

INVESTIGATION OF TEACHER CANDIDATES' OPINIONS ON TEACHING PROFESSION

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Abstract

A teacher as a human engineer is the fundamental part of the education. Teacher is the most efficient and responsible person who shapes the students' life styles, their attitudes toward the society, and affects students' development as well as creativity. The basic determiner of the education quality is the teacher. He has a direct effect on not only the environment but also the country's development. Therefore each country gives importance to prepare their teachers through special programs. The purpose of this research is to investigate the opinions of teacher candidates' at the faculty of educational science on teaching profession. The first grade students of primary school department, social science department, pre-school education department participated to this research. The sample group of the research covers 162 students in the fall semester of the 2015-2016 academic year in Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences. Descriptive survey model has been used for gathering teacher candidates' opinions. Open ended five question has been used out as data collection instrument. And content analyses model has been used to analyse the responses of the teacher candidates with their own sentences. Results have been presented with tables and the data has been interpreted.

Keywords: Teacher candidates, teaching profession, attitudes of teacher candidates.

Introduction

Teachers are one of the most important components of an education system. For this reason teacher education programs have a major role in their preparation. Teachers have various roles including analyst, curriculum developer, material developer, mentor, team member, researcher, and professional (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). They have different responsibilities in a typical classroom and they are supposed to be competent in several domains involving lesson planning, implementation skills, classroom management, and fostering professional and personal qualities. Therefore, teacher education institutions develop different strategies so that they can contribute to the preparation of teachers. As the quality of education in the future depends on the preservice teachers (Nuangchalerms & Prachagool, 2010), teacher education programs spend considerable effort in order to develop teachers in terms of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and to prepare the students for the society (Bezzina & Michalak, 2009). Teachers' competencies address the standards that teachers should have and help in increasing teachers' knowledge and skills (Seferoğlu, 2009). Teacher competencies can be defined as "the general information, abilities and attitudes that are necessary to have to do the teaching profession effectively" (Seferoğlu, 2009, p. 204). Teacher education programs provide opportunities to learn and experience teaching for the beginning teachers and also might have a considerable effect on students' learning (Tatto, Lerman & Novotna, 2009). On the other hand, teachers are now expected to meet demands of the latest change in the curriculum which requires more efforts of teacher education programs.

Teaching is not much considered as a difficult job, but it is more difficult than it seems. Novice teacher begin their profession with a belief that they can make small and important changes on both society and students' life. However, these best ideals and dreams become nightmares. Hence, they start to struggle with the challenges in order to survive (Krasnow, 1993). Approximately one-fourth of new teachers quit the teaching profession within four years. Professional development programs aiming to provide beginning teachers with more knowledge and skills about pedagogy and curriculum, adapting to the school atmosphere, improving their organizational skills, and gaining confidence in working with colleagues and stakeholders might not be sufficient for novice teachers to continue teaching profession (Hoerr, 2005).

The difficulties beginning teachers meet are related mostly to students and classroom. Classroom management and discipline problems are identified as the most serious and persistent issues in most of the studies concerning early experiences of teaching (Barrett & Davis, 1995). When beginning teachers enter the classroom, the expectations about the profession and the realities they encounter might not be the same (Melnick & Meister, 2008). Beginning teachers may have unrealistic expectations regarding teaching profession before entering the classrooms. When they enter the classroom, they face a harsh reality of everyday teaching (Lundeen, 2004) which Veenman (1984) describes as the "reality shock" (p. 143). Veenman's extensive review on beginning teachers' problems in the early years of teaching addresses that the most serious problem beginning teachers face is classroom discipline. Dealing

with students' motivation, individual differences, assessment of students' work, relationships with parents, class work organization, lack of materials and supplies, and the problems of individual students are also widely mentioned for beginning teachers both in elementary schools and in secondary schools.

Most of the beginning teachers do not feel well prepared to accomplish these daily challenges. This results in leaving the profession at the early stages (Thomas & Kiley, 1994).

