

ERPA 2014

## Pre-service elementary teachers' motivations to become a teacher and its relationship with teaching self-efficacy

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### Abstract

This study investigated 341 pre-service elementary teachers' motives to become a teacher using Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) theory as a basis. It then investigated how these motivations change as candidates follow their training and these motivations' relationship with teaching self-efficacy. The results suggests that Altruistic motives (make social contribution, shape future of children and enhance social equity) were the most influential followed by prior teaching and learning experiences, work with children/adolescents, and job security. Intrinsic motives (perceived teaching ability and intrinsic career value) came next. ANOVA results suggest that the motivations for choosing this profession remain stable between Freshman, Sophomore and Junior candidates. Teaching self-efficacy was positively related to intrinsic motives and negatively related to "fallback career" motives of elementary teacher candidates. Implications of the results are further discussed.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the ERPA Congress 2014.

*Keywords:* pre-service teachers; elementary education; motivation to become a teacher; self-efficacy.

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### 1. Introduction

It is a well-known notion that teachers can and do make a difference by shaping the lives of children and their orientation to learning. It also has been acknowledged by Governments around the world that quality teachers and teaching play a central role in development and maintenance of an intelligent, informant citizenry (MCEETYA, 1999). In this manner, teachers can be seen as architects building the future of a society through effecting new generations. Although teaching would therefore regarded as to be a socially valued occupation, Australia, the US,

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the UK and a number of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries including Turkey are currently facing the problems of teacher attrition or insufficient recruitment of qualified teachers or maintaining effective teachers (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006; OECD, 2004). According to OECD (2009) results many different Governments and employing authorities are experiencing a difficulty to sustain a suitably high-quality teaching force resulting in the issue of teachers' motivations, aspirations, and early career development to be the focus of fast-growing research area in recent years (Watt & Richardson 2008).

Within last decade, a number of studies have been reported the reasons why people choose the teaching profession. Much of the urge for the research on this topic has come from a concern that in many countries not enough people are deciding this profession and retention from this job, yielding a shortage of quality teachers. Contrary to many countries, Turkey has an oversupply of teacher creating a competition for available teaching positions both in Government and private sector. Due to this reason, retention seems less of concern neither aging of teaching workforce because 25.6% of the population is under the age of 14 providing younger workforce compared to many countries (Turkish Statistics Institution, 2009). However, these advantages don't guarantee quality teachers unless beliefs and motivations of pre-service teachers are noticed. Unfortunately, teacher educators, policy-makers, and employing authorities have for too long overlooked the values, beliefs and motivations of those entering teacher education programs and insufficiently explored how they shape beginning teachers' aspirations for professional engagement and the trajectory of their career development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In this perspective, it can be argued that pre-service teachers' perceptions impact their professional engagement, development and quality of their work.

### *1.1. Motivation to become a teacher*

Motivation has been viewed as a main factor that starts, shapes, and sustains behaviors of human being (Locke & Latham, 2004). Latham and Pinder (2005) define work motivation as "a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration" (p. 486). Reasonably, career decision process is complex due to existing of various motivations that affect an individual's actions. It can be argued that individuals' abilities, interests, values, options, advice and opinions of family and friends can all play a role, in some degree, in orienting young people toward certain profession. So, it is reasonable to state that teaching career choice might be affected by these factors.

In the past, research on the motivation for becoming a teacher has focused on motives that concern pre-service teachers' values and interest in teaching profession (Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2011). Along with these values, it is also significant to examine individuals' expectancies and affect regarding the profession. Grounded in Expectancy-Value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), which argues that individuals' choices and behaviors are shaped by their expectancies and their values, Factors Influencing Teaching Choice was developed by Watt and Richardson (2007) to provide a comprehensive and coherent framework to guide systematic investigation into the motives of teachers when they decide to become a teacher (Figure 1).

