



To Be or? Career Intentions of Prospective Teachers From Different Universities

Olmak Ya Da? Farklı Üniversitelerden Öğretmen Adaylarının Kariyer Eğilimleri

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Öz

Bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının kariyer eğilimlerini ortam (üniversite ve sosyal çevre) ve alternatif kariyer seçimleri ile bağlantılı olarak incelemektedir. Katılımcılar Marmara bölgesindeki dört ayrı üniversiteden 223 son sınıf öğretmen adayından oluşmaktadır. Kariyer eğilimleri ile ilgili maddeler ve alternatif kariyerler ile ilgili açık uçlu bir sorudan oluşan bir anketi yanıtlamışlardır. Veriler betimleyici ve yordayıcı istatistik ile analiz edilmiştir. Üniversite değişkeni ile kariyer eğilimleri ve kariyer değiştirenlerin alternatif kariyer seçimleri arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. İlaveten, sosyal çevre ve üniversitenin özellikleri belirtilen alternatif kariyerler ile ilişkilidir.

Abstract

This study investigates the career intentions of prospective English teachers in relation with context (university and social environment) and alternative career choices. The participants were 223 senior year pre-service teachers from four universities located in Marmara Region in Turkey. They answered a questionnaire including items about career intentions and an open-ended question about alternative careers. Data were analyzed through descriptive and interpretive statistics. A significant relationship is found between career intentions, alternative career choices for career changers and university variable. In addition, the social environment and the university characteristics are related to the stated alternative careers.

Anahtar Kelimeler

kariyer eğilimleri
üniversite
alternatif kariyerler
İngilizce öğretmen adayları

Keywords

career intentions
university
alternative careers
prospective English teachers

1. Introduction

Teacher candidates are multi-motivated to teach after graduation (Sinclair, 2008) and there is no single reason for choosing teaching. As teachers' initial motivation to choose teaching is influential on teacher engagement and quality of teaching, abundant studies have been conducted on pre-service teacher's entrance motivation to the teacher education programs (Alexander, Chanks and Cox, 1994; Bastick, 1999; Brookhart and Freeman, 1992; Heinz, 2015; Kyricaou and Coulthard, 2000; OECD, 2005; Richardson and Watt, 2005; Watt et al., 2012; Woolfolk-Hoy, 2008). A cross-cultural perspective has been developed to identify emerging similarities and differences in teacher entrance motivation in different contexts (Heinz, 2015; Watt et al., 2012). Although entrance motivations of teacher candidates have been the topic of attention for a long period, career intentions of teacher candidates which refer to their motivation to choose or quit teaching after graduating from the training programs is a recent research matter (Amani, 2013; Bruinsma and Jansen, 2010; DeAngelis, Wall & Che, 2013; Roness, 2011; Rots and Aelterman, 2007, 2008, 2009; Rots et al., 2010; Watts and Richardson, 2008).

Prospective teachers' career intention has been investigated mostly to see the future career plans of candidate teachers and to understand the influential factors on their stated intentions (Aksu et al., 2010; Amani, 2013; Bruinsma and Jansen, 2010; DeAngelis, Wall & Che, 2013; Rots and Aelterman, 2007; 2008; 2009; Rots, Kelchtermans & Aelterman, 2012). Additionally, the predictive value in predefined career intentions for actual future practices is questioned in the literature (Rots et al., 2010). Rots et al. (2010), elaborating on a series of previous research about teacher career intention (Rots and Aelterman, 2007; 2008; 2009), conducted a path analysis to construct a comprehensive model to explain the factors related to career intentions of pre-service teachers and the predictive value in the stated career intention. Four categories of variables are found to be related; 1) initial motivation for teaching and teaching commitment, 2) integration into teaching variables (teaching efficacy, professional orientation, and learner-oriented beliefs), 3) teacher education variables (faculty support, mentor support and teacher education preparation), and 4) employment opportunities (*negatively related*). The logistic regression analysis indicated that pre-service teachers' career intention before graduation is a robust predictor for their actual performance after graduation. The influence of the second and the third variables mentioned by Rots et al. (2010) is confirmed in other studies as well (Bruinsma and Jansen, 2010; DeAngelis, Wall & Che, 2013).

Amani (2013) reports that career intentions are affected by significant others, like family members, friends and lecturers, and their occupational knowledge. However, in Rots et al. (2010) significant others are claimed to be ineffective on teacher career intentions. This difference might be explained with a cross-cultural outlook which proposes that people in some societies are more concerned about others' decisions than the others and this situation can be explained with cultural difference in those societies. Finally, job security and the governmental loans are the other significant factors that are claimed to affect pre-service teachers' decision to stay in teaching profession.

