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Examining trainee teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession: Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University case

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Abstract

The present study both investigates the attitudes of teacher trainees towards teaching profession and the relationship between students' attitudes and the graduated school. A mixed design was employed. 118 students from the ELT Department of a state university constitute the research group. The data were collected by means of open-ended questions and an attitude scale. The data analyses revealed that majority of the students possess positive attitudes towards teaching profession. The qualitative data analyses showed that female students had more positive attitudes than the males did. When the attitude differences of students according to school graduation were examined, no significant differences were found among groups. It is necessary that the curriculum of Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools should be redesigned and the Ministry of Education and policy makers should take some measures and develop new teaching policies, and provide additional opportunities to develop consciousness on teaching profession.

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Keywords: attitude; pre-service teacher education; teacher development; teaching profession

1. Introduction

Teachers play a crucial role on the development of learning second-language skills of the learners. Positive attitudes and actions employed by them can make positive changes on the lives and professional development of their students. According to Chastain (1998), teachers' positive attitudes, emotions, and feelings towards

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themselves, the class, the language, learners and culture of the language promote the quality of teaching and learning. Attitude is defined as a complex mental state involving beliefs and a tendency to react in a way towards a designed class of stimuli (Anastasi, 1957). In order to promote learners' positive attitudes and good feelings, teachers should respond to their various interests and needs, help them develop positive self- concepts and cooperative attitudes by listening to them. Additionally, they should provide clear feedback for them, help them comprehend what they are going to do in classes, encourage them to develop intrinsic motivation and discover their capabilities and take responsibilities to develop skills for learning. It is clear that only teachers employing positive attitudes and actions can make positive changes on the lives of their students.

Brown (2001) states that the roles teachers play and the styles they develop will merge to give them tools for creating a classroom climate that is positive, stimulating, and energising. Teachers who are highly motivated and have positive attitudes towards their profession can establish good relationships in classes, create positive energy, facilitate the process of learning, provide advice and counsel when students seek it, which all enhance the quality of teaching. It should be considered that pre-service and in-service teachers should be ready and enthusiastic to take such great responsibilities and there is need to train, encourage and help them develop their teaching skills permanently.

In Turkey, after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, teacher training under the responsibility of Ministry of Education has gained importance and improved qualitatively and quantitatively (Terzi and Tezci, 2007). After 1982 The Higher Education Council and the Ministry of Education have become responsible to train teachers related to teaching profession. These training programmes are hoped to equip teachers with necessary characteristics while performing their professions.

Since teachers' personality and attitudes are significant contributors to teaching and learning, many researchers have set off to determine teachers' attitudes towards their profession. There are studies on pre-service and in-service teachers in the related literature [Bademcioğlu, et al. (2014); Doğan and Çoban (2009); Gürbüz and Kışoğlu (2007); Güneyli and Aslan (2009); Hussain et al. (1985); İspir (2010); Oruç (2011); Özsoy et al. (2010); Terzi and Tezci (2007); Üstüner (2006); Yeşil (2011)].

Terzi and Tezci (2007) investigated the attitudes of prospect teachers towards teaching and revealed that they had positive attitudes and gender variable was investigated and t- test analysis showed a significant difference in favour of females. When the class variable was investigated, analysis showed no significant difference. In their study, Özsoy et al. investigated the factors affecting pre-service students' choice of teaching as a profession and factors change with respect to their gender and found out by analysing the data gathered from pre-service teachers that almost half of the students choose teaching as a profession because they think it is sacred, it is the best profession that suits them and it is the profession in their ideals. Besides, a significant difference between males and females in the consciousness factor was determined. Similarly, Oruç investigated the attitudes of trainee teachers towards teaching as a profession at a state university. In total 80 students studying their first and third years in the department participated in the research study. The data analysis showed that students had clear positive attitudes towards teaching.

