A Phenomenological Study on Student Selection for Departments of Primary Education and Appointment of Primary School Teachers in Türkiye

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study is to identify the opinions of faculty members, who are experts in their fields, on student selection for teacher training institutions for primary education and on the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers in Türkiye. The study is based on phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research methods. The study sample consists of thirty faculty members selected using the criterion sampling technique from twenty-nine faculties of education including the department of primary education. The data in the study were collected using a semi-structured interview form and analysed through the content analysis method. As a result of the analyses, five themes were created regarding the opinions of the faculty members on student selection for teacher training institutions for primary education. In this context, various codes were listed under the themes of "student selection procedures", "student characteristics", "quotas", "source of students" and "incentives". Considering the field experts' opinions on non-appointed primary school teachers, three themes were identified, and various codes were listed under the themes of "employment opportunities", "quantity" and "appointment procedures". The findings revealed that the main policies considered necessary by the faculty members in selecting students for primary school teacher training institutions included planning the student resources starting from secondary education and selecting eligible individuals through objective interviews, in addition to central examination. It was also concluded that the main policies to be pursued in solving the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers included making a needs-based arrangement in quotas in faculties of education and ensuring a sufficient number of graduates, as well as improving retirement conditions and conducting merit-based appointments for vacancies arising from retirements by excluding out-of-field teachers.

Keywords:
Faculty of Education, Primary School Teacher, Student Selection, Non-appointed Teacher

INTRODUCTION

As it is also mentioned in many sayings dedicated to teachers, they are assigned significant duties and responsibilities. In this respect, planning teacher training activities, that is, selecting individuals to be teachers, training teacher candidates and appointing them as teachers can be considered an important process. It is known that different practices have been adopted at different times in selecting students to train as primary education teachers in Türkiye. Students who wanted to enrol in these schools during the first years of the Republic were required to take a written exam for Turkish and Calculus courses, and oral exams for Reading, History, Geography and Calculus courses. Moreover, it was enough for those willing to become a teacher to be a Turkish citizen, to have graduated from primary school, to be aged between 16 and 20, and to have no physical or mental disability that would prevent them from teaching. It was also observed at later times that students were selected for primary school teacher training institutions among those who completed primary education, who were smart, virtuous and solid, and who performed their military service as a sergeant or corporal. There are documents indicating that teacher candidates once required a written document from the local authority to certify having the relevant qualities (Öztürk, 1996). With the establishment of Village Institutes, healthy and talented villagers (boys and girls), who completed five-year primary education, were selected for these schools and received boarding education to become primary school teachers (Akyüz, 2014; Dilaver, 1994). In 1965, there were several changes regarding student selection for primary teacher training schools in the Administrative Regulation on Primary Teacher Training Schools. These changes stipulated that those who wanted to attend these schools would first take a preliminary written exam, and those who passed this exam would take a second selection exam at the school. It was deemed important that multiple-choice questions would be used in the respective exams (Aşılıoğlu & Kinay, 2018). Different practices were adopted over time, yet within the scope of the Basic Law No. 1739 on National Education published in 1973, which

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assigned the task of primary school teacher training to institutes providing two-year education, some specifications were determined for student admission. A sine qua non of admission was being a citizen of the Republic of Türkiye. The candidates were also required to be a graduate of primary teacher training school, teacher training college or any other high school. There was also a provision stating that the quota for graduates of any teacher training school would be 75% (Aşılıoğlu & Kinay, 2018). Furthermore, students to be selected were required to certify that they were sound and healthy (having no disabilities such as stuttering, blindness, strabismus, deafness, lameness, hunchback, and no contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, trachoma, and other physical and mental disorders that would prevent them from teaching) with a report from a full-fledged hospital to be submitted during the final enrolment. In addition, it was required for male candidates to certify having no relation to military service, and for female candidates, who would be admitted to the relevant institutions as boarders, to certify being not married, divorced or widowed. Besides, candidates must not be an employee of any institution or a student in an educational institution (Aşılıoğlu & Kinay, 2018). In the 1980s, some radical changes were made in the field of teacher training. In 1982, Teacher Training Colleges under the Ministry of National Education were affiliated to universities and changed into faculties of education, and two-year institutes of education training teachers for primary schools were affiliated to faculties of education of universities and changed into colleges (Akyüz, 2014). Starting from this period, students have been selected for these institutions based on their scores in central exams administered by Student Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM) (Öztürk, 1998). Since then, students have been admitted to Faculties of Education through central exams conducted by ÖSYM, despite the occasionally changing names and methods. Today it is observed that there are varying criteria in selecting the student resource to train teachers for primary education. The method adopted today in student selection for the primary education program of universities is presented in Figure 1.
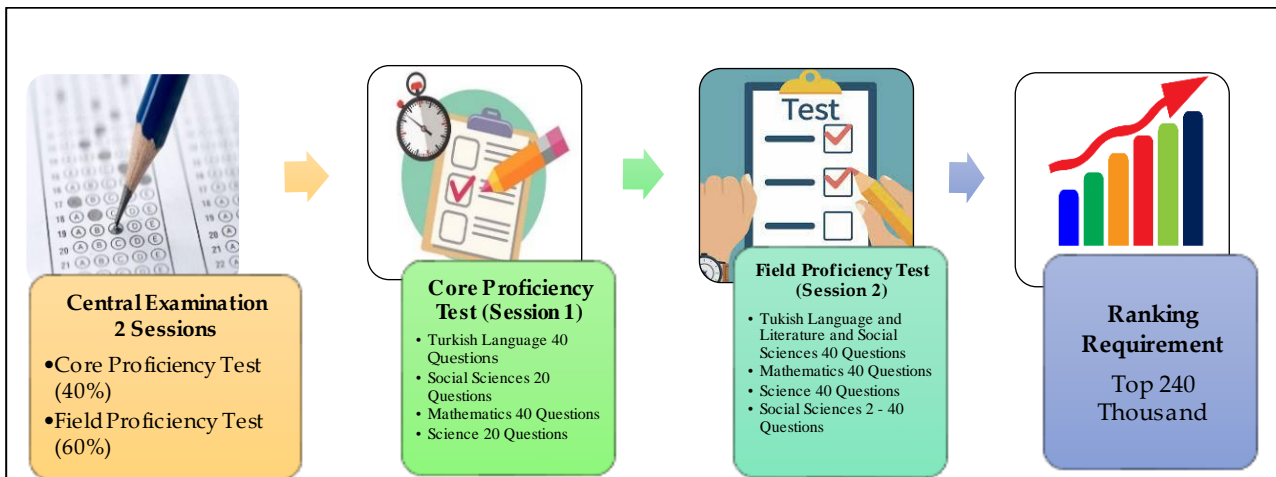

