinking and decision making. For, the individual's happiness in work life will have reflections on their life in general and social life as well. This will form the background for the development of the society. In this sense, teachers represent a significant human capital and their contributions to the educational process are highly significant for development (Bozdoğan et al., 2007).

The recognition of qualitative studies within the recent years has influenced the traditions of research on teachers positively and has led to new directions and contributions. A glance at educational research studies in Turkey reveals that there are many studies on teachers. In general, these studies (Assunção, 2000; Bozdoğan et al., 2007; Esen, 2005; Girgin et al., 2010; Lopes, 2000; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002) are concerned with the young individual's perspectives on their professional identity and most of the studies have adopted various research techniques like interview, diary, written stories, group discussion, and attitude scales. For instance, in Bozdoğan et al.'s study (2007) on university students' attitudes towards their profession, "Teaching Profession Attitudes Scale" was used. As a result of the study, it was found out that pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession varied significantly in terms of sex and the factors underlying the undergraduate program choice.

In Girgin et al.'s study (2010) on pre-service pre-school teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession and another study on self-esteem, it was found that the group's attitudes towards teaching were neutral and professional self-esteem was at a medium level.

In "The Teacher Profile Study", Gök and Okçabol (1998; cited in Esen, p.19) administered a survey on approximately 2000 teachers, analyzed these teachers' general characteristics and discovered how they view their own profession, the educational system, social and educational issues. According to the results of this research which reveals the internal profile of a teacher, the majority of the teachers chose this profession willingly and conscientiously. However, they also pointed out that this profession was not respected in the society.

In another study by Çelik and Köse (2007), pre-service pre-school teachers' opinions regarding the profession were analyzed. As a result of the administered

questionnaire, it was observed that students have a positive outlook on their profession in general regardless of university level, sex and family's economic status.

The preschool period which covers the ages 0-6 is perhaps the most critical period in which the personality and all other developmental fields are shaped. It is an undeniable fact the majority of the behaviors acquired in childhood shape the individual's personality, behaviors, habits, beliefs and value judgments. The preschool teacher is the most closest person to the child following the parents and is an expert and educator who teaches, loves, and provides company; in short, works in order to meet children's and their friends' needs for most of the day. In short, preschool education is one of the most significant components of the education process. At the same time, preschool teaching is a profession which requires special attention and love. For this reason, the individuals selected for this position must really love children and internalize the teaching profession. In Turkey, with the growing focus on preschool education, the individuals who will serve in this field should show more sensitivity to their professions (Çelik and Köse, 2007; Oğuzkan and Oral, 2003). In light of these, the present study aims to evaluate pre-service preschool teachers' views on their own profession since they have a significant place in the education of children.

1. The aim of the study:

The main aim of the present study is to analyze freshman and senior pre-service pre-school education teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession. In light of this main question, answers to the following questions will be sought:

Is there a difference between freshman and senior pre-service teachers in terms of:

- a. Class level
- b. Sex
- c. High school type
- d. Presence of teachers in the family
- e. Factors underlying the preference for teaching profession
- f. Parents' educational status

2. Methodology:

The present study adopted the descriptive design. The descriptive model aims to clarify a situation, make an evaluation in terms of standards and point to potential relationships between events. Therefore, the basic aim is to define and clarify a situation.

2.1.1. Sample:

The research was carried out in Ondokuz Mayıs University in the 2010-2011 educational year and 181 pre-service teachers, 91 freshman and 90 senior students

studying pre-school education of Primary Education Department participated in the study.

2.1.2. Data collection tool:

In the research, the "Teaching Profession Attitudes Scale" developed by Çetin (2006) was adopted. The scale comprised two sections: "personal information" and "attitude statements". A five-point Likert scale ranging from "I strongly agree" to "I strongly disagree" was used; negative and positive statements were intermingled. The attitudes questionnaire which comprised 35 items included 20 positive statements, which were scored as (5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1) and 15 negative statements, which were scored as (1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5). As a result of the analysis by Çetin (2006), the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.95 ($\alpha = 0.95$).

2.1.3. Data Analysis:

Data collected through the attitudes scale were analyzed by means of SPSS (Statistical Packet for Social Sciences). As a result of the normality test, the descriptive statistics of frequency (f) analysis was adopted while Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis, one-way ANOVA tests were performed in order to determine the differences between independent variables. The quantitative data were transformed into tables and interpreted and whether there is a significant difference between independent variables was tested at the level of $\alpha = .05$.

3. Findings:

The findings of the study are presented in line with the subproblems: Firstly, the demographic information of 1st and 4th year pre-service pre-school teachers will be presented followed by the subproblem data.

3.1.1. Findings related to demographic information:

The demographic characteristics of the participants:

- Fifty per cent of the pre-service teachers were freshmen while the rest were seniors.
- Twenty per cent of the pre-service teachers were male while eighty per cent were female.
- The participants had graduated from Anatolian high school (34%), normal high school (27%), Anatolian teacher training high school (20%), vocational high school (10%), super lycee (6%), and Anatolian vocational school (3%).
- The foremost reason why the Anatolian teacher training high school graduates chose this type of high school was "quality of the education".

