Preschool teachers candidates’ view on the profession in the context of past, today and tomorrow

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Abstract: This Study is done in order to determine job guarantee criteria, which is an important determinant of the choice of profession, effect on preschool teacher candidates. Dissemination of preschool education project increased the need for preschool institutions and preschool teachers. Thus, Open University started education to train preschool teachers and individuals graduated from various positions have been appointed as preschool teachers. This situation has made preschool profession a guaranteed job which affected students’ career choice. With the thought that the factors in teachers’, who train future generations, choices of profession affect the future; it is aimed to investigate teacher candidates’ feelings. Study group is created with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade students studying in the department of early childhood education in 2011-2012 academic year, in Agri Ibrahim Cecen University. The number of teacher candidates is 148 with 72 women and 76 men in which there are equal number of people from each grade. With this work, information about students’ skills’ close proximity to teaching, outlook on the profession, willingness to make the profession in the future and information about the situations which they like or don’t like is reached.

Keywords: Preschool, Education, Profession, Teacher

1. Introduction

Preschool education started to develop after implementation of European Union’s criteria in Turkey where preschool education was serving to the working parents and parents who have high socio-economic level. By the year 2004 this perception was started change and with the help of the imperative preschool education project’s infrastructure studies made parents being more aware about preschool education. The increased number of students, dissemination of preschool education increased the need for training preschool teachers. Such that, universities started to train preschool teachers by distance education as well as formal education. Shortage of preschool teachers is so high which causes preschool teachers to work in preschool educational institutions particularly in Ministry of Education with very low grades which can be get just entering teacher qualifying exam has increased interest towards this profession. However, when the data, between 2008 and 2013, is reviewed (TSI), every year preschool teacher number increased about 4000 teachers each year.

Intense interest to the profession made department of early childhood education most preferred department after law, psychology, counselling and guidance from graduates of equally-weighted area and after medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, physical therapy and rehabilitation and some engineering departments from graduates of science and math area. This choice is important in terms of results of the choice which is whether it is made consciously or not or whether according to student’s skills or parents’ and environment’s wants, whether from desire to work in public sector or just because of job guarantee.

Improving the quality of education is not only to increase the rate of school enrollment, not by arranging the physical environment; but it depends on teachers’ cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects which make teachers more qualified. Because of the teacher's intellectual attitude, emotional reactions, various habits and approach to students is greatly important and preschool-age students are affected by teacher’s approach and the form of interpretation of events rather than his transfer.

Preschool students are affected by the attitude of the...
teacher since they see the teacher as the primary role model by their developmental aspects. Attitude “which is attributed to an individual and his thoughts about psychological objects and a trend forming behaviours and feelings on a regular basis”. An attitude affects an individual’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours by making it compatible with each other. These three factors which is in harmony with each other are called as the ABC model or elements of attitudes. Cognitive, affective and behavioural elements are established and exactly located in the strong attitude. Some of the more behavioural elements may be too weak, especially in poor attitude. Individual must put on a positive attitude towards his goal he wants to achieve, to his actions to achieve this objective and to results will he obtain as a result of the action, in short all the learning situation, and in addition to his own personality characteristics. Negative attitude putted on against situation is an insurmountable obstacle in analyzing situation, using knowledge and skills for actions readiness and motivation for learning because of the individual refusing situation (Pehliván, 2008; Başaran, 1990; Feldman 1993).

In the teaching profession, the degree of closeness to the ideal self affects role models itself, professional productivity, professional success, attitudes. Individuals will allow the teacher for wellbeing of future generations and to show the potential when he reaches himself that he is dreaming or in time he is closest to his dreamed self.

Not to be able to decide on one of the job options can be caused by various reasons. These can arise from individual’s undifferentiated abilities and interests, chronic instability, disapproval of job alternatives according to his self-design, a kind approach-away conflict from not to be able to reconcile his and his environment’s, especially his parents, wishes (Kuzgun, 1986).

If the choice of profession is affected by the concept of the ideal self more than self-concept it is expected that the relation between self and profession concepts is low in individuals who are dissatisfied with the self-concept where it is high in individuals satisfied. Self, the ideal self and occupational concepts are just resemble an umbrella wire, mushroom, increases in the intimacy between self-ideal and self, intimacy between the concepts ideal self and profession, self and profession is also increasing (Kuzgun, 1986).