Doğan and Çoban (2009) investigated the relationships between students' attitudes towards teaching profession and their anxiety level, and the findings revealed that students had positive attitudes and the anxiety level of students was found to be lower when they had positive attitudes. Female students recommending this profession to others, those who liked their profession and those who were optimistic in finding a job were found to have had positive attitudes and the pessimistic ones were found to be more anxious. In the same year, Güneyli and Aslan also (2009) investigated prospective teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession in terms of their "gender", "class" and "socio-economic" levels, their reasons for choosing this profession, what the problems they may confront when they start the profession and whether the education they received is sufficient. A significant difference in favor of female prospective teachers in relation to the gender factor was determined. However, no significant difference between attitude scores was observed in relation to the effects of class and socio-economic levels. The majority of prospective teachers chose Turkish language teaching because they loved the profession. The prospective teachers' most important concern about their future was "not being appointed".

In a recent study Bademcioğlu et al. (2014) investigated Yıldız Technical University teacher candidates' attitudes towards the teaching profession in terms of gender, field and programs from which they have graduated, and whether or not they practiced teaching profession before. Data analyses revealed that the scores of teacher

candidates' attitudes towards teaching profession were very high. In the study, it was observed that there was no significant difference between teacher candidates' attitudes towards teaching profession and programs they graduated from, and similarly no significant difference was observed between their attitudes towards teaching profession and gender and their field. However, when compared according to teaching experience, a significant difference was observed in favor of experienced teachers. The researchers concluded that teaching experience had a positive and significant effect on teacher candidates' attitudes to teaching profession.

The expectations of teachers, their sensitivity, priorities, and values contribute to the quality of education, so the teacher is the most important component of the quality of education in regular and special education. It is essential to prepare well-equipped teachers and this can be realized by learning about teacher trainees' needs, expectations, levels of attitudes and knowledge. It is also necessary to help them acquire ideas related to non-stop learning, perform their jobs enthusiastically and facilitate the development of teacher's attitudes. The fundamental objective of this study is to determine the English Language Teaching Department trainee teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession in term of gender, classes, their reasons for choosing this profession, and school graduation. It is considered that the results of the study will contribute to the field.

2. Methodology

The present study employs a mixed design, in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed.

2.1. Aims and significance of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine the attitudes of the trainee teachers towards teaching profession. It also examines the attitudes of the trainee teachers in terms of gender and class. Besides, the study aims to investigate the relationship between their attitude scores and the previous type of school they graduated from. There are some representative studies determining the attitudes of Turkish students, as mentioned above, but this study differs from the others in the way that it may give us a possibility to compare the attitude levels of students towards teaching profession studying in different classes and by means of the data collected from the trainees, we can have a chance of noticing the effectiveness of the courses that students take during their training. To this end, the following research questions were posed:

1. What is the attitude level of the trainee teaches towards teaching profession?
2. What are the attitude differences of the trainee teachers in terms of gender?
3. What are the attitude differences of the trainee teachers in terms of class?
4. What is the relationship between their attitude scores and type of school they graduated from?
5. What are the reasons of the trainees to choose the English Language teaching as a profession?

2.2. Participants and setting

The data were collected from the 118 trainee teachers studying in different classes of the ELT Department of a state university on the western coast of Turkey. The students were selected by random selection method. The department offers a four-year training programme plus a mandatory one-year prep class to improve the skills of students who fail to attain a sufficient score in a skills-based exemption exam at the beginning of their studies. Students studying in the first year have generally come straight from different high schools or after studying in the prep class, and are therefore recent high school graduates who have little experience about teaching profession. It was for this reason that 1st year students were included in the study. In the second and third years, students gradually take courses about teaching profession. In the 4th year, students undertake a school experience course in the first semester and a practicum during the second semester, and are consequently observers of current practice in schools, and experience English teaching and learning from a different perspective than the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students.

It was considered to be appropriate to include such participants from different classes in the investigation. The students who participated in the study were all native speakers of Turkish Language and were in the Fall Term of 2011-2012 Academic year. At the time of data collection, all students had already finished their mid-term exams and were in the midst of the first semester.

2.3. Instruments

“Attitudes towards Teaching Profession Scale” developed by Çetin (2006) was used in the study to collect quantitative data. It was a 5-item Likert-type scale with 35 statements, 15 negative and 20 positive. The reliability of the scale was found to be $\alpha=0.95$. The language of the scale was Turkish. The qualitative data were collected by 6 open-ended questions in Part I. The questionnaire was administered the students during class hours by getting permission and agreement of the tutors and students previously.