A teacher as a human engineer is the fundamental part of the education. Teacher is the most efficient and responsible person who shapes the students' life styles, their attitudes toward the society, and affects students' development as well as creativity (Ataünal, 2000). The basic determiner of the education quality is the teacher. He has a direct effect on not only the environment but also the country's development (Ünal & Ada, 1999). Therefore each country gives importance to the preparing their teachers through special programs (Ataünal, 2000).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is investigating the opinions of teacher candidates' at the faculty of educational science on teaching profession. Under the scope of the study, questions asked to the teacher candidates were above:

- 1) What is your reason in preferring teaching profession?
- 2) What are the advantages of teaching profession for you?
- 3) What are the disadvantages of teaching profession for you?
- 4) Even if you need to liken the teaching profession to something, what would it be?
- 5) Do you prefer teaching profession again if you are given one more chance?

Method

Model of the Study

The descriptive survey model has been utilized in the study. In the survey model, an existing circumstance is aimed to be described as it is and no effort is made in any manner to change, or influence it (Karasar, 2003, p. 77). While analysing the teacher candidates responses to the questions with their own sentences content analyses model has been utilized in the study.

Study Group

There are a total of 162 first grade students in the study group consisting of 60 teacher candidates in primary school department, 57 teacher candidates in pre-school education department and 45 teacher candidates in social science department of the Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences. The study was performed in the fall semester of the 2015-2016 academic year. The personal details of a total of 162 teacher candidates in the study group have been presented above:

Table 1. Distribution of teacher candidates participating in the study according to gender

Gender	Primary School		Pre-school Education		Social Science		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Female	46	77	55	96	17	38	118	73
Male	14	23	2	4	28	62	44	27
Total	60	100	57	100	45	100	162	100

As it can be seen in Table 1, 73% of the teacher candidates are female and 27% of the teacher candidates are male. If it is examined through the departments, while the number of female participants is much more than the male participants in Primary School and Pre-School Departments, the number of male participants is much more than the number of female participants in Social Sciences Department. This can be interpreted as the teaching profession in the Primary School and Pre-School Education is widely preferred by females.

Data Collection Tool

In order to enable teacher candidates to explain their ideas without any limitation, open ended questions has been used in the study. So, the students' ideas about the subject and point of view can be seen without any guidance.

As a data collection tool in this study, 10 open ended questions developed by researchers through a review of the related literature at the first stage. Then the views of the five teaching staff at the Faculty of Educational Sciences has been received. Lastly data collection form has been finalized consisting of 5 open ended questions.

Findings And Interpretations

In this part of the study the response of teacher candidates to the questions have been presented in the form of tables, the findings have been analyzed and interpreted, and also some examples of the teacher candidates' own sentences are given to reflect their views.

The distribution of the teacher candidates' reasons in preferring the teaching profession has been presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of teacher candidates' reasons in preferring the teaching profession

No	Views	f
1	to raise a good generation by directing the future of the individuals	39
2	it is convenient with my personal characteristics and my interests	34
3	I like to teach something, share my knowledge and my experience	33
4	I enjoy children and spending time with them	24
5	to cultivate usefull individuals to him, his country and the society	21
6	Because of my graduate field, examination system or the type of the score	18
7	Because it is a sacred profession	11
8	Because it is a comfortable and guaranteed profession	10
9	to solve the problems in the community	9
10	Because it is a profession that I allways dreamed	8
11	the effect of my teachers and my admiration to them	7
12	the effects of my family members	6
13	having too much holidays	5
14	it offers the opportunity to improve yourself	4
15	it has a good social status	2
16	it is a suitable profession especially for women	2
Total		233

When the data in Table 2 are examined, it can be observed that most of the teacher candidates care about raising a good generation by directing the future of the individuals. A majority of the teacher candidates stated that they preferred the teaching profession because it is convenient with their personal characteristics and their interests, and also they like to teach something, share their knowledge and their experience.