The model puts together themes from the teacher education literature that has been identified with teaching career choice and the ability-related beliefs regarding career choice literature. The framework conceptualizes both the altruistic-type motivations that have been highlighted in the teacher education literature (Moran, Kilpatrick, Abbott, Dallatt, & McClune, 2001) along with personally utilitarian motivations and intrinsic motivations, together with ability-related beliefs that are considered the central point of career choice literature (Lent, Lopez, & Bieschke, 1993). The framework also considers the effect of demand and reward aspects of the teaching profession on individuals' perceptions and career satisfaction and commitment to the profession. In brief, the model comprises of five higher order constructs: socialization influences, perceptions of the task, perceptions of the self, values related to teaching and the teaching career as a fallback career.

There has been limited number of studies examined motivation to become a teacher. Watt and Richardson (2008) focused on different aspects of the FIT-Choice model including perceptions, profiles, and aspirations concerning teaching as a career for beginning teachers. Their ongoing longitudinal study with 510 Australian pre-service teachers revealed three types of beginning teachers; "highly engaged persisters", "highly engaged switchers", and "lower engaged desisters". Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus (2011), using FIT-Choice model, have recently examined 136 Dutch pre-service teachers motivation to become a teacher, their effort to plan in this profession and

their involvement and commitment in the profession. They distinguished adaptive (motives that are positively related to effort, involvement and commitment) and maladaptive (motives that are negatively related to these constructs) motives for becoming a teacher.

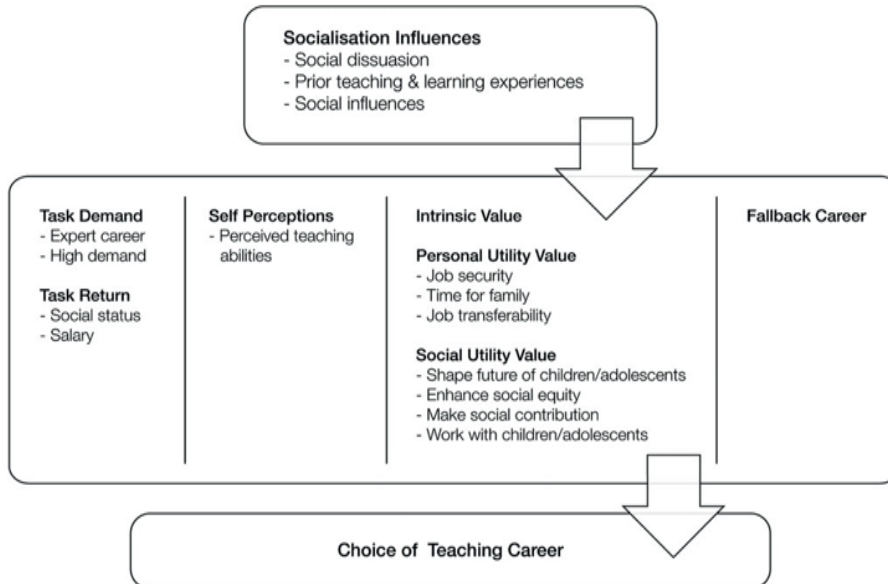


Fig. 1. The factors influencing teaching choice (FIT-Choice) theoretical model, adapted from Watt et al, (2012)

Another study, done by Kılınç, Watt, and Richardson (2012), portrays motivations and perceptions of 1577 first year pre-service Turkish teachers. They found that altruistic ‘social utility values’ were the most influential, followed by the desire for a secure job. Intrinsic value and perceived teaching abilities came next for teacher candidates in Turkey. They attributed these findings to the economic situation and role of teaching profession in Turkey. Jugović, Marušić, Ivanec, and Vidović, (2012) studied a sample of 374 first year pre-service Croatia teachers’ motivations to become a teacher and their relation between personality traits. Two interpersonal dimensions namely extraversion and agreeableness emerged as significant predictors of intrinsic career value and satisfaction with the choice of the teaching profession

Although these results suggest that the FIT-Choice model provides a theoretical and analytical framework to help investigations in teacher education area, not enough studies conducted to conceptualize teachers’ motivations regarding their profession.

### 1.2. Teaching self-efficacy

Self-efficacy defined as “People’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated type of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p.391). In line with this perception, teachers’ self-efficacy pertains to their beliefs or judgments regarding the desired learning outcomes even when pupils are difficult or unmotivated (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). So, as Bandura (1993) points out, self-efficacy plays a key role in motivational processes. Self-efficacy might also be related to career choice since it can be considered as a motivational process. In addition to structural and social weights on career choices, self-efficacy is an important mediator of these external influences and has a direct relation on career choice (Betz & Hackett, 1981). Even though pre-service teachers’ teaching self-efficacy has been studied, how their teaching self-efficacy is related to their motivation to become a teacher remains unclear due to lack of studies in this area.