2.4. Data analysis

The quantitative data were analysed by using Pearson Correlation Coefficient, t-test, and ANOVA within the package for statistical the social Sciences (SPSS) 16. For the examination of the qualitative data, ‘descriptive analysis’ method was employed. The data appropriately were summarised considering some pre-determined themes (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Then the frequency tables of qualitative data were prepared and findings were presented. During data analysis the positive and negative statements of the attitude scale were considered, and in the positive items higher scores represent higher attitudes. In the negative items low scores show high attitudes.

3. Findings

3.1. RQ1. What is the attitude level of the trainee teaches towards teaching profession?

Firstly, the reliability of positive statements was calculated, and found high (Alpha= 0.919). The Grand Mean of the positive items was found as 4. 19. Item 27 within the positive group, “Teaching is a profession that necessitates commitment” was the item with the highest attitude score (M=4. 78). This was followed by item 28, “Teaching is an honourable profession” (M=4. 76) and, item 33 “Teaching is one of the professions that have an important conscientious dimension” (M=4. 71).

Item 4 “Teaching is a passion for me” was the item with the lowest attitude score (M=3. 52). “No one can prevent me from practising this profession” (M=3.54) was the item which received the second lowest score, and this was followed by item 15, “If I were required to choose a different profession, I would choose the teaching profession again without a hesitation (M=3.58). The mean scores of the positive items show that students have positive attitudes towards teaching profession (See Table1).

The reliability of the negative statements was calculated by using Cronbach Alpha and it was found highly reliable (Alpha= 0.918). The Grand Mean of the negative items was found as 1. 96.

Table1. Descriptive Statistics of the positive attitudes towards teaching profession

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item-total Correlation	If item deleted Cronbach's Alpha
4. Teaching is a passion for me.	3.52	1.190	.745	.911
9. No one can prevent me from practising this profession.	3.54	1.226	.709	.912
15. If I were required to choose a different profession, I would choose the teaching profession again without a hesitation	3.58	1.300	.739	.911
27. Teaching is a profession that necessitates commitment.	4.78	.419	.407	.919

28. Teaching is an honourable profession.	4.76	.680	.461	.917
33. Teaching is one of the professions that have an important conscientious dimension.	4.71	.619	.319	.920

Within the negative group, Item 31 “The idea of continuously updating myself worries me about practising this profession.” was the item with the highest mean score (M=2. 63), and this was followed by item 16 “I do not suppose that I will always feel excitement for learning and teaching” (M= 2.39) and item 26 “.I do not suppose that I am going to teach if I find a better job” (M=2. 14). Item 5 “I think teaching does not have any attractive features.” was the item with the lowest mean score (M=1.58). Item 13, “I do not like teaching profession”, with a mean 1. 68, and item 20 “Teaching is the last profession that I will practise since I am fed up with the courses and teachers”, (M=.1. 68) were the items with the second lowest score, and this was followed by item 23 “If only I get in a difficult situation, I can think of practising this profession (M=1.72). The results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics results of the most and least used negative items

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item-total Correlation	Ifitem deleted Cronbach's Alpha
5. I think teaching does not have any attractive features.	1. 58	. 972	. 615	. 913
13. I do not like teaching profession.	1. 68	1. 146	.782	. 908
16. I do not suppose that I will always feel excitement for learning and teaching.	2. 39	1. 206	. 549	. 915
20. Teaching is the last profession that I will practise since I am fed up with the courses and teachers.	1. 68	1. 085	. 808	. 907
23. If only I get in a difficult situation, I can think of practising this profession.	1. 72	1. 101	. 782	. 908
26. I do not suppose that I am going to teach if I find a better job.	2. 14	1. 408	. 786	. 907
31. The idea of continuously updating myself worries me about practising this profession.	2. 63	1. 332	. 360	. 922

3.2. RQ2. What are the attitude differences of the trainee teachers in terms of gender?

Gender variable was investigated and independent pair t- test analysis showed a significant difference in favour of the females. The results are given in Table3.

