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Öğretmen Yetiştirme Programlarındaki Öğretmen Adaylarının Profili

The Profile of Prospective Teachers in Teacher Education Programs

Ahmet Ok* & Pınar Önkol**
METU Faculty of Education Department of Educational Sciences

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, öğretmen yetiştirme programlarına yerleşen öğrencilerin profillerini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Öğrenci profilleri; aile, akademik, sosyal ve motivasyon olmak üzere dört başlık altında incelenmiştir. Çalışma için dört coğrafi bölgeden altı yüksek öğretim kurumu seçilmiştir. Verilerin toplanması için araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen kapalı ve açık uçlu soruları kapsayan bir bilgi formu kullanılmıştır. Veriler genelde betimsel istatistik çözümleme yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, öğretmen yetiştirme programlarına gelen adayların düşük gelirli, farklı okullardan gelmekle birlikte çoğunlukla Anadolu öğretmen liselerinden geldiklerini, ortaöğrenim sürecinde sosyal etkinliklere pek katılmadıklarını, ancak öğretmen olmak için hevesli olduklarını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Aday öğretmenlerin profilleri, öğretmen eğitimi, hizmet-öncesi eğitim

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics of prospective teachers. The characteristics were examined under four themes: family /home background, academic background, social background, and motivation. Six higher education institutions from four different provinces were selected and the data were collected via an information sheet consisting of closed and open-ended questions developed by the researchers. The data were analyzed mainly by making use of descriptive statistics. Results of the study indicated that students who enter teacher education programs come from low-income families. Although the type of high school from which they graduated showed variety, the data showed that the students were mainly graduates of Anatolian teacher high schools. The results also indicated that students were rarely involved in social activities during their secondary education. It was promising to observe that they had a high motivation for becoming teachers.

Key Words: Prospective teachers' profiles, teacher education, pre-service education

Introduction

Teacher education is critical for the achievement of the elementary and secondary education in developed and developing countries (Keith & Lewin, in press). For the success of a teacher education program several constituents should be considered. These are the society, which provides and operates educational institutions, the accumulated knowledge, and the learners (Sözer, 1991) for whom the course will serve (Demirel, 2006; Saylor, Alexander & Lewis, 1981). Among these components, one of the most frequently emphasized issues was student characteristics that play a major role for the design, improvement and reform of the curriculum or teacher education programs (Awender & Harte, 1986; Levin 2000). In addition, the theory of school learning emphasizes the student entry characteristics - cognitive and affective or student history- as an important variable to establish for further learning. As Hasan Ali Yücel, one of the well-known ministers of the Turkish National Education, stated in an opening speech during the first national education convention (Milli Eğitim Şurası) and Okçabol (2000) at the second National Teacher Education Symposia emphasized, the role of students' entry characteristics in relation to their adaptability to teacher education programs and teaching is crucial. (MEB, 1992).

* Asst. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Ok, METU Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences
** Reseach Assistant, Pınar Önkol, METU Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences.

Moreover, Cruickshank, Bainer and Metcalf (1995) also focus on students' personal characteristics and the way they were educated as one set of factors that influence how teachers teach. As emphasized by Levin (2000), any attempt to change or renew an education program will be incomplete without considering student history. Therefore, teacher education institutions should consider their students' characteristics so that they can offer a more effective teacher education program, positive learning environment and a social environment. As stated by Watts (1984) it may be simple to train teachers, who can just transmit knowledge, or the ones who guide students and may not go beyond building self concept among learners, or the ones who simply mediate learning. However, what is actually needed is the integration of all these aspects that could only be possible through an expanded set of data about the potential prospective teachers.

Consequently, the aim of the present study was to explore the characteristics of first year (novice) students of teacher education programs with respect to their home background, academic background, social background, and motivation toward becoming a teacher. In this sense, by using both quantitative and qualitative research procedures, the researchers aimed to examine the educational level and occupational status of the students' parents, students' achievement, type of high schools from which students graduated, social or extra curricular activities in which they participated during high school years, factors that motivated students to select teaching such as; their university preference ranks, attempt to re-sit the UEE, why they choose to teach, and their desire to remain or change the program at which they study.