### 1.3. Purpose of the study

Studies using Fit-Choice model have begun to be conducted in different countries within different contexts. In Turkey, Kılınç, Watt, and Richardson(2012) applied this scale to wide range of teaching levels and majors. Unfortunately it is difficult to have a clue about teachers' motivations and perceptions regarding specific grade level such as elementary or secondary. In fact, majors also should be examined differently in order to investigate specific problems pertaining to specific majors. The motivation to become a teacher literature lacks investigations focused only on elementary pre-service as well as examining the pre-service teachers' motivation across grade level. Studying the motivations to become a teacher only for elementary level is important because it differs from secondary education in many ways. This study attempted to fill the gap in this area through investigating elementary pre-service teachers' motivations and their related teaching self-efficacy. Additionally the study examines the teachers' motivations across grade level to have a clue about trend in motivation toward teaching in elementary level. Research questions formulated as follow.

- RQ1: What are the pre-service elementary teachers' motivations to become a teacher?
- RQ2: What are the motivations of pre-service elementary teachers across grade level?
- RQ3: Is there a relationship between pre-service elementary teachers' motivations to become a teacher and their teaching self-efficacy? If yes, how are they related?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and procedure

Participants of the study were 341 Freshman, Sophomore and Junior pre-service elementary teachers, including Science Teacher (n=100), Math Teacher (n=108), Classroom Teacher (n=76), and Social Science Teacher (n=61). Of these teachers, 94(27.6%) were male, and 247(72.4%) were female. The average age of the teacher trainees was 20.26 years ( $SD = 1.4$ ) and the time in traineeship ranged from 1 to 3 years ( $M = 1.83$ ,  $SD = .782$ ).

The study conducted at Erciyes University in Kayseri at the end of Spring 2013 academic year. The participants of the study reached through instructors of Education Department in this University. Permission to conduct the study was taken from these lecturers. Questionnaires were administered in classroom settings by the author of the study. The physical appearance of the researcher was significant because as soon as the participants finished the survey the researcher collected them without revealing the data to the lecturer of the course. This is important because the content of the study is about why pre-service teachers chose this profession. If the lecturer were to collect the questionnaires than the participants would feel uncomfortable that may lead them to hide the actual motivation they have. With this process the researcher aimed to lessen the possible effect of the participants' lecturers on themselves. Before administering the study the researcher emphasized that the participation was voluntary, and guaranteed that personal information they would provide be treated confidentially and that all data would be used solely for research purposes. The administration of the questionnaires took approximately 20 minutes in each classroom. In total, 398 pre-service teachers' were asked to participate in the study. 355 of the candidates accepted to participate (89, 2% response rate). Of these responses 14 (3, 9%) cases excluded from the analysis due to missing data. 341 participants constitute our sample.

### 2.2. Measuring instruments

#### 2.2.1. Factors influencing teaching choice

Participants' motivations for becoming a teacher were assessed through validated Turkish version of the FIT-Choice (Watt & Richardson, 2007) scale adapted by Kılınç et al. (2012). The scale consists of 48 items measuring 12 motivations and 6 perceptions toward teaching profession. All the items had the same prefacing statement ('I chose to become a teacher because . . .'). An item example is "I have the qualities of a good teacher". Participants' responses on 7-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The internal consistency (Cranbach's alpha) of this scale was  $\alpha = .85$

### 2.2.2. Self-efficacy for teaching

An adapted version of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale; Long Form (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy 2001) was used to assess pre-service elementary teachers' self-efficacy for teaching. Turkish version of the scale was adapted and validated by Çapa,Çakıroğlu and Sarıkaya,(2005). The scale including 24 items is designed to assess wide range of capabilities (Efficacy Student Engagement - Efficacy for Instructional Strategies - and Efficacy for Classroom Management-) that teachers consider important in good teaching. It consists of items such as 'I can teach in different ways in my classes' or 'I can handle disturbing behavior'. Participants rated their agreement on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*insufficient*) to 9 (*very sufficient*). The internal consistency (*Cronbach's alpha*) of this scale was  $\alpha = .95$ .