2. Hypothesis

How positive is the view of preschool teacher candidates who are studying in the department of early childhood to their profession? To determine this, the following questions are sought.

2.1. Sub-Problems

1) Is there a significant difference in the levels of their wishes to start to the profession according to their degree for teacher candidates?
2) Does role of gender matter for maintaining the stability for where they wish to be in the future?
3) To what extent teacher candidates’ view on the profession has affected the situation now?

3. Method

Study group is created with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade students studying in the department of early childhood education in 2011-2012 academic year, in Agri İbrahim Cecen University. The number of teacher candidates is 148 with 72 women and 76 men. Teacher candidates were asked to draw three pictures primarily focused on preschool teacher candidates, titled past, present and future. Shortly after the images collected, the test was administered consisting of the unfinished sentence. In the test, and in the image sentences are given about the teacher candidates’ gender, age, what grade they are in, how they see themselves, the field they feel successful, their feelings for their past, wishing to turn back to the past, future profession, view on the profession, future expectations. The raw data collected was organized and interpreted by using SPSS 15 program on outlook to now, proximity of the ability to the area, wishing to turn back to the past, outlook to the future and past, future prospects and what they like and do not like about the profession.

Incomplete Sentences Method is obtained from the research carried out by V.V.Barabanovaand M.E.Zelenova with undergraduate psychologists. Those who are psychologists and pre-school teachers deal with a special segment of the society (both need a counsellor). We are of the opinion that this present study can be helpful in drawing the “portrait” of prospective pre-school teachers. Selection and practice of the profession of pre-school teaching is a crucial factor since this profession concerns the future and the future generations.

4. Findings

4.1. Findings in the Picture

When students’ image analysis of pictures taken by itself they gave place to the figures of the nature of geography they lived in past episodes of their lives (mountains, snow, chickens, horses ...), family members, the baby. It is remarkable that in the paintings of present there are faculty of education, emotional relationships, dorm, themselves where in the paintings of future mostly contains school, home, work, hobbies. When half of the images of students who want to continue pre-school teaching profession in the future which includes the majority of women, it is observed that there are marriage, home, partner where there is no sign of professional reflection. However, more than a majority of the remaining half, reflected their physiological appearance, the rest has given place to hobbies and substantive improvement in the pictures of past, present and future. 10% of teacher candidates who participated in the study gave place to the tomb theme in their paintings. Tomb theme can be predictive for pessimistic approach in the future.
Teaching Profession in the Picture

Teacher candidates have shown in their drawings that they are quite bored because of lectures and the exams of the school, but with starting to the profession they have expressed happy professional life by combining past and future in terms of childhood. This happiness stands out as being with children and profession is seen as a return to childhood. Also plotted pictures in the context of past, present and future depicted towards establishing a happy home, and this situation leads especially creating a happy family is thought to be fundamentals of being successful and happy in the profession.

Setting in the Picture

Teacher candidates have added features of the geography in which they lived in the past pictures from which they devoted pictures as past, present and future. The majority drew themselves outdoors in the paintings. They have placed themselves in proportion in the setting. Especially students who grew up in Van and Agri have placed mountains, snow in their pictures. This feature is not very common in pictures of the students who are living on the coast. Female students gave place for home motif in the pictures. In pictures of now, university faculty buildings, student houses, dormitories, KPSS books, preschool materials are shown. In future, teacher candidates mostly placed representative materials of their ideal professions. Projects of the ones who want to be civil engineers, soccer stadiums of those who want to be footballer, podium items for those who want to be a model are located.

Figures in the Pictures

There are teacher candidates who place their mother and father drawing pictures of them while some drew just as swaddled baby. Candidates who place friends to the pictures are limited in the Pictures of now. In the pictures of future mostly partner and colleagues have placed. The vast majority of those who want to make the teaching profession, schools and students and the house they live near the school are placed in their pictures of future. Candidates who want to be footballer gave a place to the form elements like ball and cup. Teacher candidates gave place to symbols in the pictures. There are expressions like history by seedlings, young tree as now and future as a tree with thick-bodied figure, sun, clouds, cradle, and grave. It is found that some drew their own portraits of the childhood, youth and old age.