In a large-scale study conducted by Aksu et al. (2010) in Turkey, it is found out that most of the candidate teachers want to continue teaching after graduation. Examining the tendencies of student teachers from different subject areas (N= 18226; 7.8% majoring in teaching English) studying in 51 different universities, it is reported that 87.1% of the prospective teachers are planning to teach after graduation while 9.7% would prefer another career and only 3.2% is not planning to pursue teaching at all.

Where the teachers get teacher training has an impact on their career plans. The quality of pre-service education offered in different programs is claimed to be effective on teacher efficacy and plans about their plans to stay in teaching (Darlin-Hammond et al, 2002). Based on the results of a longitudinal study, Roberts, Harlin and Briers (2009) claim that rather than student teaching experiences, the university is a strong predictor for future career intentions. Wang and Fwu (2002) state that high prestige of teaching career in Taiwan positively affects the career intentions of potential teachers from prestigious universities.

Previous studies on the issue elucidate that career intentions have investigated the issue from different perspectives such as career entrance motivation, integration into teaching variables, teacher education variables, employment opportunities in alternative careers, significant others and the prestige of university. However, the relationship between context (university characteristics and social environment) and alternative career options that inspire prospective teachers to change their future career plans from teaching to another career path has not been studied yet. In our study, the context of training refers to the university characteristics and the social environment of cities in which the universities are located. Considering the gap in the literature on teacher career intentions and based on the data from different universities, the present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between career intentions of prospective teachers and their universities?
2. What are the alternative job opportunities that motivate teacher candidates to choose another career?
3. Is there a significant relationship between alternative careers plans and the context (university characteristics and social environment)?

2. Method

Design

This survey study with quantitative nature is designed to unearth the relationship between variables. The qualitative data about the alternative career options were thematically coded and transformed into categories to be used in quantitative analysis.

Participants

Prospective English teachers (N=223) enrolled in 4 universities located in the Marmara region of Turkey (Boğaziçi University, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Trakya University and Uludağ University) answered the questionnaire for a large-scale study on prospective English teachers' career plans. This large scope research was focusing on 13 universities located in different regions of Turkey (Author, 2014). The results of this earlier research implied that there is a difference between those universities in terms of candidate English teachers' career intentions. The current study, focusing on one region and closely examining the alternative job opportunities suggested by participants, aims to make further elaboration on the first results obtained in the aforementioned large-scale study. Participation in the study was on voluntary basis and the procedure was completed in line with the research ethics. All the participants were senior year students and when the data were collected they were in the last two months of their final semester in the teacher education program. Being close to graduation, they were concerned about their future plans in teaching career. In Table 1, it is seen that the female participants (f=170) outnumber the males (f=53), which is parallel with the case frequently observed in ELT departments in Turkey. The age of the participants ranges between 20 and 31 with a mean of 22.

Table 1. Gender distribution of participants

		University				Total
		Boğaziçi Univ.	Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Univ.	Trakya Univ.	Uludağ Univ.	
Gender	Female	39	23	45	63	170
	Male	10	8	22	13	53
Total		49	31	67	76	223

Although the selected universities are located in the same region, their academic and contextual characteristics differ from each other. Boğaziçi University is an international high-ranking (URAP, 2011), prestigious English medium university located in Istanbul, the most populated metropolis in Turkey. The entrance point of the ELT department for this university is the highest of the country (OSYM, 2016). The social-life, historical places and industry in Istanbul make it a city of attraction for many people.

Uludağ University is located in Bursa which is a city very close to Istanbul. Like Istanbul, Bursa is a metropolis with its industrialized, socially active and historically rich background. The required entrance point for the ELT department in Uludağ University is high (OSYM, 2016).

Compared to Boğaziçi and Uludağ, Trakya and Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Universities are located in smaller cities, Edirne and Çanakkale respectively. Although these two locations are historically important cities in Turkey, they are small and less industrialized compared to Istanbul and Bursa. Trakya and Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Universities, compared with Boğaziçi and Uludağ Universities, are accepting students with lower entrance points (OSYM, 2016). Investigating data from universities with different characteristics and social environments allowed the researchers to interpret the career intentions of the participants with a deeper perspective.

