



Research Journal of Education

ISSN(e): 2413-0540, ISSN(p): 2413-8886

Vol. 3, No. 8, pp: 75-80, 2017

URL: <http://arpgweb.com/?ic=journal&journal=15&info=aims>

Career Motivations of Turkish Prospective Teachers of English

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Abstract: This study aims at providing further insights into the factors influencing people's decisions to pursue teaching English as a career. The study attempts to give answers to the following questions: (1) What are the career motivations of 1st and 4th grade prospective English teachers? (2) Is there a difference between 1st and 4th grade prospective English teachers' career motivations? A total of 84 prospective English teachers (41 first grade and 43 fourth grade) participated in the study. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire designed to investigate career motivations of Turkish prospective English language teachers. For the data analysis, descriptive statistics in terms of mean and standard deviation were computed, and independent samples t-tests were conducted to find out whether the findings were statistically significantly different or not. The findings revealed that intrinsic and altruistic reasons were the most preferred ones by the student teachers. In contrast, extrinsic reasons were found to be the least influential factors behind the participants' decisions to become a teacher. The findings also showed that there is not a statistically significant difference between the grades in terms of career motivations. According to the results, further implications were suggested in the study.

Keywords: Career motivations; Intrinsic reasons; Altruistic reasons; Extrinsic reasons; Prospective English teachers.

1. Introduction

Teacher beliefs and teacher perceptions related to teaching career have been widely emphasized in research on teacher education over the past two decades (Hung, 2011). However, what motivations and background experiences teachers bring to the teaching career has recently attracted more attention (Sali, 2013). In last years, there has been a vast amount of research both internationally and nationally investigating the factors motivating people to take on a teaching career (Low *et al.*, 2011).

In the Turkish setting research on teacher career motivations have also considerably gained momentum in recent years. A number of studies have been carried out to identify the attractions of Turkish student teachers' career choice from specific teaching programs such as pre-school, elementary school, mathematics and biology teaching departments (Aksu *et al.*, 2010; Kabadayi, 2008; Kılnc and Mahiroğlu, 2009; Özsoy *et al.*, 2010; Saban, 2003). Although there is a growing research on teacher motivation in the field of general education in Turkey, there seems to be few studies that have investigated the motivations to become a teacher of English (Sali, 2013; Subasi, 2009). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the prospective English teachers' motivations for career choice in Turkish context and it attempts to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the career motivations of first year and fourth year prospective English language teachers in Turkey?; (2) Is there a difference between first year and fourth year prospective English language teachers' career motivations?

2. Background to the Study

2.1. Motivation for Choosing Teaching as a Career

Motivation is an inner drive that pushes individuals to do something. It is also an important factor for the satisfaction people get from activities they engage in. In relation to teaching and teacher education, motivation may, therefore, determine for what reasons individuals are choosing teaching as a career and how long they remain in the initial teaching education program (Sinclair, 2008). Studying the motives behind what attracts individuals to teaching may be worthwhile since it "has implications for teacher education planning and curriculum design, teacher recruitment authorities, and government and intergovernmental planning and policy decisions." (Watt and Richardson, 2007).

The motives regarding the choice of teaching as a career are various. Studies on teacher motivation have mainly indicated three basic sources of motivations: altruistic reasons, intrinsic reasons, and extrinsic reasons (Watt and Richardson, 2008). Altruistic reasons are generally described in relation to a desire to work with children, and a desire to help society improve; intrinsic reasons indicate an instinctive passion about teaching and a desire for

personal growth; and extrinsic reasons refer to job related aspects such as job security, social status or economic benefits (Watt and Richardson, 2008).

Reasons for choosing teaching as a profession have also been investigated from particular theoretical perspectives. A number of studies have examined the theories of motivation by identifying the basis in the career selection process. Drawing upon Self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000), Spittle, Jackson and Casey (2009) found the sources of motivation for becoming a physical education teacher include intrinsic motivation (about the interpersonal service), extrinsic motivation (about sport and physical activity) and amotivation (teaching is perceived easy). In a series of studies, by using Expectancy-Value theory, (Richardson and Watt, 2005;2006) developed a 'Factors Influencing Teaching Choice' (FIT-Choice) scale. Their findings revealed a number of reasons for choosing teaching as a career: intrinsic career values, personal utility values (job security, job transferability, family concerns), social utility values (helping society improve), prior teaching and learning experience, perceptions of task demand and return, social influences and fallback career (undesired preference) (Richardson and Watt, 2006).

