

# Choosing Teaching Profession as a Career: Students' Reasons

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## Abstract

The success of educational change inevitably depends on the quality and performance of teachers. Therefore, the importance of employing high quality teachers is crucial for educational systems. Choosing talented and committed brains to teaching career depends on making it an attractive profession. It is considered that there are some reasons why student teachers choose teaching as a career. Many studies reveal that while some students choose this profession with altruistic-intrinsic and extrinsic reasons, some others choose it under the influence of others. This study aims to determine for what reasons student teachers choose teaching profession as a career. The study was carried out quantitatively and 1410 student teachers participated in this research. Results revealed that students chose teaching mostly with altruistic-intrinsic reasons. In this respect, while the female students chose it with altruistic-intrinsic reasons, the students from poor and crowded families and the male counterparts chose it with extrinsic reasons.

**Keywords:** student teacher, choosing career, education faculty

## 1. Introduction

Career choice is considered as one of the major areas of concern for young people nearing the end of their schooling (Alberts, Mbalo, & Ackermann, 2003). Since it is a challenge to make a choice of their career, it is important for both parents and their children. As teaching plays vital role in preparing future generations of any society, it is essential to employ qualified and dedicated teachers in the profession. Therefore, choosing teaching as a career becomes more crucial.

Many other factors within and outside the family have also been linked with career choices in teaching profession as well as other professions. When teacher recruitment is concerned, it is claimed that the profession fails to attract bright young people (Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). It has some structural, social and psychological reasons (Ingersoll, 2001; Lai, Mok, Ko, & Li, 2000; Menter, Hutchings, & Ross, 2002; Coulthard & Kyriacou, 2002). According to one view, student teachers choose this profession with altruistic-intrinsic reasons or extrinsic reasons. In another view, they choose it under the influence of others such as their parents, teachers or peers. This study aims to determine for what reasons student teachers choose teaching profession as a career. In attempting to investigate student teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a career, the research aims to increase awareness towards teacher training system in Turkey. It is considered that the results and recommendations to be provided through this research will lead teacher education program coordinators, national education ministry authorities and policy makers to revise the system to move forward.

### 1.1 Altruistic-Intrinsic Reasons

Altruistic-intrinsic reasons deal with seeing teaching as a socially worthwhile and important job. It also covers aspects of the job activity itself such as teaching children and an interest in teaching the school subject. It is implied in many researches that one of the main reasons for choosing to teach is based on intrinsic motives. In this respect, "intrinsic career value" indicates that students have an instinctive passion about teaching and genuinely enjoy it. Similarly, teaching is accepted to be worthwhile to find out the characteristics of those who are interested or not interested in teaching if we are concerned with encouraging people into teaching (Coulthard & Kyriacou 2002). According to Ozbek (2007) students teachers choose their career with personal factors rather than economic and social factors. Moreover, in some other studies it is claimed that student choose teaching as a

career since it is an autonomous profession while some others think that they can stay young in this profession. What is more, while some candidates think that they can bring up their children in this profession easier than any other work, some others have some ideological approaches like influencing young generations (Kelly, 2012; Lawver & Torres, 2011). Haciomeroglu and Taskin (2010) found that while some candidates choose the career as they think that the profession is respectable and they like teaching children, others think that the profession will make them happy. Tataroglu, Ozgen, and Alkan (1998) assert that they have an interest and love in teaching, see the profession as an appropriate, respectable and blessed work.

### 1.2 Extrinsic Reasons

It is revealed in some studies that student teachers are motivated to join profession with mostly extrinsic reasons (Chan, 1998). Extrinsic reasons refer to economic as well as conditions of service and social status. It is considered that students are interested in teaching as a career, and generally regard teaching as a preferred and respected occupation (Lai, Ko, & Li, 2000). Students who are interested in teaching consider teaching career for its enormous contribution to society, good salaries and good working conditions. The security of employment offered by teaching and the attractive working hours and longer holidays (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Knobloch, 2005; Stiegelbauer, 1992; Hayes, 2000).

### 1.3 Influence of Others

Making their career choice under the influence of others means choosing the profession as a result of their peers, teachers, relatives and parents' effect (Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991; Bastick, 2000; Brown, 1992; Chuene, Lubben, & Newson, 1999; Saban, 2003; Cermik, Dogan, & Sahin 2010; Behymer & Cockriel 1988; Kniveton, 2004; Y. Boz & E. Boz, 2008; C. Papanastasiou & E. Papanastasiou, 1997, 1998; Haciomeroglu & Sahin, 2009; Ubuz & Sari, 2008). Student motives are also influenced by their own images and experiences of school life and the work of teachers (Hutchison & Johnson, 1994; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Reid & Caudwell, 1997; Chan, 1998; Heafford & Jennison, 1998).