Figure 1. Student selection for primary education program during the 2022-2023 academic year

As observed in Figure 1, an individual who wants to study primary school teaching in Türkiye in the 2022-2023 academic year must first take the Higher Education Institutions Examination (YKS), which is a two-session central exam conducted by ÖSYM, and fulfil the ranking requirement to be placed in the relevant program.

Different methods have been adopted in Türkiye regarding the appointment of teachers, as in student selection for the primary school teaching program. Especially with the proclamation of the Republic, teaching began to be valued as a profession, and accordingly, several practices were put into use. The leading step taken was Law No. 439 on Secondary School Teachers enacted on 13 March 1924. In the first article of this law, teaching was defined as a profession divided into separate classes and levels in charge of carrying out the state's educational activities (Aşılıoğlu & Kinay, 2018). With these legal regulations during the first years of the Republic, teaching became a profession to anyone (Akyüz, 2014).

Considering the recommendations of the foreign experts invited to Türkiye after the proclamation of the Republic, meeting the need for teachers in the society, where the majority of the population lived in villages was prioritized. In this context, no further practice was adopted in teacher appointments until the 1940s and the new graduate teacher candidates were appointed on the condition of serving in the villages for five years.

When their obligatory service ended, they were administered an exam and appointed to primary schools in cities (Dilaver, 1994). This practice was maintained when the village institutes were established, and preservice teachers who successfully graduated from village institutes were appointed without any additional procedure, yet the obligatory service period of teachers who were appointed to villages by the Ministry of Education was determined as twenty years (Akyüz, 2014).

In the same period, similar practices were also encountered in Primary Teacher Training Schools in cities where primary school teachers were trained. Preservice teachers who completed the relevant school were appointed without any requirements. However, some measures, such as prohibiting employment in state institutions and organizations or paying compensation, were taken to prevent appointed teachers from having another job and leaving the profession before completing their obligatory service. In addition, private businesses employing these individuals were required to dismiss them within a month upon notification of the Board of Education. Otherwise, they were considered to have undertaken the compensation (Öztürk, 1998).

In the 1960s, different practices were adopted to meet the need for teachers rising with the increasing population. One practice effectuated with the Law dated 11 October 1960 was that those who graduated from high school or any other equivalent institution and those who dropped out of universities and colleges were granted the right to do their military service as primary school teachers in villages after receiving training. Those who were willing to continue teaching were appointed as teachers under the Law dated 26 July 1963. Another practice adopted to meet the teacher deficit in this period was the appointment of secondary and equivalent school graduates aged over 18 as substitute teachers. In the 1970s, those who graduated from different faculties but wanted to teach were appointed after receiving pedagogical formation (Akyüz, 2014).

In 1973, there was an important development concerning the teaching profession, and Basic Law No. 1739 on National Education referred to teaching as a specialized profession that undertook the state's education and related administration duties. In addition, the teaching profession was defined with three competence areas, including General Knowledge, Professional Teaching Knowledge and Field Knowledge (Basic Law on National Education, 1973).

Despite these regulations stipulated by laws, different practices were still adopted in teacher appointment procedures. In 1974, "Teaching Through Correspondence" was put into practice, and as a result, fifteen thousand preservice teachers graduated and were recruited (Dilaver, 1994). In addition, due to the events resulting from the political atmosphere of the country in the period, educational activities could not be performed in their normal course, especially in institutes of education, and many students were unable to attend school. Consequently, with circular no. 17749 in 1980, students were granted the right to take exit tests in all courses regardless of class and semester, and with this practice, one hundred and twenty-eight thousand people graduated and entered the profession (Akyüz, 2014; Dilaver, 1994).

Even though it was stipulated in Basic Law No. 1739 on National Education, no teaching-related exam was administered in the teacher appointments during the period from 1973 to 1991. In 1991, with the decision no. 37 taken by the Board of Education and Discipline, the terms of teacher appointment were determined, and it was decided that teachers would be appointed after taking an exam consisting of General Knowledge (15%), Professional Teaching Knowledge (25%), and Field Knowledge (60%). Those who would be appointed after passing this exam were required to fulfil the general conditions in Law No. 657 and to be healthy, and where teachers would be appointed was determined by lot in the computer environment considering the need (Dilaver, 1994). One year later in 1992, the exam requirement for teacher appointment was abolished, and those who graduated from faculties of education were appointed without any conditions (Çetin, 2013).

In 1995, anyone who was a university graduate and willing to teach (out of the field) was appointed as a primary school teacher. As a result of this practice, around 30 thousand university graduates from different fields were employed as primary school teachers without taking any exams or pedagogical training. Similarly, in the 1997-1998 school year, those who did not graduate from the Faculty of Education were appointed as primary school teachers with a certificate obtained at the end of a five-week course and fourteen-week teacher training (Özer & Duran, 2018).

