Abstract

Extended prior experience causes student teachers to develop personal beliefs and knowledge about teaching. Through their teacher education, they are enculturated into the profession. This process may sometimes create a tension between “old” and “new” schemes due to different factors such as prior experience and predispositions about teaching. For a better understanding of their professional and personal formation as teachers investigating pre-service teachers’ biographical background experiences and the aspects of teaching they find important is essential. This study aims at exploring positive and negative influences of pre-service teachers’ previous experiences, the aspects of teaching they find the most and least appealing and their expectations from the teacher education program. The study is qualitative in nature. Data was collected from a total of twenty six senior pre-service teachers enrolled in English Language Teaching Program at a state university in Turkey through semi-structured interviews and written comments. Qualitative content analysis was adopted to analyze the responses. While the pre-service teachers reported to be positively influenced by the teachers with pedagogical content knowledge, they are negatively influenced by the teachers who lack content and pedagogical knowledge. Among the motivating aspects of teaching, intrinsic career value, personal utility value and social utility value were the most frequently mentioned motivating aspects. Their concerns were related to task perception, most of which were connected to task demand issues. The most frequently mentioned expectation was the improvement in pedagogical knowledge.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd.
Peer-review under responsibility of Hacettepe Üniversitesi.

Keywords: concern; expectation; EPOSTL; motivation; teacher education;
1. Introduction

Learning to become a teacher is a long-distance run all along which student teachers gain necessary knowledge and skills. Diffusion of educational theories does not ensure student teachers' internalization of knowledge and learning (Korthagen, 2010). Many student teachers enroll into their programs with already existing beliefs, dispositions and attitudes resulting from their extended prior experiences as students. During teacher training, in addition to gaining competences, they are enculturated into teaching profession (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). However, this process does not always proceed smoothly. Sometimes the enculturation creates a tension between “old” and “new” schemes due to a variety of factors that play role in professional and personal formation as a teacher such as previous experiences (Flores & Day, 2006) and emotions (van Veen & Sleegers, 2006; Zembylas, 2003).

In order to enhance teacher education programs, obtaining a more comprehensive picture of this enculturation process is needed. To have a full picture, we need to understand pre-service teachers’ previous experiences, their motivations to become a teacher and their expectations from teacher education. For the present study, the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) is used as a reference. The EPOSTL is a viable tool documenting pre-service teachers’ didactic knowledge and skills necessary to teach languages which enables them to monitor their progress (Newby, 2012). Taking the EPOSTL as a framework, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the positive and negative influences of previous language learning experiences?
2. What are the most and least appealing aspects of teaching as perceived by pre-service teachers?
3. What are their expectations from their education program?

1.1. Pre-service teachers’ previous experiences

Student teachers do not start their initial teacher education without having their own judgements (Furlong, 2013). Their previous experiences as students shape their beliefs. Despite bringing no teaching experience to their initial teacher education programs, they all possess valuable experiences as learners. Observations of their teachers over years and their educational biographies as students have an impact on the formation of student teachers’ identities and attitudes which successively affect their beliefs and practices (Beauchamp, & Thomas, 2009; Calderhead & Robson 1991; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds 1991). Once students start in teacher education programs, they filter new theories on the basis of their pre-formed conceptions (Eick & Reed, 2002). Therefore, investigating previous learning experiences that contribute to their professional development and the extent to which they are combined through their underlying conceptualizations and experiences is essential for teacher development.

1.2. Motivations, concerns and expectations of pre-service teachers

For a young adult choosing the right career is one of the most important decisions to make. Sinclair, Dowson, and McInerney (2006) suggest that when students with the “right” incentives enroll in teacher education programs, they will not only be more willingly engaged in their pre-service education, but also be more actively involved in teaching during their professional lives. There are a number of studies that have explored pre-service teachers’ motivations for choosing to become teachers. The most widely articulated motives are grouped into a three-category distinction as: intrinsic motives, extrinsic motives and altruistic motives (Bastick, 2000). According to a substantial amount of research, student teachers choose teaching career because of intrinsic reasons, such as personal fulfillment and personal development; extrinsic reasons, such as job security, salary, and life-fit working conditions; and altruistic reasons, such as making a difference in the society and an interest in teaching the subject matter (Bastick 2000; Richardson & Watt 2005; Rinke 2008, Sinclair, 2008).

