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Teacher Candidates' Views on Public Personnel Selection Examination

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Abstract

The Public Personnel State Examination (PPSE) has affected the lives of many teacher candidates. This study aimed to determine the views of teacher candidates studying at an education faculty on PPSE. In the study, survey method was used and the participants consisted of third and fourth year students (n=497) at different departments of Pamukkale University Education Faculty. In data gathering, "Questionnaire of Identifying Teacher Candidates' Views towards PPSE" developed by Atav and Sönmez (2013) was used. The results revealed no significant difference based on gender and having taken PPSE previously. Besides, the teacher candidates had an anxiety of getting employed.

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Keywords: Teacher candidates, state personnel selection examination, teacher employment.

1. Introduction

Teacher is the most important factor in meeting the society's expectation from education in delivering certain values. Teachers being the individuals directly affecting the quality of education is the primary reason why teacher training is one of the significant issues for a country.

One of the prerequisites for quality education is teachers being qualified. Teachers need to have sufficient cultural, pedagogical and cognitive competencies to enhance their qualifications. Every educational system would like to employ teachers having these qualifications. In our country, an exam named PPSE is administered to measure teachers' qualifications. The direct proportion between the number of teacher candidates and the increase in the rate of graduate employment shows that there is no consistency between teacher training and employment. This

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inconsistency causes the rate of unemployment to increase which results in teacher candidates who have not been employed but studied for this profession having psychological and economical problems. Considering that 20 to 30 thousand teachers are employed at state schools every year, there are serious problems in teacher training and employment. For this reason, selection examinations have been administered to employ teachers for state schools since 1999. As of 2002, this exam is conducted with the name of Public Personnel Selection Examination (PPSE).

The factors such as the discrepancy between the number of education faculty graduates and the number of teachers that the Ministry of National Education employs, congestions in some of the subject areas, and having to get high scores in PPSE cause teacher candidates' concerns to grow. Teacher candidates prepare for PPSE during their undergraduate education, especially their last year. In this process, while they try to pass their undergraduate courses, they also continue preparing for PPSE intensely. PPSE is the last step of getting employed for the teacher candidates in the area they studied. Therefore, this situation causes pressure and anxiety in the candidates, which results in negative behaviours (Baştürk, 2007, 2008; Gündoğdu, Çimen & Turan, 2008; Karaca, 2011; Tümkaya, Aybek & Çelik, 2007). The teacher candidates who have negative thoughts about their future considering PPSE and teacher employment experience the highest level of anxiety. In a study with 149 teacher candidates, Şahin (2011) found that 81% of the teacher candidates were anxious about finding a job after graduation.

In the literature, while there are studies on the recent case with PPSE, recent studies have mostly focused on teacher candidates' views, perceptions and anxiety levels regarding PPSE. In a study conducted with 192 teacher candidates, Baştürk (2008) revealed that 80.7% of the teacher candidates had emotional anxiety that is the highest level of anxiety. In their study with 310 teachers aiming to identify elementary teachers' views towards public personnel selection examination, Tösten, Elçiçek and Kılıç (2012) found that PPSE had a negative effect on teacher candidates' psychological health and anxiety levels and the content of PPSE did not overlap with the courses given in undergraduate education. Similarly, in their study with 539 students, Karataş and Güleş (2013) determined that test anxiety affected their level of achievement at university.

Although the number of teacher candidates graduating from education faculties every year is too many, the number of teachers employed by the Ministry is also very limited. It is even not the solution to have a high score in PPSE to get employed. This situation causes a significant level of discouragement and stress in teacher candidates. Identifying teacher candidates' views on this exam can be useful in terms of the solutions to be offered. The study determining the views of teacher candidates studying different subject areas towards PPSE is thought to contribute to the literature in terms of revealed the existing situation.

This study aimed to determine teacher candidates' views towards PPSE and make an overall evaluation regarding the situation. In line with this aim, the research questions of the study are as follows:

1. Do the views of the teacher candidates significantly differ based on the variables of a) gender, b) type of education (i.e. day and evening) and c) having taken PPSE previously?
2. What are the overall views of the teacher candidates towards PPSE?