In 2001, the "Central Selection Examination for Institutions" was introduced as a requirement for teacher appointment, and the name of the exam was changed to Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS) in 2002. All public personnel, including teachers, began to be appointed based on this exam.

Until 2012, teacher candidates were appointed according to the mean of their scores in General Ability (30%), General Knowledge (30%) and Educational Sciences (40%) exams in KPSS. With a decision taken in 2013, Teaching Field Knowledge Test was added to KPSS specifically for some branches, including Primary Education. Consequently, the distribution of scores in the tests has become as follows: General Ability (15%), General Knowledge (15%), Educational Sciences (20%) and Teaching Field Knowledge (50%). In 2016, an interview was introduced in addition to the written exams in KPSS as a condition of teacher appointment. As of 2023, the practice has been in use, yet its abolishment is being discussed. The following table summarizes student selection for institutions training primary school teachers and the conditions for teacher appointment.

Table 1. Student Selection for the Primary Education Program and Terms of Teacher Appointment in Türkiye

Terms of Admission	Appointment
Central Examination 2 Sessions Session 1: Core Proficiency Test (40%) • 40 Turkish Language, 40 Basic Mathematics Questions Session 2: Equally Weighted Test (60%) • 40 Turkish Language and Literature, Geography, 40 Mathematics Questions	Central Examination 3 Sessions Session 1: General Knowledge & General Ability Session 2: Educational Sciences Session 3: Teaching Field Knowledge
Ranking requirement (Top 240 thousand)	Interview

As observed in Table 1, a student who wants to be a primary school teacher must take the two-session central exam and be placed among the top two hundred and forty thousand people to enrol in the primary education program. Candidates who fail to fulfil the ranking requirement cannot apply to the program even if there are vacancies. Considering the terms of appointment, it is observed that preservice primary school teachers who have completed their education must take a three-session central exam. In addition, those who are successful in these exams must also be successful in the interview, which is the last step to be appointed.

In the historical process, as a result of the differences and inconsistencies in the conditions required for both student selection for teacher training institutions and teacher appointment, there has been a supply-demand gap since the number of teachers trained is more than needed, which has resulted in the problem of non-appointed teachers. The actual data of the Student Selection and Placement Centre illustrate that 476,974 preservice teachers applied for the Educational Sciences exam, in other words, nearly half a million candidates are waiting to become a teacher. It is also inferred from these data that 22,023 individuals applied for the Teaching Field Knowledge test to be appointed as primary school teachers (Student Selection and Placement Centre [ÖSYM], 2022). However, the data from the Ministry of National Education for the same period show that only 2,223 preservice primary school teachers taking the Teaching Field Knowledge test were appointed (Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2022). When the statistical data were examined, it was concluded that 10% of the preservice teachers who were waiting to become primary school teachers were appointed. Furthermore, according to the actual data of the Council of Higher Education, universities allocate a quota of 4,404 individuals for primary education programs including 3,973 students in state universities and 431 students in private universities (Council of Higher Education [YÖK], 2022). In other words, more than four thousand new graduate primary school teachers each year join their colleagues who are waiting to be appointed. For a better summary, the current situation is illustrated using a metaphor in Figure 2.
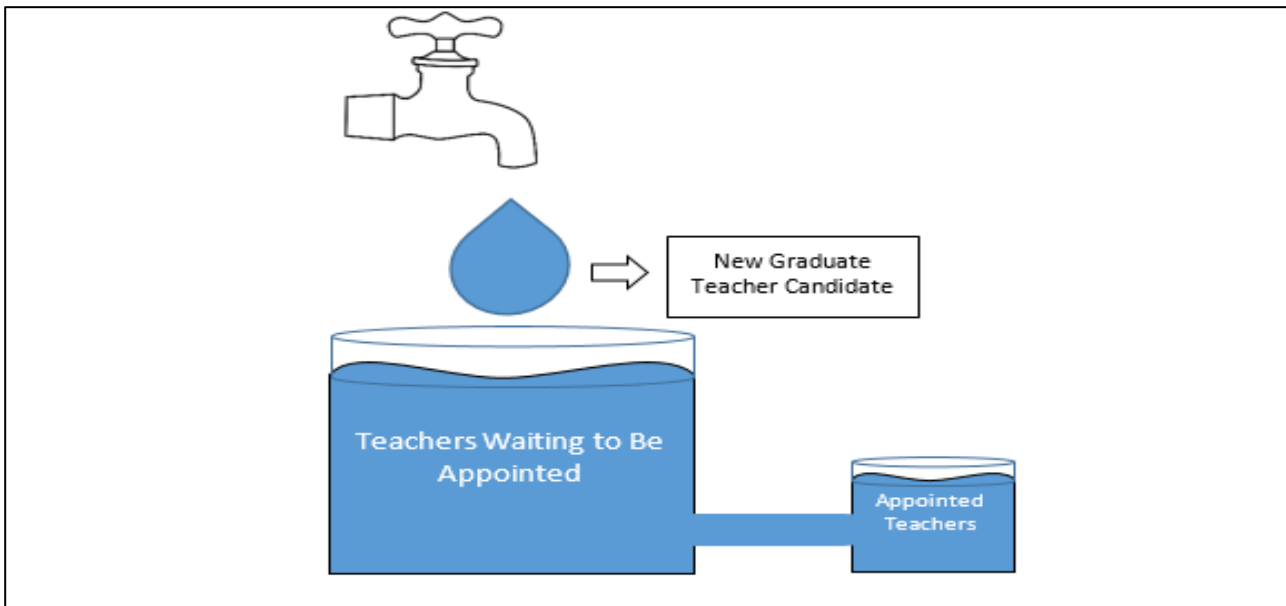
Figure 2. Illustration of the problem of non-appointed teachers in Türkiye

It is observed in Figure 2 that only a small group of teachers are appointed through central exams and interviews among a large group of candidates in Türkiye, yet new graduates join the group every year. The pool of teachers waiting to be appointed continues to fill up and remains a growing problem for it is not emptied enough to prevent accumulation.