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Pre-service elementary teachers' motivations to become a teacher (RQ1)

Highest rated motivations of pre-service elementary teachers for choosing this profession included make social contribution, shape future of children and enhance social equity (see Table 1) followed by prior teaching and learning experiences, work with children/adolescents, and job security. The lowest rated motivation was choosing teaching as a "fallback" career, followed by social influences of others recommending them to choose teaching as a career.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and factor Pearson correlations.

	Mean	St.Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Ability	5.15	1.28												
2. Intrinsic Career Value	5.13	1.64	.35**											
3. Fallback Career	3.51	1.77	-.26**	-.58**										
4. Job Security	5.40	1.69	.09	.24**	-.06									
5. Time for Family	5.39	1.54	.10	.05	.11	.42**								
6. Job Transferability	4.22	1.91	.11*	.00	.07	.19**	.20**							
7. Shape Future of Children	6.32	1.11	.12*	.28**	-.08	.32**	.30**	.17**						
8. Enhance Social Equity	6.15	1.05	.16**	.34**	-.11*	.38**	.30**	.22**	.72**					
9. Make Social Contribution	6.35	1.13	.22**	.35**	-.15**	.31**	.25**	.13*	.66**	.69**				
10. Work with Children/Adolescents	5.53	1.55	.25**	.57**	-.35**	.21**	.10	.07	.43**	.50**	.49**			
11. Prior teaching experiences	5.58	1.68	.09	.32**	-.12*	.11*	.17**	.16**	.26**	.33**	.29**	.35**		
12. Social influences	4.89	1.59	.23**	.43**	-.27**	.23**	.09	.14**	.17**	.25**	.19**	.39**	.21**	

Notes N= 341. \*\*. Correlation is significant at  $p < .01$ . \*. Correlation is significant at  $p < .05$

*Perceptions about the profession.* Although participants, in general, perceived teaching as an expert (in terms of requiring high levels of specialized and technical knowledge) and highly demanding (in terms of heavy workload, high emotional demand and requiring hard work) they also think that this profession has a low social status and low income (in terms of salary) (see table 2).

*Satisfaction with choice.* Even though social dissuasion they experienced is not relatively strong (around the scale midpoint), in line with their perception, elementary pre-service teachers are not generally satisfied with their choice of this profession scoring around the scale midpoint (see Table 2).

Table 2. Perceptions about the profession

	Mean	St. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Expert Career	5.58	1.36	-					
2. High Demand	5.56	1.44	.33**					
3. Social Status	3.97	1.57	.22**	-.01				
4. Salary	3.23	1.72	.06	-.09	.34**			
5. Social Dissuasion	4.74	1.74	.05	.11*	.08	.02		
6. Satisfaction with Choice	4.75	1.61	.24**	.19**	.31**	.36**	-.12*	-

Notes N= 341. \*\*. Correlation is significant at  $p < .01$ . \*. Correlation is significant at  $p < .05$ .

### 3.2. Motivations across grade level(RQ2)

A one-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the effect of grade level on pre-service elementary teachers' motivations to become a teacher. Subjects were divided into three groups according to their grade level (Group1: Freshman, Group2: Sophomore, Group3: Junior).

There was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level only in Ability scores for two grade levels:  $F(2, 338) = 3.72, p = .02$ . Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between groups was quite small. The effect size calculated, using eta squared, was .02. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Freshman ( $M=4.94, SD= 1.33$ ) was statistically significant from Sophomore ( $M=5.34, SD= 1.14$ ). For Sophomore pre-service teachers ability motivation was significantly higher than that of Freshman pre-service teachers. Junior group ( $M=5.23, SD= 1.12$ ) did not differ from either Freshman group or Sophomore group.

