

OPINIONS OF GRADUATES OF SOCIAL SCIENCES TEACHING ON THE PUBLIC SERVANT ELECTION EXAM

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to determine anxiety and expectations of graduates of Social Sciences Teaching about PPEE and introduce their opinion on the system thereof. The population of the study involved graduates of 2017 and previous years from Social Sciences Teaching Departments in Faculties of Education of Amasya University and Ondokuz Mayıs University (OMU), who attended PPEE, a central examination process for teacher appointment, but have not been appointed. In the study, semi-structured interview technique was employed. The participants were selected on a voluntary basis by using homogenous sampling technique, a type of purposeful sampling. The data collected from the interviews were analysed using NVivo qualitative data analysis program. The findings of the study indicate that the candidates consider PPEE as very exhaustive process, both physically and psychologically. Another finding is that there are disagreements between the newly graduated candidates and earlier graduates at some points. The most prominent opinions by the participants on this examination were that admissions to teacher training programs in the universities should be grounded on the needs and prerequisite criteria, there shouldn't be an interview process and academic standings of the candidates should be considered as criteria. The findings were intended to contribute to creation of an awareness on the anxiety and expectations of teacher candidates, and to probable future changes to PPEE.

Keywords: Graduated teacher candidates, PPEE, anxiety, expectation

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the fundamental elements in terms of the existence, survival, development and advancement of states and nations. Education is a system of multiple elements that interact with one another. Any imperfect element in such a system would have a negative impact on education. And teachers are one of the most vital elements of this system. A competent teacher means a competent society. Having impressive school buildings equipped with modern instruments or curriculums drafted perfectly are rarely enough for education. The most essential actuator at that point are competent and qualified teachers (Akar, 2007: 23).

In definition, teachers are individuals appointed in public or private educational organization to guide children, teens or adults to acquire intended behaviour and to assist others' improvement and development with the knowledge, manners and experiences they have. To another definition, a teacher is an individual qualified to teach, having completed a training required to be a teacher and having acquired relevant skills. (<http://www.tdk.gov.tr>, 2018). As such definitions also indicate the profession of teaching requires having certain skills and qualifications to educate people. It is possible to address the qualifications a teacher, who have influence on social order as they educate children and teens, in two different aspects. Teachers are not only expected to have acquired universal values in social and scientific terms but also expected to have acquired qualification on the cultural characteristics and values inherent in their own society.

And such qualifications can be determined based on the individual efforts by a teacher and assessment of such efforts. In this respect, determination of not only what qualifications a teacher should acquire but also what criteria should be used to assess these qualifications is important (Şişman, 2009: 68). This is what distinguishes the profession of teaching and places it somewhere different among the other professions. Because teaching is key profession in the process of offering cognitive and psychomotor skills to the members of other professions (Çiltaş and Akıllı, 2011: 65). Therefore, it is apparent that there should be some certain standards in training and appointing teachers.

The standards for training a teacher should be developed within the scope of a state policy, based on the criteria that are considered necessary for a prospective teacher to have acquired, and it should be determined whether such prospective teachers meet the criteria required for their appointment. In teacher training, there were various practices in various periods.

In the Early Republican Period, teacher training was considered a vital educational issue to be resolved and there were various solutions employed. In addition to teacher training schools, various resources and methods such as *Reserve Officers as Teachers*, *Substitute Teachers*, *Peace Corps*, *Pedagogical Training*, *Teacher Training through Correspondence*, *Accelerated Teacher Training Programs*, *Military Teachers*, were employed to meet the need for teachers (Akyüz, 2015: 380-391). Both the failure in planning for the need for teachers especially between 1970 and 1980, and misconception and misunderstanding as to the nature of the profession of teaching caused almost anyone with no undergraduate degree to be appointed as teachers in a short period of

time. Such a policy has led to greater problems in our education system (Safran, 2014:2). In the following years, as a solution to these problems, in 1982, teacher training organizations were integrated into the universities, for the sake of the unity of Higher Education, and as of 1992 such organizations were reorganized as Faculties of Education (Arı and Yılmaz, 2015: 906, Ataünal, 2003).

With those reforms in teacher training policies, teaching has also been recognized as a vital profession. Reviews of the curriculum drafted by the Ministry of National Education in 2004 revealed 6 criteria as to the qualifications a teacher must have acquired. These were;

- Perceived professional values of the individual
- Familiarizing with the students
- The educational process
- Monitoring and evaluating the learning and developmental process
- Interrelation of schools, families and the society.
- Familiarizing with the curriculum and content thereof (Atav and Sönmez, 2013:2).

As teaching is hardly a concern of conveying knowledge to student and requires further specialism, an examination for electing teachers to be appointed has been being conducted to determine whether the candidates meet the specified criteria or not. Another factor leading to an elective examination is the number of graduated candidates that is much higher than that the state could afford employing. Therefore, it is clear that there is a miscommunication between the relevant bodies in terms educational planning and determination of the needs. The recently increasing demand on the Faculties of Education has led to gap between what is demanded and what is offered. Observations show that in some fields the number of graduates is much greater than that the MNE needs, whereas in some fields the number of graduates is not sufficient enough to satisfy the needs (Karataş and Güleş, 2013:106). On the other hand, appointment of unqualified and incompetent individuals as teachers in order to satisfy the need for teachers, created by random interventions in educational system resulting from the mistakes and flaws in planning stages, and this examination along with other similar ones conducted to determine the qualifications of teachers lead to controversies. Due to the number of teacher candidates, expecting to be appointed, exceeding the number needed, Student Election and Placement Centre (ÖSYM) started holding examinations to determine those candidates to be appointed as teachers. The first of those examinations were held in 1999, under the name State Official Election Exam (DMS). In 2001, this examination was replaced with Central Election Examination for State Organizations (KMS) and as of 2002, it has been being conducted under the name Public Servant Election Exam (KPSS) (Karadeniz, 2016: 730; Baysan et.al. 2011: 141-142; MEB 2011; ÖSYM 2017). This exam is required for all teacher candidates, who have acquired the necessary qualifications and intends to be employed in state-owned schools.

With the ongoing arrangements on the examinations to be held for teacher appointments, MNE organized workshops with the participation of specialists, for determining general and specific competences and

qualifications to be demanded from a teacher. In this respect, in 2002 “General Qualifications for the Profession of Teaching”, in 2006 “Branch-Specific Qualifications for Primary School Teachers” and finally “Branch-Specific Qualifications for Secondary School Teachers” were specified (Candeğer, 2015: 180). These workshops aimed at determining the needs and electing qualified and competent teachers among all candidates.