- In the university selection list, 47% of the participants selected teaching departments in the first fourth rank, while 20% of the participants listed teaching programs in the 5-8th rank. The rest ranked teaching programs in 9th and higher ranks.
- An analysis of the participants' parents' educational status reveals that 46% received primary school education, 21% received high school education, 11% received university level education and 11% received secondary school education. As for the fathers' educational status, 32% had a university degree while 23% received high school education, 23% received primary school education and 20% received secondary school education.
- Of the participating pre-service teachers, 47% had a teacher in their family while the remaining 53% had no teachers in their family.
- As regards the teaching relatives in the family, 32% of the students' had close relatives (e.g., mother, father, siblings, etc.), 11% of the students' had distant relatives (e.g., aunt, uncle, etc.) and 57% of the students' had both close and distant relatives who worked as teachers.
- Of the participants, 37% had two siblings, 21% had three siblings, and 10% had four or more siblings.
- The participants' reasons for choosing the teaching profession were job security (34%), recommendation of teaching relatives (13%) and influence of previous teachers (13%). The rest of the students stated that they chose teaching since they loved children and the profession (22%), since it is an easy profession (3%), since they graduated from vocational school (2%) while a group of students explained that they made a decision on the basis of their exam score or pressure and believed teaching is a holy profession (1%). Of the pre-service teachers, 8% did not reply to this question.

3.1.2. Findings related to the first subproblem:

The first subproblem was stated as follows: "Is there a difference between the 1st and 4th year students in terms of attitudes towards the teaching profession?" Results of the Mann-Whitney U test performed for this purpose are presented below.

Table 1. Mann Whitney U test results in terms of class

Class level	N	Mean Rank	Rank Sum	U
1 st year	91	77.52	7054.00	2868
4 th year	90	104.63	9417.00	

Table 1 demonstrates that there is a significant difference between the 1st and 4th year pre-service pre-school teachers' views. In other words, the senior pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the profession were found to be significantly different from that of freshman pre-service teachers ($p = .00$).

3.1.3. Findings related to the second subproblem:

The second subproblem examined the question "Is there is a difference between pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession in terms of sex?" Results of the Mann-Whitney U test performed for this purpose are presented below.

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U test results in terms of sex

Sex	N	Mean Rank	Rank Sum	U
Female	145	92,58	13423,50	
Male	35	81,90	2866.50	2236.500

$p = .277 > .05$

Table 2 demonstrates that both 1st and 4th year male and female pre-service teachers did not significantly differ in terms of attitudes towards the teaching profession. In other words, the professional attitudes did not differ significantly in terms of sex ($p > .05$).

3.1.4. Findings related to the third subproblem:

The third subproblem was defined as "Is there a difference between pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession in terms of their high school type? The Kruskal-Wallis test results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis test results in terms of high school type

High school type	N	Mean Rank	X ²	p
Normal H. S.	49	91.82		
Anatolian Teacher Training H. S:	36	92.58		
Anatolian S.	61	77,61	16.522	.006
Super L.	11	129.82		
Anatolian V. H. S.	5	46.00		
Vocational H. S.	17	110.94		

$p < .05$

Table 3 demonstrates that the mean ranks of pre-service teachers' attitudes differ significantly with the super lycee and vocational high school graduates having higher mean ranks ($p < .05$).

3.1.5. Findings related to the fourth subproblem:

The fourth subproblem was worded as "Is there a difference between pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession in terms of presence of a teacher in the family?" The results of the Mann-Whitney U test performed for this purpose are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Mann-Whitney results in terms of the presence of a teacher in the family

Presence of teacher in the family	N	Mean Rank	Rank Sum	U
Yes	84	89.65	7530.50	3960.500
No	95	90.31	8579.50	

$p.932 > .05$

Whether presence of a close or distant teaching relative influences attitudes towards teaching profession was analyzed. Table 4 demonstrates that presence of a teacher in the family did not influence the pre-service teachers in this sample ($p > .05$).

3.1.6. Findings related to the fifth subproblem:

The fifth subproblem investigated the question "Is there a difference between pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession in terms of the parents' educational level?" The related Mann-Whitney U test and ANOVA test results are presented below.

Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis test results in terms of mother's educational status

High school type	N	Mean Rank	X ²	p
illiterate	5	107.60	4.657	.459
literate	17	101.82		
primary school	83	96.01		
secondary school	20	76.15		
high School	37	85.64		
university	19	81.13		

$p > .05$

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference between pre-service teachers' mothers' educational status. In other words, the participants' mothers' educational status did not make a significant influence on their attitudes towards the teaching profession.

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA results in terms of the fathers' educational status

	SD	SS	MS	F Value	p
Between Groups	4	3582.944	895.736		
Within Groups	176	96861.852	550.351	1.628	.169
Total	180				

$p > .05$

Table 6 demonstrates that there is no significant difference in terms of participants' fathers' educational status. In other words, the participants' parents' educational status did not make a significant influence on their attitudes towards the teaching profession.