Face Expression in the Pictures

All teacher candidates expressed their childhood with a happy face drawn; the ones who drew their infancy have more elaborate facial expressions. In the now part of the pictures, preschool teachers drew themselves according to their attitudes to the future. It is seen that Future candidates who want to be preschool teachers drew happy day for now, those who are hesitant about the future draw pessimistic and unhappy day for now. Overall they drew a happy future. Teacher candidates transfer them happy for the future in whatever area they will work.

Other Individuals in the Pictures

In the pictures of past candidates partly had included family members and friends while drawing mostly their workplaces and partner in the future. In the picture, the
partners are at the forefront. In the pictures of female teacher candidates, they include especially partner, children and their babies.

In general, when only the pictures are examined, there are candidates who drew the picture only symbolic without detailing, not including their lives as just an ordinary past childhood, now the youth the future senescence, or the ones who do not include life in details, where it is more common to see the candidates who showed their professional concerns, the current occupation gaze. This rate can be given as 60%. It is an indicator of occupational sensitivity which is shown in the pictures by speech bubbles, the areas of their books, materials contained in the environment. While detailing, male candidate teachers give place to the professional concerns mostly, female candidate teachers give place mostly to the partners. Professional perspectives of student teachers in the stability When looked at the stability levels of teachers candidates who want to be preschool teacher as well as those who want to do different jobs it is worth studying. In the picture analysis of some candidates who want to work in different areas than teaching in the future, they drew themselves as teachers or in different professions than they have stated. This shows that they are not in the real sense of professional stability. However, teacher candidates who want to be preschool teachers, a little instability is observed. Some of those who want to be preschool teachers in the future drew themselves as unhappy preschool teachers and some reflects the idea of being alternative academics.

![Picture 5. (A Happy Preschool Teacher In the Future)](image)

Teacher candidates who have not information about the setting, but the child, and the stock figures did not include information about themselves. In unfinished sentences section they expressed themselves with one word and left some questions unanswered. Candidates who drew the picture with more details and speech bubbles used descriptive language in unfinished sentences section.

Preschool teacher candidates’ professional stability is observed as it increases from 1° grade towards upper grades. This is related to unsettled view on the profession, adaptation to school and department of the first-year students. On the other hand, last grade students’ instability is reduced by get used to the department and higher chances of assignment compared to the other branches.

When unfinished sentences section is examined, preschool teacher candidates’ desire to work as preschool teacher is raised as the grade gets higher. While 55% of first-grade is thinking to turn to another profession, this ratio is reduced to 28% in the last year. When it is thought that the average age for university students is 22 to be and considered this age evolutionarily efficiently, if students study in a department that they do not want affects their point of view both today and tomorrow. However, desire to work in another area rate has been diminishing 28% is considerably high percentage. Male students have higher stability of changing their future profession compared to the female students. After approximately one year, preschool teacher candidates' unwillingness to teaching will negatively affect their productivity and motivation which would create worrisome consequences.

Even preschool teacher candidates’ stability to the profession is low; they look hopeful and happy about the future. Their hardly negative attitudes did not influence their view for the future. It is remarkable that they feel responsibilities of their families and their desire to become beneficial to society in the future.

75% of the teacher candidates want to go back to the past where 25% do not want. The majority of those who want to return to the past want to be a child forever, while the rest of them want to study and play more games. It is also found that candidates who do not want to go back to the past had made everything they want in the past and had not faced with a negative situation. It is seen that happiness is decreased as the age increases for those who act positive for today.

Female students think that they are more talented in the areas which are close to preschool teaching rather than male candidates. Talents close to preschool teaching is considered as hand skills, drama, music, painting and dance where irrelevant ones are considered as football, cooking, modeling and engineering. Also those who have talents for other areas than preschool teaching think about doing different jobs in the future.