Method

In this survey study, the researchers believe that although there is no specific research question set prior to collection of the data, the setting in which the data could be collected is seen as where the data exist. The approach in survey research is to go to these settings, administer the appropriate data collection devices and analyze data (Fax, 1969). In the descriptive survey, the researchers seek and answer questions like how many, what, and where. There are two conditions that suggest and justify the descriptive survey. First, there should be an absence of information about a problem of educational significance, and second, the setting where the information will be generated should be accessible to the researcher. Both of these conditions are met in the present study.

In the context of this study, teacher training institutions (Faculties of Education or Teacher Training Colleges) are located in different geographical regions of Türkiye. In order to achieve a more representative set of subjects, six different teacher education institutions (Faculties of Education) from different geographical regions of Türkiye were selected; one from the west (Uludağ Üniversitesi), one from the east (Erzurum Atatürk Ünivesitesi -Kazım Karabekir Eğitim Fakültesi) three from the Central Anatolia (Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Gazi Üniversitesi, and Anadolu Üniversitesi) and one from the north (Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi, Fatih Eğitim Fakültesi). From each of these institutions three programs (if present); English teaching, elementary mathematics teaching and elementary science teaching were included in the study. All subjects included in the study (N=1013) were freshman students.

Table 1.
Subjects of the Study

Institution	Teacher training program								Grand Totals
	Elementary Science Teaching		Elementary Mathematics Teaching		English Teaching		Total		
	*M	**F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Anadolu U	-	-	16	25	18	90	34	115	149
Atatürk U.	63	34	35	18	25	56	123	108	231
Gazi U.	28	40	15	11	6	75	49	126	175
METU	17	25	10	20	19	94	46	139	185
KTÜ	50	32	29	21	-	-	79	53	132
Uludağ	-	-	-	-	24	114	24	114	138
Sub-total	158	131	105	95	92	429	355	655	
TOTAL									1013***

*Male, **Female, ***Three students did not respond to gender question.

The data were gathered through a 30 items data collection tool. Five of these items were open-ended and the remaining were designed in such a way that the subjects could respond by marking an alternative among the given options or by supplying short information. As for validity, both face and content validity procedures were applied. For the former, experts were consulted to check for clarity and understandability of the items. For the later it was mainly based on the review of literature related to the rules for item writing. The data collection process lasted in one month. During this process, the researchers prepared the data collection instrument which was sent back to each of the six institutions via a parcel company and after they were administered, they were sent back to the researchers via the same way. A total of 1050 instruments were sent and 1041 of them were returned. Among the instruments received, 28 of them were not complete and usable, therefore, a total of 1013 constituted the sample of the present study.

During the data analysis process, descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies and cross-tables were used to analyze the data. In addition, qualitative data analysis procedures were used to analyze the open-ended questions. Each open-ended question was assumed as one main theme (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), and then the coding categories /schemes were formed for each theme identified in the data. During the data analysis process, descriptive and qualitative results were organized under four themes (students' home background, academic background, social activity background and motivation) and the last theme was further split into four sub-themes. At this point, it is important to emphasize that the readers may find different numbers of cases in the descriptive tables throughout the paper, which is due to missing data on certain variables.

Results

Data gathered from 1013 students were analyzed and organized under four major themes; students' home background, academic background, social background and motivation. Motivation is categorized under four sub- themes: university preference ranks, re-sitting ÖSS and scholarships awarded, reasons for choosing to teach, and the desire to stay in or change the program/course of study. Further sub-division of motivation into sub-categories or factors was primarily done for the sake of clarity, and because multiple factors may add to one's motivation.

Students' Home Background

Under this theme, mothers' and fathers' level of education, their occupations, and the number of siblings in the family were examined. In general, Table 2 indicates that 13.6% of mothers and 3.3% of

fathers of students who choose to teach have no schooling at all. It should be clearly indicated that, the percentages might not refer to complete illiteracy but they refer to the fact that these percentages reflect formal schooling that students' parents received. On the other hand, majority (85.4% of mothers and 96.4% fathers) completed a certain level of education, however only 8.9 % of mothers and 25.1% of fathers had a tertiary education. The percent of fathers who hold a tertiary education is approximately three times more than that of mothers'. The main reason for this could be related to roles or stereotypes attributed to males in the society, such as taking care of households, which may result in the need for more education among the fathers.

In relation to the level of education, 53.2% of the mothers of students' have had elementary education. On the other hand, in relation to fathers' level of education, the situation is more promising (Table 2). In a study conducted by Eğitim-Bir-Sen (2004) illiteracy levels of mothers and fathers (mainly the illiteracy rate) showed a similar pattern but the percentages are generally higher compared to the results of this study.