2. Method

This study employed survey model since it aimed to determine the teacher candidates' views on PPSE. Preferring a longitudinal design within survey model, third and fourth year students' views were examined. Survey model is a type of research that aims to describe a case that existed in the past or already exists (Karasar, 2004; Ekiz, 2009). In longitudinal studies, different groups of the same sample are the focus of research.

2.1. Participants

This study was conducted with third and fourth year students studying at different departments of Pamukkale University Education Faculty in the fall term of 2014-2015 academic year. The departments and number of students included in the study are as follows: Turkish Language Education (n=56), Foreign Languages Education (n=25), Computer and Instructional Technologies Education (n=56), Preschool Education (n=97), Social Studies Education (n=63), Science Education (n=30), Elementary Education (n=124), Elementary Mathematics Education (n=27),

Psychological Counselling and Guidance (n=19). In total, the study was conducted with 497 students (third year=242; fourth year=255).

2. 2. Data Gathering Tool

In the data gathering process, "Questionnaire of Identifying Teacher Candidates' Views towards PPSE" developed by Atav and Sönmez (2013) was used. In the questionnaire consisting of 45 items, 5-point Likert scale was used. While 5 referred to strongly agree, 1 was strongly disagree. The questionnaire contained four sections that were "undergraduate education and PPSE", "general views on the exam", "views on the state employment system" and "the effect of the exam on personal life". The reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) of the questionnaire was calculated as ,94.

2.3. Data Gathering and Analysis

The questionnaire used in the data gathering process was administered to the participants on a voluntary basis by the researchers and the data were transferred to computer environment. In data analysis, SPSS 17.0 was used, t-test and one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) was run.

3. Findings and Interpretation

In this section, the findings and interpretations regarding the teacher candidates' views towards PPSE are presented with respect to the research questions. For the first research question, t-test analysis was conducted to identify whether the teacher candidates' views towards PPSE differed based on the variable gender. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of the Teacher Candidates' Views on PPSE Based on Gender (t-test)

Groups	n	\bar{X}	Ss	Sd	t	p
Female	326	144,03	22,73	495	.51	0,110
Male	171	142,89	24,17			p>0,05 Difference not significant

In Table 1, the comparison of the groups based on the variable gender is given. The views of female and male students towards PPSE did not show any significant differences, [$t_{(495)}=.51$, $p>0,05$]. According to the findings, there was no difference between the views of the two groups on this issue.

Whether the teacher candidates' views differed based on the type of education (i.e. day and evening) was also examined. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of the Teacher Candidates' Views on PPSE Based on Type of Education (t-test)

Groups	n	\bar{X}	Ss	Sd	t	p
Day Education	381	146,0945	24,03	495	4,34	.001
Evening Education	116	135,5776	18,19			p>0,05 Difference significant

As is seen in Table 2, a significant difference was found between the mean scores of the students in normal education and those in evening education, [$t_{(495)}=4,34$, $p<0,05$]. This difference that was found to be in favour of the normal education students can be due to various reasons. As is known, it is economically burdensome to have evening education. Therefore, most of the students in evening education have better economic conditions compared to their peers in normal education. Moreover, the students in evening education can work to make money during the day. This situation can be the reason why the evening students had lower mean scores in their views on PPSE.

Whether the teacher candidates' views towards PPSE differed based on the variable of having taken PPSE previously was also investigated. The results of the analysis conducted for this variable are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of the Teacher Candidates Based on the Variable of Having Taken PPSE Previously (t-test)

Groups	n	\bar{X}	Ss	Sd	t	p
Yes	126	142,8175	26,29	495	-,460	.646
No	371	143,9191	22,11			p>0,05 Difference not significant

As is seen in Table 4, no significant differences were revealed between the groups based on the variable "having taken PPSE previously", [$t_{(495)}=-,460$, $p>0,05$]. The views of the students who took PPSE previously and those who did not take the exam before were similar.