Besides motivations, research has also shown that pre-service and beginning teachers have different concerns regarding their future careers. In his review, Veenman (1984) summarizes the most frequently reported problems for beginning teachers as classroom discipline, motivating students, addressing individual differences, evaluating student work, relationships with parents, classroom management and insufficiency of school supplies. Research on pre-service
teachers’ concerns is relatively few in number. The most commonly reported concern of student teachers is teaching anxiety. According to previous research this teaching anxiety usually causes classroom ineffectiveness that would result in lower student performance and discipline problems (Murray-Harvey, Silins & Saebel, 1999; Payne & Manning, 1990). Understanding pre-service teachers’ concerns will allow teacher educators to be cognizant of these discouraging factors and develop instructional strategies that will contribute to diminishing their concerns and enable them to cope with such challenges (Stripling, Ricketts, Roberts, & Harlin, 2008).

Unlike motivations and concerns, studies investigating pre-service teachers’ expectations from their programs are scarce in number. Chuene, Lubben and Newson (1999) found a close relation between teaching career choice reasons and expectations from teacher education programs. Özgün–Koca and Şen (2006) examined pre-service teachers’ perceived changes in their beliefs and expectations about the teaching profession at the end of their four-year program in Turkish context. They reported that student teachers acknowledged the importance of pedagogical knowledge after student teaching.

2. The study

2.1. Participants

In the study the participants were full-time undergraduates of ELT (English Language Teaching) program at a Turkish state university. The data was collected during 2014-2015 academic year. The total cohort of the study was 26 pre-service senior ELT students (8 male, 18 female), aged between 21 and 22.

2.2. Data collection and analysis

The data was collected from a total of twenty six senior student teachers enrolled in ELT Program at a state university in Turkey through semi-structured interviews and student teachers’ written comments. Open ended questions were used to gather their insights. For the formation of open-ended questions, the guiding questions that appear in the Personal Statement section of the EPOSTL were adapted. Qualitative content analysis was adopted to analyze the responses. While coding the responses given to the open-ended question asking the most and least appealing aspects of teaching, theoretical model developed by Richardson and Watt (2006) was taken as a framework. To examine motivations for the choice of a teaching career, the model uses a three-way classificatory division: intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivations.

2.3. Findings and discussion

2.3.1. Pre-service teachers’ previous experiences

This initial question invited participants to describe one or more previous language learning experiences that influenced their language learning process both positively and negatively. This question enabled us to gain insights into teacher behaviors and skills they consider important in teaching.

As displayed in Table 1, in responding to the query, four main themes emerged:

- Prior influences (PInf),
- Initial teacher training (ITcT),
- Professional teacher traits (ProfTcT),
- Personal teacher traits (PerTcT).

By looking at the total frequencies of the coded responses, more than half of the responders mentioned either their prior teachers such as primary school and high school teachers or their micro-peer teaching experiences as positively influencing their learning (total f=6 and 8, respectively). In the prior influence category, previous teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge was the most frequently mentioned quality (f=4). In the initial teacher training category, however, they mentioned the positive influence of micro-peer teaching experiences rather than content,
pedagogical or pedagogical content knowledge (f=5). Some of our participants, instead of giving explicit references from their prior experiences, responded this query by referring either to professional or personal teacher traits. With regards to positive influence, they mentioned pedagogical and content knowledge, reporting the former more frequently than the later (f=5 and 2, respectively). They also mentioned that they were positively influenced by innovative, patient and responsive teachers.

As for the previous experiences which negatively affected their learning, our participants referred to professional and personal teacher traits (total f=13 and 8, respectively). In the professional teacher traits category content knowledge atrophy was more frequently mentioned than pedagogical knowledge (f=8 and 5, respectively). Additionally, in the personal teacher traits category authoritarian and dissuading teachers were more frequently mentioned teacher traits (f=3 and 2, respectively). These findings indicated that while teachers who were able to relate their pedagogical knowledge to their subject matter knowledge influenced learners positively, teachers who lacked content and pedagogical knowledge influenced learners negatively. This negative influence is seemed to be doubled with the negative personal traits such as aggressiveness and irresponsiveness.