As of 2013, ÖSYM has started evaluating not only the teaching qualifications of the teacher candidates but also their branch-specific qualifications through the Branch-Specific Exam followed by the original PPEE and currently this exam’s score equals to the 50% of the total score (Memduhoğlu and Kayan, 2017: 1267). As of 2016, a new stage, interview, has been added to the process, and succeeding in interviews has become a must as well as succeeding in PPEE. The latest amendment regarding the employment of teachers has been the law on contract teachers. Pursuant to this law, after 4 years of contract service in a school, teachers may be promoted as permanent staff in the same school (Güven, Dak 2017:3).

The Aim and Importance of the Research

PPEE has become critical stage in teacher candidates’ lives, where they race one another to perform so well that they could eliminate the others. Tremendous number of candidates, many of whom start preparing in their 3rd year, attend this exam. They even attend private courses to score good marks in the exam. And this process inevitably leads to pressure and stress for the candidates. Added the levels anxiety, social and parental pressure, the negative attitudes towards the exam, the process becomes more and more troublesome for the candidates. The levels of anxiety and despair of those candidates who have already graduated from the university but have not succeeded in PPEE so far and therefore have been continuing to prepare, are much higher (Ceyhan, 2005; Doğan and Çoban, 2009).

PPEE, having become the most essential criteria for the teacher candidates to be appointed and to serve as professional teachers, leads many researchers to conduct studies on this exam. Such researches analyse the opinions of the candidates on PPEE and its negative impacts on them. The findings of such researches generally conclude that PPEE is an element of pressure on the candidates, that it leads to anxiety, stress and despair, and that it has a negative impact on candidates’ attitude towards their courses and on their social and economic life as it dominates their professional future. There are also conclusions stating the exam is poor in evaluating the qualifications of the teachers and there should be other criteria for the election (Karaca, 2011; Gündoğdu, Çimen and Turan, 2008; Sezgin and Duran, 2008; Akpınar, 2013; Tösten, Elçiçek and Kılıç 2012; Karataş and Güleş, 2013; Atav and Sönmez, 2013; Baştürk, 2007).

Number of Social Sciences Teacher candidates trained to teach courses such as Social Sciences and Atatürk’s Principles and Revolutions and currently expecting to be appointed, and therefore, the number of those who have not been appointed have increased recently.

The aim of this study is to determine anxiety and expectations of graduated Social Sciences Teacher candidates, who previously attended PPEE, about the exam, and introduce their opinion on the system thereof.

METHOD

Research Model

This research, conducted for analysing the opinions of teacher candidates on PPEE, and the impacts of this exam on their lives, is a qualitative phenomenological research, structured with a standardized open-ended interview approach. The phenomenological pattern focuses on a phenomenon. Phenomenological researches aim at researching concepts we are aware of but could not explain (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013: 78). In other words, phenomenology is concerned about how people interpret, perceive, convey and evaluate their experiences (Saban and Ersoy, 2016).

The standardized open-ended interview approach consists of a series of questions, carefully developed and sorted in a certain order, and each participant were asked the same questions, in the same manner and order. As the population of the study involved graduated candidates and it was not possible to reach all of them at the same time, they were reached through phone calls and informed on the aim and scope of the study in detail. At the end of such information, the interview form was sent to the voluntary participants via e-mail and their responses were received via e-mail. Participation in the research was in voluntary basis and this was disclosed on the introduction section of the interview form. The forms were sent to a total 25 participants, former and newly graduated teacher candidates, via e-mail and they were asked to reply in written. 15 participants replied to e-mails.

The Population of the Study

The population of the study involved 15 teacher candidates, having graduated in 2017 and previous years from Social Sciences Teaching Departments in Faculties of Education of Amasya University and Ondokuz Mayıs University (OMU).

Participants forming the population of the study are the teacher candidates who attended PPEE, a central examination process for teacher appointment, but have not been appointed in their field. The participants were elected on voluntarily basis. In the study, the participants were selected among the candidates who attended PPEE but have not been appointed, in particular, as what is aimed is to determine anxiety and expectations of graduates of Social Sciences Teaching about PPEE and introduce their opinion on the system thereof. The demographics of participants were introduced in the Table below. Although the levels of income, a part of demographics of the participants, were rated as good, middle and low, there was no certain criteria in determining such rates, but the participants were expected to determine those based on their own criteria.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

Demographics	Educational Background	Level of Income	Attended PPEE Course?	Prepared for PPEE for (years)	Marital Status	Graduated in	Graduated from	Age	Gender
OMU NG4	Undergraduate	Good	Yes	1	Single	2017	OMU	20-25	female
OMU NG3	Undergraduate	Good	Yes	1	Single	2017	OMU	20-25	male
OMU NG2	Undergraduate	Middle	No	1	Single	2017	OMU	20-25	male
OMU NG1	Undergraduate	Low	No	1	Single	2017	OMU	20-25	male
OMU FG3	Undergraduate	Middle	Yes	3 +	Single	2013	OMU	25-30	female
OMU FG2	Undergraduate	Middle	Yes	3 +	Single	2013	OMU	25-30	male
OMU FG1	Undergraduate	Middle	Yes	2	Married	2012	OMU	25-30	female
AU NG4	Undergraduate	Middle	Yes	1	Single	2017	AU	20-25	Female
AU NG3	Undergraduate	Middle	No	2	Single	2017	AU	20-25	Female
AU NG2	Undergraduate	Low	No	1	Single	2017	AU	20-25	Female
AU NG1	Undergraduate	Good	No	1	Single	2017	AU	20-25	Male
AU FG4	Graduate	Middle	Yes	1	Single	2014	AU	25-30	female
AU FG3	Undergraduate	Middle	Yes	3 +	Single	2014	AU	20-25	female
AU FG2	Graduate	Middle	No	3 +	Single	2012	AU	25-30	female
AU FG1	Undergraduate	Middle	No	1	Single	2016	AU	20-25	female

Of the participants, 5 are male and 10 are female. All but 7 of the participants attended PPEE courses. All but 1 of the participants are single. Of the participants, 7 graduated in 2017 while 8 graduated in previous years. The average income level is middle. 2 of the participants are studying in graduate programs. Of the participants, 5 are between 25 and 30, while the rest are between 20 and 30. As well as their demographics, the participants were also asked about their PPEE scores.