In terms of perceptions there was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level only in social dissuasion scores for three grade levels:  $F(2, 338) = 11.46, p = .000$ . The effect size calculated, using eta squared, was .06 indicating a medium effect size. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Freshman ( $M=5.25, SD= 1.57$ ) was statistically significant from Sophomore ( $M=4.52, SD= 1.72$ ) and from Junior ( $M=4.19, SD= 1.85$ ). Freshman pre-services experienced social dissuasion significantly higher than both Sophomores and Juniors. The Sophomore group did not differ from Junior group in terms of social dissuasion factor.

For the rest of motivation and perception subscales no statistically significant difference found between grade levels indicating that, in general, pre-service elementary teachers' motivations remain stable across grade level.

### 3.3. Motivation to become a teacher and self-efficacy(RQ3)

Correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between pre-service teachers' motivations to become a teacher and their teaching self-efficacy (see Table 3). Our sample reported a moderate level of teaching self-efficacy above the midpoint (4.5) with a mean of 5.45 ( $SD=1.12$ ). Statistically significant relationship between intrinsic motives (motivated by wanting to feel competent; ability, or to satisfy curiosity; intrinsic career value) and self-efficacy was found to be the highest between  $.33 < r > .45$  (medium correlation), following the statistically significant relationship between the Altruistic motives (Contribute something to society; Shape future of children, Enhance social security, and make social contribution) and self-efficacy between  $.22 < r > .30$  (between small and medium). Relationship between Extrinsic motives (motivated by external praise, external rewards or because it was prescribed by others; Job security, Time for family, Job transferability, and Social influences) and teaching self-efficacy of pre-service elementary teachers was either significant but small or insignificant (See Table 3).

Statistically significant negative small relationship,  $r = -.24, n=341, p < .01$ , was observed between choosing teaching as a fallback career and teaching self-efficacy. This indicates that those who chose teaching as last option reported lower self-efficacy than those who did not choose this profession as a fallback career.

A very small relationship noted between the perceptions of pre-service teachers and their self-efficacy except with the last one, satisfaction with choice. Medium relationship,  $r = .35$  (medium), detected between satisfaction with choice and self-efficacy indicating that those who satisfied with teaching also possess higher level of self-efficacy than those who are not satisfied with their choice.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and factor Pearson correlations

	Mean	St. Dev.	Self-efficacy
Self-efficacy	6.45	1.12	—
1. Ability	5.15	1.28	.44**
2. Intrinsic Career Value	5.13	1.64	.32**
3. Fallback Career	3.51	1.77	-.24**
4. Job Security	5.40	1.69	.05
5. Time for Family	5.39	1.54	.07
6. Job Transferability	4.22	1.91	.18**
7. Shape Future of Children	6.32	1.11	.23**
8. Enhance Social Equity	6.15	1.05	.28**
9. Make Social Contribution	6.35	1.13	.30**
10. Work with Children/ Adolescents	5.53	1.55	.29**
11. Prior teaching experiences	5.58	1.68	.13*
12. Social influences	4.89	1.59	.18**
13 Expert Career	5.58	1.36	.19**
14.High Demand	5.56	1.44	.13*
15. Social Status	3.97	1.57	.13*
16. Salary	3.23	1.72	.16**
17.Social Dissuasion	4.74	1.74	.03
18. Satisfaction with Choice	4.75	1.61	.35**

Notes N= 341. \*\*. Correlation is significant at  $p < .01$ . \*. Correlation is significant at  $p < .05$ .

#### 4. Discussions and conclusion

This study focused on three research questions. First, it investigated the motives of elementary pre-service teachers for choosing this profession. Altruistic motives (make social contribution, shape future of children and enhance social equity) were the most important motives driving pre-service elementary teachers for being a teacher followed by prior teaching and learning experiences, work with children/adolescents, and job security. Fallback career option seems to be the least effective motive for the pre-service teachers. Although these results (means of motivations) (Table 3) are in line with the previous study done by Kılınc et al. (2012) and Eren and Tezel (2010) in current study sample scored considerably higher on work with children/adolescents, shape future of children/adolescents and make social contribution scales. The difference might be attributed to the focus area of the current study and the previous studies. The present study addressed elementary preservice teachers' motivations whereas the previous studies has concentrated on pre-service teachers in general.