Some of the teacher candidates' reasons in preferring the teaching profession are; enjoying children and spending time with them, to cultivate usefull individuals to him, his country and the society, it is a profession that they allways dreamed, the effect of their teachers and their admiration to them, solving the problems in the community, offering the opportunity to improve themselves.

These reasons stated by the teacher candidates can be interpreted that the teacher candidates are conscious about the teaching profession. And it can also be interpreted as teacher candidates who are conscious about the teaching profession could be more effective teachers.

Another noteworthy data obtained among the findings of the study were; some of the teacher candidates' emphasized that they preferred the teaching profession because of their graduate field, examination system or the type of the score, and because of the effects of their family members. It can be interpreted as the teacher candidates who explained these reasons preferred the teaching profession without their own interests and desires. So it can be difficult for them to perform teaching profession.

On the other hand some of the teacher candidates' reasons in preferring the teaching profession points some aspects of the teaching profession. For instance, a sacred profession, a comfortable and guaranteed profession, having too much holidays, a suitable profession especially for women.

Some of the teacher candidates' own sentences related with this subject are presented above:

"I'd always imagined myself as a teacher since childhood."

"I think it is the most beautiful profession that suits me though my personal characteristics."

"I want to cultivate usefull individuals and educate the new generation for the future of the country so that they know their responsibilities."

"In fact, I decided to choose teaching profession in 6th grade. The reason was my teacher, and very much like to become a teacher like her."

"Being a teacher is very advantageous because of it's working hours and holidays."

"I think teaching profession is a comfortable profession than the others."

"I always had an interest in children. While in high school, I had choosed Department of Child Development unconsciously. But I never regret it. I am happy to be a teacher in the future."

"Teaching profession was always in a different place for me. It is a very big happiness to teach something to children, also teach them the life by looking into their eyes."

These reasons explained by the teacher candidates also suggest the advantages of teaching profession. The distribution of the teacher candidates' views about the advantages of the teaching profession has been presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of teacher candidates' views about the advantages of the teaching profession

No	Views	f
1	having too much holidays	53
2	appropriate working hours and conditions	44
3	having a sacred, respected, special and important position in society	42
4	to raise a good generation and build the future	31
5	sprending pleasant time with the children or the students	30
6	feeling the happiness to teach something to people	22
7	to provide continuous professional development	18
8	explore new people and new places	13
9	a suitable profession especially for women	12
10	a comfortable and guaranteed profession	13
11	to improve the communication skills	9
12	to improve the personality characteristics	7
13	a regular and continuing salary also being on holiday	7
14	continuously be dynamic, energetic and social	5
15	traning their own children more consciously	4
16	to cultivate usefull individuals to him, his country and the society	4
17	to be remembered by the students that you educated	3
18	to change and develop the society	2
Total		298

As it can be observed in Table 3, some of the views are the same with Table 2. The views expressed in both tables about the teaching profession are; having too much holidays, to raise a good generation, to be a sacred profession, to provide continuous professional development, to be a suitable profession especially for women, to be a comfortable and guaranteed profession, sprenging pleasant time with the children or the students, to teach something to people, to cultivate usefull individuals to him, his country and the society. Since 9 views are the same with table 2 and table 3, it can be inferred that these advantages of the teaching profession effects teacher candidates choises.

According to the data in Table 3, some of the other views about the advantages of the teaching profession explained by the teacher candidates are; appropriate working hours and conditions, explore new people and new places, improving the communication skills and the personality characteristics. Besides 7 teacher candidates stated the salary of the teaching profession and they expressed that having a regular and continuing salary also being on holiday is an advantage of teaching profession.

Some of the teacher candidates' own sentences related with this subject are presented above:

"In my opinion sharing is the most beautiful thing in the world, and teachers share everything they know lovingly."

"The biggest advantage is always learning new things while being a teacher, to renew himshelf."