Table 2. PPEE Scores of the Participants

PPEE Scores	Branch-Specific Exam Scores	Educational Sciences Exam Scores	Interview Scores
OMU NG4	70	75	Not interviewed
OMU NG3	70	72	Not interviewed
OMU NG2	75	70	Not interviewed
OMU NG1	-	-	-
OMU FG3	80	82	90
OMU FG2	75	73	Not interviewed
AU NG4	67	70	Not interviewed
AU NG3	75	75	Not interviewed
AU NG2	65	75	Not interviewed

AÜ NG1	60	70	Not interviewed
AU FG4	62	71	Not interviewed
AU FG3	70	76	Not interviewed
AU FG2	71	74	Not interviewed
AU FG1	63	68	Not interviewed

Table 2 shows participants' in PPEE Educational Sciences Exam Scores, Branch-Specific Exam Scores and the Interview Scores. Only one of the participants has attended an interview, and one of them has never attended any of the exams.

Collection and Analysis of Data

As the participants were residents of different cities, the Standardized open-ended interview forms developed were sent to the participants via e-mail and they responded in written via e-mail. The forms, sent to participants, not only included questions that the participants could express their opinions on PPEE but also a question that they could express whether they had chosen the profession willingly or not. There were also questions aimed at finding out about their preparation period PPEE, determining anxiety about the exam and impacts of the exam on their social and economic life. Prior to the final release of the form, another form that could be in parallel with the aim of the study, was drafted based on the preliminary conversations with the students, and this draft was inspected by Turkish Language Specialist and two other field specialists. This form, finalized upon the remarks by the specialists, was implemented for two students and a pilot study was conducted. Thereafter, forms were sent to the participants via e-mail and they responded via e-mail.

Upon the collection of data, the interview forms were analysed using QSR NVivo qualitative data analysis program. The main purpose in the content analysis was to find out concepts and relations that could assist in explaining the data collected. In this respect, the qualitative data can be analysed in four stages, that is coding the data, determining themes, organizing codes and themes and describing and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013: 259-271).

In this study, the forms filled by the participants, after being reviewed one by one, were coded according to content analysis method. In coding, initially, five themes were determined on the basis of questions. These themes are categorized as;

- Opinions on the profession of teaching
- Preparation period for and expectations from the exam
- Concerns regarding the exam
- Opinions on PPEE and
- Future plans.

The interview scripts of the participants were coded on the qualitative data analysis program in accordance with the themes determined.

Three specialists were consulted in the process. The data were coded on the qualitative data analysis program in accordance with the themes determined. Similarities and differences between the opinions of the participants were categorized and modelled based on the themes. The themes and opinions were analysed separately in the Findings sections.

The participants were coded as below, based on the university they graduated and whether they are former or new graduates.

AUFG: Amasya University, Former Graduate

AUNG: Amasya University, New Graduate

OMUFG: Ondokuz Mayıs University, Former Graduate

OMUNG: Ondokuz Mayıs University, New Graduate

FINDINGS

Opinions On The Profession Of Teaching

In order to determine whether the participants preferred teacher training willingly or not, they were asked the question *Did you preferred teacher training willingly? Please explain in detail.* Three different cases were determined upon the responses.

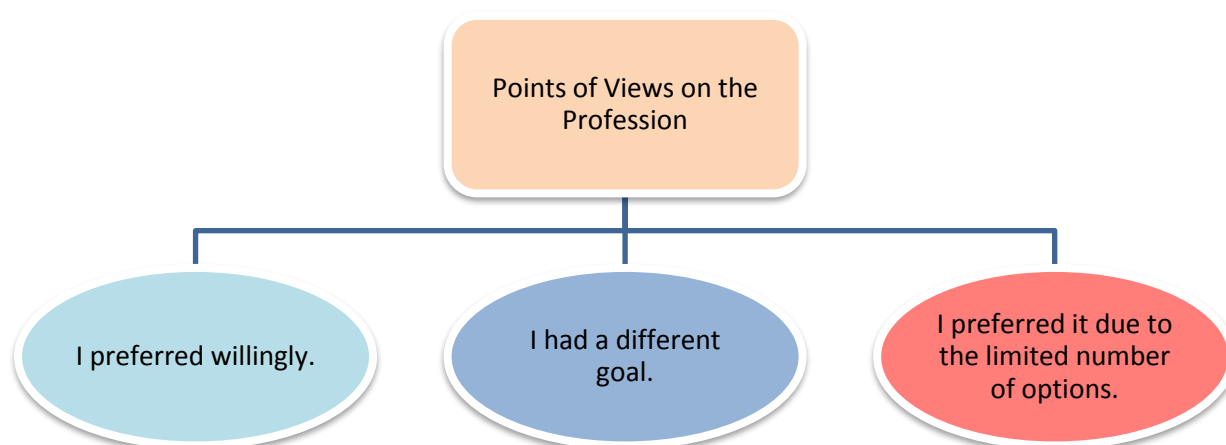


Figure 1. Points of Views on the Profession

As seen in Figure 1, participants responded *I preferred willingly, I had a different goal, I preferred it due to the limited number of options.* Distribution of these responses by the participants are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Participants' Points of Views on the Profession

	AU FG1	AU FG2	AU FG3	AU FG4	AÜ NG1	AU NG2	AU NG3	AU NG4	OMU FG2	OMU FG3	OMU NG1	OMU NG2	OMU NG3	OMU NG4
I had a different goal				1										
I preferred willingly	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
I preferred it due to the limited number of options										1				

According to Table 3, all teacher candidates but the two stated they preferred the profession willingly.

The most prominent of the opinions of the candidates on the profession are as follows:

Yes. I preferred it willingly. My family, especially my grandmother (maternal) wanted me to be teacher...**AUE2**

Actually, my dream job was psychology. I always love to teach ... when I started the 2nd semester, I told myself that I should apply for a master's degree and started studying for that. I liked my branch during my master's education more and I began to feel sorry for social sciences as it is valued in our country, as it should be. **(AUG4)**

I preferred this profession willingly. My ability, my self-confidence and my qualifications, my love for children, and the fact that I like to do something for people were the reasons why I preferred this profession and liked it very much. **(AUNG4)**

I preferred it willingly and because I believe I am good at communicating to the children. **(OMUNG4)**

Preparation Period For And Expectations From The Exam

The participants were asked "Would you please present your remarks on your preparation period?" and "What were your expectations considering your study program?" to give details of their preparation period.