3. Conclusion and Suggestions:

In the recent years, many studies have been conducted on the teaching profession with respect to the profession's quality, teachers' attitudes towards the profession, teachers' problems, etc. (Bozdoğan et al., 2007; Esen, 2005; Girgin et al., 2010; Lopes, 2000; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002)

It is an inevitable fact that teachers have the second most significant responsibility in terms of raising the future generations. As a matter of fact, the teaching profession requires willingness and sacrifice. Individuals who raise pre-school children must love their jobs in all respects so that they can carry out their job effectively. The present study aimed to analyze pre-service teachers, who will teach pre-school children (0-6) in the years which will form the basis for their lives, in terms of their attitudes towards the teaching profession.

The participants of the study were 181 freshman and senior pre-service pre-school teachers. The findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

Of the pre-service teachers, 50% were freshmen and 50% were seniors; 20% were male and 80% were female; their high school types were Anatolian high school (34%), normal high school (27%), Anatolian teacher training high school (20%), vocational high school (10%), super lycee (6%), and Anatolian vocational high school

(3%); 47% ranked teaching in the 1st-4th places while 20% ranked teaching in the 5th-8th places in university selection period. Additionally, a glance at the participants' parents' educational status showed that mothers' educational levels varied as follows: primary school (46%), high school (21%), university (11%), secondary school (11%). As for the father's educational level, 32% had a university degree, 23% had high school diploma, 23% had primary school diploma and 20% had secondary school diploma. Of the pre-service teachers, 47% had a teacher(s) in their family and the 53% had no teachers in the family. In addition, the reasons for choosing the teaching profession were listed as follows: job security (34%), recommendation of teaching relatives (13%), and influence of previous teachers (13%). The rest of the students stated that they chose teaching since they loved children and the profession (22%), since it is an easy profession (3%), since they graduated from vocational school (2%) while a group of students explained that they made a decision on the basis of their exam score or pressure and believed teaching is a holy profession (1%).

It can be understood that there is a significant difference between first and fourth year students' views. In other words, the senior pre-service teachers' attitudes towards their profession were found to be significantly different from that of first-year students. Thus, it could be argued that senior students have more positive attitudes than first year students and feel more ready for their profession.

A significant difference was not observed between the pre-service teachers' attitudes in terms of sex. In other words, sex did not significantly influence professional attitudes ($p > .05$).

A significant difference was observed in terms of high school type, with super lycee and vocational high school graduates having more positive attitudes ($p > .05$).

The potential influence of the presence of a close or distant teaching relative in the family on attitudes towards the teaching profession was also analyzed and it was understood that this variable did not yield any differences among pre-service teachers ($p > .05$).

As regards the parents' educational status, a significant difference was not observed in terms of mothers' and fathers' educational status ($p > .05$).

An analysis of the above findings indicates that female students outnumber male students. This can be explained by the common perception that teaching is usually viewed as women's profession. A similar study was conducted by Çelik and Köse (2007). The researchers tried to measure preschool education pre-service teachers' attitudes towards their profession through a questionnaire developed by them. The findings indicated that class level, sex and the family's economic status did not influence students' attitudes and in general they had positive attitudes towards their profession. In the same study, female students outnumbered male students, which was explained in the same way as in the present study. At the same time, a third of the

students mentioned the "teacher appointments" and related it to job security upon graduation.

Coultas and Lewin (2002) studied the teaching profession preferences and teacher characteristics in four different countries. The findings of their study indicated that those who preferred the teaching profession usually had medium and low level economic status. Students who chose teaching view this profession as a secure choice since the job is ready and the income is steady.

In Akyol and Aslan's (2006) study entitled "Pre-service pre-school teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession and professional self-concept", the pre-service teachers explained that the presence of a teacher in the family, the family's conditioning, job security, and willingness to become a teacher had positive attitude towards teaching.

In light of these data, it has been found out that the participating pre-service pre-school teachers had a positive attitude towards their profession as revealed in their responses to the "teaching profession attitudes questionnaire".

On the basis of this, the following can be suggested:

- The teaching profession is related to all professions involved in the production of services; therefore, it has a significant and meaningful position among all professions. Despite this, there are some inappropriate behaviors and attitudes in the society in terms of choosing and directing students to this profession. Consequently, some arrangements should be made so that the teaching profession reaches the position that it deserves. This requires the reconstruction of the teaching profession in terms of economics; in addition, not only the exam scores but also the appropriateness of students' personality to the profession should be a criterion in the selection of pre-service teachers. The teaching profession is not solely composed of information transformation; therefore, teachers' personality should be suitable for this profession. To this end, personality tests should also be taken into consideration in the assignment of teachers.
- The teaching profession attitudes questionnaire used in the present study can be utilized in different areas of teaching in order to make comparisons.
- On the basis of the attitudes studies' findings pointing to a relationship between students' professional selections and the family culture, economic status and number of siblings, more comprehensive undergraduate teaching programs towards developing attitudes should be constructed.

- Throughout the high school education, students should be guided in terms of their career and programs and activities should not only introduce the departments and programs but also professions.

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