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Contemporary Foreign Language Education: Linking Theory into Practice



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MOTIVATION TO BECOME A TEACHER: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY INTO THE PERSPECTIVES OF TURKISH PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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Introduction - Theoretical Framework

In many developed countries of the world, governments have embraced the notion that national economic development, change and success are dependent on a well educated and highly literate workforce and have taken greater interest in all aspects of schooling and improving teacher quality. Teachers are positioned as central to a country's growth and national development. The report prepared by OECD involving 25 countries indicates that as teachers are the most significant resource in schools, they are central to improvement efforts. Thus, "improving the efficiency and

equity of schooling depends, ..., on ensuring that competent people want to work as teachers, that their teaching is of high quality" (2005, p. 18).

Over the last decade, research into the reasons that motivate people to take on teaching as a career has increased at a considerable level. Teacher motivation is an important concern for educational leaders because teacher motivation has an important effect on student motivation, student perceptions and behaviors Research conducted with teacher candidates in a number of European countries, such as France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic and the U.K. as well in the US and Australia revealed that a desire to work with children and adolescents is the main factor that attracts people into a teaching career (Kyricou & Coulthard, 2000; Richardson & Watt, 2006). Studies conducted with practicing teachers confirmed this finding as well. The most frequently indicated reasons for career choice among teachers were a desire to work with children and adolescents, the potential of the job to provide intellectual fulfillment and make a social contribution (OECD, 2005).

A large scale study conducted with 1653 prospective Australian teachers aimed to investigate their motivations for having chosen teaching as a career and their perceptions regarding the teaching profession at their entry to teacher education (Richardson & Watt, 2006). Across the general sample, the highest rated motivations for having chosen teaching included perceived teaching abilities, intrinsic values such as the desire to make a social contribution, shaping the future and working with children and adolescents. The lowest rated motivation was choosing teaching as a "fallback" career, followed by social influence of others' encouragement to undertake teaching, job security, and time for social contribution. Background characteristics painted a portrait of these beginning teacher education candidates as typically female, young, and from less than affluent family backgrounds. On the other hand, studies in different sociocultural contexts such as Brunei (Yong, 1995), Zimbabwe (Chivore, 1988) and Jamaica (Bastick, 1999) have shown that more extrinsic motivations such as a salary, job security and career status were found to be important motivations of choosing a career in teaching. Researchers who have examined the motivations of career switchers into teaching in various countries have suggested that rewards of salary and career prestige are not high priority for this group. The decision to switch to teaching was mainly for personal satisfaction, rewards of making a social contribution and a desire to keep learning.

There have been a few studies carried out in Turkey regarding this issue. Cermik, Doğan and Şahin (2010) explored the factors influencing prospective teachers' career choices at the department of elementary education and the extent their choice perception changes at the end of teacher education program. Findings revealed that mercenary, extrinsic, intrinsic and altruistic factors underlie teachers' career choices and that the rate of intrinsic and altruistic motives increases towards graduation.

Contemporary Foreign Language Education: Linking Theory into Practice

To our best knowledge, there has been no study conducted to investigate the motivations of English language teachers in Turkey. Although there is a huge demand to learn English and for English teachers in Turkey, teaching, gradually, seems to be less attractive as a career, at a time when other careers offer higher salaries, clearer pathways for career development, greater social prestige, and more agreeable working conditions. That is, teaching must compete with other careers and professions for new entrants as its appeal as a career is declining. Unless teaching can be made an attractive career choice for new graduates as well as those who switch to teaching after pursuing other careers, there will be a shortage of qualified and experienced teachers. Thus, identifying the motivations related to teachers' career choice is a critical step to attract highly skilled young people to teaching to increase the quality of teaching and education. Moreover, teachers' initial motivations on entry to teacher education were found to have a significant effect on their level of career satisfaction and plans to persist in the profession (Watt & Richardson, 2008), therefore it is essential to find out the factors motivating them to pursue teaching.

The aim of the present study is to profile and explore the teaching motivations, perceptions about the profession, and career commitment and satisfaction of Turkish prospective teachers of a four-year teacher education program As beginning teachers' perceptions impact their subsequent professional engagement, development, and the quality of their work, we believe that this study would shed valuable information on education in general.

Methodology

Participants and Setting

The participants of this study are 97 prospective teachers (PTs) of English, enrolled in a four-year English Language Teacher education program of a state university located in Istanbul, Turkey. The teacher education program offers courses such as 'Word Knowledge', 'Advanced Grammar', 'Phonetics and Phonology' in the first

year, which contribute to the development of prospective teachers' English proficiency. In the second and third years, the program offers a variety of courses including 'Approaches and Methods in ELT', 'Technology and Materials Design', 'Teaching English to Young Learners' and 'Teaching Skills' to develop theoretical knowledge and practical skills in language teaching. In the fourth year, while taking courses such as 'Testing and Evaluation' and 'Curriculum Development', PTs start their practicum experience, conducting field observations in the fall term and performing teaching in the spring term. The demographic information related to the participants is presented in the findings section.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from PTs by means of the FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) scale. The scale was applied to the PTs in the fall term of the 2010-2011 academic year upon their entry to the teacher education program and in the spring term of the 2010-2011 academic year before they graduated.