When the studies on student selection for teacher training institutions and appointment of teacher candidates in Türkiye are reviewed, it is observed that the subjects examined within the scope of the study are addressed from different perspectives. Considering the studies on student selection for teacher training institutions, historical analyses of the practices followed in the selection of human resources for the relevant institutions are primarily encountered (Akyüz, 2014; Dilaver, 1994; Duman, 1991; Gelişli, 2005; Koçer, 1967; Öztürk, 1998; Kuru & Uzun, 2008; Uygun, 2010). In addition, Hotaman (2011) investigated in his study whether faculties of education could select their students. In their study, Kahramanoğlu, Özer and Döş (2017) proposed an interview-based model for student selection to teacher training institutions. In another study conducted in 2018, student selection for faculties of education was discussed from the viewpoint of academicians within the scope of the changes in the faculties (Kozikoğlu & Kayan, 2018).

When the studies on the appointment of teacher candidates were examined, it was observed that some studies focused on the experiences of non-appointed teachers (Gökçe, 2014; Manav, 2022; Kiraz, 2014), whereas others addressed the teacher appointment policies in certain periods (Albayrak, 2018; Aydın, Sarıyer & Uysal, 2014; Mete, 2009; Uygun, 2010). Moreover, Mete (2009) identified the opinions of teachers on the legislation to be developed to close the teacher gap in cities in addition to the teacher appointment policies. In another study, the metaphors created for non-appointed teachers by individuals from different sections of society were examined (Varışoğlu & Kaşaveklioğlu, 2019). Furthermore, Akpınar and Erdamar (2020) discussed the problem of non-appointed teachers within the scope of overeducation and examined the obligation of preservice teachers to work in lower-status jobs unsuitable for their education, in the context of faculty members' awareness.

When the literature is reviewed in general, it is observed that the studies on the selection of human resources for teacher training institutions mainly focus on the analysis of student selection practices from a historical perspective. The studies on the appointment of teacher candidates to the profession examine the experiences of non-appointed teachers and the teacher appointment policies in certain periods.

Unlike other studies, both issues are discussed together in this study. Faculty members, who are experts in their fields and among the most important stakeholders of the teacher training process, were asked for their opinions on student selection for teacher training institutions and solutions to the problems encountered in teacher appointments. It is believed that the study results can be a source for policies to be developed for the reformation of the ongoing practices in the relevant subjects. In this context;

The general purpose of the study is to identify the opinions of faculty members, who are experts in the field of education, on the selection of student resources for the institutions that provide teacher training for primary education and on the solution to the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions are sought:

1. What are the policies to be adopted in student selection for institutions that provide training for primary school teachers?

2. What are the policies to be adopted to solve the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers?

METHOD

This study is descriptive in that it aims to identify the opinions of faculty members, who are experts in their fields, on student selection for institutions where teachers are trained for primary education and on the solution to the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers in Türkiye. The purpose of descriptive studies is to present the research findings in an organized and interpreted way. For this purpose, data obtained are first described clearly in a certain systematic way, and results are obtained from these descriptions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Accordingly, qualitative research approaches were used in the study. The stages in qualitative research are not always linear and in the same order, yet they are planned as illustrated in Figure 3.
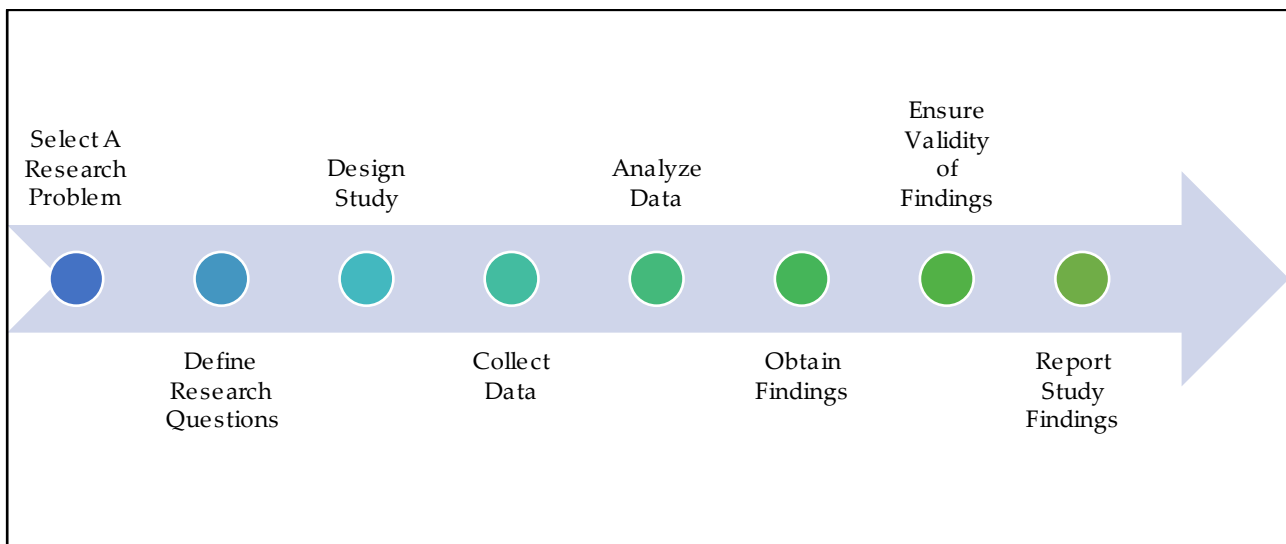

Figure 3. Stages of qualitative research, Bütün, M. (2014). Qualitative research. B. Johnson & L. Christensen (Eds.) *Educational research: quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches* (M. Bütün, Trans.) (p. 375-408). Ankara: Eğiten.