With regard to the second research question of the study, the teacher candidates' views were evaluated without a certain variable. Analysing the data obtained from the questionnaire, frequency, percentage and mean score values were calculated. The analysis results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Frequency, percentage and mean score values related to the teacher candidates' views towards PPSE

ITEMS	Strongly Agree		Agree		Somewhat Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		X
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
31.The number of teacher employed by the Ministry being low affects my preparation for the exam negatively.	135	27,2	127	26	143	29	76	15,3	16	3,2	3,71
38.PPSE is important for me.	153	38,8	133	27	132	27	61	12,3	18	3,6	3,68
32.I'm concerned that I may not get employed after taking PPSE.	148	29,8	138	27	134	27	55	11,1	22	4,4	3,67
29.I think the exam results will affect my future.	151	30,4	136	27	122	25	70	14,1	18	3,6	3,66
23.The selection should be done when entering the faculty based on the need and all graduates should be employed.	161	32,4	114	23	117	24	75	15,1	30	6	3,6
30.I get mentally exhausted while preparing for PPSE .	135	27,2	127	26	143	29	76	15,3	16	3,2	3,58
33.I get economically overburdened while preparing for PPSE .	122	24,5	141	28	144	29	74	14,9	16	3,2	3,56
34.PPSE affects my participation to social activities at school negatively.	121	24,3	141	28	141	28	71	14,3	23	4,6	3,53
24.PPSE should contain questions based on subject areas.	132	26,6	125	25	131	26	81	16,3	28	5,6	3,5
27.I think I can get a sufficient score in PPSE.	107	21,5	140	28	162	33	64	12,9	24	4,8	3,48
22.I think the ministry employment system should be changed.	136	27,4	136	27	109	22	64	12,9	52	11	3,48
40.I'm very concerned about my future.	113	22,7	121	24	159	32	80	16,1	24	4,8	3,44
39.I cannot look into the future with hope because of PPSE.	110	22,1	128	26	144	29	89	17,9	26	5,2	3,41
44.I get psychologically exhausted when I think that I am an economic burden for my family.	115	23,1	112	23	153	31	81	16,3	36	7,2	3,38

45. I feel worthless as an individual studying education because of having to take this exam.	130	26,2	90	18	138	28	92	18,5	47	9,5	3,33
36. I think I will be put pressure from my family and environment if I don't get employed after taking this exam.	98	19,7	122	25	145	29	92	18,5	40	8	3,29
35. I think preparing for PPSE hinders my courses at school.	88	17,7	132	27	139	28	111	22,3	27	5,4	3,28
6. Getting a high score in PPSE is only possible through a preparatory course.	79	15,9	129	26	168	34	92	18,5	29	5,8	3,27
43. That I cannot afford my needs as an adult makes me upset.	104	20,9	114	23	124	25	107	21,5	48	9,7	3,23
1. The teaching education you receive in your undergraduate education is mostly toward PPSE.	132	26,6	77	16	115	23	109	21,9	64	13	3,2
41. I am losing my self-confidence and faith.	94	18,9	97	20	156	31	115	23,1	35	7	3,2
19. I think it is not fair that subject area exam is only for some of the areas.	81	16,3	113	23	156	31	102	20,5	45	9,1	3,16
14. The questions related to educational sciences in PPSE can assess the knowledge of teaching.	111	22,3	80	16	149	30	84	16,9	73	15	3,14
16. Exams focusing on practice can replace PPSE.	67	13,5	126	25	167	34	83	16,1	54	10	3,13
28. I think I prepare for PPSE.	57	11,5	121	24	182	37	106	21,3	31	6,2	3,13
2. The content of the pedagogical formation you receive is enough for PPSE.	34	6,8	151	30	171	34	116	23,3	25	5	3,1
17. The subject area exam administered as of 2013 is unnecessary.	82	16,5	109	22	130	26	122	24,5	54	11	3,08
26. PPSE should be abolished.	91	18,3	80	16	163	33	101	20,3	62	13	3,07
5. The questions in PPSE overlap with the education faculty curriculum.	38	7,6	123	25	203	41	101	20,3	32	6,4	3,06
42. I sometimes regret that I chose this profession.	83	16,7	105	21	132	27	109	21,9	68	14	3,05
13. The general ability section in PPSE is necessary.	48	9,7	134	27	157	32	92	18,5	66	13	3,02
10. The faculty members that we take courses from are far from understanding our concerns regarding PPSE.	44	8,9	116	23	170	34	136	27,4	31	6,2	3,01
12. The general knowledge section in PPSE is necessary.	48	9,7	134	27	157	32	92	18,5	66	13	3,01
21. PPSE is a necessary exam.	66	13,3	96	19	171	34	83	16,7	81	16	2,96
15. There should also be an oral examination for the teacher candidates within PPSE.	52	10,5	141	28	116	23	106	21,3	82	17	2,94
7. The faculty members that we take courses from are competent in preparing us for PPSE.	38	7,6	97	20	198	40	124	24,9	40	8	2,93
3. The education we receive at school is sufficient for answering the educational sciences questions in PPSE.	35	7	92	19	204	41	127	25,6	39	7,8	2,91

