



The reasons of the teachers and pre-service teachers to prefer the mentally disabled primary school teaching program

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine pre-service special education teachers' motives to prefer special education. 77 senior class pre-service special education teachers who attended to Abant İzzet Baysal University in 2011-2012 education year formed the research group. Data were collected by asking pre-service teachers to complete an open-ended statement. Data were analysed and frequency and percentage values were presented. In conclusion, it was found that motives of pre-service special education teachers were consisted of perceived easiness of assignment (15%), business opportunities (13%), the thoughts towards being helpful to children who need special education (9%) and economic return (8%).

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Keywords: Special education teacher, motives to prefer teaching

1. Introduction

A teacher is defined as a person assigned to guide and direct learning experiences of students in a public or private education institution (Öncül,2000:866). Being one of the oldest professions in the world, teaching profession is likely to continue its position in the future considering the understanding that it is not possible to fully replace a teacher's position. Ensuring the success of an education system is related with the qualifications of teachers so the teaching profession requires occupational professionalism and occupational expertise in this aspect.

A study carried out by UNESCO states that 10% of the Turkish population consists of disabled people. In light of this data, it is possible to say that there are around 7-8 million disabled people in Turkey. It is considered to be important to provide a comprehensive education opportunity and ensure adaptation to society through education for the disabled people, who are generally abstracted from the society and suffer from insufficient self-care (Ulutaşdemir, 2007:1).

Education of special education teachers to meet the need for special education staff in our country started in the Special Education Branch of Gazi Education Institute in 1952-53. After the two-graduation period, the first psychology clinic, which is now called Guidance and Research Centre, was established with the aim of providing service in diagnose of the disabled people, developing measurement tools for assessment and educating staff. In 1965, the Faculty of Education was established in Ankara University, and the Department of Special Education started its four year program. After 1979, the certificate programs aimed to educate staff for the special education field. The need for teachers in special education institutions was met through in-service training and certificate programs until 1983. In 1990, the Special Education Teaching Program was opened in Anadolu University. Today, special education teachers are educated through four-year undergraduate programs in faculties of education (Akçamete,1998:198).

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The teaching profession has been a field of study for researchers for its various aspects. The teaching profession, competencies required by the profession, attitude of teachers and pre-service teachers towards the profession, their interests of field, expectations, satisfaction perceptions and the reasons for preferring the teaching profession are some of the fields of study. This study aims to explore the reasons of the mentally disabled primary school preservice teachers for preferring the mentally disabled primary school teaching program. In this context, taking into consideration the the characteristics of the mentally disabled students, having the sufficient awareness and consciousness in preferring this branch of teaching profession is of importance.

In literature, there are studies in different branches to define the reasons for preferring the teaching profession by pre-service teachers (Boz and Boz, 2008; Memur-Sen, 2008; Sabbağ, 2003; Semerci, Demiralp, Koç and Kerimgil, 2009; Hacıömeroğlu and Şahin Taşkın, 2010; Tataroğlu, Özgen and Alkan, 2011; Kalağan and Güzeller, 2010; Özsoy, Özsoy, Özkara and Memiş, 2010; Eskicumalı, 2002; Ubuz and Sarı, 2009; Çermik, Doğan and Şahin 2010; Papanastasiou and Papanastasiou 1998; Erkan, Tuğrul, Üstün, Akman, Şendoğdu, Kargı, Boz and Güler, 2010; Sarıkaya and Khorshid, 2009; Özbek, Kahyaoglu and Özgen, 2007).

Boz and Boz (2008:138) states that the reasons of the pre-service teachers to prefer the teaching profession can be categorized under three main headings. The first is the reasons originating from self-devotion which covers the factors such that the profession is considered to be important and necessary for the society and being useful to the community; the second is the intrinsic reasons such as the indulgence from teaching and the activities in teaching profession and passion for working with children, and the third is the extrinsic reasons such as long summer vacations, societal status, the opportunity to find a job.