The phenomenology design, a qualitative research approach, was used in this study. The main purpose of the design is to identify the experiences of participants in a study group regarding a phenomenon (Creswell, 2021). Accordingly, the phenomenon focused in this study is the review of faculty members' opinions on student selection for primary education programs and practices adopted in teacher appointments in Türkiye.

Study Group

The criterion sampling method was used in the study to determine the study group. This sampling method aims to examine situations that meet a set of predetermined criteria. The relevant criteria may be prepared by the researcher or there is a list of criteria prepared beforehand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this context, among the universities in Türkiye, the faculties of education with the department of primary education were set as a criterion, and then the faculties to be included in the study were determined using the random sampling method, in which each member of the study population is selected with an equal chance (Budak & Budak, 2014). While determining the universities to be included in the study, a representative number was assigned to each faculty of education including the department of primary education, and the pieces of paper with the numbers were put in a bag and selected randomly. The

universities and faculties of education included in the study as a result of these selections are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Universities and Faculties of Education Included in the Study

Adana Çukurova University Faculty of Education
Adıyaman University Faculty of Education
Afyon Kocatepe University Faculty of Education
Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University Faculty of Education
Aksaray University Faculty of Education
Amasya University Faculty of Education
Antalya Akdeniz University Faculty of Education
Bartın University Faculty of Education
Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University Faculty of Education
Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Faculty of Education
Denizli Pamukkale University Faculty of Education
Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Faculty of Education
Erzurum Atatürk University Kazım Karabekir Faculty of Education
Gazi University Gazi Faculty of Education
Giresun University Faculty of Education
Hacettepe University Faculty of Education
Hatay Mustafa Kemal University Faculty of Education
İzmir Dokuz Eylül University Buca Faculty of Education
Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University Faculty of Education
Kars Kafkas University Dede Korkut Faculty of Education
Kırıkkale University Faculty of Education
Kütahya Dumlupınar University Faculty of Education
Malatya İnönü University Faculty of Education
Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University Faculty of Education
Sakarya University Faculty of Education
Siirt University Faculty of Education
Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University Faculty of Education
Trabzon University Fatih Faculty of Education
Uludağ University Faculty of Education

It is observed in Table 2 that the universities in the study are distributed in a way that there is at least one university from each region. The relevant data is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Regional distribution of the cities where the universities in the study are located

After the universities to be included in the study were determined, a study group consisting of field experts working in the relevant faculties was formed. The characteristics of the group are described below.

Study Group (Faculty Members/Field Experts): To collect data for the study, a group was formed including faculty members who were experts in their fields and working in the department of primary education in faculties of education. Accordingly, the data were collected from thirty faculty members within the scope of the study. The main criterion in determining the individuals in the study group was that their major was in the field of primary education. The data were obtained through interviews with these field experts.

Data Collection Tool

A semi-structured interview form, which is one of the qualitative data collection tools, was used in the study to identify the opinions of faculty members on the selection of student resources for primary school teacher training institutions and the solution to the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers. With this approach, it is possible to obtain the same kind of data from different people regarding similar topics (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, as cited in Patton). The interview form used for data collection was developed considering the relevant literature and shared with three experts experienced in qualitative research for their opinions. In this context, two questions with the same content were addressed to the faculty members. These questions are:

1. What kind of policies do you think should be adopted in student selection for faculties that provide training for primary school teachers?

2. What do you think can be done to solve the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers?

The interview form was administered voluntarily. It was highlighted to the participants that ethical rules would be followed during the study and that their personal information would be kept confidential. The interview form was administered in online platforms with no attempt to affect the opinions of the participants, and they were described as they were stated.

Data Analyses

The content analysis method was used in the study to analyse the data obtained for identifying the opinions of the faculty members. Analyses performed in phenomenological research are aimed at exploring experiences and concepts. In content analyses carried out for this purpose, it is necessary to reveal the themes and concepts that can define the phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The content analysis performed within the scope of the study consisted of four stages. First, the interviews with the faculty members were

transcribed, and then the data obtained were analysed and similar statements were assembled and coded. In the third stage, the codes were grouped under relevant themes, and in the last stage, the data obtained were interpreted in light of these themes. The stages of the content analysis conducted to reveal the opinions of faculty members are presented in Figure 5.
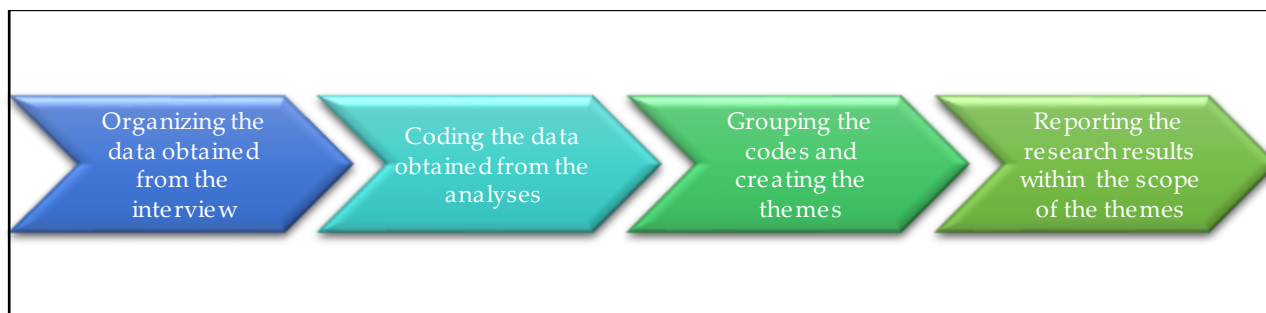

