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## Primary teachers' and primary pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward teaching profession<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*The main purpose* of this study is to compare the primary teachers and pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes toward teaching profession in Turkey. *Descriptive method* was used in the study and the study was carried out on 180 first grade and 107 fourth grade primary pre-service teachers at the Faculty of Education in Rize University and 131 primary teachers working in the primary schools located in Çayeli (Rize) district. The Attitude Scale towards Teaching Profession (Özgür, 1994) and the Turkish form of the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (Baloğlu and Karadağ, 2008) were used as data gathering instrument in the study. *The study results* revealed that the first grade primary pre-service teachers' scores on the attitudes towards teaching professions were statistically higher than the scores of the fourth grade primary pre-service teachers and of the primary teachers. However, the study results indicated that the teaching self-efficacy scores of the first grade pre-service teachers were statistically lower than the teaching self-efficacy scores of the fourth grade pre-service teachers and primary teachers. On the other hand, the study results showed that females' attitudes towards teaching profession were higher than the attitudes of their male counterparts whereas self-efficacy scores did not differentiate due to the gender of the primary pre-service teachers and primary teachers. Moreover, the study results indicated that there were not any significant correlation between the self-efficacy and attitudes scores of the pre-service teachers and primary teachers.

**Keywords:** Teacher self-efficacy, attitudes towards teaching profession, primary teachers, primary pre-service teachers, teaching efficacy.

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## Introduction

In the current education system, rather than an approach that directly transfers information to students; an approach aiming to develop students' abilities to learn how to reach the information, how to produce it and how to use it, is dominant. In this approach, the role of the teacher is to help students gain these abilities. The teaching profession is accepted in the National Education Basic Law number 1739, paragraph 43 as "a specific specialization profession consisting of general knowledge, specific field knowledge, education and pedagogical formation. In our society, we also see that the teacher is charged with different missions. The teacher is expected to be not only an instructor, but also a model, an ideal example, a problem solver and a person who guides people.

At the end of their pre-service education the pre-service teachers are expected to consider themselves efficient for their profession. This expectation is expressed with the concept of "*self-efficacy beliefs*". Gurkey and Passaro (1994) defined teacher self-efficacy as "teacher's belief in his/her confidence in giving students an effective instruction and education." According to that definition, in order to be successful in his/her profession, a teacher is expected to have a high belief that he/she can do it. Indeed, researches on this issue show that there is a positive relationship between *self-efficacy belief* and academic achievement (Üredi and Üredi, 2006; Zajacova, Lynch and Espenshade, 2005).

Another important point of teacher-training is teachers' attitudes towards their own profession. The studies on teacher attitudes reveal that teachers influence the students in acquiring new behaviors with their attitudes or behaviors (Duman, 2002; Güçlü, 2000; Yaşar, Sözer and Gültekin, 2000). Moreover, studies also show that the positive attitude of the teachers about teaching profession also contributes to the quality of teacher-student relationship and learning process (Erdem, Gezer and Çokadar, 2005; Küçükahmet, 1976).

This study aims to examine self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession of the pre-service and in-service primary teachers comparatively. First of all, the concepts of teacher self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession are going to be handled.

## Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs

*Self-efficacy* is a concept expressing a person's confidence about carrying out certain actions and his/her expectation about the result of these actions (Henson, Stephens, and Grant, 1999). Self-efficacy theory, which is first suggested by Bandura (1997), argues that a person's success expectation about a certain issue determines the actions s/he will carry out. Therefore, this expectation will affect the consistency of the actions of the person and the struggle to pass over an obstacle when it is encountered (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002).

*Self-efficacy beliefs* emerge depending on the person's performance, psychological situations and positive inculcations of the society to the person (Palmer, 2006; Cone, 2009). In that respect, it is assumed that the experiences of pre-service teachers during pre-service training, suggestions of instructors about that matter and the educational environment they offer play an important role in development of self-efficacy beliefs. The related studies on this subject support this assumption (Ekici, 2008; Nartgün et al., 2008; Palmer, 2006; Unrau and Grinnell, 2005).