Distribution of participants' opinions on their preparation periods is indicated in Table 4.



Figure 2. Participants’ Opinions on Preparation Period

Table 4. Distribution of Participants’ Opinions on Preparation Period

	AU FG1	AU FG2	AU FG3	AU FG4	AÜ NG1	AU NG2	AU NG3	AU NG4	OMU FG2	OMU FG3	OMU NG1	OMU NG2	OMU NG3	OMU NG4
I scored below my expectations due to exam stress												1	1	
I believe I’m successful, but I do not believe the exam is secured		1	1											
I had a time management problem during my preparations							1	1						1
Very exhaustive process, both physically and psychologically		1	1	1		1	1	1		1		1	1	
I studied in a second undergraduate degree and was appointed in relation to that department										1				
I haven’t been appointed as the vacancies are not distributed in a planned manner									1					
The examination system being changed constantly is the most important factor in my failure														
I had to work and prepare at the same time										1				

The reason why I fail in exam is me	1	1	1	1
I didn't have many expectations from the exam.			1	
I didn't prepare as I hadn't had any expectations.			1	
Practicing in tests is important	1			
High motivation is important	1			

As seen in Table 4, a majority of the teacher candidates stated that the preparation period was an exhausting one, both physically and psychologically. The most prominent of the opinions of the candidates on the preparation period are as follows:

It was a very busy period. I had family issues during both the school and preparation period. I was contributing to my family's living and studying at the same time. I did not have the opportunity to attend a private course. At that time my mother was very sick, and I had to visit home every weekend. I also suffer from acute asthma. But whatever the conditions were, every year until this time I attended the exam as if I had been a slave who had to obey. Now I do not bother myself preparing. I studied in a disciplined and planned manner, checking various resources. I do not believe I failed. The test technique, success in mathematics, the number of net correct answers and time management... These are nonsense. Now I certainly believe that the questions were stolen. There is nothing I can do, this is how the system works! **(AUF2)**

A very difficult, psychologically exhausting period requiring a lot of disciplinary working... I think that the reason why I failed is definitely due to the system's redundancy and failure to evaluate the level of knowledge and experience. **(AUF3)**

I prepared for the exams held in 2013, 2014, 2015 in particular ... I could not succeed, but my family saw not harm of me preparing for another year and was even supportive. Although I prepared well in 2014, I did not manage to be appointed as I could not eliminate 250-300 more "competitors". The following period turned out to be a bit more challenging. My family lost their hope, and there had been expectations from me to have a job. Then I started preparing for the exam of 2015 while working as a worker in a factory, and studying in the remaining time, upon their suggestions, advices and sarcastic words of neighbours. Of course, due to the harsh conditions in the factory, I was not able to succeed in this test either, as the number of vacant positions was decreased as the years passed. Finally, I lost my hope too... I have opened a joint business with my cousin with my savings. I recently took over a private course and now I run that business. To summarize, I gave up my dreams for exams and to be appointed after 2015... I do not think I failed due to the lack of time for studying. On the contrary, I believe that the reason is that the government, without any planning, allocates excessive quotas to the universities in order that everyone could graduate from university. Currently, there are nearly 30 thousand graduates of Social Sciences Teaching. The annual requirement of the state is no more than 1000-2000 people. I wonder what the government planned for the remaining 28 thousand. **(OMUFG2)**

... It was the social and family pressure that was exhausting, rather than the exam itself. It was a nightmare. I have always sought for a way out... I really tried to do my best day and night. It was a complete disappointment for me. I thought I would not be credited for I had done, after all the struggle. That year I also attended the Exam for Transition to Higher Education (YGS). I scored well on that exam. I was also admitted to the Religious Culture and Ethics Teaching program at the same university... Then my adventure in my second degree started, as I thought the graduates of this program had higher rates of appointment. It was really a strange program for me, where I had no background related to... It was a very exhausting period for me. I had to work because my family could not afford supporting me. I had to work in various jobs ranging from serving as waiter to serving in marketing, to go on studying. It was also very hard for me to study and work at the same time. I applied to graduate school just to get a scholarship and to afford my school more easily. Fortunately, as soon as I graduated, getting high score in exams, I have been appointed. I could not afford not being appointed. I was not even considered a human being, even by my family in the first place. I felt like I was a burden on their backs. My parents were illiterate people, and in no way could understand my situation. I even thought of committing a suicide as a way of salvation at that time. I was ready to go that far. They even forced to marry a person I did not want to, just for that I go away from home ... I was never respected and even my brother, who quitted high school and worked as a barber was more respected, because he was earning money... I started living in a private apartment in the same city. I paid the rent with the student loan from my graduate study. I have completed my degree and worked there, I studied for PPEE for some time, and thank God I have been appointed as soon as I graduated. My attitudes towards them have never changed, but theirs, after I have been appointed, changed in a positive way. It is very sad but unfortunately even the family does not respect you as a man, if you do not earn money. **(OMUFG3)**

I did not prepare for PPEE. There are no vacant positions. I did not want to waste time in vain. **(OMUNG1)**

Concerns Regarding The Exam

The participants were asked “*Would you please present your remarks on your anxiety about the exam (pre- and post-)?*” to determine their anxiety about the exam. Distribution of participants’ anxiety about the exam is indicated in Table 5.



Figure 3. Participants' Concerns Regarding the Exam

Table 5. Distribution of Participants' Concerns Regarding the Exam

	AU FG1	AU FG2	AU FG3	AU FG4	AÜ NG1	AU NG2	AU NG3	AU NG4	OMU FG2	OMU FG3	OMU NG1	OMU NG2	OMU NG3	OMU NG4
Family and social pressure causes me to get anxious									1					
My anxiety began with the Branch-Specific exam				1										
My scariest anxiety was the thought of not being appointed												1		
My scariest anxiety is not to be awarded what I deserved			1											
The exam scared me									1					
I am anxious of excitement during the exam due to exam stress							1						1	1
My anxiety began when I first failed						1								
My anxiety began when I was waiting for the results	1				1			1					1	1
Failing constantly took my anxiety away.		1												
It is nonsensical that they evaluate our whole academic life with one exam.									1					

As seen in Table 5, 5 of the candidates stated that they were anxious while they were waiting for the results. The most prominent of the remarks of the candidates on the anxiety are as follows:

The year I first attended the exam I had both hope and anxiety... I said "It is not meant to be" ignored it... In my last attempt I cried in the exam and wrote a poem. I do not even take the exam seriously anymore... I just write now... **AÜE2**