Table 2.
Parents' Education

	Mother		Father	
Education	f	%	f	%
Elementary(5)	539	53,2	334	33,0
Middle (3)	66	6,5	138	13,6
High (3)	170	16,8	242	23,9
Tertiary (2-4)	90	8,9	254	25,1
Master's	-	-	1	,1
No Education	138	13,6	33	3,3
Total	1003	99,0	1002	98,9

In relation to the students' mothers' and fathers' occupation, the data analysis indicated that most of mothers were housewives (82.3 %) whereas only 1.4 % of the fathers were unemployed. When the occupations of parents are concerned, they mainly work as civil servants, workers, teachers, nurses, employees in the private sector and in pharmacy. In general, mothers hold 10 different occupations whereas fathers hold 28. It should be noted that only 7% of mothers work and 82.3% are housewives. Similarly, according to a survey by Eğitim-Bir-Sen, 2004, 88.7% of mothers of teachers who actively teach are housewives. This strengthens the general belief that teachers generally belong to families where the mothers are housewives (which can also be called as stereotyping of "housewife idea). Furthermore, the data revels that 4.3 % of mothers and 14.9% of fathers were teachers who sent their children to study teaching. This might weaken the public perception that teaching is a highly valued profession and, where most of the time children of teachers continue the family tradition and choose teaching as a tradition. In addition, this result is also interesting for teacher education institutions, which intend to attract students from more educated home backgrounds, especially a common public idea that students of teacher parents' have higher intention to choose teaching as a career.

Table 3.
Mothers' and Fathers' Occupations

Occupations	Mother		Father			Mother		Father	
	f	%	f	%	Occupations	f	%	f	%
Housewife	834	82,3	-	-	Farmer	-	-	82	8.1
Worker	17	1,7	181	17.9	Driver	-	-	34	3.4
Self employed	6	,6	151	14.9	Police	-	-	20	2
Civil Servant	53	5,2	184	18.2	Engineer	-	-	13	1.3
Teacher	58	5,7	145	14.3	Accountant	-	-	13	1.3
Pharmacist	1	,1	2	.2	Other	-	-	18	1.8
Nurse	15	1,5	1	.1	Unemployed	-	-	14	1.4
Research assist.	2	,2	-	-	Retired	-	-	25	2.5
Day Laborer	3	,3	3	.3					
Midwife	1	,1	-	-	Total	1000	98,7	987	97.1
Lab. Assistant	1	,1	-	-	Missing	15	1,5	29	2.9
Deceased	7	,7	43	4.2	Total	1013	100	1013	100

Regarding the family size or the number of siblings in the family, the data reveals that the number of siblings changes from 1 to 15. That is, 64.6% of students have 1 to 3 siblings, whereas the remaining 35.4% of the students have 3 or more sibling. Almost sixty four percent of students attending teacher education programs belong to families who have 1-3 children. Only 33% of the subjects live in two-sibling families. In general, it was observed that prospective teachers' mothers are housewives and their fathers are mostly public servants or unqualified workers. Similar to the low professional occupations, the students' fathers and mothers mostly have primary and secondary education only and they come from families with 1-4 children.

Academic Background

The second theme was academic background under which teacher training program students' high school scores, their high school major and the type of high school, and the size of the schools they were graduated from were examined.

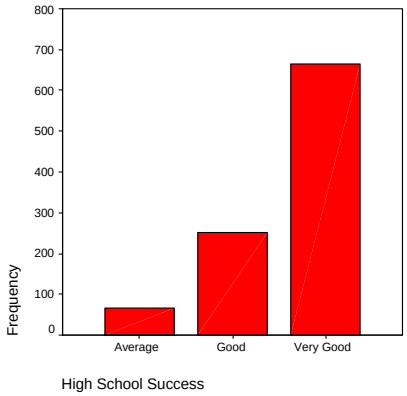

Figure 1. The Distribution of Students' High School Scores

Figure 1 and Table 4 explicate that 67.7% of student success scores range between 9 and 10 (Very Good) on a ten point scale. 25.7% falls within the range of 7 through 8.99 (Good) and 6.6 percent falls within the range of 5 to 6.99, average (Fig 1 & Table 4). Further examination of the data in relation to students' achievement scores and program selected (Table 4) showed that, within the whole group, 6.6 percent of students had average high school cumulative grade point average (CGPA) scores, among these, less than one percent of the students selected English language teaching (ELT), 1.4 percent selected elementary mathematics teaching and 4.6 percent selected elementary science teaching programs.