Apart from these conceptualizations, starting from 1950s, several theories of career choice have been provided (Topkaya and Uztosun, 2012). One of the earliest ones is Maslow (1954) needs theory. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954), a theory in psychology, proposed that most fundamental needs at the bottom must be satisfied before the needs at the top such as self-actualization, self-confidence, and self-esteem. In a sense, as individuals experience self-actualizing during career preparation so will they be more likely to get satisfaction from the career field which they had that experience (Subasi, 2009). In another theory, Super (1953) self-concept theory, it is suggested that the attitudes a person holds regarding his/her self have influence on his/her behaviors. Therefore, according to the theory, one's self-perception can play an important role in choosing a career. However, Holland (1959) described Super's self-concept theory (1953) as not enough and asserted that career decision also depends on occupational knowledge other than one's self-knowledge. In addition to these, as a different perspective on career choice, Bandura (1986) proposed self-efficacy theory. According to that theory, individuals' perceptions of their own abilities to achieve a task have an influence on their motivation (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2006). According to Bandura (1986), there is a positive relationship between individuals' performances and their perceived self-efficacy levels: if a person performs better, his/her belief in his/her self-efficacy increases, or vice versa. In this regard, the individuals' perceptions of their ability impacts their interest expressed in a given occupation, and thus plays a determinative role in choosing a career.

2.2. Research on Reasons for Choosing the Teaching Profession

Studies regarding what attracts individuals to choose teaching as a career mainly adopted traditional classification of intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic attractors. Many studies have demonstrated that intrinsic and altruistic reasons frequently prevail but extrinsic reasons are also important attractors. For example, Watt and Richardson (2007) reveal altruistic reasons as the main sources of motivation. They carried out the study with pre-service teachers enrolled in three Australian universities and found three mostly rated motives as perceived teaching abilities, the intrinsic value of teaching, and the desire to make a social contribution. Hammond (2002) small-scale research can be reported as an example of a study where the results demonstrate intrinsic reasons as mostly referred. By focusing on trainee teachers of information and communication technology, Hammond (2002) found that trainees' past experiences of teaching as well as their interest mostly determined their career choice. In another study, (Feng, 2012) also reported intrinsic reasons as being of pivotal importance. However, in their comparative study of Norwegian and British pre-service teachers, Kyriacou *et al.* (1999) found that rather than intrinsic reasons, the participants preferred "enjoying teaching" and "enjoying working with children" as their initial career choice motivations. Similarly, Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) found "enjoying teaching" as the major reason for choosing teaching as a career.

In Turkey, Aksu *et al.* (2010) found that altruistic reasons are not as important as other types of reasons. Being one of the largest quantitative studies in Turkey, Aksu *et al.*'s study revealed that half of the participants reported teaching profession was their ultimate desire. However, almost one-third expressed that they chose teaching as fallback career due to their scores from the university entrance exam. Also, another group of participants reported more extrinsic reasons such as job opportunities and security, holidays, flexible hours, and the possibility of engaging in a secondary employment. Similarly, in a qualitative study, Boz and Boz (2008) reported that the participants were more influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic reasons than altruistic reasons; Ubuz and Sari (2008) found that their participants chose teaching as a career for mostly extrinsic reasons followed by intrinsic reasons; and Kılınç and Mahiroğlu (2009) found that no altruistic reasons were important and the top three attractors of teaching were indicating both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons such as enjoying working with children or having a light work load.

On the other hand, again in Turkey, Saban (2003) found that altruistic reasons as well as extrinsic reasons as primary motives in prospective elementary school teachers' career choice. Similarly, Özsoy *et al.* (2010) large scale study showed that majority of the participants voluntarily chose teaching and they wanted to contribute to the development of society and the education of others, which means they were mainly attracted by intrinsic and altruistic reasons. Finally, in their studies with prospective English language teachers, Subasi (2009) and Topkaya and Uztosun (2012) highlighted altruistic and intrinsic reasons as main reasons to become a teacher.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Instrument

The participants of this study were a group of students at the English Language Teacher Training Department of a public university in Turkey. A total of 84 prospective English language teachers (41 first year and 43 fourth year) took part in the study.