What worries me is that I am excited during the exam and forget about everything. As this test is now the only remedy, it causes people to worry about the reactions from their environment. **(AUNG3)**

Now that I have no hopes for the exam, I'm just attending to see the questions. **(OMUFG2)**

To me, the exam was a horrible beast. I had been studying so hard as I had never in my life to defeat that beast... I feel very sorry for my friends who experience this situation as I do. That's why I respond to this survey. **(OMUFG3)**

One of the questions that scared me was "Will I be appointed?" Social Sciences Teaching has become a field that has been less regarded and that has lower number of vacancies day by day. After the results were revealed, I realized that I should now give other fields a chance. In this respect, I applied to for being an official in various organizations. **(OMUNG2)**

Opinions on PPEE

The participants were asked “What is your opinion on the criteria of PPEE on evaluating your teaching skills?”, “What is your opinion on the criteria of PPEE on evaluating your branch-specific knowledge?”, “What is your opinion on interview stage of PPEE?”, “What kinds of impacts did PPEE have on your economic and social life?” to find out their opinions on PPEE. Distribution of participants’ opinions on PPEE is indicated in Table 6.

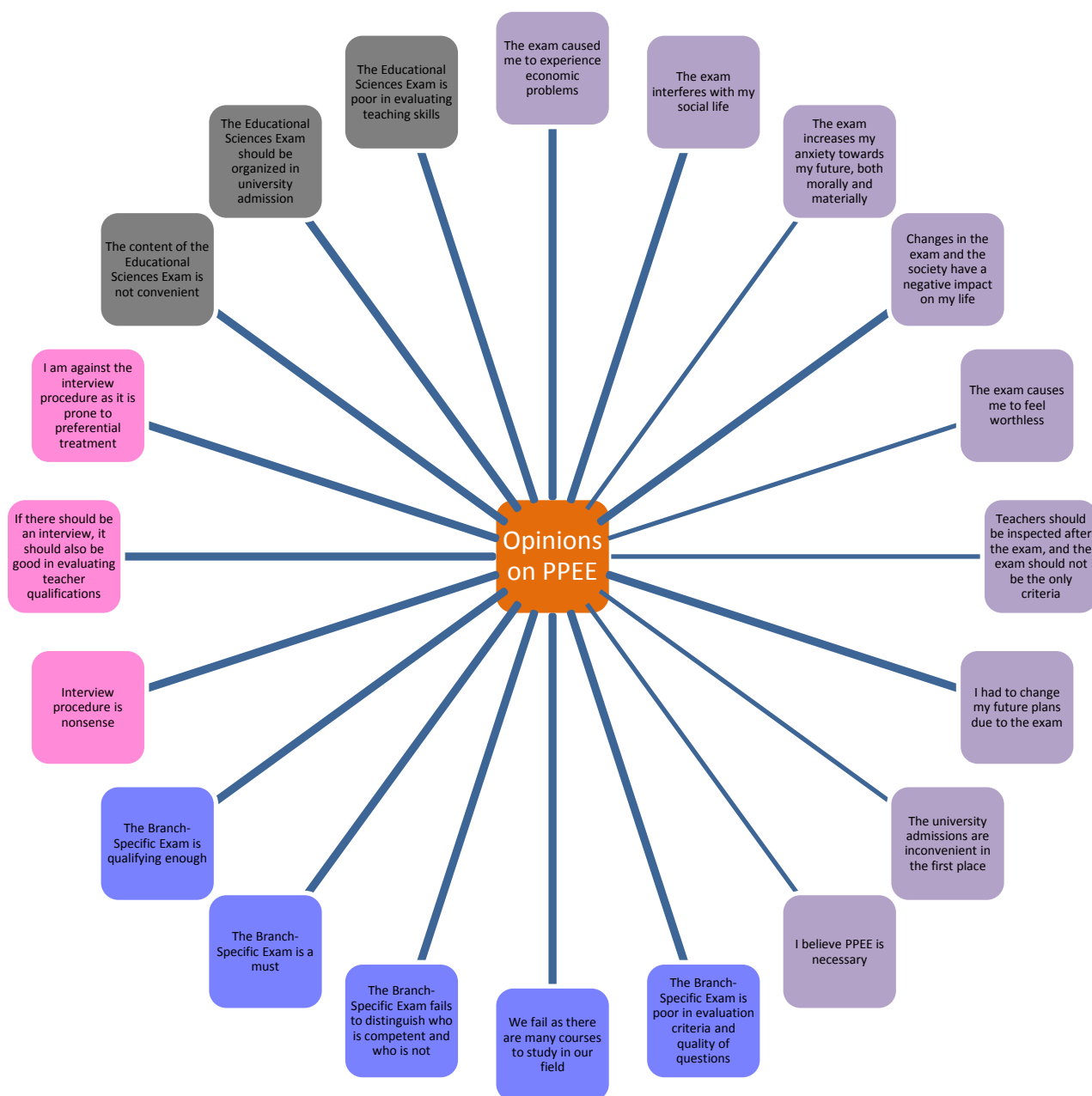


Figure 4. Opinions on PPEE

Table 6. Distribution of Participants' Opinions on PPEE

	AU FG1	AU FG2	AU FG3	AU FG4	AÜ NG1	AU NG2	AU NG3	AU NG4	OMU FG2	OMU FG3	OMU NG1	OMU NG2	OMU NG3	OMU NG4
The Branch-Specific Exam is qualifying enough	1													
The Branch-Specific Exam is poor in evaluation criteria and quality of questions			1			1		1	1	1		1	1	
The Branch-Specific Exam fails to distinguish who is competent and who is not		1		1			1				1			
The Branch-Specific Exam is a must					1									
We fail as there are many courses to study in our field														1
The content of the Educational Sciences Exam is not convenient			1											
The Educational Sciences Exam is poor in evaluating teaching skills		1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1
The Educational Sciences Exam should be organized in university admission	1													
I had to change my future plans due to the exam					1									
I believe PPEE is necessary														
Teachers should be inspected after the exam, and the exam should not be the only criteria							1							
Interview procedure is nonsense			1		1									
If there should be an interview, it should also be good in evaluating teacher qualifications							1	1		1				1
I am against the interview procedure as it is prone to preferential treatment	1	1		1		1			1		1	1	1	
The exam caused me to experience economic problems	1	1						1	1	1			1	1
The exam increases my anxiety towards my future, both morally and materially			1	1		1								
The exam causes me to feel worthless		1							1	1				
The exam interferes with my social life	1						1	1		1		1	1	1
Changes in the exam and the society have a negative impact on my life					1									
The university admissions are inconvenient in the first place				1										

Reviewing Table 6, it is obvious that the questions on the opinions on PPEE are the ones answered in detail the most. A great majority of the participants stated that both branch-specific exam and educational sciences exam were poor in evaluating the qualifications, the questions are not qualifying enough, they are against the interview procedure as it is prone to preferential treatment, the exam causes them to experience economic problems and the exam interferes with their social lives. The most prominent of the opinions of the candidates on PPEE are as follows:

Teaching skills are to be experienced directly in the class. We are being subjected to a test on a paper. But I've heard no one appointed thanks to these skills. Every week, I went to school by preparing the course plan, presentations, activity and exercise plans during my internship... First of all, I should state that there were no subjects that I had not studied in my field... There is no distinction between who is competent and who is not...