Table 4.
Students' High School Scores and Programs They Study

Program	High School Success								
	Average			Good			Very Good		
	Count	Column %	Table %	Count	Column %	Table %	Count	Column %	Table %
E LT	6	9,2	,6	69	27,4	7,0	428	64,5	43,6
Mathematics Education	14	21,5	1,4	64	25,4	6,5	121	18,2	12,3
Science Education	45	69,2	4,6	119	47,2	12,1	115	17,3	11,7
Total	65	100,0	6,6	252	100,0	25,7	664	100,0	67,7

Of the whole group, 25.7% of students' high school scores were labeled as good (7 to 8,99). Of these students 7% selected English teaching, and 6.5% selected elementary mathematics teaching and 12.1 % selected elementary science teaching. Among those, whose high school scores were labeled as very good (9 to 10); 43.6% selected English teaching, 12.3% selected elementary mathematics teaching and 11.7% selected elementary science teaching. That is, English teaching has been attracting students with higher scores compared to the other two programs (Table 4).

High school students in Turkey are supposed to select one major in the 10th grade (2nd year of high school). This choice will determine the field they will prefer to study if they plan to continue their studies in higher education. Subjects of the present study reported six different high school majors; science (n=219), mathematics (n=4), science and mathematics (n=266), Turkish and mathematics (n=11), literature (n=1) and foreign language (n=501). Data analysis in relation to high school majors and teacher education program selected indicated that students who study science, mathematics and English in high school generally selected a program of similar background during their university education. On the other hand, one student from literature, six students from Turkish and mathematics, and five students from science-mathematics preferred to study a different program, namely in English teaching.

Table 5.
High *School Major and Teacher Education Program*

		Name of the Program			
		ELT*	Math Education	Science Education	Total
High School Major	Science	4	76	139	219
	Mathematics	2	1	1	4
	Science-math.	5	116	145	266
	Turkish-math.	6	3	2	11
	Literature	1	-	-	1
	Foreign lang.	501			501
Total		519	196	287	1002

*English Language Teaching

Table 6.
Schools and Type of Program Attended

Name of high school graduated		Name of the program			Total
		ELT	Maths Education	Science Education	
Public HS	Count	45	76	169	290
	% program	8,6	38,2	58,9	28,8
	% of Total	4,5	7,5	16,8	28,8
Anatolian HS	Count	74	30	24	128
	% program	14,2	15,1	8,4	12,7
	% of Total	7,3	3,0	2,4	12,7
Religious HS	Count	0	1	3	4
	% program	,0	,5	1,0	,4
	% of Total	,0	,1	,3	,4
Voca Tech HS	Count	3	2	0	5
	% program	,6	1,0	,0	,5
	% of Total	,3	,2	,0	,5
Ana Voc Tech HS	Count	2	0	0	2
	% program	,4	,0	,0	,2
	% of Total	,2	,0	,0	,2
Science HS	Count	0	2	1	3
	% program	,0	1,0	,3	,3
	% of Total	,0	,2	,1	,3
Private Science HS	Count	0	0	2	2
	% program	,0	,0	,7	,2
	% of Total	,0	,0	,2	,2
Teachers HS	Count	23	1	4	28
	% program	4,4	,5	1,4	2,8
	% of Total	2,3	,1	,4	2,8
Anatolian Teachers HS	Count	253	52	32	337
	% program	48,5	26,1	11,1	33,4
	% of Total	25,1	5,2	3,2	33,4
Private HS	Count	15	3	4	22
	% program	2,9	1,5	1,4	2,2
	% of Total	1,5	,3	,4	2,2
Other	Count	107	32	48	187
	% program	20,5	16,1	16,7	18,6
	% of Total	10,6	3,2	4,8	18,6
Total	Count	522	199	287	1008
	% program	100,0%	100,0	100,0	100,0
	% of Total	51,8%	19,7	28,5	100,0

The next parameter analyzed under the academic background was the type of high school from which the teacher education students came. In this particular analysis, the type of school and teacher

education program were matched. The SPSS cross-tabulation analysis for windows (Green, Salkind &Akey, 2003) indicated that 36.2% of students came from Anatolian teacher or teacher high schools, 28.8% came from public high schools, and 20.6% of the students graduated from other high schools (other than the ones mentioned in this text). 12.7% came from Anatolian high school. In relation to the programs; English language teaching students generally came from Anatolian teacher high schools (48.5%), other high schools (20.5%), Anatolian High schools (14.2%), Public high schools (8.6 %), Teacher high schools (4.4 %) and private high schools (2.9 %) (Table 6).