Table 3. T- test: Attitude differences in term of gender

Attitude	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
Positive	Female	82	4. 3006	. 54003	3. 164	. 002
	Male	36	3. 9339	. 66233		
Negative	Female	82	1. 8577	. 72855	-2. 213	. 049
	Male	36	2. 2093	. 92954		

3.3. RQ3. What is the attitude differences of the trainee teachers in terms of their classes?

In order to answer the research question, the data were analysed by One Way ANOVA model and no significant difference was found according to their classes (See Table 4).

Table 4. One Way ANOVA test: Attitude differences between classes

Attitude	Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F; P
Positive	1	28	4.2500	.49160	.784 .505
	2	41	4.0756	.74441	
	3	23	4.2139	.51606	
	4	26	4.2788	.52672	
	Total	118	4.1887	.60157	
Negative	1	28	1.7833	.64192	2.065 .109
	2	41	2.0650	.96603	
	3	23	2.2290	.75927	
	4	26	1.7692	.67098	
	Total	118	1.9650	.80769	

3.4. RQ4. What is the relationship between their attitude scores and type of school they graduated from?

The quantitative data were analysed by One Way ANOVA model and no significant difference between groups was found in terms of schools they graduated from. Although there is not statistically a meaningful significance, it is interesting that the Anatolian Teacher Training High School graduates received the lowest attitude mean score in both categories. Mean positive is (M=3.6875), and mean negative is (M=2.4333). The number of the students, the mean scores and the type of the schools are given in the Table 5.

Table5. Attitude differences in terms of school graduation

Type of school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P	
Mean Positive	HS	15	4.0400	.82228	2.355	0.058
	SHS	35	4.3400	.47986		
	ATHS	8	3.6875	.71452		
	AHS	58	4.1969	.56433		
	PHS	2	4.4250	.24749		
	Total	118	4.1887	.60157		
Mean negative	HS	15	2.1244	.99231	1.675	0.161
	SHS	35	1.8190	.64869		
	ATHS	8	2.4333	1.01669		
	AHS	58	1.9759	.80270		
	PHS	2	1.1333	.00000		
	Total	118	1.9650	.80769		

HS= High School; SHS= Super High School; ATHS= Anatolian Teacher Training High School; AHS= Anatolian High School; PHS= Private High School

3.5. RQ5. What are the reasons of the trainees to choose the English Language teaching as a profession?

As a part of the research, the trainee teachers were asked to write their reasons for choosing teaching as a profession. The data gathered by open-ended questions were analysed through content analysis by putting the items under the determined categories. The data were analysed by One Way ANOVA model and significant differences between groups were found. In order to determine the differences between groups Bonferroni Multiple Comparisons test (Post Hoc) was employed.

45 of the trainees out of 118 (M= 4. 4722) expressed that they liked English language and 32 of them (M= 4. 396) stated that it was a suitable job for them. In total 77 (% 65. 25) of the trainee teachers were found to have positive attitudes and they were eager to become teachers by their own wishes. In other words they were intrinsically motivated to study in the ELT Department (See Table 6).

Table 6. Findings about trainee teachers' reasons for choosing English language teaching

	Reasons for preference	N	Mean	S.D	F	P	Dif. Groups
Mean positive Items	Liking English Language (A)	45	4. 4722	. 31253	16.492	0. 000	A-C, A-D, A-F
	Influence / Guidance by the Family / Teacher (B)	8	3, 1750	. 48033			B-C, B-E
	Ease of Finding A Job (C)	15	3. 8267	. 45429			C-E
	By Coincidence (D)	6	3. 9000	. 54955			E-F
	Suitability for me (E)	32	4. 3969	. 43569			
	University preference(F)	12	3. 7473	. 88339			
	Total	118	4. 1826	. 60051			
Mean Negative items	Liking English Language (A)	45	1. 5733	. 47576	16.627	0. 000	A-B, A-C, A-F
	Influence / Guidance by the Family / Teacher (B)	8	3. 2833	. 94533			B-D, B-E
	Ease of Finding A Job (C)	15	2. 5111	. 63179			C-D
	By Coincidence (D)	6	2. 2111	1.06785			E-F
	Suitability for me (E)	32	1. 6771	. 41378			
	University preference (F)	12	2. 5939	1.03814			
	Total	118	1. 9675	. 81069			

