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Attitudes of primary school teacher candidates towards the teaching profession

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to determine the attitudes of teacher candidates on the teaching profession. Within the framework of this objective, the Likert type scale comprising of 25 attitude sentences were developed in order to be used in the study. The sample of the study consists of a total of 150 teacher candidates studying at Hacettepe University. In the study, the views and suggestions of the teacher candidates with regards to the improvement of this profession were studied in detail. Attitude scales were applied to the students at the primary school teaching department. After analyzing the data collected, relevant recommendations were set forth in the proposal.

KeyWords: Attitude, teacher candidates, teaching profession.

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1. Introduction

Attitude is defined as individual mental processes, which determine both the actual and potential responses of each person in the social world (Allport, 1966). Baysal (1981) defines the attitude as a cognitive, affective and behavioral response which is organized on the basis of experience and knowledge, to the individual's himself/herself or any object or event around his/her environment. With regards to these definitions, attitude can be defined as a response which can be positive or negative to any situation, event or object. Attitudes of individuals towards their profession have an effect on their performance. This also applies for the teaching profession, because the attitudes and perceptions of a profession affects the perceptions of professional competence and achievement, teachers' attitudes towards their profession have a great importance in fulfilling the requirements of the profession.

In order to be successful in the teaching profession, which requires patience, dedication and continuous operation, it is important to like and willingly practice this profession. In this context, the attitudes of teacher candidates play a significant role in their future career successes due to the reason that they motivate the individuals to behave in a positive or negative way. It is doubtless that teacher training programs have a major role in forming the teacher candidates' thoughts towards teaching profession. For this reason, the teachers' attitudes, which are shaped in the teacher training programs towards the teaching profession, should be arranged in order to acquire a positive attitude towards the teaching profession.

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2. Methodology

2.1 Method

Because survey method studies are carried out in order to determine current situations, the study was carried out with this method to state the attitudes of primary school teacher candidates towards teaching profession.

2.2 The Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to determine the attitudes of primary school teacher candidates towards the teaching profession and present effective suggestions based on the results of the research.

2.3 Sample

A total of 150 students studying at Hacettepe University Division of Primary Education constitute the sample of the research.

2.4 Data Collection Tools

In the research the attitude scale was used to determine the attitudes of the teacher candidates. The attitude scale consists of 25 items in total, which includes both negative and positive expressions. Each term included in the Likert scale was arranged in five choices. The identification levels of the terms were graded as 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: uncertain, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree. The reliability coefficient of the scale was determined to be 0.86. After the application process, the data gathered were analyzed by considering the percent and frequency values. In order to confirm the structure validity of the scale, factor analysis was applied and it was stated that the scale consisted of four load factors. The terms related to the factor groups and their load factors have been demonstrated in table 1 below.

	The Factor Load of The item													
The items related to the first factor	1	.456	3	.567	10	.632	19	.544	24	.376	25	.603	.564	
The items related to the second factor	7	.376	8	.546	9	.365	15	.456	16	.435	17	.526	18	.298
The items related to the third factor	4	.346	11	.453	14	.542	29	.654	21	.672	23	.365		
The items related to the fourth factor	2	.463	5	.315	6	.388	12	.536	13	.455	22	.667		

Table 1. The factor groups formed by factor analysis and the factor loads of the items related to these factors.

3. Findings & Results

The findings and results of the research are represented by considering the load factors determined by the factor analysis. According to this analysis, it was stated that the attitude scale consisted of four load factors. These are,

- i. Tendency to the profession of teaching,
- ii. Technical competence,
- iii. Vocational satisfaction,

- iv. The negative perspective of the teaching profession.

3.1. Tendency to the Profession of Teaching

There are 5 items related to this factor in the scale. The first item is “I think that the most appropriate job for me is teaching.” When the responses of the student are examined it can be observed that a large majority of them have a positive attitude towards their professions. A proportion of 65% of them agree with this opinion while 10% does not agree with the same item.

The second item is “If I have a chance, I would choose this profession again.” For this item 48% of the students have a positive thought and agree with this idea while 20% do not agree. The rest of the students are not certain about this idea with a rate of 32% and this is a considerable value for teacher candidates in demonstrating that they are still not sure for their future.

“I believe that primary teaching is more important than other branches of teaching for the purpose of raising children.” is the third item of the scale. For this item 85% have a positive point of view, while only 9% think otherwise. This indicates that the teacher candidates are conscious of the importance of their profession which will help them raise a successful generation for the future.

The other two items are related to each other and about future plans of teacher candidates. By these items it is attempted to determine whether the teacher candidates plan to work in the private sector or public schools. When the answers for these items are examined, it can be observed that half of the students are not certain of this and they have not planned anything about this. A proportion of 67% of the rest prefer working at public schools rather than private schools while 10% think oppositely.

According to these answers it can be said that teacher candidates have a positive tendency to the profession of teaching in general. Most of the students believe that they have a significant role for education and they are willing to perform their job. It is striking that 32% of the students are not sure if they have chosen the right job for themselves and also half of them still have not planned the type of institution they will work at. This means that there are still some points for them that are not definite and they have not made plans yet.