Elementary Mathematics education students came from Public high schools (38.2%), Anatolian Teacher High Schools (26.1%), Anatolian High Schools (15.1%). Students of Elementary Science teaching came from Public high schools (58.9%), Schools not classified (16.7%), Anatolian teacher high school (11.1%), Anatolian high schools (8.4%). Students from private high schools rarely select teacher-training programs (1.3%; 1.2%; 1.8% for each program respectively). Of the whole group (N = 1008) 18. 6 percent (n = 178) of students came from other secondary education institutions.

Social Activity Background

Under this theme the social activities (extra curricular activities) that participants were involved during high school years and the school size is examined. The social activities refer to students' involvement in any type of school club or similar group or individual activities. On the other hand, school size refers to the approximate population of the high school pre-service education students graduated from. In this study school size is categorized under the labels of small (1-500 students), medium (501 – 1000 students), big (1001–2000 students), and very big (2001 or more students).

In relation to social activities, the situation is quite interesting because 74.4% of the students either did not join any social activities or did not respond to the item. In the data collection instrument, subjects were asked to write "no" if they did not join any social activities and the above percentage proves this finding, however, we believe that this result needs to be discussed rather cautiously with respect to extra curricular activities provided in high school, the social dimension of teaching profession and teacher education learning environment. On the other hand, 26.6% of the students joined a social activity during their high school years. Among those who joined an activity are indicated as sports (11.5%), music (2.7%), theater (2.3%), literature (2.2%), folk dancing (1.8%) and library (1.2%) were the most frequently denoted. The remaining fourteen areas of activity (chess, drawing, consumer protection, first aid, the red crescent (Kızılay), social cooperation, civilian defense, environment) did not exceed one percent. For a profession like teaching, the potential candidates' tendency to join social activities on a limited basis during high school years is rather interesting. The main reason for not preferring to take part in social activities may be University Entrance Exam (UEE) especially when the 11th grade students are considered. For 9th and 10th grade students there is a need to find the impediments for such a low tendency to participate in social activities. Thus, educators need to reconsider the factors that make the high school process rather a mechanic process where students only attend regular class hours and mainly try to solve UEE oriented multiple choice test questions, but are not willing to attend any extra curricular activity. Here it is noteworthy to think about the question of what the teacher education institutions in Türkiye should do in order to improve the teacher candidate profile. The answer to this question is critical due to the fact that education is not the total sum of cognitive learning instructional activities only.

Data analysis about school size indicated that about 30% of the students came from schools with a population of less than 500 students, 38.5% from schools with population of 500 to 1000 students, 24.5% came from schools with a population of 1001 to 2000, and the remaining 7% came from schools with a population of 2001 to 5000 students. School population was considered one major parameter when social interaction and school community is questioned. Almost 68.5% of students come from schools with less than 1000 students, that is; in schools with this big student population it may be difficult to find physical space, allocate resources an organize extra curricular activities.

Motivation

Students may be attracted to a field of study for variety of reasons that could be defined as attractors or the energy that make someone or an organism to act (Kauchak & Eggen, 2003). Herein

several factors are considered as the indicators of motivation that may have attracted students to choose teaching and these factors are examined such as students' program preference rank in the nationwide University Entrance and Placement Examination (UEE), scholarships offered by ministry of national education, desire to re-sit UEE, attractors of the teaching profession (why choose teaching), the force behind the choice of teaching, and desire to change the program or the institution (university) in which they are enrolled. Each of these indicators is examined respectively as follows.

Preference ranks. In Türkiye, almost all secondary level graduates who would like to study at higher education institutions are expected to sit a nation wide exam and make about 24 choices of departments they would like to study. Many of the universities tend to consider these preference ranks as indicators of their strength in the country. These ranks are also considered as profession and fields students desire to attend. In this respect, the assumption is that the higher the preference rank, the more motivated or interested are the students.