Bandura (1981) defines self-efficacy concept as, person's own judgment of how much he/she can use his/her cognitive, social and behavioral abilities in order to carry out a pre-service task (quoting from Bandura 1981 Montcalm, 1999). Since attitudes have cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Köklü, 1995), self efficacy concept seems to be related to the attitude concept. When a person has the belief that he will be successful in an event by using his cognitive, social and behavioural skills, it can be said that this person, similarly, can develop positive thought, feeling and behaviour to this event. It is considered to contribute a person's showing positive

trends to an event because of the fact that this person's thinking himself competent. So studies in this subject (Çelik and Bindak 2005; Morgil, Seçken and Yücel 2004; Hutzler, Zach and Gafni, 2005) also show that there is relationship between *self-efficacy beliefs* and *attitude*.

### **Attitudes towards Teaching Profession**

*Attitude* concept, which is derived from the Latin word *aptus*, means “readiness and convenience for action (Hogg and Vaughnan, 2006).” Oppenheim (1992) defined attitude as a person's tendency for positive or negative reaction to a stimulus. Demirel and Ün (1987) mentioned attitude as learned inclinations that pushes people to perform certain behaviours when confronted with certain people, objects or situations.

People are not born with their attitudes. Attitudes are learned during a person's social development and changes and develop in time (Aydın, 1985). However, the most basic attitudes are formed during childhood. Parent's rewarding the children when they behave in desired way and punishing them when show an unwanted behavior causes to develop many permanent negative and positive attitudes among children. Furthermore, a person's teachers, friends and visual media can be very influential on children to develop attitudes and to be prejudiced towards certain objects (Morris, 2002). While mentioning the attributes of attitude, Kağıtçıbaşı (1988) stated that attitudes are not inborn they are gained afterwards by experiencing, they are not temporary they last for a certain time, they cause a biasedness in the human-object relationship and they have a personal type and an attitudinal type.

In reviewing the literature, it is seen that Derman (2007) studied chemistry teacher candidates' self-efficacy perceptions and the relationship between their attitudes towards teaching profession and Çetinkaya (2007) studied Turkish teacher candidates' self-efficacy perceptions and the relationship between their attitudes towards teaching profession. Teachers and teacher candidates in this regard, however, there is no study which evaluated together each. Within the scope of this study, the relationship between classroom teacher candidates and classroom teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and the relationship among their attitudes towards teaching profession examined comparatively. Therefore, this research will contribute to the relevant literature at this point. By means of the comparison of the self-efficacy and attitudes of teacher candidates at university and the self-efficacy and attitudes of teachers in profession, it is tried to reveal whether there is any difference between pre and after process of the profession. So, with the results of this study, the process of teacher education and the teaching profession as well as on the implementation of the present recommendations will be made.

### **Aims**

The basic aim of this research is to investigate the self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession of primary teachers and pre-service primary teachers comparatively. In order to get this main purpose, those research questions are formulated:

1. Do primary teachers' and pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession statistically vary?
2. Do primary teachers' and pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession statistically vary according to gender?
3. Do primary teachers' and pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession statistically vary according to the preference rank of the currently studied department?
4. Is there an statistically significant correlation relationship between primary teachers' and pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession?

## Method

This research is based on descriptive method and carried out with 418 people, 180 of whom are pre-service teachers studying in Rize University Education Faculty and 131 of whom are primary teachers working in Çayeli town center. Ohio Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, adapted to Turkish by Baloğlu and Karadağ (2008), and the Scale of Attitudes towards Teaching Profession developed by Özgür (1994) are used in the study.

The form of Ohio Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale was previously developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) and adapted to Turkish by Baloğlu and Karadağ (2008). The scale is consisted of 24 items and 5 dimensions (guidance, direction of behaviors, motivation, teaching ability and testing and evaluation). Reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) of the whole form is calculated as 90. In the current application of this scale, reliability coefficient of the scale is calculated as 95. Besides, as a result of validity analysis on scale, it was observed that all item's factor loadings are above 60 and the total variance that one factor explains is measured as ,48. Consequently, it is decided that, total self-efficacy score can be calculated on one factor.

The Scale of Attitudes towards Teaching Profession which was developed by Özgür consists of 33 items, 20 of which are positive and 13 are negative. In that analysis Özgür (1994) found correlation coefficient (+0,63) by calculating rank-order correlation coefficient. In current study, factor analysis revealed that the factor loadings of the scale items were above 30 except two items; and the total variance that one factor explain was seen to be 23. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as 87. As a result, considering that the original form of the scale has also been developed one dimensionally, total scores of the attitudes towards teaching profession has been calculated on one factor without making any change in the original scale.