It is observed that, candidates who do not want to work as preschool teachers dwell on possible professional challenges. Leading concerns about preschool teaching are noise, difficulties in dealing with parents, attitude of the administration, monotonous life style and low salary. Candidates also mentioned about the problems responsibilities of the job, fear of fail and anxiety of being misunderstood. It should be considered that noise is a result of order problems or teacher attitude. In every institution; coordination, responsibilities and rights should be taught to the teacher candidates. In addition, investigations should be made about the attitudes of managers.
Even working in specific time intervals when applying the studies in order – first drawing and then unfinished sentences – inconsistency has occurred. In both drawing and incomplete sentences parts, number of the students who describe themselves in different ways is increased from past to the future sections and the percentage of the ones who are inconsistent describing the future is 24%. It is found that future anxiety is lived more intensive. Inconsistency here is affected by the differences in sections. Female student candidates have made much more consistent transmission teachers compared to male candidates.

Teacher candidates’ desire to build career is about 15%. This demand in almost all is observed in male teacher candidates.

4.2. Findings in Incomplete Sentences

Incomplete Sentences Method is obtained from the research carried out by V.V. Barabanovaand M.E. Zelenova with undergraduate psychologists. Those who are psychologists and pre-school teachers deal with a special segment of the society (both need a counsellor). We are of the opinion that this present study can be helpful in drawing the “portrait” of prospective pre-school teachers. Selection and practice of the profession of pre-school teaching is a crucial factor since this profession concerns the future and the future generations.

With this paper, we compile students’ perspective on their past, present and future, and research their views on the profession, i.e. their abilities in comprehending the significance of the profession that they choose. We also attempt to find out how much they are close to reality considering their world views.

Incomplete sentences not only account for students’ perspective on past, present and future but also reveal what they attach value to. Thus, they tell with these sentences their feelings, expectations and moral values concerning past, present and future (Barabanova, Zelenov, 2002).

The answers given by the students starting with the statements “I believe I am skilled enough...” and “Considering myself ....” tell about their features concerning self-valuation, being ambitious and present state of mind. Evaluating their skills, students argue that they can solve the problems they may face in relation to their future education and profession. That is to say, they express their views with the statements such as “I think I am quite skilled... I will carry on my education abroad and I will have a career”, and “I will work with children”.

During the test, the girls gave clearer and more definite answers while assessing themselves with the question “what do I think about myself”. For instance, girls gave answers such as “I believe I am beautiful and intelligent” (18%), “I am lazy and boring” (7%), and “I will be a successful teacher, because I like children” whereas boys avoided giving a clear answer but gave answers such as “I have many plans, and I hope I can fulfil them” (12%), “…I want to take up my profession as soon as possible, and I want to earn money” (32%), “…I want to have an independent life” (21%), and “…I am afraid of working with children throughout my life” (4%).

Most of the students have positive beliefs in evaluating themselves (78%). Nevertheless, majority of the answers indicate that the students have some worries and self-distrust.

Incomplete answers such as “When I was a child, I ...”, “I think, past is ...”, and “If I could ever return to my childhood...” helped to explore students’ perspectives on their past.

Most of the students gave positive answers to the questions about past (40%) giving a good impression about it (“The past was good for me...”, “It was very nice and full with unforgettable memories...”, and “they were pleasing years...”).

Answers given to the incomplete sentences like “If I could be a child again” were full of positive impressions. Most of the time, students do not want to change anything about their past or just want to do little change in some direction. That is, the answers indicate such a desire with the following answers: “I would attend all courses offered to children...”. “I would play on the streets with my friends the whole day...”, and “I would live in big cities which are full of amusement for children”. Yet, most of students would like to change themselves with regard to past. 28 % of the children answering the incomplete sentence wrote “If I were a child again...” wrote “I would be more determined...”, “I would develop my skills...”, and “I would not cry that much”.

The students expressed their expectations for future with statement such as “Future means for me...”, “When that day comes...”, “I hope I...”, “When I become mature...”, “I always wanted to...”, and “I dream of...”.

The students believe that the future will be “bright and pleasing”. Therefore, 52% of the answers contain statements like “Future draws my attention...”, and “it will be pleasing...”. 26% of students associate future with marriage, starting a family and having children as inferred from answers such as “My life will be full of family and domestic problems...”, and “family, work, children and lots of children even at workplace...”. However, 22% of the students do not have positive beliefs about future as they characterize future being “… something uncertain ...”, “…lots of tasks and work…”, “difficult job...”, and “distressing stage...”.