The exam is just a formality... I can say that I and my family have been exhausted, materially and morally. I realized I was studying for nothing. From the economic aspect... It is very painful. PPEE is a never-healing wound for me. "I wish I had never studied. There was not a single day I didn't cry... I now describe myself as "General Manager of nonsense objectives"... If I had been appointed, I would have had a job and insurance, a salary, a life, and a qualification... I have no wages and I am still saving money. **(AUG2)**

Although PPEE seems to measure teaching skills from a formal point of view (general skills - literary knowledge, educational sciences and branch-specific knowledge), it has lost the ability to measure teaching ability from a real point of view. That most of the questions asked in the exam are wrong, the board members who prepare the questions ask only the questions which are in parallel the content of the books they authored, the knowledge tested in the questions neither has the potential of being taught to a student nor they are taught to us during our undergraduate education are the most prominent evidences that prove this examination could not measure teaching skills. The stage of oral examination is also very wrong... Even if a test such as PPEE is succeeded, it is unjust to decide whether one could be a teacher, with an interview of maximum of five minutes. **(AUG3)**

First of all, I think the mistake begins with the university admissions. Unfortunately, the system, starting with mistakes, continues also with mistakes. In our country, regardless of their competence or interest, people are subjected to exams on paper, and placed accordingly. Those who score high on exams are considered to be smart, successful, and competent in that profession. However, the skills that people have cannot be measured by a multiple-choice exam. The teacher must have knowledge of the pedagogy and technology. With multiple choice exams, it is not possible to measure whether or not candidates have the skills to use technology, pedagogical background to convey their branch-specific knowledge or they are good at communication skills or have the personality that can set an example for the students. I did not attend PPEE for the last two years because I do not have hopes thereof. As an observer, I don't think the interview is conducted transparently. We don't know who the interview jury members are and how they are selected... I've heard about serious allegations about the evaluation. **(AUG4)**

I do not find this measurement criteria that is based only on a test, to be appropriate. On the contrary, it would have been better to have demonstrative lectures in class. I think that interviews should be abandoned for a more objective evaluation. **(AUNG2)**

This exam should not be the only criteria. Teachers appointed should also be supervised... Their efficiency and productivity in the branch should be taken into account... Especially Social Sciences Teaching covers a wide variety of topics It is not possible to study every subject in a limited time period. Even if we have no time limitation, we encounter many things we do not know, in the pilot tests. As we dive into details and study harder, we are drowned in detail and become unable to solve the problems we've known very well. In consideration of this the examination should be more qualified... Although not economically, it is a socially very

demanding and exhausting situation. I can only say that we are left with only the concept of social life... Because we are living exam-oriented lives. Exams, with different names and content but always resulting in winning and losing. **(AUNG3)**

... A total of 50 questions measure my knowledge as a social studies teacher and according to the results, it is determined whether I should be appointed or not. And the rate of the score of this exam in the overall score, is 50%. 50 questions only determine my knowledge embedded in volumes of books and my competence in the branch. I have nothing more to say about such a ridiculous exam... Because of the government's inability to plan, for years I had to live with embarrassment before my family and environment... Feeling embarrassed, I had to ask for money from my family. I can't tell how humiliating this is for someone at the age of 23-24-25. I gave up just not to experience those feelings again and started working as a factory worker in 2015. I am 27 years old, and just able to sustain myself economically, therefore, just think of marriage. I had to break up with my partner I had been seeing for years, because I was unemployed... **OMÜE2**

... I do not believe that teaching skills could be measured by asking theoretical knowledge that is memorized and marked in the exam. The practice which matters the most, is not measured in any way. I was one of the first teachers appointed through interview last year. Although interviews, to some degree compensate for the deficiency, it is for the candidates who achieved a certain success in PPEE. I think PPEE and others are conducted to eliminate candidates rather than to measure their teaching skills. It is not right to call them candidates; to me, they are all teachers. This is ridiculous too. I never encountered graduated doctors, engineers being called "candidate". But when it comes to us, then we are called candidates. Haven't we already studied for 4 years to be teachers? Candidate for what? If the faculties of education are competent to raise us as teachers, then let's shut them down and open private PPEE courses. I cannot really understand some things... I think it's a good thing to be interviewed. Because it is really important for teachers to be able to express themselves, to have the ability to lecture, to communicate, to have good human relations, etc. If what is implied is the interviews we experienced, questions asked there are ridiculous. Our friends say that the questions are not related to the branch in any way. I think it is a system of nepotism... Private PPEE courses are exploiting people who have the slightest hope of being appointed. It became a commercial field, I have no idea what they think about the education itself. But without those courses, it is not very possible to succeed in those exams either. My social life never came to mind when I was preparing for PPEE. In such a period you cannot think of your social life. **(OMUFG3)**

There were not questions qualified enough to measure teaching skills in the exam. I spoke to my friends, who finished the exam and left the exam hall and they said "It was not a demanding exam. I could have done it even if I hadn't studied for it" which shows how unqualified the PPEE of 2017 is... I think the interview is unnecessary ... It was like I did not have any social life. **(OMUNG2)**

Future Plans

The participants were asked “What changes have it caused in future plans, not being successful in this exam?” to give details about their future plans. The remarks of the participants are indicated in Table 5. Distribution of participants’ future plans is indicated in Table 7.