25.Exams like PPSE should also be administered after employment.	57	11,5	100	21	150	30	110	22,1	80	16	2,88
37.Due to PPSE, I cannot get along with my friends at school.	66	13,3	91	18	129	26	135	27,2	76	15	2,87
39.The faculty members provide explicative information towards PPSE in our courses.	110	22,1	128	26	144	29	89	17,9	26	5,2	2,86
11.The content of PPSE is suitable.	38	7,6	89	18	188	38	118	23,7	64	13	2,83
18.I think the subject area exam will serve for the aim.	40	8	106	21	149	30	119	23,9	83	17	2,8
38.The faculty members answer questions related to PPSE in our courses.	153	30,8	133	27	132	27	61	12,3	18	3,6	2,71
4.The education we receive at school is sufficient for answering the general knowledge questions in PPSE.	27	5,4	86	17	162	33	157	31,6	65	13	2,7
20.Preparatory exams for PPSE is an indicator of success in PPSE.	45	9,1	62	13	142	29	144	29	104	21	2,59

As is seen in the Table, the items that were rated highest by the teacher candidates included "The number of teacher employed by the Ministry being low affects my preparation for the exam negatively." ($\bar{X}=3,71$), "PPSE is important for me." ($X=3,68$), "I'm concerned that I may not get employed after taking PPSE." ($X=3,67$), "I think the exam results will affect my future." ($X=3,66$), and "The selection should be done when entering the faculty based on the need and all graduates should be employed." ($X=3,60$). Although almost all of the teacher candidates stated that PPSE is important, they wanted the selection to be done in entering the faculty and all graduates to get employed. This finding supports the result that they are concerned about not getting employed and PPSE will affect their future. These results are also consistent with the findings of Çimen and Turan's study (2008) conducted with 507 teacher candidates. On the other hand, the items rated lowest by the teacher candidates included "The content of PPSE is suitable." ($X=2,83$), "I think the subject area exam will serve for the aim." ($X=2,80$), "The faculty members answer questions related to PPSE in our courses." ($X=2,71$), "The education we receive at school is sufficient for answering the general knowledge questions in PPSE." ($X=2,70$) and "Preparatory exams for PPSE is an indicator of success in PPSE." ($X=2,59$). As can also be inferred from these five items being answered negatively by the teacher candidates, the result that the content of PPSE and the subject area exam cannot serve as selecting teachers for employment is consistent with the findings of Şimşek and Akgün (2014), in their study with 120 teacher candidates, that the content of PPSE is not sufficient in selecting qualified teachers by itself, and other criteria should also be considered. Furthermore, Çimen and Yılmaz (2001) conducted a study with 55 teacher candidates to identify biology teacher candidates' views on PPSE. Their finding that 60% of the 55 teacher candidates thought the content of PPSE is not suitable is consistent with the current study.