Table 7.
Students' Preferences Regarding the University Program

Rank order	f	%
1,00	154	15,2
2,00	188	18,6
3,00	132	13,0
4,00	110	10,9
5,00	101	10,0
6,00	54	5,3
7,00	54	5,3
8,00	42	4,1
9,00	27	2,7
10,00	29	2,9
11,00	23	2,3
12,00	15	1,5
13,00	14	1,4
14,00	13	1,3
15,00	9	,9
16,00	7	,7
17,00	5	,5
18,00	3	,3
Total	980	96,7
Missing	33	3,3
Total	1013	100,0

In this study, 980 prospective teachers answered this question (96.7 %) and 33 did not provide any responses (3.3%). The analysis of preference ranks indicated that 67.7% of students in the whole group ranked teacher education among their first five choices, 20.3 % ranked between their 6-10th choices and the remaining 8.9 % ranked it between 11th-19th choices. In short, a total of 88% of teacher education program students ranked teaching among their first 10 choices. For a long time, teacher education institutions (faculties of education and other teacher training institutions) have been criticized for having students who preferred to select these institutions among their last ranks. Similarly, some researchers referred to this problem as "low quality students" (Bülbül 1979; Karagözoğlu, 1987; Tekin, 1987 as cited in Sözer, 1991). In the study conducted by Karagözoğlu (1987), it was reported that only 12.7 percent of

the pre-service students ranked teaching among their first three choices. In a more recent study Okçabol (1999 as cited in Okçabol et al., 2003) indicated that there is an increase in the tendency to choose teaching especially among the students who come from the so called "popular schools". About 90 percent of the subjects in the present study ranked teaching among their first 10 choices. Although the above data may not represent the whole prospective student population, they still provide researchers a clue for investigating, examining and using the reasons that made this raise in preference ranks regarding the students' selection of teacher education programs.

Re-sitting UEE and scholarships. The data analysis results indicated that 69.8 percent (n=707) of students were receiving a scholarship, but the rest did not (26.9%, n=272), and 3.4% (n=34) did not respond to the question at all. The students who planned to re-sit UEE did not exceed 1.7 %, the rest (96.2%, n=975) stated they were not planning to do so. Here, it is possible to interpret such a result in different ways; one of which may be that students may not like to enter into such a challenge for the second time. Another reason may be that the students are content with the course of study or the institution in which they are enrolled. On the other hand, the findings of the study reported in the following lines do support this thinking to some extent.

Why teaching? The question of "*why choose teaching*" is frequently raised among teacher educators and studies trying to seek answers to this question indicate that there is a long list of reasons. However, when one looks at the most frequently cited ones, it can be seen that the most common ones are the desire to work with young people, the value given to the teaching profession in society, personal interest in the subject area selected, job security, the interest in self-growth (Arends, Winitzky, &Tannenbaum, 1998). In this study, the most frequently mentioned reasons by the subjects were the desire to teach, interest in the subject area of study, better job opportunities, suitability of the teaching profession to students' personal characteristics, self confidence expressed as "I can do it", the high school they studied at, the higher education institution they would like to study at, the desire to

Table 8.
Why Did Students Choose to Teach?

Institution	*I Like Teaching	Subject Area	Job Opportunity	Self confidence, "I can do it"	I like children	The school I graduated	The Institution, University	Help others	Because my parents are teachers	It is good for females
Middle E. Tech. Univ.	69	39	30	30	12	24	12	7	8	9
Gazi Univ.	54	115	44	30	5		2		13	5
Anadolu Univ.	43	46	41	32	19	2	4	16	3	8
Karadeniz Tech.Univ	38	30	51	18	12	4	-	10	9	11
Atatürk Univ.	110	70	45	37	9	14	-	4	5	14
Uludağ Univ.	36	41	24	33	4	7	-	9	4	6

* Each student was allowed to write more than one reason.

help others, the desire to work with children, suitability of the teaching profession to female characteristics (Table 8), and students' UEE scores.

Close examination of Table 8 indicates that students who participated in this study choose teaching for four reasons; the desire to teach, the interest in the subject they would like to teach, better job opportunities and the perception that their personal characteristics match with the ones teachers are

expected to have. Here, it is interesting that there are teacher parents who motivate their children to choose teaching and these pre-service students are more likely to choose teaching as a profession. On the other hand, 41 students from Uludağ University, 25 from Karadeniz University, and 21 students from Gazi University emphasized their UEE score. These students stated that it is the university entrance exam score that resulted in their preference to study teaching during their university education. In other words, their personal preferences did not make a much difference in their selection of programs and/or universities.