Sabbağ (2003), in his research carried out with n=761 teachers working in Keçiören district of Ankara, states that 70,49% of the teachers preferred the teaching profession because they loved the teaching profession very much. In another research, Semerci, Demiralp, Koç and Kerimgil (2009) lists the reasons for preferring the teaching profession as influence from teachers, recognition of the profession valuable, coincidence and love for kids.

Çermik, Doğan and Şahin (2010) aimed to find out the reasons of the pre-service teachers (n=157) to prefer the profession and whether there is a significant change in the existing preference reasons at the end of the education period. According to the findings of the research, the factors are the utilitarian factors with a rate of 30,83% including job opportunity under state guarantee, regular salary payment, vacation advantages of the profession; the extrinsic factors with a rate of 29,55% include the score in the Student Selection Examination, encouragement of parents, at least one family member working as a teacher; the intrinsic factors with a rate of 27,32% including the idealized profession, love for kids, interest in teaching; and finally the selfless factors with a rate of 12,30% including the esteemed status of the profession within the society, service to the community through education, the perception as the holiness of the profession.

According to the findings of another study carried out in Cyprus by Papanastasiou and Papanastasiou (1998), the most effective extrinsic factor for preferring the profession is the opportunity to be appointed after graduation.

Özsoy, Özsoy, Özkara and Memiş (2010), in their studies, explored the factors affecting the preference of the teaching profession by the preservice teachers (n=855) and whether these factors change according to their gender. The statement with the highest positive opinion was 'I preferred to be a teacher consciously'. On the other hand, 61.7% of the pre-service teachers stated that they preferred the profession because 'they believed they would contribute to education'. Another striking finding is that 59.5% of the pre-service teachers stated that they stated 'I preferred because my score in examination was sufficient to enter only to this department'. Likewise, 47.3% of the pre-service teachers stated, 'I preferred because it was the most suitable profession for me'. In addition to these findings, 54.6% of the pre-service teachers stated that they preferred the profession because 'it is a holy profession', 53.4% preferred because they think 'they have the capabilities required by the profession', 47.3% preferred because 'it is the most suitable profession for him', 46.9% preferred because they 'love kids', and 46.9% preferred because 'it was the profession I idealized'.

In a study carried out by Eskicumalı (2002), the pre-service teachers listed the reasons for preferring the profession as the love for kids (23%), less working hours and long vacation period (37.1%), and job guarantee (37.1%). 36% of the pre-service teachers in the same study group stated that they preferred the profession willingly,

20% stated that they preferred with the influence of their friends and family and 17.4% stated that they preferred with the influence of their teachers.

Ubuz and Sarı (2009), in their study with pre-service teachers, asked them why they wanted to be a teacher. According to the results of this study, most of the pre-service teachers stated the reasons for preferring the profession as 'the score obtained from the university entrance exam' and 'influence of the family and surroundings'. Other three reasons emphasized in this study were 'love for kids', 'love teaching' and 'teaching is a holy profession'.

Erkan, Tuğrul, Üstün, Akman, Şendoğdu, Kargı, Boz and Güler (2010) listed the most effective factors for preferring preschool teaching by the preschool pre-service teachers as love for kids with a rate of 31,5%, love for the teaching profession with a rate of 26.4% and ready job opportunity with a rate of 18%.

Sarıkaya and Khorshid (2009), in their study with the n=1000 new coming students in Ege University aimed to determine the factors of preferring the teaching profession. According to the findings of the research, the factors affecting the preference of the profession were stated as positive opinions about the profession with a rate of 33,6% (such as loving the profession, finding the profession interesting, having a career, realizing the ideals and goals); the emphasis on the advantages of the profession with a rate of 28,2% (the opportunity to find a job easily, prestige in society, easy study process); the feeling of desperation with a rate of 23,5% (such as the score only sufficient for this department, graduating from a vocational high school, having a profession, the effect of the financial status of family); and the recommendations of others with a rate of 14,7% (such as the expectation of family, suggestions of friends and teachers).