Table 1. Pre-service teachers’ background experiences

| Theme       | Positive               | F | Negative                          | F |
|-------------|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| PInf        | Content Knowledge      | 1 | Pedagogical Content Knowledge     | 1 |
|             | Pedagogical Knowledge  | 1 |                                   |   |
|             | Pedagogical Content Knowledge | 4 | Pedagogical Content Knowledge     | 1 |
| ITcT        | Micro-teaching         | 5 | Pedagogical Content Knowledge     | 2 |
|             | Collaborative learning | 3 | Content Knowledge -atrophy        | 1 |
| ProfTcT     | Content Knowledge      | 2 | Content Knowledge                 | 8 |
|             | Pedagogical Knowledge  | 5 | Pedagogical Knowledge             | 5 |
|             | Innovative             | 1 | Authoritarian                     | 3 |
|             | Patient                | 1 | Dissuading                        | 2 |
| PerTcT      | Responsive             | 1 | Irresponsible                     | 1 |
|             |                        |   | Reluctant                         | 1 |
|             |                        |   | Aggressive                        | 1 |
| Total       |                        | 24|                                   | 25|

PInf: Prior influences; ITcT: Initial teacher training; ProfTcT: Professional teacher trait; PerTcT: Personal teacher trait

2.3.2. Motivations, concerns and expectations of pre-service teachers

The open-ended questions asking for the most and least appealing aspects of teaching profession, and their expectations from their teacher education program drew the following extensive list of attributes presented in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively. Among the motivating aspects of teaching, intrinsic career value, personal utility value and social utility value were the most frequently mentioned motivating aspects of teaching (total f=8, 7, 7, respectively). A majority of participants indicated love of working with children, job security and social contribution as the most appealing aspects of teaching profession (f=4, 3, 7, respectively). In the task perception category social status, salary and teaching as an innovative profession were mentioned as the most appealing aspects of teaching (f=3, 3, 2, respectively). With respect to motivations, our findings are in line with the previous research conducted in different contexts. For instance, in Australian context Manuel and Hughes (2006) found that personal aspirations to work with young people; to maintain a meaningful engagement with the subject area they were drawn to; and to attain personal fulfilment and meaning are the main reasons of teaching career choice. In the English context, Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) reported social contribution and job mobility as the main factors influencing career choice decisions of pre-
Recent studies exploring Turkish pre-service teachers’ motivations for teaching have also reported intrinsic career value, social contribution and perceived personal suitability as major reasons for choosing teaching as a career (Öztürk-Akar, 2012; Ok & Önkol, 2007).

As for the concerns of pre-service teachers, the most frequently mentioned concerns were related to task perception, most of which were connected to task demand issues such as classroom management, teacher morale, school system and parental involvement (f=6, 5, 5, 3, respectively). In the task return category salary, appointment criteria, vicious cycle and low social status were mentioned as main concerns (f=4, 3, 3, 2, respectively). Similar results have been reported in previous studies. In their cross-cultural study investigating pre-service teachers’ efficacy beliefs and concerns in Malaysia, England and New Zealand, Berg and Smith (2014) reported parents, classroom management, status of teachers, and policy among the main concerns about teaching. Similarly, Baum and McMurray-Schwartz (2004) found that the quality of teacher-family relationships, the role of parents in education, and meeting children's needs are the main concerns of the pre-service teachers.

| Theme                  | Motivations                  | F | Concerns                     | F |
|------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|
| Task Perception        |                              |   |                              |   |
| Task demand            | classroom management         | 6 | teacher morale               | 5 |
|                        | teacher morale               | 5 | school system                | 5 |
|                        | parental involvement         | 3 |                              |   |
| Task return            | social status                | 3 | salary                       | 4 |
|                        | salary                       | 3 | appointment criteria         | 3 |
|                        | innovative                   | 2 | vicious cycle                | 3 |
|                        | social status                | 2 |                              |   |
| Self-Perception        | knowledge transfer           | 1 |                              |   |
| Value                  |                              |   |                              |   |
| Intrinsic career value | love of children             | 4 | female job                   | 2 |
|                        | character                    | 1 |                              |   |
|                        | love of English              | 1 |                              |   |
| Personal utility value | job security                 | 3 | no chance of update          | 4 |
|                        | working conditions           | 2 |                              |   |
|                        | holidays                     | 2 |                              |   |
| Social utility value   | social contribution          | 7 |                              |   |