Figure 5. Participants' Future Plans

Table 7. Distribution of Participants' Future Plans

	AU FG1	AU FG2	AU FG3	AU FG4	AÜ NG1	AU NG2	AU NG3	AU NG4	OMU FG2	OMU FG3	OMU NG1	OMU NG2	OMU NG3	OMU NG4
It didn't change my future plans but now I have study more							1	1					1	
I thought of committing a suicide		1												
PPEE has never been priority for me, I always chased my dreams				1										
The exam was a disappointment														1
All my future plans changed as I failed in the exam			1						1	1		1		
Each time fail in the exam I lose my interest in and love for the profession		1												
Not succeeding in the exam led me to revise my studying techniques						1								

As seen Table 7, 4 of the participants stated that their future plans changed as they failed in the exam. The most prominent responses as to the participants' future plans are follows:

I have to postpone my dreams for one more year. As time goes by, I worry that my productivity as a teacher will decrease. **(AUGF1)**

First of all, "failing" is not the correct definition for me. It is rather we were convicted to failure... Where worthiness is meaningless, there is no meaning in claiming your rights. Essentially, this system is driven by competition and leads to hostility and loneliness. It's a situation that even makes you consider suicide as an option. I was back from the death exactly twice. There's no such thing as a future plan for me. Now, I am a good and talented writer. I have two books ready to be published. I cannot have them printed because of financial troubles... But I do not live saying "I wish". It is hard to be the sole addressee of the same question every day! And the hardest one is to keep silent against those questions! **(AUGF2)**

Failing in this exam changed my hopes, my dreams, my point of view, the cities I dreamed of living in, the steps I wanted to take. I costed me my self-confidence... **AÜE3**

It changed my plans but not my dreams... I was a little bit lucky and I took over a private course with the money I had saved for many years and I have reached my dreams in any way, with my own efforts. I am currently doing my dream job in my own workplace, I'm teaching. **(OMUFG2)**

After 3 years I was appointed, even though I had to complete a different department; Late but good, I succeeded in the exam. If I hadn't, I wouldn't be here right now... I am thankful for what I'm now. **(OMUFG3)**

It led me towards different fields. After a certain age, you start worrying about your future... **OMÜY2**

I like to research and study. I told myself that I should be an academician, when I was in scientific research methods class in my second year. It was not my priority to succeed in PPEE and be appointed. I chose to make an effort for my dreams. (AUFG4)

It did not cause any changes in my plans. Because I had already known that being appointed was hard for this department. However, now and then, I have had a single idea I believe in. I can succeed in this exam and I can be appointed. For this, I'll do more than my best and continue to study to be appointed. (AUNG3)

Suggestions regarding the exam

The participants were asked "How should the most successful candidates be selected to be appointed to a limited number of vacancies?" to present their suggestions regarding the exam. Distribution of participants' suggestions regarding the exam is indicated in Table 8.



Figure 6. Participants' Suggestions Regarding the Exam

Table 8. Distribution of Participants' Suggestions Regarding the Exam

	AU FG1	AU FG2	AU FG3	AU FG4	AÜ NG1	AU NG2	AU NG3	AU NG4	OMU FG1	OMU FG2	OMU FG3	OMU NG1	OMU NG2	OMU NG3	OMU NG4
Academic standings of the candidates should be considered as criteria					1		1		1	1					
Branch-Specific Exam should be more functional.									1						
There should be interviews but preferential treatment should be avoided.												1			
There shouldn't be an interview, PPEE is enough for election.													1		
The teacher candidates should be examined psychologically.			1	1											
There should be a new exam that could measure the competence and qualifications on teaching.				1											
I believe our suggestions would be ignored.		1													
Teacher candidates should be elected during the university admissions.										1					
Elections should not be based only on cognitive but also affective skills.			1	1		1	1								
The examinations should consist of only Educational Sciences Exam and Branch-Specific Exam.	1														
The differences between universities and lecturers should be taken into consideration.				1											
There is no need for a new system as teacher candidates succeeding in existing ones are successful.													1		1

As seen in Table 8, the suggestions are concentrated on that the academic standings of the candidates should be a criteria and elections should not be based only on cognitive but also affective skills. The most prominent of the suggestions by the candidates on the exam are as follows:

I would be talking in vain! Unfortunately; we have nobody to respond to or consider our suggestions. Because I do believe that the system will neither be changed nor be improved. I answered your questions in the sincerest way. Despite everything; I congratulate you for doing such a precious research. (AUF2)

First of all, when admitting students in the faculties of education, there should be a realistic threshold score based on the exam score and the candidates passing the threshold must be psychologically examined. Psychologically sound candidates should be interviewed by a reliable jury of specialists, and the interviews should be recorded. Interviews, on the other hand, should be conducted at least twice, at different times by different juries. As Mustafa Kemal Atatürk said, "Our most important and valuable task is the national education. It is absolutely necessary to be victorious in national education affairs. This is the only real salvation for a nation." Candidates who would do this properly should not be wasted by an examination such as PPEE, they shouldn't be disappointed with the constant changes in the system, and the path to be followed should be

determined from the very beginning. Otherwise, only the “teachers” who have achieved exam and interview scores will touch the brain of a student. Education does not just relate to “brain” but also to “love, value, and naturalization”. **(AUF3)**

... I think that teacher candidates should be appointed with exams that can measure their personality and competencies, not scores or points. **(AUF4)**

I think whether or not a person really wants to do this profession should be a criterion. Being a teacher to earn money may comfort you today in all senses, but the inefficiency in your profession will lead to incompetent, unconscious and unqualified generations of tomorrow, who will be unaware of the value of their country. **(AUNG3)**

Communication skills, personality and habits of and values possessed by the individuals to become teachers should be taken into account as a factor, they should be subjected to various psychological tests. **(AUF4)**

Firstly, the faculties of education should admit students as many as needed those with competence of teaching. For this, there should be exams to measure competence of teaching in faculties of education, as such exists for the departments such as music, physical education, etc. **(AUF4)**

It must be a system of oral, written and applied exam. This system should be commenced at the faculties of education. More precisely, in university admissions, the competence of the candidates should be measured, and they should be interviewed briefly on the basis of their Undergraduate Placement Exam (LYS) scores. Then, during the university years, the candidates should be prepared for teaching in an applied manner... They should also be offered with elective courses on the fields such as health, technology, science, music, sports and foreign language to extend such are available in the university. Teacher candidates should develop themselves in every aspect... **AÜY4**