Figure 5. Stages of the content analysis performed in the study

Several steps were followed to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. In this context, it was checked whether the contents reported by the researcher and the meanings attributed to the findings were correct. Creswell (2021) suggests, for reliability, that the codes created for the study subject by the researcher and another expert should be compared. Accordingly, the findings obtained from the research and the raw data obtained with the data collection tool were delivered to three experts who were competent in qualitative research and they were asked to compare the findings. The consistency between the raw data and the findings was tested using the reliability formula (Reliability = Agreement / {Agreement + Disagreement}) by Miles & Huberman (1994). According to the formula, the consistency between the coders should be at least 80% for qualitative reliability. The results obtained from the evaluation of the experts revealed that the raw data and the meanings attributed to the data by the researcher matched 87%. For the validity of the study, the thick description (rich description), which is one of the eight main strategies proposed by Creswell (2021) for validity, was employed. In this context, the participants' opinions that were selected by lot were quoted with no changes.

FINDINGS

The findings obtained were discussed below in line with the sub-purposes of the study.

Findings Regarding the First Sub-Purpose of the Study

To obtain findings regarding the first sub-purpose of the study, the opinions of the faculty members on the policies to be adopted in student selection for primary school teacher training institutions were examined, and the relevant findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Opinions of the Faculty Members on the Policies to be Adopted in Student Selection for Primary School Teacher Training Institutions

Theme	Code	Frequency (f)	Total
Student Selection Procedures	Holding objective interviews	6	20
	Requiring higher scores for teaching programs	4	
	Keeping the current practice	4	
	Administering proficiency exams	2	
	Selecting students among the top 20 thousand in the ranking	1	
	Selecting students with the highest ranking	1	
	Allowing each university to develop their own student selection model	1	
	Implementing the student selection model for teacher training colleges	1	
Student Characteristics	Selecting students who are eligible for teaching	5	16
	Selecting students who have positive attitudes towards the profession	4	
	Selecting psychologically competent students	3	
	Selecting students who are eager to teach	2	
	Selecting virtuous students	1	
	Selecting students who love kids	1	
Quota	Carrying out needs-based student admissions	6	8
	Decreasing the quotas	2	
Source of Students	Establishing teacher training high schools	5	7
	Ensuring that students from science and social sciences high schools prefer teaching programs	2	
Incentive	Enhancing the prestige of the profession	4	6
	Giving priority to those whose first three preferences include teaching programs	1	
	Giving priority to top students in schools	1	

It is observed in Table 3 that the faculty members grouped the policies to be adopted in student selection for primary school teacher training institutions under five themes including student selection procedures, student characteristics, quota for students to be selected, source of students to be admitted and incentives for students to prefer primary education programs. Under the theme of student selection procedures, the faculty members mostly emphasized that objective interviews should be held in selecting students to be trained for primary school teaching in faculties of education. Another important suggestion by the faculty members within the scope of the relevant theme was that primary education programs should require higher scores in university entrance exams. On the other hand, it was observed that some considered it necessary to keep the available policies as they were. Under the theme of student characteristics, it was identified that the faculty members mostly recommended selecting students among those who were eligible for teaching. Similarly, other important policies suggested by the faculty members included selecting students who had positive attitudes towards the profession and who had the psychological competence required for teaching. Under the theme of quota for students, the most frequently expressed opinion was that students should be selected considering the need for teachers. Under the source of students theme, the faculty members mostly stated that high schools for teacher training should be established. In addition, under the theme of incentives, which was the last theme created in line with the opinions of the faculty members, it was emphasized that the prestige of teaching should be enhanced so that more students would prefer the profession.

The statements selected by lot among the participants' opinions on policies to be adopted in student selection for primary education programs are presented below:

Faculty Member (FM)4: I expect that students who are eager to teach will be selected and those who are more intelligent among them will be prioritized with a system in which economic opportunities that attract students when they graduate are offered, and in which students are selected among the top 20 thousand in the exam results. If the teacher is the architect of the future, their intelligence and qualifications should be suitable, and this person should not have any economic concerns.

FM12: Not only primary school teachers but all teachers should be interviewed before starting the faculty. A preliminary examination should be carried out regarding candidate students' interest in, respect for, and attitude and behaviours towards the profession. A person with a moral weakness or insensitivity should never be accepted as a teacher candidate.

FM26: 1. Teacher training institutions should only be preferred by graduates of teacher training high schools. 2. The number of students admitted should be consistent with the number of teachers needed or it should be just a little more than that (around 10%) 3. Students should be selected among those who are at the top of the country's rankings in the university entrance exam. 4. Preservice teachers may also be interviewed or asked to submit reference letters including an assessment of their level of attitudes and skills required by the profession.