"Teaching profession makes you learn to be patient and tolerant."

"Teacher learns how to behave to their own children because of always being in touch with children in class."

"Having weekend holidays makes you more energetic and increases your motivation."

"If I consider as a woman, I think it is a profession that I can spend time with my family and my children in the future."

"I want to explain this with an example. Yesterday was my teacher's birthday. When I called him and celebrated his birthday, feeling the excitement and happiness in his voice is indecribable. I think this is one of the biggest advantages of teaching profession despite the passing years being always in somebody's mind."

"One of the biggest advantage of the teaching profession is your little students who loves you so much."

Besides the advantages of the teaching profession what about the disadvantages are tried to determine in the study. The distribution of the teacher candidates' views about the disadvantages of the teaching profession has been presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of teacher candidates' views about the disadvantages of the teaching profession

No	Views	f
1	a diffucult and tiring profession that requires exertion and patience	33
2	not to be able to assign to the profession	31
3	a profession that required responsibility and sacrifice	22
4	dealing with the students' parents	17
5	lack of the salary	16
6	teaching has been undervalued and lack of the respect for the teaching profession	15
7	children or students and their various problems	13
8	KPSS problem and constantly changing examination system	10
9	crowded classrooms and classroom management problems	10
10	environment that do not have suitable conditions for teaching	9
11	communte constantly with people and society	8
12	individual differences of the students	7
13	feeling inadequate and worry about inability to handle the subjects effectively	7
14	early started working hours and getting up early in the morning	7
15	having occupational health problems	7
16	ongoing professional activities outside the school	5
17	forcing students to understand the subjects	4
18	the lack of career oppotunity	4
19	compulsory mission in the east part of the country	3
20	unskilled too many teachers	3
21	not to reflect any negativity to the students	3
22	having problems with the director	3
23	not to feel safe	2
24	monotony	2
25	not to spare enough time for himself	2
26	having problems with the other teachers in the same school	1
27	evaluation of the exam papers	1

When the data in Table 4 analyzed, it can be observed that a majority of teacher candidates express the disadvantages of the teaching profession as; a diffucult and tiring profession that requires exertion and patience, a profession that required responsibility and sacrifice, diffuculties of dealing with the students' parents, lack of the salary, and lack of the respect for the teaching profession.

It is important to note that there some views expressed by the teacher candidates about the disadvantages of the teaching profession only related for Turkey. These are; not to be able to assign to the profession, KPSS problem and constantly changing examination system, compulsory mission in the east part of the country. Substantial number of teacher candidates define these executing applications in the country as an advantage of the teaching profession.

Other disadvantages of the teaching profession pointed by the teacher candidates are; children or students and their various problems, crowded classrooms and classroom management problems, environment that do not have suitable conditions for teaching, individual differences of the students.

On the other hand few of the teacher candidates specified the early started working hours and getting up early in the morning, having occupational health problems as disadvantages of the teaching profession.

Some of the teacher candidates' own sentences related with this subject are presented above:

"Teaching profession has been undervalued in Turkey, sufficient importance do not given to teachers and respect to teachers also decreased."

“Being always in crowded environments is a disadvantage of teaching profession.”

“Teachers should check their speeches and behaviours as they are models for the children.”

“Mistake should not be done. Even a small mistake can effect the child and his life.”

“It can be diffucult to deal with a lot of children at the same time, or it may be diffucult to keep up their energy.”

“Parents blame the teachers at the slightest problem and do not seek any problem on their child.”

“The biggest disadvantage is the so few salary against the labor.”

“Someone who wants to make a career in this profession do not have any chance.”

“Always talking and trying to tell something to someone can make you feel tired.”

“Even if you feel bad or something bad happens to you, you should not reflect this to children. Beause this can affect the whole life of the children. I think the biggest disadvantage is teachers always have to look happy.”