Both scales are designed as Likert type 5 degree scale (1: I don't agree at all; 5. I totally agree). In data analysis, self-efficacy and attitude scores of the pre-service and in-service teachers are compared via T-test and ANOVA, and the relationship between self-efficacy and attitude scores has been determined via correlation analysis.

## Results

Self-efficacy scores and attitudes towards teaching profession scores of primary teachers and pre-service primary teachers studying at 4<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> grades are compared using ANOVA on Table 1.

**Table 1.** Comparing self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession

Dimension	Position	N	X	SD	df	F	p	Scheffe
Attitude	1) 1. grade	180	3,99	,617	415	46,808	,000	1-2 1-3
	2) 4. grade	107	3,43	,288				
	3) Teacher	131	3,53	,568				
	Total	418	3,70	,591				
Self-efficacy	1) 1. grade	180	3,63	,644	415	8,299	,000	1-2 1-3
	2) 4. grade	107	3,95	,489				
	3) Teacher	131	3,83	,803				
	Total	418	3,77	,676				

As seen in Table 1, attitude scores of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade pre-service teachers are found to be significantly higher than *attitude* scores of both 4<sup>th</sup> grade pre-service teachers and in-service (working) teachers [ $F_{(2-147)}=46.81$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. However, opposite to the attitude scores, self-efficacy scores of 1<sup>st</sup> grade pre-service teachers turned out to be significantly lower than the self-efficacy scores of both 4<sup>th</sup> grade pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. [ $F_{(2-147)}=8.30$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. These

results indicated that pre-service primary teachers have more positive attitudes towards teaching profession when they enter university, but these attitudes decrease during pre-service education periods. However, the results showed that that pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy beliefs increase during their pre-service education. It can be said that the education pre-teachers got at the university contributes to them to see themselves more sufficient in fulfilling the teaching profession and increase their self-efficacy beliefs.

Whether primary teachers' and pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy scores and attitudes scores statistically vary according to gender is compared in Table 2, via T-test.

**Table 2.** Gender effects on the self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession

Position	Dimension	Gender	N	X	SD	df	t	p
Pre-service teachers	Attitude scores	Female	167	3,89	,606	285	3,904	,000
		Male	120	3,62	,520			
	Self-efficacy scores	Female	167	3,73	,664	285	-,528	,598
		Male	120	3,77	,526			
Teachers	Attitude scores	Female	119	4,05	,620	128	1,968	,051
		Male	61	3,86	,595			
	Self-efficacy scores	Female	119	3,63	,679	128	-,049	,961
		Male	61	3,63	,572			
Total	Attitude scores	Female	235	3,79	,622	416	3,431	,001
		Male	183	3,59	,529			
	Self-efficacy scores	Female	235	3,75	,753	416	-,884	,377
		Male	183	3,81	,563			

In Table 2, it is seen that attitude scores of female pre-service teachers and female working teachers are statistically higher than attitude scores of male pre-service teachers and male working teachers [ $t_{(285)}=3.90$ ,  $p<.05$  and  $t_{(128)}=1.97$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. However, it has been observed that teaching self-efficacy scores do not vary according to gender neither among primary teachers nor among pre-service primary teachers [ $t_{(285)}=-.53$ ,  $p>.05$  and  $t_{(128)}=-.05$ ,  $p>.05$ ]. That variation in attitude towards teaching profession which is in favor of females is also visible when primary teachers and pre-service primary teachers are evaluated together [ $t_{(416)}=3.43$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. These results revealed that both pre-service and in-service female teachers have more positive attitudes towards teaching professions than their male counterparts. However, the result indicated that pre-service and in-service primary teacher's self-efficacy beliefs did not differ according to gender. The belief in the community that teaching is a suitable profession for women can be said to be effective in female participants' developing positive attitudes towards teaching profession.

Whether pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy scores and attitudes towards teaching profession scores statistically vary according to the preference rank (which order they prefer their department in university entrance examination) of the currently studied department is compared in Table 3 via ANOVA.