The FIT-Choice SCALE, developed by Watt & Richardson (2007), was based on Expectancy-Value Theory and Social-Cognitive Career Theory. It was developed as a comprehensive model for studies that aim to understand why individuals choose a teaching career. The scale consisted of a demographic information section and 3 sections with a total number of 61 items answered on a 5-point Likert scale. The data gathered by the scale can be grouped under three subscales: motivations for teaching, perceptions about the profession, and decision to become a teacher.

The first subscale "motivations for teaching" addressed intrinsic values, personal utility values, social utility values, ability-related beliefs, fallback career, and socialization influences related to teaching as a career (Watt & Richardson, 2006, pp.34-35). Within this subscale, items addressing *intrinsic career value* included statements such as "I'm interested in teaching", "I've always wanted to be a teacher". *Personal utility values* combined job security (i.e. "Teaching will provide a reliable income"), time for family (i.e. "Teaching hours will fit with the responsibilities of having a family") and job transferability (i.e. "A teaching qualification is recognized everywhere") factors. *Social utility values* combined factors including shaping future of children/adolescents (i.e. "Teaching will allow me to influence the next generation"), enhancing social equity (i.e. "Teaching will allow me to benefit the socially disadvantaged"), making social contribution (i.e. "Teaching allows me to provide a service to society"), and working with children/adolescents (i.e. "I want a job that involves working with children/adolescents"). Ability-related statements addressed PT's self-perceptions of their own teaching abilities (i.e. "I have good teaching skills"). Items addressing *fallback career* included statements such as "I was not accepted into my first-choice career" and "I chose teaching as a last-resort career." *Socialization influences* combined social influences (i.e. "My family think I should become a teacher"), and prior teaching and learning experiences (i.e. "I have had inspirational teachers").

The second subscale "perceptions about the profession" combined expertise (i.e. "Do you think teaching requires high levels of expert knowledge?"), difficulty (i.e. "Do you think teachers have a heavy workload?"), social status (i.e. "Do you believe teaching is a well-respected career?") and salary (i.e. "Do you think teaching is well paid?").

The third subscale "decision to become a teacher" contained items that addressed social dissuasion (i.e. "Did others tell you teaching was not a good career choice?") and satisfaction with choice (i.e. "How happy are you with your decision to become a teacher?").

Piloting was conducted with 36 randomly selected PTs for reliability purposes and the Cronbach coefficient was found to be.82. Data analyses involved calculating mean scores, their standard deviations and conducting a paired samples t-test to identify the factors influencing PTs' decisions for choosing a teaching career, and to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between these factors as they begin and complete the teacher education program.

Results

Profile of the Participants

Demographic questionnaire was applied to PTs when they entered and before they left the program. As demographic data, the gender of PTs, whether they have a family member or a relative in the teaching profession, and the education level they would work at when they graduate were gathered.

Out of 97 PTs, 66 PTs were female (69%) and 31 PTs were male (31%). Demographic questionnaire also showed that the 73% of the PTs (69 out of 97) had a family member or a relative who is doing the teaching profession.

Finally, when PTs were asked to indicate the education level they would like to work at when they graduate, the majority of them chose primary school education (48% in their first year and 51% in their final year). Their choices were followed by university level (20% in their first year and 24% in their final year) and high school level (23% in their first year and 20% in their final year). Upon their entry to the program, nine PTs (9%) stated that they would work at a kindergarten level when they graduate. When they came to their final year, this number was decreased to four (5%).

Teaching Motivations

When the influential factors motivating PTs to become a teacher were analyzed, it was observed that, in their first year, the highest rated motivations included "shaping future of children/adolescents" (M= 3.95), "enhancing social equity" (M= 3.93) and "having time for family" (M= 3.86). In their fourth year, PTs rated "shaping future of children/adolescents" (M= 4.23), "prior teaching/learning experiences" and "making a social contribution" (both M= 4.08) and "intrinsic career values" (M= 4.05) as their highest motivations (see Table 1).

For the PTs, the lowest rated motivation was choosing teaching as a "fallback" career both in their first and final year in the teacher education program (M= 3.29, and M= 2.56, respectively).

Among the influential factors listed, a significant difference occurred between their first year and final year motivations for the following factors: "time for family," "prior teaching/learning experiences," "making social contribution," "working with children/adolescents," "teaching as a fallback career," "job transferability," and "shaping future of children/adolescents" (see Table 1).