The data of the study were collected by means of a questionnaire designed by Subasi (2009) with the purpose of investigating Turkish pre-service teachers' reasons for becoming an English teacher. The questionnaire includes 85 items and the participants indicate how far they agree or disagree with each item on a scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Three main categories and twelve subcategories of the reasons in the questionnaire were as follows: Intrinsic Reasons (Interest, Talent, Satisfaction, Challenge-creativity, Lifelong learning); Altruistic Reasons (Children, Adolescents, Improving educational system, Betterment of society); Extrinsic Reasons (Income-security, Influence of others, Advantages). For seeing the internal reliability of the questionnaire for its administration for the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for all the items in the questionnaire and for main and sub-categories. Alpha coefficient for all the items in the questionnaire was found as .971; alpha coefficients for the main categories and sub-categories were all found to be over .82.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was administered during the participants' class hours and it took approximately 20 minutes to complete filling the questionnaire. For analyzing the data, first, descriptive statistics (mean scores and standard deviations) were computed, and then a series of independent samples t-tests were carried out in order to find out the differences between first year and fourth year participants of the study.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents mean scores and standard deviations related to three main categories and sub-categories in the questionnaire. The table shows that intrinsic and altruistic reasons were the most preferred ones by the participants. In contrast, extrinsic reasons were found to be the least influential factors behind the participants' decisions to become a teacher. When the mean scores related to each sub-category is examined it can be seen that 'talent' is the most effective intrinsic reason, followed by three other intrinsic reasons, 'challenge-creativity', 'lifelong learning', and 'interest'. On the other hand, the least influential reason for participants' career choice was 'income-security', followed by 'influence of others', both of which are sub-categories of extrinsic reasons.

Table-1. Mean Scores for Career Motivations

	M	SD
INTRINSIC REASONS	4,269	0,048
Interest	4,301	0,462
Talent	4,356	0,525
Satisfaction	4,062	0,589
Challenge-creativity	4,315	0,555
Lifelong learning	4,312	0,566
ALTRUISTIC REASONS	4,149	0,056
Children	3,976	0,659
Adolescents	4,069	0,591
Improving educational system	4,284	0,557
Betterment of society	4,266	0,565
EXTRINSIC REASONS	4,030	0,048
Advantages	4,288	0,481
Influence of others	3,913	0,564
Income-Security	3,888	0,564

Table 2 presents mean scores and standard deviations of first year and fourth year participants related to three main categories and sub-categories in the questionnaire.

Table-2. Mean Scores for Career Motivations According to Years

	First Year		Fourth Year	
	M	SD	M	SD
INTRINSIC REASONS	4,220	0,538	4,316	0,329
Interest	4,326	0,546	4,277	0,370
Talent	4,402	0,591	4,321	0,456
Satisfaction	3,972	0,707	4,143	0,441
Challenge-creativity	4,182	0,663	4,441	0,396
Lifelong learning	4,213	0,663	4,407	0,481
ALTRUISTIC REASONS	4,054	0,632	4,238	0,362
Children	3,887	0,779	4,060	0,515
Adolescents	3,951	0,705	4,181	0,438
Improving educational system	4,190	0,621	4,374	0,479
Betterment of society	4,190	0,698	4,338	0,395
EXTRINSIC REASONS	3,954	0,472	4,102	0,410
Advantages	4,243	0,526	4,331	0,436
Influence of others	3,829	0,618	3,994	0,576
Income-Security	3,791	0,592	3,981	0,527

Although Table 2 shows that fourth year participants' mean scores in all the main categories are slightly higher than those of the first year participants, independent-samples t-tests conducted to see whether this difference is significant or not indicated that the differences are not significant. In other words, the results produced statistically non-significant difference between first and fourth year participants with respect to intrinsic reasons ($t(65,70) = -987$, $p = .327$), altruistic reasons ($t(63,13) = -1,625$, $p = .109$), and extrinsic reasons ($t(79,21) = -1,52$, $p = .131$).