Taking everything into consideration, it is evident that teacher candidates choose their career with different reasons. For this reason, this study aims to discover for what reasons student teachers choose teaching profession as a career. It also purposes to find out if variables like gender, department, grade, family social background, place they live, age produce significant difference.

## 2. Methodology

This study employed a survey method. The data were collected through a scale called the "Choosing Teaching Profession as a Career Scale (CTPCS)".

### 2.1 Sampling

The sampling was determined through purposive sampling method. The advantage of this method is that the researcher can use prior knowledge to choose respondents (Bailey, 1994). In this respect, 1410 student teachers participated in this research. And reliability and validity work was carried out 220 students out of this sample.

Participants were from the Departments of Education from seven public universities (*Adiyaman-18.0%*; *Mus Alpaslan-17.7%*; *Cumhuriyet-15.4%*; *Artvin Coruh-13.1%*; *Mersin-12.0%*; *Sakarya 13.0%* and *Inonu-10.9%*). Of these participants, 58.6% were female and 40.0% male. As far as their grade was concerned, 35.5% were freshmen, 22.3% sophomore, 19.5% junior and 22.7% seniors. Of them, 19.5% were from the departments of Primary School Teaching, 17.7% Science and Technology Teaching, 15.2% Psychological Counseling and Guidance, 12.8% Pre-School Teaching, 10.0% Social Sciences Teaching, 9.6% Turkish Teaching, 8.9% Religious Studies and Ethics Education, 4.2% Mathematics Teaching, 2.1%.

### 2.2 Scale Adaptation Process

In this study, the "Choosing Teaching Profession as a Career Scale (CTPCS)" was used with a written permission of Lai, Chan, Ko and So who developed it. It was a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" with a midpoint of 3. It had 22 items below three sub-dimensions: the altruistic-intrinsic reasons sub-dimension (9 items), the extrinsic reasons sub-dimension (8 items) and the influenced by others sub-dimension (5 items). Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was discovered as 0.79 in general. This three-factor structure explained 45% of the total variance.

In the adaptation process of the original scale, back-translation technique was used. This technique is the preferred one although it can be time consuming and expensive. In this technique, a scale is translated into the target language by one translator and then translated back into the source language by another independent translator who is blinded to the original questionnaire. The two source-language versions are then compared

(Sperber, 2004; Looman & Farrag, 2009). Then, it was proofread by 48 students. As a result, it was proved that the language was understandable, the scale was valid and usable in the Turkish Culture.

### 2.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA is considered to be a general modeling approach that is designed to test hypotheses about a factor structure whose number and interpretation are given in advance (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2000). In CFA, on the other hand, one builds a model assumed to describe, explain, or account for the empirical data in terms of relatively few parameters (Jörreskog & Sörbom, 1993). The technique of CFA analyzes a priori measurement model in which both the number of factors and their correspondence with the indicators are explicitly specified (Kline, 2011). The most frequent used statistics regarding CFA and model-data is Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), RMSEA, NFI, NNFI, CFI, GFI, and AGFI. The goodness of fit index (GFI) of the items was presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The goodness of fit indexes

Fit index	Acceptable fit index	Suggested model (n:220)
$\chi^2/df$	$0 < \chi^2/sd < 3$	487.18/206 = 2.36
RMSEA	$.05 \leq RMSEA \leq .10$	.08
RMR	$.00 \leq RMR \leq .10$	.10
SRMR	$.00 \leq SMR \leq .10$	.09
NFI	$.90 \leq NFI \leq .95$	.95
NNFI	$.95 \leq NNFI \leq .97$	.95
CFI	$.90 \leq CFI \leq .95$	.92
GFI	$.90 \leq GFI \leq .95$	.90
AGFI	$.80 \leq AGFI \leq .90$	.80
PGFI	$.00 \leq PGFI \leq .95$	.66