Contemporary Foreign Language Education: Linking Theory into Practice

Table 1 *Teaching motivations of prospective teachers in their first and final year of the teacher education program.*

	PTs in the first year of the education program (N= 97)		PTs in the final year of the education program (N= 97)				
	M	SD	M	SD	df	t	p
Intrinsic career value	3.84	.86	4.05	.77	90-	1.767	.081
Job security	3.60	.77	3.48	.73	90	1.105	.272
Time for family	3.86	.82	3.50	.72	82	2.730	.008*
Prior T&L experiences	3.65	.93	4.08	.74	88	-3.441	.001*
Making a social contribution	3.73	.64	4.08	.71	85	-3.290	.001*
Working with children/adolescents	3.69	.91	3.95	.67	89	-2.110	.038*
Social influence	3.32	1.05	3.55	1.12	90	-1.401	.165
Perceived ability	3.62	.72	3.74	.69	90	-1.161	.249
Fallback career	3.29	.62	2.56	1.25	86	5.349	.000*
Job transferability	3.42	.68	3.77	.76	89	-3.258	.002*
Shaping future	3.95	.72	4.23	.58	88	-2.772	.007*
Enhancing social equity	3.93	.85	4.00	.72	93	-.668	.506

Note. N: # of students

*p<0.05

Perceptions about the Profession

The analysis of the PTs' perceptions about the profession revealed that both in their first and final year they "agreed" that teaching is a highly expert career, in terms of requiring high levels of specialized, technical and expert knowledge (M=4.14 and M= 4.24 respectively). PTs also perceived teaching as a low-paid job (M= 2.43 in their first year and M= 2.17 in their final year).

When PTs' first and final year perceptions were compared, a statistical significance was found for only "social status" of teaching. This shows that in their final year PTs gave lower ratings for the social status of teaching as valued by the society (see Table 2).

Table 2 *Teaching perceptions of prospective teachers in their first and final year of the teacher education program*

	PTs in the first year of the education program (N= 97)		PTs in the final year of the education program (N= 97)				
	M	SD	M	SD	df	t	p
Expert career	4.14	.77	4.24	.68	87	-.980	.330
High demand	3.75	.74	3.97	.69	85	-1.935	.056
Social status	3.50	.83	3.24	.73	84	2.258	.027*
Salary	2.43	1.05	2.17	.86	86	1.909	.060

Note. N: # of students

*p<0.05

Decision to Become a Teacher

The analysis of the third part of the scale where PTs expressed whether they had experiences of social dissuasion from teaching as a career and whether they were satisfied with their career choice showed that, both in their first and final years, PTs were indecisive about the experiences of social dissuasion (M= 3.07 and M= 2.99 respectively).

PTs reported relatively strong satisfaction with their decisions to become a teacher both at the beginning and end of the program with mean ratings around the scale midpoint, closer to 'agreeing' (M= 3.82 in their first year and M= 3.78 in their final year). There was also no significant difference between their reported decisions to choose teaching as a career (see Table 3).

Contemporary Foreign Language Education: Linking Theory into Practice

Table 3 *Career choice satisfaction of prospective teachers in their first and final year of the teacher education program*

	PTs in the first year of the education program (N= 97)		PTs in the final year of the education program (N= 97)				
	M	SD	M	SD	df	t	p
Social dissuasion	3.07	.99	2.99	.83	85	.548	.585
Career choice satisfaction	3.82	1.02	3.78	.88	86	.311	.756

Note. N: # of students

*p<0.05

Discussion and Conclusion

Participants' responses showed that both when they entered the program and were nearing graduation social utility values including 'shaping future of children/adolescents', 'enhancing social equity' and 'making a social contribution' were strong determinants for choosing teaching as a career, similar to the findings of Kyricou and Coulthard (2000). In the fourth year PTs also identified 'prior teaching/learning experiences' as an important factor that contributed to their decision.

The findings of the study have also revealed that PTs did not perceive teaching as a fallback career. Both upon entry to the program and nearing graduation, they believed that teaching requires expertise and that teachers are in demand. Yet, in their fourth year there was a significant decrease in their beliefs that teaching profession is respected in society. Participants' responses also indicated their belief that teaching is a low-paid profession, and this belief appears to be stronger in their final year. These findings may be related to their practicum experience, as PTs have an opportunity to closely observe in-service teachers, students and parents in their practicum schools.

In every society there are various career options which offer greater social pres-

tige and higher salaries than teaching. These findings indicate that policy makers and employing authorities may need to address concerns about the social status of teaching profession and low salaries if they want to recruit and retain motivated and inspiring individuals who would choose teaching over other jobs.

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ENHANCING STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF A JAPANESE LANGUAGE LESSON THROUGH A CLASSROOM QUIZ: THE IMPROVISED APPROACH & THE WITTY WAY

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Introduction

Classroom quizzes come in many forms of practices. They are performed generally as a testing method or as a closure of a certain lesson. From the perspectives of many Malaysian students, a classroom quiz often involves a one way interaction from a teacher to students in transmitting any tested questions or problems to be answered by them. It is scarce to see a classroom quiz integrates some psychomotor or a two-way interaction between a student and a teacher. Due to that matter, some students might find it a bit bored or unattractive.

A study had been carried out in order to investigate whether the new approach and the witty way of a classroom quiz would enhance students' understanding in the learning of Japanese language. The study involved 20 form two candidates of Dato' Ahmad Maher Secondary School for two months. Data were collected by using a pre-test and a post-test. The results showed that the new approach and the witty way of the classroom quiz would enhance students' understanding in the learning of Japanese language.