Instruments and Data Collection Procedure

The data for the large-scale study (Author, 2014) were collected through a questionnaire which consists of three major titles as demographic information, professional preferences and English teaching career plans. Within the frame of this article, items for demographic information and career intention (under the title of career preferences) are taken into consideration. Demographic information includes age, university and gender. Career intentions are questioned

through three options a) don't want to be an English teacher, b) changing career after a period of time, c) want to teach English whole career life. In the analysis options "a" and "b" were merged under the title of "leaving teaching career" as the current research is focusing on the alternative job opportunities for not continuing in teaching career rather than the different timing of leaving teaching. Option "c" in the questionnaire is represented under the title of "continuing teaching". In the questionnaire the participants were required to choose one of the three options and explain their alternative career plans.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used for demographic data analysis. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between university and career intentions of participants. Excluding the missing values ($f=10$), 213 questionnaire responses were taken into analysis. Open ended responses of participants who plan to change career were thematically coded in order to figure out the alternative careers that they aim to choose. As the assumption for Chi-square test was not met in the analysis and it was found out that more than 20% of the contingency cells having expected values < 5 , the relationship between university and the emerging codes were tested by using Fisher's Exact Test.

3. Results

The Relationship Between Career Intentions and University

Descriptive statistics indicate that the majority of the participants plan to continue English teaching career after graduation ($f=136$), while the number of participants who plan to leave teaching is 77. Chi-square statistics were run to test the relationship between career intentions and the university variables. The results are presented in Table 2. The relationship between the two variables was found to be significant, $\chi^2(3) = 22.304$, $p < .000$. Interpreting the percentages, it is seen that participants from Boğaziçi University has the highest percentage for leaving career, and the participants who plan to leave teaching ($f=30$; 62.5%) are more than the ones who plan to continue ($f=18$; 37.5%). On the contrary, in other universities the percentage for continuing teaching is higher than the percentage for leaving career and they can be listed as Trakya University, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University and Uludağ University, from the highest to the least respectively. Majority of participants from Trakya University plan to teach after graduation ($f=49$; 80.3%) and the portion of the participants planning to leave teaching career is 19.7% ($f=12$). A similar case is observed in Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. The number of participants who plan to change career ($f=9$; 29%) is lower than the ones who plan to choose teaching English as a life career ($f=22$; 71%). Finally, while 26 (35.6%) participants plan to change career after graduation, 47 of them (64.4%) want to pursue teaching English in Uludağ University.

Table 2. The relationship between career intentions and university

		Career Intention		Total	
		Leaving Teaching Career	Continuing Teaching		
University	F	30	18	48	
	Boğaziçi Univ.	Expected Count	17.4	30.6	48.0
		% within University	62.5%	37.5%	100.0%
	f	9	22	31	
	Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Univ.	Expected Count	11.2	19.8	31.0
		% within University	29.0%	71.0%	100.0%
	f	12	49	61	
	Trakya Univ.	Expected Count	22.1	38.9	61.0
		% within University	19.7%	80.3%	100.0%
	f	26	47	73	
	Uludağ Univ.	Expected Count	26.4	46.6	73.0
		% within University	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%
Total	f	77	136	213	
	Expected Count	77.0	213.0		
	% within University	36.2%	100.0%		

$\chi^2: 22.304$ $df: 3$ $p: .000$

The Relationship Between Alternative Careers and University

The suggested alternative career plans of participants who stated that they plan to change career ($f=77$) were thematically coded and listed under emerging categories. Three major categories appeared after the analysis, i.e., No Specific Answer, Private Sector (tourism and commerce) and Academician. In order to test the relationship between alternative careers and the university variables a chi-square test was conducted however it was found out that more than 20% of the contingency cells had expected values < 5 . Therefore, Fisher's Exact Test was used to examine this relationship. The details of the results are presented in Table 3. A statistically significant relation between the variables was assured (Fisher's Exact Test=12.531; $p=.040$).

Table 3. The relationship between alternative careers and university

		AlternativeCareer			Total	
		No Specific Answer	PrivateSector: Tourism and Commerce	Academician		
University	Trakya Univ.	f	5	4	3	12
		ExpectedCount	4.4	5.0	2.6	12.0
		% within University	41.7%	33.3%	25.0%	100.0%
	Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Univ.	f	6	3	0	9
		ExpectedCount	3.3	3.7	2.0	9.0
		% within University	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
	Boğaziçi Univ.	f	6	12	12	30
		ExpectedCount	10.9	12.5	6.6	30.0
		% within University	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	Uludağ Univ.	f	11	13	2	26
		ExpectedCount	9.5	10.8	5.7	26.0
		% within University	42.3%	50.0%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	f	28	32	17	77	
ExpectedCount		28.0	32.0	17.0	77.0	
% within University		36.4%	41.6%	22.1%	100.0%	