As seen in the Table 1, Chi-square test is significant ( $\chi^2 = 487.18$ ,  $df = 206$  and  $\chi^2/df = 2.3 < 32$ ,  $p = .00$ ). What is more, the goodness of fit index (GFI = 0.90), the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI = 0.80), the normed fit index (NFI = 0.95), the non-normed fit index (NNFI = 0.95), the comparative fit index (CFI= 0.92), the root mean square residual (RMR = 0.10) are indicating good fit. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.08), as well as the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.09) indicate good fit. Furthermore, the overall model fit statistics in LISREL is within the generally accepted thresholds and suggests an acceptable goodness-of-fit. As a result of this analysis, it was discovered that results indicated good fit (Cote, Netemeyer, & Bentler 2001; Vieira, 2011; Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008; Brown, 2006; Schreiber, Stage, King, Nora, & Barlow, 2006; Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003; MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Baumgartner & Homburg, 1996). Road scheme of student teachers' perceptions was shown in Figure 1.

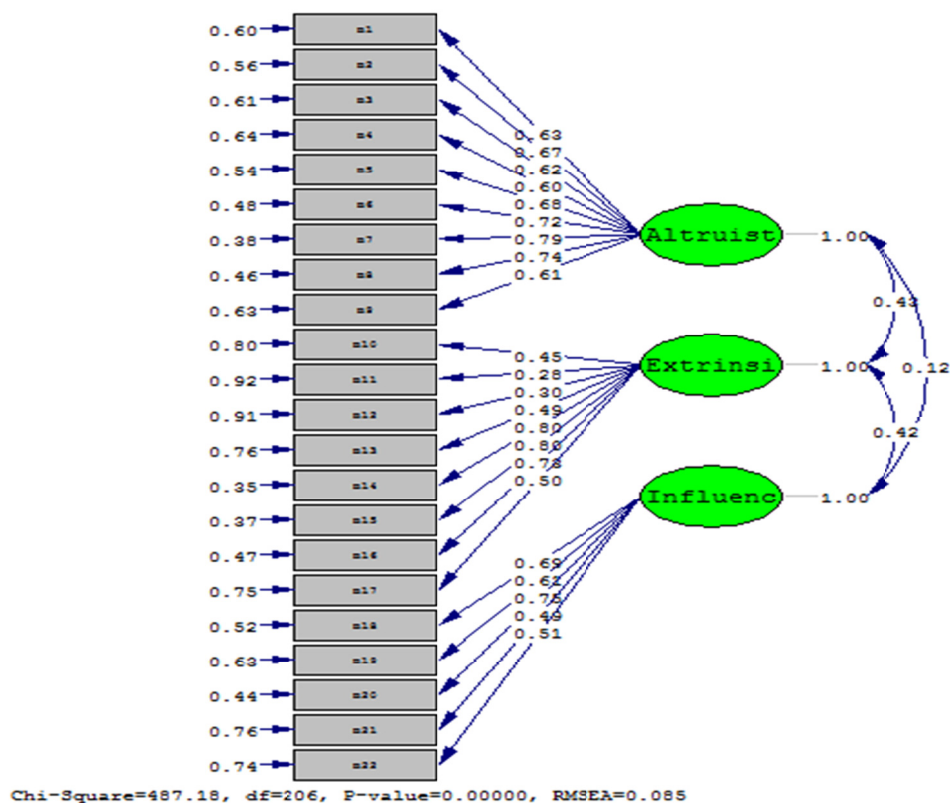


Figure 1. Road scheme of student teachers' perception rates of three-dimension models

Here, correlations were analyzed below three sub-dimensions. According to this, the correlation among altruistic-intrinsic and extrinsic sub-dimensions was 0.42. The correlation between altruistic-intrinsic and influenced by others is 0.12 and extrinsic and influenced by others is 0.42. This moderate correlation among sub-scales shows that each subscale exists in the construct itself (Peter 1981). In the altruistic-intrinsic reasons sub-dimension, the lowest error variance was 0.38, and the highest was 0.64. In the extrinsic reasons sub-dimension, while the lowest significance value was 0.35, the highest was 0.92. In the influence by others sub-dimension, the lowest significance value was 0.44 and the highest was 0.76. These values indicated that error variances were in acceptable limits in this study.

2.4 Reliability

The reliability coefficient of the adapted scale was found as 0.91 for the altruistic-intrinsic sub-dimension, 0.80 for the extrinsic reasons sub-dimension and it was 0.74 for the influenced by others sub-dimension. Generally, reliability coefficients values around 0.80 are “very good,” and values around 0.70 are “adequate” and over 0.70 as “excellent” (Kline, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that the reliability coefficient is excellent for this study.