After surveying the research in the literature, it is possible to say that the teachers or the pre-service teachers who preferred the teaching profession focused on the options such as loving the teaching profession, the social aspect and advantages of the profession, the encouragement of the family and teachers and the university examination score.

On the other hand, since there is no research on the reasons of the teachers or pre-service teachers to prefer the mentally disabled primary school teaching program, comparison of the reasons of the pre-service teachers to prefer the mentally disabled primary school teaching program with the results of the research existing in the literature is considered to be important. In this respect, the study will aim to answer the following question.

- What are the reasons of the pre-service teachers to prefer the mentally disabled primary school teaching program?

2. Methodology

This section includes the research model, study group, data collection tool, data collection and analysis.

2.1. The Research Model

This is a descriptive study, which aims to determine the reasons of the pre-service teachers, studying the fourth year in the special education department primary school teaching program, to prefer the mentally disabled primary school teaching program. The survey method was used in the research. This research method is used in researches to describe and explain what the incidents, objects, entities, institutions, groups and various areas are (Kaptan, 1998).

2.2. The Study Group

The study group of the research consists of n=90 pre-service teachers studying in the fourth grade in Abant İzzet Baysal University and are likely to graduate in the 2012 academic year. The research was carried out with n=77 students who participated in the research voluntarily.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

In order to collect data in the research, the gender and the availability of disabled family members of the students were determined firstly. The pre-service teachers were asked to complete the open-ended statement, “I preferred this profession because ...”, which explains the reason why they preferred the special education teaching department. The qualitative findings obtained from the answers to the related question of the pre-service teachers were analysed descriptively.

2.4. Data Analysis

The answers of the pre-service teachers to the open-ended statement were examined and the obtained qualitative data were analysed by determining the frequency and percentage values of the items expressing the opinions.

3. Findings

This section includes the findings obtained as a result of the analysis of the data collected, the findings and interpretation taking into consideration the research question.

The findings about the distribution of the pre-service teachers by the variables of the gender and availability of disabled family member are given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Findings about the Gender and Availability of Disabled Family Members of the Pre-service Teachers

Gender	f	%	Availability of disabled family member	f	%
Male	25	32	Yes	5	6,5
Female	52	67	No	72	93,5
Total	77	100	Total	77	100

As seen in Chart 1, for the variable of the gender of the pre-service teachers who preferred the mentally disabled primary school teaching program, 32% of the pre-service teachers are male and 67% are female. For the availability of a disabled family member, 6,5% (n=5) of the pre-service teachers stated that they had a disabled family member.

The frequency and percentage rates of the reasons of the pre-service teachers to prefer the mentally disabled primary school teaching program is given the Table 2.

Table 2. The Reasons of the Pre-service Teachers to Prefer the Mentally Disabled Primary School Teaching Program

Q	The Reason	f	%
1	High appointment rate, easy appointment and appointment guarantee.	15	15
2	This branch of teaching offers wide job opportunity.	13	13
3	I thought I would be helpful and make a contribution to the education of children in this field.	9	9
4	Good economic conditions and high financial earning.	8	8
5	I like taking care of kids.	7	7
6	I believe I am patient and this profession requires patience.	7	7
7	Recommendation and guidance of my teachers.	4	4
8	My sister/brother is disabled.	3	3
9	The spiritual aspect, the merit and consideration for the afterlife according to my religious belief.	3	3
10	I thought being with and teaching these students would make me happy.	3	3
11	I preferred because I love the profession.	3	3
12	I find this profession fun.	3	3
13	My score in the university entrance exam was sufficient to enter the program.	2	2
14	I preferred because I like squaring the circle.	2	2
15	I preferred to change the attitude of the people towards the disabled individuals in the society.	2	2
16	I preferred because I studied this field in the girls' vocational high school.	2	2
17	I preferred because I thought this is the best profession for me.	2	2
18	I didn't have many options and I thought this was the only profession for me among my preferences in the exam.	2	2
19	The society is unaware of the disabled individuals and the disabled are not given the necessary importance.	2	2