The qualitative data analysis results confirmed the findings of the attitude scale, which is thought to increase reliability of the study. This finding is also in line with the findings of the studies carried out by Güneşli and Aslan (2009); Özsoy et al. (2010). In the latter 50% of the trainees in their study preferred to become teachers since they had positive feelings towards teaching and teaching is the profession in their ideals. The number of the students who were not much eager to prefer the teaching as a job was 41 (%34.75). 8 of them (M=3. 1750) preferred this profession as a result of the influence of their parents or relatives, 18 of them (M= 3. 8267) expressed that it was the ease of finding a job, which made them choose this profession, and 6 students (M=3. 9000) preferred this department just by co-incident. These students were not intrinsically motivated to become teachers.

4. Discussions

This study firstly was an investigation of the attitudes of trainee teachers towards teaching profession. The mean scores of the positive items show that students have positive attitudes towards teaching profession and the Grand Mean of the positive items was found as 4. 19. This finding was in line with a number of studies (Güneşli and

Aslan, 2009; Doğan and Çoban, 2009; Yeşil, 2011) who used in their studies the same scale developed by Çetin, (2006).

When the differences between classes were examined, no significant difference was determined between classes. The freshman students' positive attitude mean score ($M=4, 25$) was close to the mean score of the senior students' mean score ($M=4, 27$). This finding is promising for teaching profession. The level of attitude scores of junior students shows that they prefer this profession consciously. Both they love to be teachers, and on the other hand, I believe they are aware of the fact that they can find a job more easily than the other faculty graduates. It is our responsibility that they maintain this enthusiasm and eagerness and if possible to increase the level of their positive attitudes. It seems to be reasonable that these freshman students can be observed in a longitudinal study; the attitude differences of the students should be observed and retested to see the differences between 1st and 4th years. Another important point is to question the reason why the senior students have similar level of positive attitudes although they have taken more courses related to teaching than the junior students. It might be the concern about being unsuccessful in the Public Personnel Selection Exam (KPSS exam) that they have to take or the final projects they have to finish on time. This issue requires an in-depth investigation. In a further study, it is suggested that burnout levels of the 4th year students should be determined, and then, the relationship between their burnout levels and attitudes should be examined.

The descriptive analysis of the demographic information revealed that female students ($M=4, 3006$) had more positive attitudes than the males ($M=3, 9339$). This is not a surprise finding since both in Turkey and in the world there are some similar research findings confirming the findings of this study (Oruç, 2011; Terzi and Tezci, 2007; Doğan and Çoban, 2009; Yeşil, 2011). There is a tendency that teaching profession is mostly attributed to women. This might be due to the reason that mothers are the first teachers of their children. The study carried out by Oruç, (2011), whose study is in line with this study, has significance because the participants are ELT teacher trainees and the attitude scale used to gather data was designed by Çetin (2006) as in this present study.

Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools are supposed to prepare students to become highly motivated effective teachers but when the attitude differences of those students according to school graduation were examined, no significant differences were found among groups in this study. Whereas, the researcher had assumed that the students who had graduated from Anatolian teacher training schools would have higher positive attitudes towards the teaching profession than the other groups. Çeliköz and Çetin (2004) stated that one of the aims of Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools is to train and prepare students for the education faculties where they become teachers. According to Kırbıyık (1995) the ones who would like to become teachers should prefer to study at Anatolian teacher training schools before they start to study at university and psychologically be ready for the profession. It is necessary that the programs of these schools should be redesigned and the Ministry of Education, policy makers and teachers working at those schools should take some measures on the issue, develop teaching policies, redesign new programs, and additional opportunities for those students to develop their consciousness about being a teacher. Çeliköz and Çetin investigated the attitudes of those students and found out that the boarding students of these schools developed lower attitudes towards teaching profession. It is necessary for those groups of students to provide some effective and efficient programmes, organising some social activities where they can have a chance of meeting effective teachers and get them to think about positive sides of being a teacher by introducing them a number of strategies. Finally, it is important that in-service teachers to teach in these schools should carefully be selected and assigned.