2.5 Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, SPSS and Lisrel 8.80 packet programs were used. For the students teachers' demographic variables like socio-economic background (*education level of parents, place where their families live, family income, number of brothers and sisters*), grade, age, department and gender variables percentage (%) and frequency (f) and Crosstabs analysis were done. For significance statistics and dual comparisons, t-test was calculated and for multi-comparisons, one-way ANOVA was made. Significance level was accepted as  $p < 0.05$  for both tests. In all tests, “Test of Homogeneity of Variances” prerequisite was provided ( $p > 0.05$ ). For significance of the findings among groups, Tukey multi comparison test was used.

3. Findings

As far as the student teachers' demographics was concerned, while 52.7% of the participants' fathers had primary school degree, 31.4% had secondary, 14.5% university, and 1.4% master's degree. When their mothers' education level was concerned, 72.7% of them were primary school graduates, 23.2% secondary and 4.1% university graduates. Furthermore, 20.6% of the student teachers' families lived in villages, 28.9% township,

34.0% cities and 16.5% in big cities. Concerning the number of brothers and sisters, 7.7% of them had one, 16.5% two, 22.6% three, 18.9% four and 35.0% five or more brothers and sisters. Regarding the monthly family income, while 29.7% of them had approximately 1000 Turkish Lira and less, 29.2% between 1001-1500 TL, 19.1% between 1501-2000 TL, 11.4% between 2001-2500 TL, 5.8% of them between 2501-3000 TL and 4.7% of them had 3001 TL and over.

While 23.1% of the student teachers stayed with their families or relatives, 40.7% at public dormitories, 16.5% private or foundation dormitories, and 19.6% with their friends. 76.0% of the participants took bursary or student loans. Of the participants, while 38.4% studied in the same city, 26.0% in a neighboring city, 15.2% in the same geographical area, and 20.4% in a different geographical area.

When gender variable was concerned, significant differences were discovered among their views on career choice and altruistic-intrinsic reasons [ $t_{(1408)} = 2.09, p < .05$ ]. According to that the female student teachers choose their careers with altruistic-intrinsic reasons compared to their male counterparts

As far as the number of brothers and sisters was concerned, significant differences were also discovered. As such, those who come from crowded families make their choices with extrinsic reasons [ $F_{(4-1404)} = 5.16, p < .01$ ]. The students with five or more brothers and sisters choose their careers with extrinsic reasons compared to those with three or less brothers and sisters ( $p < .05$ ).

There were also significant differences between students' views and extrinsic reasons in terms of the place they live [ $F_{(4-1405)} = 7.98, p < .01$ ]. According to that the student teachers who lived in private dormitories chose careers with extrinsic reasons compared to their counterparts who lived with their families, relatives or friends.

When the influence by others sub-dimension was concerned, significant differences were discovered [ $F_{(4-1405)} = 3.30, p < .05$ ]. According to that the student teachers who lived in private dormitories were influenced by others compared to those who did not ( $p < .05$ ).

As far as department variable and altruistic-intrinsic reasons were concerned, significant differences were obtained [ $F_{(8-1401)} = 10.18, p < .01$ ]. The students from the Turkish Teaching Department chose their careers with altruistic-intrinsic reasons compared to those from the departments of Primary School Teaching, Mathematics Teaching, Pre-school Teaching and Religious Studies and Ethics Education ( $p < .05$ ).

Regarding department variable and extrinsic reasons, significant differences were found [ $F_{(8-1401)} = 7.04, p < .01$ ]. According to that the students from the Psychological Counseling and Guidance Department chose their careers with extrinsic reasons compared to those from the departments of Pre-School Teaching, Primary School Teaching, Turkish Teaching, Mathematics Teaching and Science and Technology Teaching ( $p < .01$ ).