When the results of motivations and concerns are compared, we observed that the motivations are clustered in value category whereas concerns are clustered in task perception category. This observed pattern indicated that although our participants attached a high value to their profession, they perceived teaching as an extremely demanding task with low-return. Similar observations were noted by other researchers as well. Watt and Richardson (2006, 2008) and Aksu et.al, (2010) reported that teaching was perceived as a career high in demand and low in payment.
Table 3. Expectations from teacher education

| Theme                      | $F$ |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Professional development   |     |
| Knowledge & skills         |     |
| Pedagogical Knowledge      | 14  |
| Content Knowledge          | 8   |
| Pedagogical Content Knowledge | 4  |
| Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge | 1 |
| Task                       |     |
| Early practice             | 6   |
| Personal development       |     |
| Self-perception            |     |
| to be an innovative teacher| 1   |
| to feel motivated          | 2   |
| Value                      |     |
| to be respected            | 3   |

Pre-service teachers’ responses to the question asking their expectations from their teacher training program were grouped under two main categories: professional and personal development. Table 3 displays a summary of what pre-service teachers expected from their teacher education program. Looking at Table 3, the most frequently mentioned expectations from teacher education program were improvement in pedagogical and content knowledge ($f=14$ and $8$, respectively). Though less frequently indicated, they also expected improvement in pedagogical content knowledge ($f=4$). Only one pre-service teacher expressed her expectation regarding technological pedagogical content knowledge. Six respondents focused on the importance of practices in real classroom settings and mentioned their wish to be given the opportunity of earlier teaching practices. Along with the professional development expectations, some of our participants stated expectations with respect to personal development ($f=6$).

3. Conclusion

In this study we investigated pre-service language teachers’ previous language learning experiences having an impact on their learning, as well as motivations, concern and expectations from their teacher education programs. With regards to the background experiences, we found that our pre-service teachers were positively influenced either by their primary and high school teachers or by their micro-peer teaching tasks that form a crucial part of their enculturation into teaching profession. As for the negative influences they mentioned the lack of content and pedagogical knowledge and criticized teachers who were not competent in both subject-matter and pedagogy. In addition, they asserted that while innovative, patient and responsive teachers have a positive impact, aggressive and indifferent teachers create a negative impact on their learning.

Participants’ responses to the query asking the most appealing aspects of teaching profession were mostly accumulated in values category. Values included intrinsic career values (including love of working with children, job appropriate to female/character and love of subject matter), personal utility values (including job security, working conditions and holidays) and social utility values (the desire to make a social contribution). Although our participants declared that they were intrinsically motivated by teaching profession, they were not free of concerns. The most frequently mentioned concerns were related to task perception, most of which were connected to task demand issues such as classroom management, teacher morale, school system and parental involvement. This profile of motivations and concerns indicate that our pre-service teachers perceived teaching as a career that is highly demanding with low returns, especially in terms of salary, social status and vicious career cycle. This finding calls for scrutinizing the current recruitment and promotion policies. According to the current policy of the Turkish Ministry of National Education, teacher candidates are obliged to pass a test in order to be recruited. This test creates tension and anxiety both in the senior year student teachers and the graduates due to the low recruitment rates. Hence, senior year students, instead of focusing on their practicum experiences, spend most of their times to get ready for the test. For practicing teachers, different professional development opportunities should be created and teachers who are willing to develop
themselves should be promoted. We argue that such amendments will not only prevent practicing teachers to reach a plateau in their career, but also help to attract young enthusiastic adults to the profession.

Pre-service language teachers’ prominent expectation from their teacher education program was improvement in pedagogical knowledge. We believe that this expectation is aligned with their classroom management concerns. This expectation together with their desire to have earlier practice opportunities suggest that in order to retain their expectations, we, as teacher educators, must continue to seek new systems and opportunities enabling longer practice in real classroom settings. However, for designing such new practice opportunities we need a benchmarking system. As suggested by Çakır and Balçıkani (2012), the EPOSTL can serve as a benchmarking tool for language teacher education programs nationwide.