3.2. Technical competence

According to the factor analysis, it can be observed that there are 7 items in connection to this factor. The results of the items, which are considered to be related to each other, are grouped and given together. For example the three answers of the scale are about the belief of the teacher candidates for the future successes in their job and their vocational competence that will help them overcome the difficulties they will face. It is seen that more than half of the students have a positive attitude for all of these answers and they believe that they are suitable for their profession.

The other answers are about general culture, branch knowledge, professional formation, and educational methods and techniques of the teacher candidates, respectively. It is noteworthy that for all the answers nearly 19% of the students have a negative view and they don't consider themselves adequate for their job. Also for all items, approximately 20% of them are not sure about their competence. The rest of the students with an average rate of 60%, believe that they have enough academic and vocational backlog.

In parallel with the given answers, it can be said that teacher candidates have a positive view about their technical competence in general and this will lead them to success in the future. It is doubtless that it is not possible to achieve targets without having sufficient proficiency. For this reason not only the students with positive answers but also the teacher candidates with negative answers, who are not sure about their professional competence, should be taken into account.

3.3. Vocational satisfaction

In the scale there are 6 items related to this factor. Through these items it has been attempted to determine how the teacher candidates feel about their job and if they are satisfied with it. The first item is “I think the internal satisfaction of teaching is more than other jobs’.” When the answers of the students are examined it can be observed that 75% of students agree with this idea while 11% of them do not. Likewise, the second item attempts to set the satisfaction of the students and is “I am proud of guiding people’s life through the education that I shall provide.” A proportion of 90% of students agree with this idea, which is a considerable amount.

The two other items, which are related to each other and at the same time they try to measure the confidence and satisfaction of the teacher candidates that come from the vocational continuity of the teaching. For these items almost 80% of the teacher candidates have a positive view and this surely can be attributable to their successes in the future.

The only item that is answered negatively is the last one and it is “The thought of teaching children the things they do not know makes me happy.” It can be observed that 73% of the students do not agree with this idea, which shows that they feel uncomfortable about their job. It is doubtless that because primary school teachers have a significant role for raising children from the beginning of their educational lives and for this reason this amount may be considered possible for the young and inexperienced teacher candidates.

According to the responses provided by the teacher candidates, it can be observed that the teacher candidates feel satisfied, happy and confident in performing their job in the future. These positive feelings will surely enable and contribute to their teaching. The only negative aspect is that they do not feel comfortable in teaching new things to little children and this may be due to the responsibilities that they will have to undertake. It is doubtless that they will begin overcoming these feelings through the experience they shall acquire in their future careers.

3. 4. The negative perspective of the teaching profession

Through the help of the items related to this factor, it has been attempted to determine whether or not teacher candidates have any negative thoughts on their future professions. For this purpose firstly they are asked if the idea of being a teacher seems to be boring to them or not. According to the results, it can be observed that 71% of the students do not agree with this idea and 13% are not certain and the rest think so with a rate of 16%.

The second item is “I believe that teaching is not an appropriate profession both for my personality and life style.” According to the results, it can be observed that the answers of the students are similar again. Again the majority of the students do not agree with this idea with a rate of 70% while 15% are not certain. However 15% of the students agree and this means that teaching is not the right job for them.

The third item is “I feel regret for choosing the teaching profession.” A proportion of 65% of students do not agree with this idea and 20% are not sure. A proportion of 15% of students regret their choice. According to this result, it can be said that 65% is not a satisfactory rate because still there is an amount of teacher candidates that are not sure or feel regret and this cannot be disregarded.

Another item is “I do not recommend the teaching profession to those who will make a career decision.” It is noteworthy that nearly half of the students agree with this idea at a rate of 45% and this rate is equal to the negative responses. It can be said that even the teacher candidates, who do not feel regret for their choice, do not recommend the teaching profession to others.

The last item is about the respectability of the teaching profession. Through this question it has been attempted to determine if the respectability of this profession has declined or not. According to the results, 81% of the students agree with this idea, 9% are not certain, and only the 10% of the students believe in the respectability for their jobs.

Considering the response of students for this factor generally, it can be said that teacher candidates do not consider teaching to be boring and they believe that it will benefit themselves. But even if they believe so, it is challenging that they do not recommend their profession to other people. Most of the teacher candidates do not feel regret for choosing their job but the ratio of the rest that feel regret or are not certain on this subject is considerable also. For all the answers, the most remarkable one is the conception that they agree with the thought, which argues that the respectability of the teaching profession has declined.

4. Suggestions

Due to the results of the study, it can be said that;

- ✓ In order to help students for planning their professional lives, necessary instructions should be given at education faculties.
- ✓ In order to raise the technical competences of the teacher candidates, required educational processes should be elicited after confirming their inadequacies.
- ✓ In order to make the students feel comfortable about their jobs, more opportunities should be presented to them for acquiring sufficient teaching experience.
- ✓ Activities should be organized at education faculties, in an effort to increase the professional satisfactions of teacher candidates.
- ✓ Not only education faculties but also other related institutions should work to raise and demonstrate the respectability of the teaching profession, primarily to teacher candidates and then to the public.

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