When the mean scores of first and fourth year participants are compared according to sub-categories of intrinsic reasons, it is seen that the first year participants scored higher in the 'interest', 'talent', and 'lifelong learning' categories, and the fourth year participants scored higher in the 'satisfaction' and 'challenge-creativity' categories. However, results of the independent-samples t-tests indicated a statistically significant difference only for the 'challenge-creativity' category ($t(64,71) = -2,157$, $p < .05$). With regard to the sub-categories of altruistic reasons, the results indicated that fourth year participants' mean scores are higher than the mean scores of first year students; however, results of the independent samples t-tests showed that the differences are not significant. For extrinsic reasons, the results revealed that fourth year participants have higher mean scores in all the sub-categories but, again, these differences are not statistically significant.

The findings of this study revealed that intrinsic and altruistic motives were very influential reasons behind student teachers' career choice, and extrinsic reasons were found to be a little bit less effective. These findings are in line with the findings of Topkaya and Uztosun (2012), Subası (2009), Ozsoy *et al.* (2010), Gürbüz and Sülün (2004), and Saban (2003) who also indicated that intrinsic reasons as well as altruistic reasons were the major motives for entrant teachers. The findings of this study also support Kyriacou and Koberi (1998) and Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) studies which found that the participants' decisions to become a teacher had been strongly influenced by the intrinsic and altruistic factors such as 'enjoying teaching profession', 'enjoying working with children' and 'a desire to contribute to society'. The results of this study also corroborate Watt and Richardson (2007) who reported the same motives as being the most important ones for student teachers' career choices.

The findings of the present study also show that the top four motives influencing Turkish prospective English teachers' decisions to pursue teaching as a career are 'talent', 'interest', 'challenge-creativity' and 'lifelong learning'. These results indicate that Turkish prospective English teachers place a high value on being talented in learning English as a foreign language and studying English as a subject matter for the professional goals at most. They also consider teaching as a challenging profession that requires using their creativity. These findings are particularly consistent with Subası (2009), who found 'talent', 'interest', and 'challenge-creativity' as the most effective factors behind Turkish prospective English teachers' career choice.

In addition, the results of the study indicated that, the most effective sub-categories of the altruistic motive factor were 'improving education system' and 'betterment of society'. These results are in line with the findings of Subası (2009), Gürbüz and Sülün (2004), and Saban (2003), who also mentioned their participants' desire to serve for their society.

Finally, in this study, the least influential reason for student teachers' career choice was found to be extrinsic reasons. This means that the participants placed less value on material rewards of the profession such as job security or financial income as compared to others reasons for choosing the profession. These findings corroborate the findings of Subası (2009), but they don't support the findings of Ubuz and Sarı (2008), Boz and Boz (2008), and Kılınç and Mahiroğlu (2009).

5. Conclusion

One of the conclusions of this study is that Turkish prospective English language teachers mostly have intrinsic and altruistic reasons for their career choice, and extrinsic reasons follow the other two categories. In addition,

'talent' is a very effective intrinsic motive factor for them, which indicates that they put high value on being talented in learning English as a foreign language. Also, the findings indicated that 'challenge-creativity', 'lifelong learning', and 'interest' are important reasons for choosing the profession of teaching English as a foreign language. However, the least influential reasons for participants' career choice are 'income-security' and 'influence of others'. Another conclusion of this study is that there is not a statistically significant difference between first year and fourth year Turkish prospective English language teachers in terms of their reasons for choosing teaching English as a profession.

All in all, the influences of career choice on individuals are a lifelong one and an undesired choice may negatively affect academic success during education. The findings of the present study revealed that Turkish prospective English language teachers are mostly intrinsically motivated and they do not choose this profession as a fallback career. This is important for the education of future generations due to the fact that intrinsic motivation is mostly characterized by the beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of student teachers. Providing insights into these affective domains should be given importance. It should also be kept in mind that maintaining intrinsic motivation is required for the further stages in the career. Therefore, measures should be taken to sustain a long-term maintenance for intrinsic motivation.

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