Findings Regarding the Second Sub-Purpose of the Study

To reach the findings for the second sub-purpose of the study, the opinions of the faculty members on the solution to the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers were examined, and the relevant findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Opinions of the Faculty Members on the Policies to be Adopted in Solving the Problem of Non-Appointed Teachers

Theme	Code	Frequency (f)	Total
Employment Opportunity	Better retirement conditions	7	28
	Smaller class sizes in primary schools	5	
	5-year primary education	4	
	Establishment of village schools	3	
	Employment opportunities in different areas	2	
	Abolishment of substitute teaching	1	
	Starting the assistant classroom teacher practice	1	
	Starting the reading expert practice	1	
	Employing the support teacher model	1	
	Appointment of non-appointed teachers as civil servants	1	
	Recruitment in Ministries of Interior, and Culture and Tourism	1	
	Appointment of teachers to museums	1	
Quantity	Making a needs-based quota arrangement in faculties of education	17	21
	Decreasing the number of faculties of education	4	
Appointment Procedures	Merit-based appointment	1	4
	No out-of-field appointments	1	
	More teacher appointments	1	
	Proficiency exams in addition to the central examination	1	

It is observed in Table 4 that the opinions of the faculty members on the solution to the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers mainly regarded providing employment opportunities for non-appointed teachers, addressing the problem in terms of quantity and arranging the appointment procedures. The faculty members mostly mentioned the improvement of retirement conditions for teachers under the theme of employment opportunities. Other important issues emphasized by the faculty members within the scope of this theme were reducing class sizes in primary schools and extending the primary education period to five years. Under the theme of quantity, as in the policies to be adopted in student selection for primary education programs, the faculty members stated that the most important issue to be considered in the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers would be a need-based quota arrangement in faculties of education. What is noteworthy here is that this policy proposed by the participants is the most frequently recommended

policy in all themes created within the scope of the relevant topic. In addition, it was identified under the theme of appointment procedures that the faculty members proposed a merit-based appointment procedure in which no individual out of the field would be appointed and proficiency exams would be administered together with the central exam.

The statements selected by lot among the participants' opinions on the policies to be adopted in solving the problem of non-appointed teachers are as follows:

FM6: It is necessary to ensure that teachers who qualify for retirement and are waiting for the promised improvement in their personal rights can be retired, that the actual need for teachers should be determined by reducing class sizes, especially in big cities, and that teacher appointments should be merit-based.

FM19: A very good plan should be developed for the teacher gap. Those who are successful in both KPSS and the "Teaching Proficiency Exam" to be administered should be appointed to these positions, and other graduates should be recruited by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Unqualified teachers must not be appointed only for employment. Otherwise, it will take a heavy toll on the country.

FM29: The primary education programs opened in rural regions recently should be closed. The number of students in the existing programs should be decreased. The 4+4+4 system should be abandoned, and primary education should again last 5 years. Primary school teaching graduates should be trained as qualified and find jobs not only in state schools but also in different areas.

RESULT, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to identify the opinions of faculty members, who were experts in the field, on policies to be followed in student selection for primary school teacher training institutions and on how to solve the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers. For this purpose, the data collection tool developed within the scope of the study was administered to the study group, and relevant policy recommendations were identified.

Based on the individual evaluations of the sub-purposes of the study, it is believed that important data have been obtained regarding the procedures that should be employed in selecting students for institutions that provide training for primary school teachers and in considering the characteristics of students to be selected. According to the faculty members who are experts in the field, especially the affective aspects of students to be selected for training should be carefully assessed, and those who are eligible for the profession, psychologically competent and have a positive attitude towards teaching should be selected. In this respect, the faculty members emphasized the need for objective interviews, in which different student characteristics are assessed, in addition to the central examination while admitting students to the relevant institutions. In their study, Kozikoğlu and Kayan (2018) investigated the changes in faculties of education from the perspective of academicians and concluded that the central examination was not enough to select students for faculties of education and that different characteristics of students should also be considered. These data support the results of the study. It is also known that multi-stage assessments that measure different skills and also include interviews are performed to select students for teacher training institutions in Finland and Singapore, where the achievement in internationally recognized exams such as PISA and TIMSS is high (Yılmaz et al., 2019). The student selection process in Singapore consists of three stages, including interviews and medical examinations as well as proficiency tests (Ministry of Education of Singapore [MOE], 2022). Similarly, Finland has a multiple-stage process to admit students to teacher training institutions. The relevant stages are listed as the matriculation exam, a written admission exam, an aptitude test, an individual interview and an observation of a micro-lesson (Kansanen, 2003). On the other hand, in Türkiye, students are admitted to teacher training institutions based on their ranking (the top 240 thousand) in a central exam that assesses cognitive skills. Another issue emphasized by the faculty members regarding the student selection procedures for faculties of education is that high achievers in the central exam should be admitted to the department of primary education. Yet, the actual data of ÖSYM indicate that none of the students in the top ten thousand in equal weight ranking, which is required for admission to the primary education program in Türkiye, preferred the relevant department. What is more important is that none of these students preferred any department of