**Table 3.** Effects of teacher profession preference on the self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession

Dimension	Position	N	X	SD	df	F	p	Scheffe
Attitude	1) 1-5. preference	71	3,86	,627	283	,737	,531	
	2) 6-10. preference	77	3,79	,609				
	3) 11-15. preference	62	3,72	,620				
	4) 16 + preference	77	3,75	,489				
	Total	287	3,78	,586				
Self-efficacy	1) 1-5. preference	71	3,70	,624	283	,842	,472	
	2) 6-10. preference	77	3,76	,620				
	3) 11-15. preference	62	3,69	,606				
	4) 16 + preference	77	3,83	,589				
	Total	287	3,75	,609				

On Table 3, it is seen that pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy [ $F_{(2-285)}=.84$ ,  $p >.05$ ] and attitudes towards teaching profession scores [ $F_{(2-285)}=.74$ ,  $p >.05$ ] do not vary according to the preference rank of the currently studied department. Therefore, while teacher candidates choose university departments, their feelings and thoughts have no effect on their standings that they make during their preference.

The correlation between pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy scores and attitudes towards teaching profession scores is tested via correlation analysis on Table 4.

**Table 4.** The correlation between self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession

Dimension	Attitude scores	Self-efficacy scores
1. Attitude scores	1	
2. Self-efficacy scores	,09	1

As it is seen on Table 4, there is not a statistically significant correlation between primary teachers' and pre-service primary teachers' self-efficacy scores and attitudes towards teaching profession scores; nevertheless, a low positive correlation has been observed ( $r=.09$ ). So it is understood that there isn't a significant relationship between their thought about this profession and their beliefs in performing this profession.

## Discussion

As a result of the research, first grade students' attitudes towards teaching profession scores have been observed to be higher than scores of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students and working teachers. This result is in contradiction with the findings of the study by İsmailoğulları (1998). This situation may stem from the employment problem of primary teachers in our country. Probably, the positive attitude of pre-service teachers when they enter university diminishes because of the fear of not being appointed and KPSS (Public Personnel Selection Exam) anxiety. Additionally, in the research, primary teachers' attitude scores are relatively found to be higher than 4<sup>th</sup> grade students' scores. That result is parallel with the results of the studies by Korkmaz (2009) and Bayhan (2009). Primary teachers' being appointed, getting into contact with students and practicing their theoretical knowledge and getting positive results may have had an effect on this case.

In the research, first year students' teaching profession self-efficacy scores are seen to be lower than 4<sup>th</sup> year students and working primary teachers' scores. This result is similar to the findings of the studies by Çetin (2008), Ekici, (2008), Nartgün et al. (2008), and Unrau and Grinnell (2005). All of these studies revealed that pre-service teachers of upper grades have higher self-

efficacy beliefs than those pre-service teachers at lower grades. In other words, these results showed that pre-service teachers' self efficacy beliefs improve during their training periods. However, Senemoğlu and Demirel (2009) have found out that teaching self-efficacy level does not vary according to experience. That result is contradicting with the result of this research. The pre-service teachers can find the opportunity to use their theoretical knowledge in the practical lessons of the last grade such as "School Experience" and "Teaching Practices". In this way, their professional awareness may rise. So these results can be explained with the fact that pre-service teachers just realize their self-efficacies towards the profession at fourth grade.

In the research female's attitude scores are found to be higher than male's scores. Studies on this subject, Akpınar, Yıldız and Ergin (2006), Aşkar ve Erden (1987), Çakır, Erkuş and Kılıç (2000), Çapa and Çil (2000), Çetinkaya (2007) and Şen (2006) have shown that female students' positive attitudes towards teaching profession is more than the males. Therefore the results of research and the result obtained from this research appear to be parallel. However, Bayhan (2009), Çakır, Kan and Sünbül (2006) and Smith (1973) did not find any significant difference according to gender. These results are not parallel with the results of the present study. Additionally, in this study, self-efficacy scores are determined to not to change according to gender. This finding is parallel to the results of the study of Senemoğlu and Demirel (2009). The previous studies revealed that self-efficacy scores of males are higher than females (Çetin, 2008; İpek, Tekbıyık and Ursavaş, 2010; İpek and Bayraktar, 2009; Morgil, Seçken and Yücel, 2004). The results of the present study are also similar to the results of those previous studies. The fact that in this research attitudes towards teaching profession scores of female teachers and pre-service teachers are higher than males can be explained with the belief in our society that "teaching is women's profession".