When department variable and influenced by others sub-dimension were concerned, significant differences were discovered [ $F_{(8-1401)} = 4.54, p < .01$ ]. According to that the students from the Religious Studies and Ethics Education Department were influenced by others compared to those from the Psychological Counseling and Guidance Department ( $p < .01$ ). By combining positive and negative poles, uncertainty was neglected. Finally, descriptive statistics were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Items rank	Choosing teaching profession as a career scale (N=1410)	Strongly disagree and disagree		Agree and strongly agree		$\bar{X}$	Sd
		f	%	f	%		
<i>Altruistic–intrinsic</i>							
A1	Teaching is Meaningful	420	29,8	835	59,2	3,41	1,35
A2	Enjoy Being With Children	414	29,3	775	54,9	3,38	1,30
A3	Wish to Help Others	317	22,5	918	65,1	3,59	1,25
A4	Challenging Nature of the Job	460	32,6	686	48,7	3,20	1,28
A5	Enjoy Being With Teenagers	405	28,7	768	54,5	3,36	1,26
A6	Like Working in the School Environment	393	27,9	775	54,9	3,38	1,27
A7	Fitting My Personality	364	25,8	831	58,9	3,49	1,29
A8	Wish to Teach the Subject(S) I Like	379	26,9	791	56,1	3,41	1,28
A9	Have Opportunities For Continuing Education	440	31,2	695	49,3	3,23	1,27
<i>Extrinsic</i>							
A10	Higher Salary	800	56,8	376	26,7	2,48	1,33
A11	Good Working Hours	415	29,4	797	56,5	3,38	1,30
A12	More Holidays	467	33,2	723	51,3	3,26	1,32
A13	Better Job Security	505	35,8	665	47,1	3,12	1,34
A14	High Social Status	637	45,2	474	33,7	2,81	1,26
A15	Good Career Prospects	617	43,7	479	34,0	2,82	1,27
A16	Government's High Regard For Education	712	50,5	411	29,1	2,61	1,28
A17	Easier to Find Teaching Vacancy	693	49,1	461	32,7	2,71	1,35
<i>Influenced by others</i>							
A18	Influenced By Peers	841	59,6	332	23,5	2,44	1,27
A19	Influenced By Family Members	751	53,2	441	31,2	2,65	1,33
A20	Influenced By the Mass Media	839	59,5	321	22,8	2,42	1,23
A21	Influenced By Teachers	584	41,4	598	42,5	2,97	1,37
A22	Reflect My Religious Belief	602	42,7	620	44,0	3,03	1,44

As seen in the Table 2, 65.1% of the students chose their careers to help children, 59.2% thought that teaching was meaningful and 58.9% considered that the profession fit their personalities. Moreover, 56.1% wished to help others, 54.9% enjoyed being with children and 54.9% enjoyed working. While 56.5% of them chose teaching career because of good working hours, 51.3% chose it for longer holidays and 47.1% for better job security. While 56.8% of them strongly disagreed or disagreed that they chose the career for higher salary, 50.5% chose it for government's high regard for education, 45.2% high social status, 49.1% finding teaching vacancy easier. Although approximately 60.0% of the students stated that they were not influenced by their teachers, relatives, peers, media and family members, 42.5% were influenced by others.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The main concern of this study was to determine the reasons why student teachers choose teaching profession as a career. It also aimed to find out if variables like gender, department, grade, family social background, place

they live, age produced significant difference. In this respect, a number of results were obtained.

According to one of the results, most of the student teachers of this sample came from poor, lower educated families who mostly lived in villages or townships. They mostly stayed at public, foundation or private dormitories and met their financial needs with bursaries or student loans. They also attend to universities mostly in the city where they are currently living or a neighboring city and the places where geographically in the same region. As can be understood, the students who choose teaching as a career come from generally poor, middle class and crowded families. This is probably because of the economic difficulties that the families have. They do not want to send their children to far and big cities to attend university as life standards are comparatively higher in big cities compared to cities they currently live. It is easier to meet their needs when children stay with them at their homes. Several studies discovered similar results. These studies prove that teaching is a profession of economically lower or middle classes (Banks, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Zeichner, 1996; Durcharme & Agne, 1989; Villegas, 1993; Sleeter, 2001).

There is also difference between “salary” and “working with children” factors in terms of gender. In other words, while women prefer working with children, males prefers for salary. The student teachers who had more brothers and sisters chose the profession with extrinsic reasons. In the Turkish Society, in crowded families, it was expected from a child to choose a career which provides job security. It seemed that economic reasons determined career choice of children at crowded families. In this respect, it is known that finding work in teaching career is relatively easy although it becomes tough at times. In some studies, it is considered as a profession that contributes to society, salary and status (Johnston, McKeown, & McEwen, 1999). Moreover, in some studies it is claimed that student teachers consider the profession as an important career choice (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Fwu & Wang, 2002). While some researches include opportunities (Borchert, 2002) and some others imply teacher factor (Goh & Atputhasamy, 2001; Park, 2005; Cermik, Dogan, & Sahin, 2010; Kok, 2012).