Fisher's Exact Test: 13.844 p: .023

The results indicated that 36.4% ($f=28$) of the total participants ($f=77$) did not mention any alternative career. When the participant percentages for each university are taken into consideration, it is seen that the least percentage for "no specific answer" is from Boğaziçi University ($f=6$; 20%). In other universities the percentage of participants with no specific answer is relatively higher, i.e., Trakya University ($f=5$; 41.7%), ÇanakkaleOnsekiz Mart University ($f=6$; 66.7%) and Uludağ University ($f=11$; 42.3%). The highest frequency and percentage concerning private sector as an alternative career is seen in Uludağ University ($f=13$; 50%). Likewise, participants from Boğaziçi University also have very high frequency and percentage ($f=12$; 40%). However, although the percentage seems relatively high as a result of total participant number, the frequencies show that few participants from ÇanakkaleOnsekiz Mart University ($f=3$; 33.3%) and Trakya University ($f=4$; 33.3%) prefer working in private sector. Finally, the percentages indicate that the highest tendency to become an academician is observed in Boğaziçi University ($f=12$; 40%). The frequency and percentage for being an academician as an alternative career is low in Trakya ($f=3$; 25%) and Uludağ Universities ($f=2$; 7.7%). Specifically, there is no participant from ÇanakkaleOnsekiz Mart University who claimed to become an academician ($f=0$; 0%).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Despite the ample amount of research on pre-service teachers' motivation to become a teacher, there is scarcity of studies on their future career intentions. Understanding prospective teachers' career intentions and examining the potential factors which are relevant to these intentions are very important for motivating high quality pre-service teachers for teaching. This study aims to expand the literature on pre-service teachers' career intentions by investigating the topic in relation with context and potential alternative careers. Therefore, the data were collected from senior-year prospective English teachers enrolled in different universities and the alternative career opportunities that captivate these teachers were scrutinized.

Parallel with the previous studies a majority of the pre-service teachers plan to continue teaching English after graduation (Amani, 2013; Aksu et al., 2010). The results illustrated that 136 student teachers out of 213 consider teaching as a

whole life career. On the other hand, it is found out that the frequency of participants who plan to choose another career is 77, which is a substantial portion of the total population (36.2 %). Subject specific opportunities of English teachers might be a plausible explanation for their tendency to leave teaching profession. English, widely accepted as the lingua franca of our time, provides prestige and alternative job opportunities to people in Turkey (Doğançay-Aktuna and Kızıltepe, 2005). The variety and number of alternative careers for prospective English teachers increase with their English proficiency. Eventually, pre-service English teachers become more prone to change their future career from teaching to another. In other words, parallel with the results by Rots et.al. (2010) employment opportunities in other fields have a negative relationship with pre-service teachers' intention to stay in teaching.

The relationship between university and career intention is highlighted in previous research (Roberts, Harlin & Briers, 2009; Wang and Fwu, 2002). Especially, Wang and Fwu (2002) report that after graduation prospective teachers in prestigious universities tempt to pursue teaching, which is a respected profession in Taiwan. The interpretive statistics in our study makes it observable that graduates of Boğaziçi University, the most prestigious and the highest-ranking university in this study, have the highest tendency to give up teaching. In other words, the relationship between university prestige, respect to teaching profession in the country and prospective teachers' tendency to pursue teaching is confirmed in the present study. It can be claimed that as the prestige of teaching in Turkey has been decreasing (Eskicumalı, 2002), motivations of prospective teachers from prestigious universities to choose teaching as a life-long career is also diminishing.

Another interesting finding of the present study is the relationship between social environment and potential alternative career options influencing future teachers' career plans. Teacher candidates from Boğaziçi University indicated an apparent tendency to become an academician. Boğaziçi University is a very academically oriented university which has a distinct international reputation. The marked academic orientation of the university is supposed to have an effect on the career intentions of the prospective teachers and make them more motivated to become researchers. In addition, the results indicated that student teachers studying at universities located in industrialized cities (Istanbul and Bursa) are more likely to consider working in private sector as an alternative career than the ones from less industrialized cities (Çanakkale and Edirne). As Bursa and Istanbul are cities with various job opportunities in private sector, the candidate teachers might be more aware of alternative careers in which they could take the advantage of English. Commerce and tourism in particular appear to be very suitable career paths for prospective English teachers who can use their language capital in those alternative careers.

5. Suggestions

Focusing on university characteristics and the social environment in the cities in which the candidates live during the training years, it was aimed to unearth the role of context in prospective teachers' career intentions. Since the career intentions of prospective English teachers might be affected by context specific variables, we suggest developing strategies tailored for each context in order to increase prospective teachers' career engagement and willingness to choose teaching as whole life career. The results of our research can be enriched through further studies from different contexts. Moreover, collecting data from different subject areas other than English will show the effect of major on career intentions and alternative career options and therefore provide a more comprehensive outlook for the issue under discussion. Finally, longitudinal studies would show us the predictive value in the stated career plans of pre-service teachers.

6. Reference

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