Similarly, when we examine the findings regarding the question of "who motivated them to choose teaching", the students most frequently emphasized that it was either their own decision, or their parents', their high school teachers' or their peers' and relatives' (Table 9)

Table 9.
Who Motivated You to Choose Teaching?

Institution	It was my decision	My Parents	My High school teachers	Peers	Prestige of the Institution	My Relatives
METU	76	77	80	15	3	-
Gazi U	75	71	50	11		4
Anadolu	51	59	59	21	-	10
Karadeniz T	56	57	33	12	-	9
Atatürk	101	111	60	16	-	13
Uludağ	42	41	31	6	-	-

Table 9 indicates that parents' and teachers' decision is as important as students' own decisions. It might be interesting to investigate whether a similar profile could appear in other fields of study such as science, engineering, architecture, and other fields.

The desire to change or stay in the course of study. Prospective freshmen teachers were asked whether they *would like to study a different course/department in the same university, or change university but study in the same course /program.* For these two questions students were asked to respond as "yes" or "no" first and then state the reasons for their decisions. Negative ("no") responses to the former question reflects their desire to remain in the same course and study at the same university, and positive ("yes") response reflects the desire to study in a different course at the same university. Negative response to the latter question reflects the desire to stay in the same university and study in a different or same course, whereas positive responses reflects desire to study at a different university and study the same course or both; change university and study a different course. Data related to these two questions are analyzed separately. The data analysis in relation to the first question reveled that 688 students stated that they would not like to change their course of study. Here reporting frequency and percentages for each response may mislead the readers because each student stated multiple reasons for their positive or negative responses or sometimes they did no write a reason at al. The main reasons for the students for not changing their course of study were expressed as: *I like my course/department, I want to be a teacher, Teaching offers a better job opportunity, It was my ideal profession, I believe I will be successful in this profession, It is a profession I would enjoy.* On the other hand, 221 students stated that they would like to change the program/course and their main reasons were; their desire to study in a different teaching program (such as language teaching, mathematics teaching, literature teaching, English teaching, Classroom teaching, etc.), their desire to study in a different field of study (Pharmacy, Medicine, Engineering, Architecture, Management Computer Engineering, etc.). These results offer two promising points on the part of teaching profession. First of all, the students desire to remain in teaching and the other one is that although some students want to study in a different course of study, they are still aiming to become teachers.

The data analysis in relation to the latter item, "*change university but study in the same course /program*" revealed that 547 students responded as "no", whereas 415 students responded as "yes". Those who responded negatively in relation to studying the same course at a different university mainly emphasized *quality of instruction, the institution itself (ie. the university, the opportunities offered and the city the university is located at).* On the other hand, students who answered the same question positively mainly emphasized *the nature and the medium of instruction* (language of teaching), *the course load*, *the school environment*, *home distance*, *poor opportunities*, *the grading system, expectation to study at a "better" university* (such as METU, 9 Eylül, İstanbul Univ., Marmara Univ., Ankara Univ, 19 Mayis Univ, Hacettepe Univ, and Gazi Univ.) *expenses, student instructor relationship, climate of the region and instructors' attitudes towards students.*

Regarding the responses to the two questions presented above it may be possible to state that teaching itself is among the primary motivators for the students who select teaching as a profession. In addition, the institution itself may be a factor attracting students towards a course although some other factors might be the medium of instruction, the social environment, social life in the province, expenses, courses load, grading system and finally the attitude of the instructor and the instructor-student relationship. In this respect, it is important that the Faculties of education, as the responsible bodies for teacher education, should consider these aspects and assess themselves in relation to the above mentioned aspects, so that they can take relevant measure to attract more prospective teachers to their institutions.

Conclusion

Characteristics of the students who entered English teaching, elementary mathematics teaching and elementary science teaching programs of six different teacher education institutions showed rather a diverse background in relation to their families' level of education and occupation. In addition, their family backgrounds were also different when family size and numbers of siblings are considered. Regarding this issue, if the number of people living in the same household was explored, it may be more probable that the size might be found more diverse. In this respect, teacher education institutions should consider this diversity in the process of improvement of teacher training courses while prioritizing extra curricular activities by emphasizing the social dimension of teacher education and teaching profession.