Many studies reveal that gender related issues determine this choice as well. In this respect, according to another result obtained from this research, the female student teachers chose teaching profession as a career with altruistic–intrinsic reasons. It is indicated that they perform the profession with love and commitment. This is consistent with the results which were found in some other studies (Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Chan, 1998; Daehlen, 2007; Hutchinson & Johnson, 1994; Johnston, McKeown, & McEwen, 1999; D. Newby, Smith, R. Newby, & Miller, 1995; Saban, 2003; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012). The 2009-2010 school statistics also proves it. According to that, 95.0% of pre-school teachers were female, 52% primary education, 41.9% secondary school in Turkey (Fwu & Wang, 2002). This shows that teaching is perceived as a feminized profession (Creed & Patton, 2003; Spitze & Logan, 1990; Wilgosh, 2002; Miller, Lietz, & Kotte, 2002; Heckert et al., 2002; Small & McClean, 2002; Bailyn, 2003; Basten, 1997).

On the other hand, in some other researches it is claimed that male candidates choose the profession for its status, salary and career opportunities. In this regard, male students are more influenced by status, salary and career opportunities. According to them, the factors influencing the choice of primary teaching as a career option among sixth formers differed significantly between males and females. Here, the female students tend to value teaching as a profession more highly than their male counterparts (D. Newby, Smith, R. Newby, & Miller, 1995; Butcher & Lewis, 2002; Johnston, McKeown, & McEwen, 1999; Foster & Newman, 2005; Saban, 2003; Smedley, 2007; Parr, Gosse, & Allison, 2008; Ozbek, 2007; Sahin, Cokadar, & Usak, 2008). In some studies it was discovered that female teachers choose this career with intrinsic reasons different from male ones (Saban, 2003; Y. Boz & N. Boz, 2008; Haciomeroglu & Sahin, 2009; Johnston, McKeown, & McEwen, 1999).

In another study, it was discovered that while some candidates liked teaching others, some others chose it because they believed that the profession was respectable. They also liked longer holidays, employment opportunities, working hours and conditions as well as job security (Haciomeroglu & Taskin, 2010). In another study, it was discovered that while teachers chose the profession as it provided career opportunities and contributions to the society (Lai, KO, & Li, 2000). Oruc (2011) discovered that trainee teachers have positive perceptions about teaching career.

In this research, it was also found that a great deal of student teachers consider teaching as a blessed profession. It may stem from the perception of teaching in the historical process. In the ancient civilizations and societies like Sumerians, Egyptians, Israeli, and Indian and later in Muslim societies, teaching is considered as one of the most blessed professions (Sonmez, 2010). Moreover, Yuce, Sahin, Kocer, and Kana (2013) found out that extrinsic, altruistic, and intrinsic motivations play important roles while choosing teaching career. Ozturk and Akar (2012) the social-cultural context of Turkish society shaped participants’ motivations and perceptions.

As far as department variable was concerned, while the students from the department of Turkish Teaching chose the career with altruistic–intrinsic reasons, those from the Psychological Counseling and Guidance Department chose it with extrinsic reasons. The students from the departments of Religious Studies Department and Ethics Education chose it under the influence of others.

It is discovered by many student teachers have some reasons to choose teaching profession as a career. These reasons may be altruistic-intrinsic reasons, extrinsic reasons, self-realization reasons, material reasons, influence by others reasons or some other ones. No matter what reasons they choose the profession for, it has a significant effect in educational system as well as their own lives. Therefore, it can be concluded that pre-service education should be organized with respect to educational goals primarily. Students may have their own reasons, but educational institutions have their priorities and aims that are more important than personal reasons. The recommendations reached through the results obtained in this study are below:

- Most student teachers tend to attend to universities and also work in the same city, which may limit their points of views. Therefore, they should benefit from Farabi and Erasmus programs to broaden their points of views.
- Number of Anatolian Teacher Schools should be increased as well as their quality. As students who attend these schools may probably choose the career with altruistic–intrinsic reasons, students should be inclined to colleges of education from these schools.
- Students should be supported in terms of food, housing, loans and bursary.
- An interview should be conducted to choose students for colleges of education instead of central exams.
- It is considered that the status of teaching career is relatively low. It is thought that it should be increased to attract successful students to the profession.

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