66% of the students who took the test expressed their positive beliefs about future with statements such as “… when that day comes...” and “I hope that...” completing them as follows: “When that day comes, I will achieve all my goals...”, “Everything will be perfect in my life...”, “I will be rich...”, “I will help everyone...” and “I will be financially independent...”. Following statements helped to give a clear impression on the question whether one should trust himself/herself or should believe in luck or should just believe in a happy future: “I will leave everything to chance and fate...”, “I believe I will be happy in future...”, “I will earn lots of money...” and “I will succeed in the field that I choose...”.
The chance of success in students’ lives is associated with the happiness in their personal lives and good career (for 79%). Statements such as “I have dreams about a successful career...”, “I want to start a good family...”, “...I want to be a good person...” prove this point. Self-improvement and achieving success are important for 16% of the students indicated by statements such as “…I want to improve myself…”, “to be independent...” and “to gain financial independence...”. For some, happiness just means having dreams, and there is no plan for making a particular change in life, and for 7% happiness means just “…to have a long and happy life...”.

The sentences starting with “I always wanted to...” created two groups. Wishes such as buying something, achieving something and learning something are gathered under the first group. For 81%, the desire to want something is associated with a clear need as indicated by the following: “…I always wanted to get involved in music and sing songs...”, “to be able to speak a few foreign languages...”, “…to work in a job that I find interesting...”, “…to be a famous footballer...”. Similarly, for 18%, happiness is associated with success indicated by statements such as “…to attract people’s attention every time...”, “…to be slim, kind and smart...”, “…to find a good spouse...”, “…to be slim...”, “to help people...”, and “to take care of ill children...”; because they are sensitive and caring about children.

One’s professional life usually starts with youth and ends with death. Most researchers believe that people contemplate choosing a profession between ages of 15 and 25, and want to find a clear answer in that regard. Young males and females at these ages consider what job to choose in order to reach their goals and pursue a career after defining their wishes and expectations. At the end of this stage, young people would already have made a choice for a profession, and started learning about it (Barabanova and Zelenova, 2002).

Students’ behaviour regarding future profession can be identified by the following questions: “I think my future profession is ...”, “My future profession is...”, “The thing I like about my future profession is...”, and “The thing I do not like about my future profession is...”. Analysing the answers given to the question “I think my future profession is...”, we found out that first, second and third grade students do not have clear idea about profession. They believe that the stage of starting a profession will not come soon. There is an ambiguity in their thinking with regard to profession. 69% of the students answered the question “I think my future profession is ...” writing “expression of excessive energy...”, and “…the profession that I have long dreamed of...”, and “…the advantage that I could offer to the society...”, and “…reflection of my feelings for children...”. Most of the students believe that the profession of teaching is the shortest way to be appointed as well as being a well-paid job. 31% of the students describe teaching as “…a means for earning money...”, and “…earning money by playing with children...”, and “…is a profession by which it is easy to find a job in the present conditions...”, and “the teacher is employee who is in demand...”.

Sentences regarding the statement “My future profession is...” are divided into groups like the former. For 69% of the students, the answers indicate that expectations and demands regarding profession are important given the following: “…I need to like my profession...”, and “it must comply with current standards...”, and “I will stay in this profession to the end of my life...”. Nevertheless, for 31% of students, the profession of teaching has different implications such as “…incessant noise and scampering children...”, and “a profession that always requires energy...”.

The ideas put to complete the sentence “The thing I like about my future profession is...” reveal the motives of students in their choosing a particular profession. The answers are classified according to the appeal of the profession. The profession of teaching means, for the 68% of students, self-improvement and experiencing childhood indicated by following statements: “…one can improve himself/herself 100% by the innocence of children...”, and “you can remain same without changing yourself and you would be happy with the profession...”, and “…I can play any kind of games with the children...”, and “…I will create my own “tale” for the children and will live there with them...”. These answers also point out the versatility of the profession. For 13% of the students, the profession of teaching is characterized with ideas such as “…communicating with children...”, and “…being able to teach everything to children...”, and “…I can both educate and bring up my own children. It is easy and practical...”.