Finally, as a part of the research, the trainee teachers were asked to write their reasons for choosing teaching as a profession. The data analysis revealed that more than half of the trainees (% 65.25) were found to have positive attitudes and they were eager to become teachers by their own wishes. The results obtained from the analysis of the open-ended questions confirmed the findings of the attitude scale, which is thought to increase reliability of the study. This finding is also in the line with the findings of the studies carried out by Güneşli and Aslan (2009); Özsoy et al. (2010). However, 34.75 % of the students were not much eager to prefer the teaching as their job. In a further study, the reasons of lack of their motivation, or hesitation to become teachers should be investigated.

5. Conclusion

Attitude is a tendency to react in a certain way towards a designed class of stimuli (Anastasi, 1957) and it has an effect on teachers' performance. Since the quality of education is directly related to the quality of teachers, we must consider the necessity of positive attitudes and try to develop teachers' positive attitudes towards to the teaching profession by taking some measures and developing some programs.

In this study, the trainee teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession, and their attitudes in terms of class, gender, school graduation, the reasons of the trainees preferring the teaching profession were all investigated, and it was found out that the attitudes of the trainee teachers towards teaching profession were positive. The attitude scores of female trainees were found to be higher than the scores of the male trainees. The findings of this study were all in line with the related research findings (Çeliköz and Çetin, 2004; Doğan and Çoban, 2009; Gourneau, 2005; Güneyli and Aslan, 2009; Özsoy et al., 2010; Terzi and Tezci 2007). According to Brown (2001) teachers who are highly motivated and have positive attitudes towards their profession can establish good relationship. The effective attitudes and actions employed by teachers ultimately can also make a positive difference on the lives of their students. For this reason, it is important that apart from content knowledge trainee teachers should acquire some attitudes and actions during their training. The authorities, those who decide on teacher education programs should design programs and courses which will help trainees learn to be kind and caring, be willing to share the responsibility involved in a classroom, be sensitive to students' diversity and be enthusiastic to stimulate students' creativity.

In this study, the majority (%65.25) of the trainee teachers was found to have positive attitudes towards teaching profession but we cannot ignore the other group (%34.75) who has negative attitudes towards their profession. As Gourneau (2005) stated, the responsibility for preparing trainee teachers is assumed to begin with teacher education programs at higher education institutions. However, it is better to focus on the students before they experienced bad attitude examples presented by inefficient teachers at schools. Teachers usually teach in the way they were taught (Goodlad, 1990). Then, in order to develop students' positive attitudes, in-service teachers, too, should be good models for their students and present them some good teacher characteristics at schools before they start their university education. Tutors, on the other hand should learn to value their students' feelings, past experience, give them opportunities to develop good attitudes, teach or encourage them to be open to differences and diversity, be critical to issues but also sensitive to each other, provide meaningful learning opportunities, utilize many approaches to learning, and encourage creativity. It is clear that to achieve this aim, a team work is needed. Educational institutions, program developers, private enterprise, trainers, mentors, in-service and pre-service teachers need to work cooperatively and enthusiastically and take responsibilities. These assumptions of the researcher are supported by the findings of Korkmaz and Yavuz (2011). In their study, they pointed out the importance of motivating students and added that teachers who were aware of their students' needs from different perspectives could motivate them more easily.

In conclusion, effective attitudes and actions employed by teachers can positively change the lives of students, so it will be helpful to examine teacher trainees' educational experiences, attitude differences and offer them some useful programs, which will illuminate them about what they should or should not do in their future classes. Determining some factors effecting trainees to choose the teaching as a profession, level of their positive or negative attitudes will highlight teacher education programs, implemented in the educational faculties. Finally, it is necessary that teacher training programs need to provide teacher candidates with knowledge and experiences with cultural diversity, and teacher trainers should aim to help trainees be independent individuals, demonstrate positive attitudes, and encourage them to be creative and take responsibility for their development.

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