4. Results and Discussion

In this study, the teacher candidates' views related to PPSE was examined based on several variables. These variables were gender, type of education and having taken PPSE previously. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between the groups based on gender. It may be the case that the problems experienced in teacher employment in recent years affected all teacher candidates, female or male. The findings revealed are consisted with previous research. For example, Gündoğu, Çimen and Turan (2008) examined teacher candidates' views on PPSE and found that there was no significant difference based on gender. This finding was also revealed in other studies (Şimşek & Akgün, 2014; Karataş & Güleş, 2013).

On the other hand, the results of the study showed that there was a significant difference between the groups based on the variable 'type of education' in favour of the students in day education. The means scores of day education students were found to be higher than those in evening education. This finding can be interpreted as that

day education students attached more importance to PPSE. Another results of the study showed that there was no significant difference between the students having taken PPSE previously and those who did not take the exam before. The views of both groups regarding PPSE are similar. All the teacher candidates, either having taken the exam previously or preparing for the exam, had the same views on the exam.

According to the current study, the teacher candidates were concerned of not getting employed. The number of teachers from all subject areas getting employed by the ministry getting lower cause a considerable level of anxiety in teacher candidates. Young individuals are disturbed with this uncertainty about their future.

The direct proportion between the increasing number of teacher candidates and the increase in the rate of graduate employment shows that there is no consistency between teacher training and employment. This inconsistency causes the rate of unemployment to increase which results in teacher candidates who have not been employed but studied for this profession having psychological and economical problems. In a study with 104 unemployed teachers, Gökçe (2014) obtained the data through a questionnaire developed by the researcher. In the first part of the questionnaire, the participants' reasons for not getting employed being unemployed were questioned. In this part, the participants were asked to rate 13 items on a 5-point Likert scale. In the second part of the study, the methods the participants used to cope with the negative situation they experienced due to being unemployed were questioned. An open-ended item was also added to the end of each part to reveal any views that were not included in the items. The study revealed that these teacher candidates often expressed their anger for not being employed, avoided meeting with people from whom they will hear negative things about their being unemployed, and there were individuals thinking to commit suicide.

On the other hand, the teacher candidates thought that the selection related to the teaching profession should be done when starting the undergraduate education. Is PPSE a realistic exam for employing teachers for state schools? Such exams administered at the end of teacher training are criticized by most people, no matter what their qualifications are. For example, Berliner (2005) stated that the tests administered to the teacher candidates graduated in Arizona state decreased the quality of teachers by canalizing their quality to various issues rather than increasing it. Therefore, they emphasized the inadequacy of selecting teaching only through tests

5. Suggestions

This study is a quantitative study using questionnaire data. Through a qualitative study, different and detailed views can be gathered from the teacher candidates. On the other hand, studies related to PPSE being conducted with faculty members and teachers working at private courses can also provide useful data. Answering questions suitable to the content of PPSE in undergraduate courses can help lower the students' anxiety as well as making them familiar with the type of questions that can come up in PPSE. It is consistent with Semerci and Özer's (2005) finding that PPSE affects students' attitudes towards courses.

Most of the teacher candidates thought PPSE was important, and experienced the anxiety of not getting employed. In this sense, it is normal that they have negative and anxious perceptions regarding PPSE. It is considered that faculty members talking to students about PPSE would lower their anxiety.

According to teacher candidates, faculty members do not have any practices on PPSE in their courses. It is thought that faculty members including questions suitable to PPSE in their courses would increase students' success and lower their anxiety. In this regard, the case of faculty members can also be examined.

In addition to the evaluations measuring subject area knowledge, criteria such as interviews and grade point average should also be used in selecting teachers. Considering the role of the teaching profession in society, emotional skills should also be evaluated. For researchers, it can be suggested to focus on more detailed issues regarding PPSE and conduct qualitative studies by gathering data through open-ended questions and interviews.

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