According to the data in Table 4, it is observed that the teacher candidates stated various disadvantages of the teaching profession. Also it can be an interesting topic if they need to liken the teaching profession to something what it could be. The distribution of the teacher candidates' views about liken teaching profession to something has been presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of teacher candidates' views about what they liken teaching profession to

No	Views	f
1	mother	20
2	tree (sycamore tree, fig tree)	18
3	book, bookshelf	10
4	family	7
5	lighthouse, night lighthouse, torch, candle, light	7
6	water, river	7
7	gardener	7
8	sculptor, artist, artwork	4
9	nature, soil	4
10	watch, compass, guide	3
11	life	3
12	pencil	3
13	architect	3
14	sun	3
15	notebook	2
16	cook	2
17	stairs	2
18	computer	2
19	carpenter	1
20	bee, ant	1
21	wind rose	1
22	traffic signs	1
23	somebody waving the swing	1
24	heart	1
25	philosopher	1
26	map	1
27	money	1
28	flour	1
29	flower	1
30	world	1

When Table 5 is observed, it can be seen that teacher candidates liken teaching profession to a lot of thing. Majority of the teacher candidates liken teaching profession to mother, tree, book, family, lighthouse, water, and gardener.

Some of the teacher candidates liken teaching profession something that protects and guides such as; mother, family, lighthouse, watch, compass, and map. Samples of the teacher candidates' own sentences are above:

"Mother, because she is always a safe harbor, always wants the best for us, she is a magnificent human being unrequited loves us, like teachers."

"A warm family. Because you must obey the rules as well as you prepare an environment with love, respect and tolerance."

"I certainly identify with a flashlight. Because when we are in darkness we can see with the help of the flashlight. Like this, teacher is a glimmer of hope who points the way to the society in the darkness."

"Watch, because the watch always show the truth of the life and time never stops. When the watch stops the people do not know in which part of the life they are. So, teachers always show people the time and the direction."

"Map, because that makes you reach the place where you want to go with the shortest and most effective way."

Some of the teacher candidates liken teaching profession something that are connected with nature such as; tree, water, river, soil, sun, bee, ant, flower, and world. Samples of the teacher candidates' own sentences are above:

"Tree, because the more efficient the tree, the better fruits."

"Sitting under the tree. Tree gives fruits and has a shade. Both physically and spiritually feed you."

"I likened it to a river. If water is used trees and the plants grow. Shortly, nature becomes beautiful, but if the water is not used it will be wasted in vain."

"Teachers are like water. Students are trees and you make them live."

"Teachers are like soil. The more fertile the soil, the more plants live on it. Everything begins, grows and give fruits with soil. Like the soil makes the plants grow with the minerals in it, the teachers educate the children with their knowledge."

"The sun. Because the sun is lighting up and heating everywhere. Even if the sun rises down, the moon and the stars that had taken the energy from sun goes on lighting up everywhere."

"I likened teaching profession to bees. Because I think teachers constantly nonstop work like them to help people"

"World, because endlessly work and maintains the stability of the universe."

Some of the teacher candidates liken teaching profession to another profession such as; gardener, sculptor, artist, architect, cook, carpenter, and philosopher. Samples of the teacher candidates' own sentences are above:

"Gardener, because if the gardener do not care, do not give water and fertilizer to the flowers, they do not grow and they die. If you take care of the flowers they become colourful flowers."

"Sculpture, because how the sculpture create an image with a plaster, teacher equip the children who come with the pure form with knowledge and creates a person."

"Teachers are like artists who draw the existing things. If he draws so good, a work of art can arise, such as the Mona Lisa for centuries spoken."

"Like architect, if the architect uses good materials on the basis of the building, the building will be strong."

"A cook, because a good meal should be blended with care, rigor and love."

"A philosopher who helps and guides people."

Some of the answers in this part found interesting, such as; traffic signs, somebody waving the swing, money and heart. Looking at the teacher candidates' own sentences and their reasons for this liken are:

"I liken to the traffic signs. Cars are the children and the thing that directs them is the traffic lights."