First of all, the academic fields should be determined and the fields that can serve for public and private sector needs should be initiated, and the fields that have excessive number of graduates should have an admission limit. Finally, there should be more attention paid to the teaching experience practices in the final year, and this experience should constitute an evaluation criterion as to whether the student could be a teacher or not. The academic standing during the 4-year education should also be considered as an evaluation criterion. The currently applicable interview procedure should also be implemented, but in more fair manner that is grounded on competence. **(OMUFG2)**

In other words, there should be just process where all scores from teaching experience, academic standing, branch-specific examinations and interview are averaged. And in order to be able to implement such an approach, I think that the state should establish a separate unit and supervise the recruitments in all ministries and organizations on the basis of justice and competence. This supervision must be totally free of preferential treatment, and only those who deserve should be able to profess... **OMÜE2**

I think this selection procedure should be administered prior to studying and completing the four-year education. Either students should be admitted according to some criteria or the admissions should be based on the needs. I think it is wrong trying to select teachers after allocating quotas in excessive numbers for teacher training departments and granting everyone a diploma. Their efforts, money and time are wasted. If the state could raise teachers as needed and as qualified teachers in the first place, there wouldn't be a need for such a selection... **OMÜE3**

I am in favour of the interview procedure. But I think the contents of the interview questions should be rearranged. And the preferential treatment should be avoided. Otherwise, unqualified people will continue to destroy our future. (OMUNG1)

Conclusion and Recommendations

CONCLUSION

Analysis of findings show that a great majority of the prospective social sciences teachers, who attended PPEE but could not be appointed, expressed that have preferred the profession of teaching willingly.

The research concludes that according to the candidates the PPEE is a physically and psychologically exhausting process, and PPEE and the possibility of not being appointed causes stress and anxiety. This finding is consistent with that of Doğan Altun, Avcı et.al. (2017), Arı and Yılmaz (2015), Atav and Sönmez (2013), Çimen and Yılmaz (2011), Karaca (2011), Güven and Dak (2017), Yılmaz and Altun Yalçın et.al. (2017), Kuran (2012), Karaca (2011), Çimen and Turan (2008) and Özsarı (2008). Trauma caused by the concerns of exam and unemployment may even drive the candidates to suicide. The findings of similar researches are consistent with these findings. (Eraslan (2005), Sevindik and Gürol (2009), Baysan (2011), Güven and Dak (2017). Majority of the teacher candidates stated that PPEE is the most prominent obstacle between them and their future; preparing for PPEE has a negative impact on their economic conditions and involvement in social life. These results are in support of the findings of Çimen and Turan (2008) and Odabaş, (2010:103).

In the theme where the concerns of the participants were analysed, it has been found that all participants have concerns, however, of different causes. A considerable majority of the participants stated that their concerns surfaced while they were waiting for their scores. The second most prominent factor in the distribution of opinions on concerns, was found out to be the concern of excitement during the exam due to exam stress.

This research, distinct from the similar ones, aims at revealing the differences between the points of view of former and new graduates.

It has been also found that there are disagreements between the newly graduated candidates and earlier graduates at some points. The newly graduated students claimed that they failed because they were in their final years, they did not have enough time to prepare for the exam, and they could not prepare for the exam

properly, while the earlier graduates claimed that they failed although they studied sufficiently and on a strict schedule, due to the system itself.

New graduates have been found to preserve their hopes and to have lower levels of anxiety, even though they failed in their first time in the exam. It is noteworthy that the former graduates started to lose their hopes on the exam and the levels of anxiety have risen considerably. Former graduates also stated that they were subjected to intense family and social pressure because they could not succeed. These results are consistent with that of Ceyhan (2005), and Doğan and Çoban (2009).

As a result of the research, former graduates expressed that all their future plans have changed because they could not succeed in PEE whereas new graduates have stated that their future plans have not changed but they just have to study harder.

Analysis of the opinions of the participants on the preparation for PEE revealed that the measurement criteria are insufficient in general, questions are not quality enough, they do not distinguish who is competent and who is not, and the educational sciences exam is poor in measuring teaching skills. These findings are consistent with that of Çimen and Yılmaz (2011), Şimşek and Akgün (2014). In this research, only one of the teacher candidates stated that PEE quality enough to measure teaching skills. This finding is consistent with that of Gündoğdu, Çimen and Turan (2008), Demir, Bütüner (2014), and Şahin and Arcagök (2010), where very few number of participants were in the opinion that the exam is quality enough to measure teaching skills. In a study conducted by the Union of United Educators (EBSAM), (2011), a significant majority of teacher candidates stated that the PEE should test their branch-specific skills.

The teacher candidates were found have expressed that the exam took them away from their social life and caused economic problems. Findings by Gündoğdu, Çimen and Turan (2008), and Semerci and Özer (2005) are similar to these findings.

A vast majority of participants pointed out that they are against the interview procedure, which has been implemented since 2016, and that such procedures are prone to preferential treatment.

The opinions of participants on how the appointments should be administered, concentrates on the following:

Admissions to teacher training programs in the universities should be grounded on the needs and prerequisite criteria,

There shouldn't be an interview;

Academic standings of the candidates should be considered as criteria;

Elections should not be based only on cognitive but also affective skills;

The teacher candidates should be examined psychologically;

Although the research is a narrow one conducted on 15 participants, the findings indicate that in teacher appointments, PPEE is a stage that should be revised to better evaluate the proficiency of the teachers. It has been understood that affective skills should also be evaluated, in order to be in the profession.

Recommendations

In the light of findings of this research and the research conducted by Çimen and Yılmaz (2011), Demir, Bütüner (2014), Şimşek and Akgün (2014), Yılmaz and Altun Yalçın et.al. (2017), Turan and Zengin (2018) et.al. Regarding the same, it has been understood that PPEE should be revised in terms of the contents questions, the questions asked branch-specific exam and educational sciences exam should be more consistent.

Profession of teaching should not be sacrificed to the trial and mistake approach of the evolving politics, and any changes and innovations to be made in this field are to be carried out without destroying any fundamental criteria.

In order to improve the quality of education, it is considered appropriate to admit teacher candidates to the universities as needed. In addition, paid teaching should be abolished. Thus, only the prospective teachers, who have proven their competence and graduated from faculties of education may be appointed through selection exams and based on similar measurement criteria and serve in this profession. As such a practice would increase the number of teachers that are appointed, number of unemployed teachers who experience traumas because they could not be appointed.

There should be study to be conducted to establish a coordination and co-operation among the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Finance and the Faculties of Education, which are the keys to train and employ the teacher candidates, and the study should be implemented with different groups and different evaluation techniques.

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