We recognize that a limitation of our study is that it was conducted with a small sample, and that our results will not be generalized across other settings. Our findings invite re-examination of previous experiences, motivations, concerns and expectations of pre-service teachers with different participants in different settings.

References

Aksu, M., Engin-Demir, C., Daloglu, A., Yildirim, S., & Kiraz, E. (2010). Who are the future teachers in Turkey? Characteristics of entering student teachers. International Journal of Educational Development, 30(1), 91-101.

Bastick, T. (2000). Why teacher trainees choose the teaching profession: Comparing trainees in metropolitan and developing countries. International Review of Education, 46(3-4), 343–49.

Baum, A. C., & McMurray-Schwarz, P. (2004). Preservice teachers' beliefs about family involvement: implications for teacher education. Early Childhood Education Journal, 32(1), 57-61.

Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009) Understanding teacher identity: an overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. Cambridge Journal of Education, 39(2), 175-189.

Berg, D. A. G. & Smith, L. F. (2014). Pre-service teachers' efficacy beliefs and concerns in Malaysia, England and New Zealand. Issues in Educational Research, 24(1), 21-40.

Calderhead, J., & Robson, M. (1991). Images of teaching: Student teachers’ early conceptions of classroom practice. Teaching and Teacher Education, 7(1), 1–8.

Chaene, K., Lubben, F., & Newson, G. (1999) The views of pre-service and novice teachers on mathematics teaching in South Africa related to their educational experience. Educational Research, 41(1), 23-34.

Çakır, A., & Balçıkani, C. (2012). The use of the EPOSTL to foster teacher autonomy: ELT student teachers’ and teacher trainers’ views. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 37(3), 1-16.

Eick, C., & Reed, C. (2001). What makes and inquiry-oriented science teacher? the influence of learning histories on student teacher role identity and practice. Science Teacher Education, 86(3), 401–416.

Flores, M. A. (2001). Person and context in becoming a new teacher. Journal of Education for Teaching, 27(2), 135–148.

Flores, M.A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers’ identities: A multi-perspective study. Teaching and Teacher Education, 22(2), 219–232.

Furlong, C. (2013). The teacher I wish to be: exploring the influence of life histories on student teacher idealised identities. European Journal of Teacher Education, 36(1), 68-83.

Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (2005). How teachers learn and develop. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do (pp. 358–389). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Knowles, J.G., & Holt-Reynolds, D. (1991). Shaping pedagogies through personal histories in preservice teacher education. Teachers College Record, 93(1), 87–113.

Korthagen, F. A. (2010). Situated learning theory and the pedagogy of teacher education: Towards an integrative view of teacher behavior and teacher learning. Teaching and Teacher Education, 26(1), 98-106.

Kyrliacou, C., & Coulthard, M. (2000). Undergraduates’ views of teaching as a career choice, Journal of Education for Teaching: International research and pedagogy, 26(2), 117-126.

Manuel, J., & Hughes, J. (2006) ‘It has always been my dream’: exploring pre-service teachers motivations for choosing to teach. Teacher Development: An international journal of teachers' professional development, 10(01), 5-24.

Murray-Harvey, R., Silins, H., & Saebel, J. (1999). A cross-cultural comparison of student concerns in the teaching practicum. Teaching and Teacher Education, 15, 261-267.
Richardson, P. W., & Watt, H. M. G. (2006). Who chooses teaching and why? Profiling characteristics and motivations across three Australian universities. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 34*(1), 27-56.

Rinke, C. 2008. Understanding teachers’ careers: Linking professional life to professional path. *Educational Research Reviews, 3*, 1–13.

Sinclair, C. (2008). Initial and changing student teacher motivation and commitment to teaching. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(2), 79-104.

Sinclair, C., Dowson, M., & McInerney, D.M. (2006). Motivations to teach: Psychometric perspectives across the first semester of teacher education. *Teachers College Record, 108*, 1132–54.

Stripling, Ricketts, Roberts, & Harlin, 2008

van Veen, K., & Sleegers, P. (2006). How does it feel? Teachers’ emotions in a context of change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 38*(1), 85–111.

Veenman, S. (1984). Perceived problems of beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research, 54*(2), 143-178.

Zembylas, M. (2003). Caring for teacher emotion: Reflections on teacher self development. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 22*, 103–125.