At the same time, the privileges that the profession provides are important. For 13% of students, “…high salary and working environment is important...”, and the profession is “practical, and has holidays, little work but same salary...”, and “…a profession which provides pecuniary and non-pecuniary satisfaction...”. However, answers contain other views; 9% of the students stated “…I do not like my future job, and I do not want to spend my life with children, I sometimes think I cannot do it more...”, “…I have to be constantly active, and I will exert effort for children...”, and “…I will always have to prepare education plans, and I hate writing...”. Furthermore, the students complained about the uncertainty involved in the profession of teaching. Facts like “…unsatisfactory conditions of the nursery schools...”, and “cultural insufficiency among the public living in the distant places, and tough living conditions...”, and “…children of poor families enduring these conditions...” are some of the reasons that discourage 64% of the students from the profession. Most of the students clearly stated what they do not want to do as a part of the profession such as “… I do not want to work as a teacher in distant places, especially in villages...” (41%).

As the method we applied is in project stage, the real goal is to reveal the problems. Thus, it can be suggested that students believe psychological and professional problems
are significant problems rather than educational-professional issues. They think that personal development, pursuing a career and reaching material well-being are important factors involved in choosing a profession. This can be explained with age characteristics and gender difference. Most of the students would like to work as pre-school teacher, and they like children and want to improve themselves. Students believe that the material well-being which the profession will provide matters. They want to finish school as soon as possible and start their career by which they will have the chance to earn money and become independent. Some of the students, who are male students in this case, do not fit into the profession they choose, because they “do not like children”, “may get fed up with noise”, and they are “afraid” to work with children throughout their lives. Comparing students’ perspective on past, present and future, we can suggest that most of the students want to choose another profession (e.g., being a footballer and singer). Nevertheless, the students want to help the society, i.e., they want to be “on their own”, and this is only possible in pre-school. Some of them want to work in their profession in creative ways. 69% of prospective teachers stated that they want to enjoy their profession. This suggests that these teachers will try to create a positive working environment in their profession as a result of which children and their parents will have positive outcomes.

5. Results

This work is done in the department of early childhood education and responds to the sub-problems. Teaching is a psychological power based on the possible effects of personality qualities and these qualities children's mental, emotional and social development (Act. Sünbül;1996, Bandura; 1969). For the candidates who are hesitant about their profession, alternatives must be created and they should be supported. Otherwise, teacher’s psychological power will start to diminish. Indecision brings unhappiness and reduces future living standards. However, their power to tackle the challenges will be reduced.

In maintaining the stability of teacher candidates, male students have been more stable than females. Female teacher candidates have not reflected their profession they wanted to work in by their pictures. Male students expressed this in a more stable way both in their writing and in pictures. Women in work thoughts in the society could be effective that women cannot be stripped from this society effect. Women in work thoughts in the society could be effective that women cannot be stripped from this society effect. In the point where directions of the society do not match with the ideals, conflicts may arise in individuals, since social life affects every single individual in a society. Job guarantee affects the choice of those who are not idealist to choose preschool teaching. Teacher candidates studying preschool teaching are affected negatively as a result of KPSS preparation, stress of life and reviewing their future lives.

Teacher candidates assert the professional challenges before they start to the profession which creates prejudices against the job. Another factor affecting the perception of the teaching profession in general is the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum affected their resistance teacher candidates developed based on the profession. These attitudes make occupational hierarchy stronger and affect teacher candidates’ relations with other staff.

Preschool teacher candidates’ negative portrayal of college can be shown as lectures. These are the courses that have lack of practice, boring and having questions based on theory rather than practice which cause them to be in negative attitude.

There are lots of students who are worried about future. Most of them are not sure about future. They anticipate “hustle and bustle, work overload and uncertainty”. These worries and uncertainty arise out of the economic and political instability in the country.

Most of the students (48%) are aware of the problems with pre-school, and they give clear negative answers such as “I do not want to work in a village…”. Yet, we would rather like to see answers such as “I am going to exert effort to improve education conditions and obtain positive outcomes, and I am not afraid of the profession...”. There are still answers laden with self-devotion such as “I will create a tale for the children”, and “I am going to help ill children...”.

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