"Somebody waving the swing. Because he can move the person sitting on the swing wherever he wants. When required he starts the oscillation and the person sitting on the swing continues to wave by their own efforts."

"I liken teaching profession to Money. Because teachers are always the most important and valuable."

"Heart, because how the heart beats with love teaching must be done with love. Each new information enlarges the heart, bigger heart means increased love. The essence of teaching is always love."

The distribution of the teacher candidates' views about if they prefer teaching profession again in case of given one more chance has been presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Distribution of teacher candidates' views about if they prefer teaching profession again in case of given one more chance

Views	f	%
Yes	133	82
No	20	12
Undecided	9	6
Total	162	100

As it can be observed in Table 6, a majority of the teacher candidates stated that they prefer teaching profession again in case of given one more chance. According to this data it can be interpreted as the teacher candidates like the teaching profession. Teacher candidates' own sentences that support this idea are presented above:

"Because education and learning never ends."

"I never give up such a sacred profession that is always in my dreams."

"Running through your dreams always make you happy."

"I would prefer again because I chose this profession with my own will."

"I love teaching profession very much, it is a special profession and I am pleased to be here."

"I am sure that I feel the best in this profession."

"It is the only profession that completes me, and it is the only profession that I will be able to perform in the best way."

"Given how many chance to me, I still would prefer teaching profession again and again."

"Yes, I would prefer again, I understood it better since I have chosen this profession."

"I would prefer undoubtedly. I can not do another profession."

A small number of teacher candidates stated that they do not prefer teaching profession again in case of given one more chance. Teacher candidates' own sentences that support this idea are presented above:

"I would think of another profession, because being a teacher makes you tired."

"If there is a better choice I would prefer another."

"I would like to prefer faculty of law."

A small number of teacher candidates stated that they are undecided to prefer teaching profession again in case of given one more chance. Teacher candidates' own sentences that support this idea are presented above:

"I have no idea, because I always act according to the psychology and the situation at that moment."

"Maybe I would not choose because teaching profession is not valuable in our country."

"It maybe chance on the conditions that I have, I am in a dilemma."

Conclusion

The conclusions obtained as a result of this study aiming to investigate the opinions of teacher candidates' at the faculty of educational science on teaching profession are as follows:

It was revealed that most of the teacher candidates care about raising a good generation by directing the future of the individuals. A majority of the teacher candidates explained that they preferred the teaching profession because it is convenient with their personal characteristics and their interests, and also they like to teach something, share their knowledge and their experience.

It was determined that the some of the views on two different questions overlap. having too much holidays, to raise a good generation, to be a sacred profession, to provide continuous professional development, to be a suitable

profession especially for women, to be a comfortable and guaranteed profession, spending pleasant time with the children or the students, to teach something to people, to cultivate useful individuals to him, his country and the society. So, it can be inferred that these advantages of the teaching profession effects teacher candidates choices.

A majority of the teacher candidates participating in the study express the disadvantages of the teaching profession as; a difficult and tiring profession that requires exertion and patience, a profession that required responsibility and sacrifice, difficulties of dealing with the students' parents, lack of the salary, and lack of the respect for the teaching profession.

Most of the teacher candidates participating in the study liken teaching profession to mother, tree, book, family, lighthouse, water, and gardener. Some of the teacher candidates liken teaching profession something that protects and guides such as; mother, family, lighthouse, watch, compass, and map.

A majority of the teacher candidates stated that they prefer teaching profession again in case of given one more chance.

In accordance with these results, the following recommendations may be put forward:

- The academic success of the teacher candidates who had preferred voluntarily may be compared to others that had not.
- Some arrangements can be made to eliminate the negative thoughts on teaching profession.
- Teachers who are successful on their profession can be rewarded.
- The parents' pressure on teachers may be reduced.
- Arrangements for rendering teaching profession can be made.

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