In the present study it was seen that pre-service teacher's attitudes towards teaching profession scores and teaching self-efficacy scores do not vary according to the preference rank of the currently studied department. Çapa and Çil (2000), Çetinkaya (2007) and Şen (2006) have found out that whichever preference rank the department the students study, does not have any effect on their attitudes towards teaching profession. Moreover, Çetinkaya (2007) has found out that it does not affect their teaching self-efficacy. These results are parallel with the results of the present study. Akpınar, Yıldız and Ergin's (2006) and Aşkar and Erden's (1987) findings pointed out that the attitudes towards teaching profession scores of those whose prior preferences were teaching profession were higher are also in contradiction with the findings obtained from the present study. These results may be stemmed from the fact that the pre-service primary teachers may have made a choice according to the scores they got rather than their interests and abilities.

Another finding of the present study indicated that there was not a significant relationship between teaching self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession of primary teachers and pre-service primary teachers. While Çelik and Bindak (2005), Hutzler, Zach and Gafni (2005) and Morgil, Seçken and Yücel (2004) have found a significant and positive relationship between teaching self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession; Boz and Boz (2010) have found a significant and negative relationship. These results are not parallel with the results of those previous studies. Considering the above mentioned studies, it is supposed to be relationship between individuals' belief of teacher self-efficacy and their attitudes towards teaching profession; the results obtained have not confirmed this thought. In this context, the effect of different variables on the relations is estimated.

## **Conclusion and Suggestion**

The study results revealed that while the attitudes towards teaching profession scores of first year students are observed to be higher than fourth year students and working teachers; teaching self-efficacy scores of them are seen to be lower than fourth year students and working teachers. According to this result, in order to increase students' attitudes towards teaching

profession, during the educational and instructional activities carried out in Faculties of Education; more weight can be given to the socio-cultural and scientific activities that can make students like teaching profession. In addition to that, concerning the employment of teachers, doing pre-service teacher's appointments easily will have a quite positive effect on their attitudes towards their profession.

According to the results concerning teaching self-efficacy beliefs; rising of teaching self-efficacy beliefs during pre-service education period affect teacher training system positively. However, the fact that these beliefs decreases after beginning to teaching profession shows that teachers should be supported about their profession through activities such as courses, seminars or pre-service trainings. Another significant result of this study points out that when pre-service are at the beginning of the process, secondary school students should be ensured to benefit from psychological consultation and guidance services at a maximum level so that they can choose professions which are suitable for their interests and abilities and so that they can develop self-efficacy and positive attitude towards their pre-service jobs. As for the teachers performing their profession, encouraging opportunities like postgraduate educations which enables professional development and making such activities advantageous will have positive effects on their self-efficacy concerning their profession.

In the present study, the attitude scores of women turned out to be higher than that of men and self-efficacy scores have been determined not to vary according to gender. Along with that, teaching self-efficacy scores and attitudes towards teaching profession scores of pre-service teachers do not vary according to the preference rank of the pre-service teachers' department. The fact that teaching self-efficacy beliefs do not vary according to the preference rank of the department does not appear as an unexpected result. However, attitudes towards teaching profession scores of pre-service teachers whose prior choices were the current departments they study have been expected to be higher than the attitudes of those who have chosen that departments in the last preference orders. In this respect, the people or institutions that are in charge of the administration of the education system have a great responsibility to work up the teaching profession into a profession which can be preferred and done with real desire and love rather than a job that is preferred for the guarantee of appointment.

Furthermore, in the research a statistically significant relationship is not found between the teaching self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards teaching profession of primary teachers and pre-service primary teachers. If the precautions are taken during the pre-service training period of pre-service teachers to increase their positive attitudes towards teaching profession, their positive attitude towards teaching profession may also increase parallel to their teaching self-efficacy beliefs. On condition that measures to increase teacher candidates' positive attitudes towards teaching profession are taken during pre-service trainings, parallelly their teacher self-efficacy beliefs are expected to rise.

In relation to the future researches; this research is conducted on classroom teachers and classroom teacher candidates; similar researches are suggested to be made between different programs such as science, elementary mathematic, Turkish and social studies in colleges of education between teacher candidates and professionals. However a significant relationship between the participants' self-efficacy beliefs and their attitudes towards teaching profession is supposed to be; the results obtained showed that there is not any significant relationship. Individuals' teacher self-efficacy perceptions and their attitudes towards teaching profession can also be examined with the different variables such as characteristics of the institution, self-esteem, personality and seniority which are thought to be associated with these concepts. The generalizability of the results of the research in this way can be increased.



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