Table 2. (Continue) The Reasons of the Pre-service Teachers to Prefer the Mentally Disabled Primary School Teaching Program

Q	The Reason	f	%
20	I preferred because I thought I would feel peaceful.	1	1
21	I believe I will not have difficulty in this profession.	1	1
22	I preferred because studying in the department is easy.	1	1
23	I preferred unconsciously. I had no interest or idea.	1	1
24	I thought the disabled are not provided the sufficient education.	1	1
25	I preferred because I like differences.	1	1
26	I preferred because I wanted to offer a solution to alienation of the individuals with special needs within the society and to the malpractices in their rights for education.	1	1
27	I preferred to make a contribution for reintegration of the individuals with special needs to the society.	1	1
	Total	100	100

As seen in Table 2, the factors affecting the preference of the mentally disabled primary school teaching program by the pre-service teachers are listed as ‘high appointment rate, easy appointment and appointment guarantee’ with a rate of 15%, ‘wide job opportunity’ with a rate of 13%, the idea ‘to be helpful and make a contribution to the education of children in this field’ with a rate of 9%, ‘good economic conditions and high financial earning’ with a rate of 8%, ‘I like taking care of kids’ with a rate of 7%, ‘I believe I am patient and this profession requires patience’ with a rate of 7% and ‘recommendation and guidance of my teachers’ with a rate of 4%.

Although the frequency is very low, the reasons of the pre-service teachers to prefer the special education teaching program are listed as ‘my sister/brother is handicapped’ with a rate of 3%, ‘the spiritual aspect, the merit and consideration for the afterlife according to my religious belief’ with a rate of 3%, ‘I thought being with and teaching these students would make me happy’ with a rate of 3%, ‘I love the profession’ with a rate of 3%, ‘I find this profession fun’ with a rate of 3%, ‘My score in the university entrance exam was sufficient to enter the program’ with a rate of 2%, ‘I like squaring the circle’ with a rate of 2%, ‘I studied this field in the girls’ vocational high school’ with a rate of 2%, ‘I thought this is the best profession for me’ with a rate of 2%, ‘I didn’t have many options and I thought this was the only profession for me among my preferences in the exam’ with a rate of 2%, and ‘The society is unaware of the disabled individuals and the disabled are not given the necessary importance’ with a rate of 2%. On the other hand, since only one of the pre-service teachers stated as ‘I preferred unconsciously. I had no interest or idea’. The pre-service teachers are considered to have preferred the profession consciously.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

High rate of appointment in this field, private sector and private course opportunities are especially considered to be effective for pre-service teachers in preferring the special education department. Also, the fact that the minimum score required to be appointed was 50,718 for the mentally disabled primary school teaching as stated by the Ministry of National Education in the appointments in August 2011, 278 of 418 special education teachers were appointed and the rate of appointment by the Ministry of National Education was 66% are considered to be meaningful, when compared to the reasons of the pre-service teachers in this study (<http://www.memurum.biz/2011/08/2011>). It is possible to state that the findings obtained from the research in the literature carried out by Hacıömeroğlu and Şahin Taşkın, 2010; Eskicumalı, 2002; Çermik, Doğan and Şahin 2010; Papanastasiou and Papanastasiou 1998; Sarıkaya and Khorshid, 2009, about the effects of the job opportunities for the teachers and pre-service teachers to prefer the teaching profession support the findings of this research.

Based on the results of the research, regardless of the occupation, making a preference about the future profession consciously taking into consideration the professional satisfaction and life quality is important. For this reason, especially the professional guidance in secondary schools should be done parallel to the interests, abilities and capabilities of students. Also, providing professional consultancy is important so that students can make preferences consciously.

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