On the other hand, teacher education students, who are limited to this particular group of participants, seem to come from patriarchal families where the parents hold low level of education and low status professions. In this respect, it is essential that teacher education institutions that would like to attract students from higher status home backgrounds should develop new strategies for raising and improving the economic status of the teaching profession if the theory that student affective and cognitive entry characteristics play a role in explaining student learning (Bloom, 1976).

It is fortunate for the teaching profession and for teacher education institutions to observe the raise in students' preference ranks of teacher education programs/course when compared to studies carried in 1980s and 1990s (Karagözoğlu, 1987; Okçabol et al. 2003). We also believe that it is also a good sign that the number of prospective teachers participated in the study who made their own decision at UEE are very similar to the number of subjects guided by their parents (Table 8). This similarity could be related with better job opportunities in the teaching profession or the students' self-confidence and personal motivation, which are reflected in the findings of the study.

In addition, students' low involvement in social activities also helped us emphasizing the social component of the teaching profession. It was interesting for us to see how limited the numbers were when the students' involvement in social activities were questioned. As mentioned before, the main reason for this may be related to the competitive nature of University Entrance Exam and maybe due the fact that their high schools could not provide them with rich extracurricular activities and opportunities. On the other hand, when the expectations from the effective teachers of the 21st century are considered, it is important that contemporary teachers hold a variety of characteristics such as personal and professional characteristics, an their ability to be reflective and problem solving teachers (Cruickshank, Jenkins & Metcalf, 2003). In this respect, this question needs to be further examined and possible solutions to the problem need to be sought for the better development of teacher candidates.

Moreover, it was not very surprising to observe that students chose teaching because they mainly liked teaching, the subject area, having better job opportunities, helping others, working with children, and they held the perception that their personal characteristics are suitable for the teaching profession. This finding is highly consistent with the other studies carried out to answer the question of why people chose to teach (Arends, Winitzky & Tannenbaum, 1998; McNergney & Herbert, 1995). Pre-service students' self-motivation to choose teaching as a career can also be considered as an opportunity to promote and select students from different backgrounds. Students from different types of schools should be motivated and promoted to prefer teacher education course because the student characteristics seems to get more homogenous, and specific to this study, dominated by Anatolian Teacher High Schools and Teacher High Schools. However, as the contemporary educational trends, such as cooperative learning, emphasize more heterogeneity than homogeneity of students' characteristics, the results found in this study do not coincide with the general trends in different educational contexts. In order to both attract a diversity of students with different characteristics to the teaching profession and to cater for the current developments and trends in the educational field, more emphasis needs to be given to this issue.

Teacher education institutions, in addition to paying great attention to the students' (thus, the prospective teachers') UEE scores and preference ranks for the teaching area, they should also take such factors like nature and aspects of the education program they run, social environment students live in, extra curricular activity areas available, institutional regulations, quality of instruction, faculty attitudes toward students and faculty-student relationship into account. Especially the last two factors mentioned constitute and are among the main characteristics of effective teachers (Cruickshank, Jenkins & Metcalf, 2003). In this respect, it is highly important that we as teacher educators should try to strengthen the factors that show probability to motivate students to choose teaching beside the economic life conditions of teachers in the developing countries. Furthermore, institutional (self) or external assessment should be considered as an institutional and educational policy to assure quality in teacher education (YÖK, 1999).

In addition, teacher education institutions, their administrators as well as policy makers like Ministry of National Education and The Council of Higher Education should assess the physical environment capacity, physical space, in relation to potential student population so that sufficient extra curricular activity areas can be provided. By doing that, not only better planning can be made by the curriculum planners and policy makers, but also students' needs can be better catered.

Finally, education reforms can not be a success without the involvement of students in shaping, managing and implementing reforms. In this respect, students should be given more opportunities to participate in the decision making processes in education (Levin, 2000). Therefore, following the constructivist movement and giving more place to students' thinking are essential factors to not only increase the quality of the instruction as well as of the teacher.

On the other hand, in order to make generalizations of the results to a wider scope of cases in Turkiye, researchers should conduct similar studies by selecting larger samples of prospective teachers and different faculties of education and integrate all the data derived in this particular study. Moreover, we also believe that if researchers design qualitative and quantitative studies to examine the relationship between prospective teachers' progress and characteristics as emphasized in this study, then the results of such studies can reflect the research question in focus in a detailed and in-depth manner.

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