teaching (ÖSYM, 2022). Another important finding obtained from the research is that the need for primary school teachers should be identified, and students should be admitted to teacher training institutions accordingly. In other words, the quotas in the relevant departments of the universities should be determined based on the needs analysis results. When the current situation in Türkiye is examined in light of the up-to-date data, it is observed that 10% of the candidates who are waiting to become primary school teachers are appointed, yet the quotas of primary education programs in state and private universities cover a total of 4,404 students (ÖSYM, 2022; MEB, 2022; YÖK, 2022). It is expected that this situation will further increase the accumulation in the pool of teachers waiting to be appointed. In this context, it can be stated that a needs-based quota arrangement suggested by the faculty members to solve the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers is highly important. Another important finding is that the participants consider it necessary to reevaluate teacher training high schools and put them into practice again. In other words, a new plan including secondary education should be developed for the selection of student resources for teacher training institutions. In line with the objectives of the Fifth and Sixth Five-Year Development Plans in Türkiye, Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools were established in 1990 to prepare students for higher education institutions that provided teacher training, help students love teaching and acquire the behaviours required by the teaching profession (Regulation No. 20723, 1990). Besides, these schools had a success average of 70% in the university exams and 80% of their students preferred higher education institutions for teacher training in line with the school mission (Gelişli, 2000). It was also identified that the quality of education provided in teacher training high schools had a significant effect on the fact that students preferred these schools (Çetin & Çetin, 2006). However, as per the decision taken in 2014, Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools were transformed into Anatolian High Schools, Social Sciences High Schools and Science High Schools (MEB, 2014). Within the scope of the first sub-purpose of the study, another important finding regarding the policies proposed by the faculty members to select students for teacher training institutions is that the prestige of the teaching profession should be enhanced. In other words, the teaching should be made preferable for students. The data obtained in the latest research on working life and professions in Türkiye support the findings of the present study. The respective research has revealed that teaching is not included in the ten most prestigious professions that are socially recognized. According to the same research data, the participants whose level of education is "high school or lower degree" consider teaching as the fourteenth most prestigious profession, while those whose level of education is "high school or higher degree" consider it as the thirteenth most prestigious profession (Social Structure Research Program [TYAP], 2020). In addition, Göker and Gündüz (2017) emphasize in their study that the salary and the employment opportunities offered to teachers significantly affect the preferability of the profession and that the teacher salaries in Türkiye are considerably lower than those in OECD countries and some developed countries.

Considering the findings obtained within the scope of the second sub-purpose of the study regarding the solutions to the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers, the faculty members mostly emphasized the need for providing new employment opportunities in and outside the field. In this context, improving retirement conditions became one of the most frequently recommended policies. Here it may have been considered that more vacancies can be ensured in teacher positions by encouraging the retirement of teachers who are waiting for the age limit even though they have completed the working period required for retirement. Şimşek and Büyükkıdık (2015) state that the vast majority of retired teachers involved in their study (85%) indicated having financial difficulties after retirement. It is acknowledged that there is a salary deduction in teachers' retirement, which may inhibit teachers from retiring earlier. In their study, where they present statistical data that support the subject, Aydın and Tuğrul (2022) note that the rate of young teachers aged thirty and under is only 17%, yet the teachers aged fifty and over have the highest rate in primary schools. Another important policy suggested by the faculty members regarding employment opportunities was to reduce class sizes in primary schools. When calculated based on the actual data of the Ministry of National Education, it was identified that there were 5,122,012 students and 238,019 classrooms in primary education institutions (MEB, 2022). As indicated by the numbers, the average number of students per classroom is 21.5. The data from OECD, which is taken as a reference in education statistics, also indicate that the average number of students per classroom in primary education is 21 (OECD, 2022). In this context, when the number of students per classroom becomes at least the same as the OECD values, new classrooms will be required to balance the number of students, and employment opportunities will thus be offered to new teachers. The

calculations show that even by decreasing the number of students per classroom from 21.5 to 21 across Türkiye, approximately 5,668 teachers will be required.

Another important policy proposed for solving the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers was to go back to the five-year primary education system. According to the latest statistical data of MEB (2022), 1,304,609 students continue their education in the fifth grade of secondary school. If it becomes five-year again, approximately the same number of students will receive primary education in the next academic year. Considering the number of students per classroom in primary education in Türkiye, it is believed that approximately 60,680 new classroom teachers will be required.

Another issue that the faculty members persistently emphasized regarding the solution to the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers was the needs-based arrangement of quotas in faculties of education, just as in the policy proposals regarding student selection for teacher training institutions. In this context, the faculty members in the study might think that the problem of non-appointed teachers is based on human resources planning that fails to consider the relevant needs. In the reports published by the Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education in recent years, there are no needs analyses performed to determine the faculty quotas. It is observed that the needs analyses within the Ministry of National Education are conducted before appointments to identify how many teachers should be appointed based on their fields. The faculty members emphasize that this kind of analysis should be performed at the beginning when selecting students for teacher training institutions. The last theme for the participants' opinions about non-appointed primary school teachers is appointment procedures. Within the scope of the relevant theme, the faculty members considered it necessary to employ a merit-based appointment method, in which those from other fields are not appointed and proficiency exams are administered together with the central exams. In a study conducted by Karataş and Güleş (2013), the participating preservice teachers stated that not only cognitive skills but also other criteria should be evaluated in teacher recruitment. In their study titled "Evaluation of teacher employment policies in Türkiye", Aydın, Sarıyer and Uysal (2014) also suggest a multi-faceted evaluation including academic achievement, physical and mental health, and interview scores in addition to the central exam scores for the employment of teacher candidates. The findings support the data obtained in the study. Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that the student resources for institutions that provide training for primary school teachers should be planned from secondary education, and those who are eligible for teaching should be selected by holding interviews in addition to central exams. As regards the problem of non-appointed primary school teachers, it should be ensured that an adequate number of students graduate from the faculties of education based on the needs analyses conducted at certain intervals, and the employment opportunities for teacher candidates in and out of the field should be increased especially by improving retirement conditions. Besides, it is recommended that several policies that will promote the reputation of teaching should be put into practice without delay.

LIMITATIONS and FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The present study is limited to the opinions of faculty members who are experts in their field. Therefore, further research can be conducted including other stakeholders. Moreover, based on the content analysis performed, some suggestions have been proposed in the study representing the opinions of field experts on the selection of students for the primary education program and the appointment of teacher candidates; however, a model regarding student selection for teacher training institutions and teacher appointment can be developed and presented in different studies based on the present research results.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by the author with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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Research and Publication Ethics Statement

Since the data used in the study belong to the period before 2020, ethics committee approval is not required. I consciously assure that ethical rules have been followed in this study and that the requirements of the article have been fulfilled as the author:

• This material is the author own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.

• The paper reflects the author own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.

• The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.

• All sources used are properly disclosed.

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