Considerably, these results contradict from other studies (Richardson & Watt, 2006) conducted outside Turkey in a way that teachers in our country are not intrinsically motivated as much as teachers from other countries (Australia, Europe, United States). The job market and sociocultural structure specific to Turkey along with educational structure may lead such results.

Secondly, the study investigated the pre-service elementary teachers' motivation across grade level. Although a small difference is found between the ability motivation scale of Freshman and Sophomores the results suggest that the pre-service teachers' motivation does not change during their training period. These results are in line with the previous study done by Canrinus and Fokkens-Bruinsma (2011). Given the reason that the pre-service teachers ability and intrinsic value subscale scores are not sufficient based on this study and the previous studies (Kılınc et al., 2012; Eren & Tezel, 2010) it is essential for educational institutions to understand pre-service teachers motivation and should find a way to foster their motivations regarding this profession. So, one of the determining factors might be the quality of teacher training program. Regarding the perceptions of the pre-service teachers the study found that the candidates are experiencing social dissuasion in considerable amount. The study revealed that freshman pre-services experienced discouragement from the society higher than Sophomores and Juniors. The difference between

freshmen( $M=4.94$ ) and juniors( $M=5.23$ ) was higher than the difference between freshman( $M=4.94$ ) and sophomores( $M=5.34$ ) indicating that the value of this profession is declining in the society.

Thirdly, the study examined the relationship between the pre-service teachers' motivation to become a teacher and their teaching self-efficacy. The study found that intrinsic motives (ability and intrinsic career value) of pre-service teachers are correlated with their teaching self-efficacy in a manner that candidates who have high intrinsic motives also possess high teaching self-efficacy. Extrinsic motives (Job security, Time for family, job transferability, and social influences), on the other hand, resulted either a small or insignificant relationship with self-efficacy. Fallback career motivation was negatively related to teaching self-efficacy. As Bandura (1997) states high self-efficacy leads individuals to engage in tasks that foster the development of skills and capabilities. So, teacher candidates who have high self-efficacy will engage in their profession in a better way to gain knowledge, skills, and competence in order to be successful in their profession. When their self-efficacy is low they probably will avoid engaging in new tasks that might help them learn new skills. The research found that student with high self-efficacy mastered various academic tasks better than did students with weaker self-efficacy (Shunk, 1982). It can be argued that intrinsically motivated student teachers tend to have high self-efficacy that results in success in their profession. In this manner, intrinsic motives play a crucial role to have a highly qualified teacher profile.

#### 4.1. Implications for educational policy and practice

The results of this study provide valuable background information for policy-makers, recruitment bodies, teacher education programs and teacher educators. Choosing teaching as a career is multidimensional and complex process. The motivations and perceptions we studied here are related not only to the candidates' psychological and personal characters but also connected to policy-makers, teacher education programs and the society itself. In Turkey, unfortunately, there is no campaign or any accommodation promotes this profession. Results from this study indicate that people are attracted to teaching as a career mainly because they want contribute to society, enhance social equity and opportunities to shape the future. Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that intrinsic motives, intrinsic career value and ability, promises to yield more effective results since they are related to teaching self-efficacy stronger than altruistic motives. Recruitment bodies should therefore cooperate with teacher education programs and policy makers to attract more intrinsically motivated candidates by examining motivations behind choosing this profession.

#### 4.2. Limitations and future research

First, the scales used in the present study were on self-reports. There is a possibility that the individuals participated in this research might not reported their actual motivations, perceptions, and self-efficacy. Beyond that, participants in the study were voluntary, indicating that the sample of current study may be biased in some level.

Furthermore, the study conducted only in one university with a sample of 341 participants. The sample reached in this study may not necessarily represent the pre-service elementary teachers in Turkey even though the characteristics of the sample were similar to the previous studies (Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012; Aksu et al., 2010). As future research, larger sample and different universities are needed in order to sketch broader picture of teacher candidates' motivations for choosing this profession.

The study examined pre-service teachers' motivations across grade level. Longitudinal studies including different education institutions are required in the future in order to understand deeply the process of motivation changes.

The study focused only on elementary level and found some different results regarding teachers' motivations for choosing this profession than the previous studies covering different levels. There might also be some differences between teachers choosing different majors. Future research is required to answer these hunches.

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