



## PUBLIC PERSONNEL SELECTION EXAMINATION USED IN TEACHER APPOINTMENTS IN TURKEY: THROUGH THE EYES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

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### Abstract:

In recent years, some factors such as the number of graduates from the faculties of education is more than that of the positions declared by Ministry of National Education (MoNE); appointment in some branches is limited; candidates should get high scores from the Public Personnel Selection Examination (PPSE, it is known “KPSS” in Turkish) to be appointed, cause increasing prospective teachers’ anxieties and make the PPSE as a hyper important exam. The aim of this study is to examine primary school prospective teachers’ perspectives of the PPSE. The research group involved 108 prospective teachers in the last year of the department of primary school education at a public university in the north of Turkey. There were 78 females and 30 males. Data for this study was collected via a questionnaire in which the items were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale. An exploratory factor analysis was used to convert the numerous variables into limited number of meaningful and independent factors. At the end of this analysis, seven factors were determined. The data collected for the research were analysed with the help of a quantitative software. The arithmetic mean values of the items were calculated and used in the comments. The significant results of the study revealed that the anxiety about not being able to be appointed as a teacher was an important psychological pressure on the prospective teachers. In this context, the lower rate of appointment to a teaching post, the idea of failure in the PPSE, the high sense of responsibility towards their family negatively affected them in the preparation process to the PPSE.

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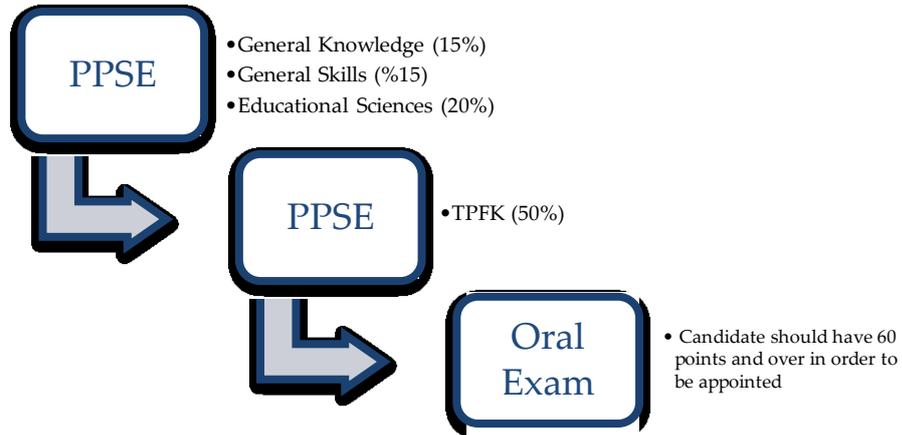
## 1. Introduction

Educational institutions are those where the individuals that the society needs are trained. Their importance cannot be denied. Sure, the principal role in these institutions belongs to the teachers. Teachers are one of the most important elements for the development of a country and therefore their training in the desired qualifications will ensure that the development of the country in the future will be in the desired direction and level (Kaya, 1984, cited in, Özer & Alkan, 2017). Besides, there are cultural and social duties of teachers in transferring the values of society to future generations and ensuring social peace (Özden, 2005). For this reason, countries attach great importance to the training and selection of qualified teachers and are continuing their quests on this issue that teachers are trained in the best way in both pre-service and in-service education (S. Baştürk, 2011). As students are the mirror of their teachers, we evaluate teachers by looking at their students. In this context, Oktar and Bulduk (1999) indicate that negative teachers behaviours are the main reason for the failure of students.

According to Kavcar (2002), there is a general view that teacher education is an open, dynamic and continuous process. In other words, teacher education has a structure that teacher should follow constantly throughout the lifetime and be tracked by educational and employer institutions. This structure can be defined with the following components: selection, training, appointment, and in-service training of teachers.

In Turkey, after graduating in order to be able to study in faculties of education, students should make an application for higher education institutions with their secondary education achievement scores and scores obtained from the Higher Education Transition Examination, and Undergraduate Placement Examination. The placement of our candidates is centrally realized by the Student Selection and Placement Centre (SSPC, it is known "ÖSYM" in Turkish). After graduation, in order to be appointed as a teacher, prospective teachers must pass through a two-stage process: the written exam (PPSE) and the oral exam. As well summarized by İsmail and Demir (2017), between 2002 and 2013 prospective teachers had to succeed in the General Knowledge, General Abilities and Educational Sciences sections of the PPSE, which was prepared by the SSPC. From 2013 onwards, prospective teachers should pass the Teaching Profession Field Knowledge (TPFK) exam in addition to the PPSE, and those who were successful in both exams were appointed within a limit set by the budget and

number determined by Ministry of Finance and by Ministry of National Education (MoNE). By 2016, the oral exam was entered in the life of prospective teachers. So, they should pass the oral exam in case they were successful in the PPSE and the TPFK. This process is summarized in Figure 1:



**Figure 1:** The process of appointment of a prospective teacher

If we need to give a little more detail about the PPSE, it helps to select personnel for first-time public service duties and pre-select personnel to be appointed for public sector positions and bodies through special talent tests. A candidate entering the PPSE can use his/her score for two years. Prospective teachers should take two sessions on Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon of the PPSE. The first session is composed of the General Ability and General Cultural Knowledge tests in which there are 120 questions. Candidates have 130 minutes in order to complete this test. In the second session, candidates should complete the Educational Sciences test including 80 questions, in 100 minutes (ÖSYM, 2017).

Within the PPSE, another session that prospective teachers have participate to is the Teaching Profession Field Knowledge (TPFK) exam in which they have to complete a test with 50 questions in 75 minutes (ÖSYM, 2017). The distribution of the questions is 80% from the subject-matter knowledge and 20% from the pedagogical content knowledge (we use this concept according to the terminology of Shulman, 1986, 1987). This session is held 3-5 weeks after the first two. All the questions in the PPSE are in multiple-choice form. Table 1 shows the test contents of TPFK exam for primary school prospective teachers:

**Table 1:** Test contents of TPFK exam for primary school prospective teachers

| Tests of TPFK exam                       | Approximate weight of questions in test  |
|--|--|
| Subject Matter Knowledge test (80%)      | Basic Mathematics (12%), General Biology (6%), General Physics (6%), General Chemistry (%6), Turkish Language (12%), Turkish Literature during the Republic Period (6%), Children's Literature (6%), History of Civilization (6%), Turkish History and Culture (6%), General Geography (6%), Turkey Geography and Geopolitics (8%) |
| Pedagogical Content Knowledge test (20%) | -  |

As the table reveals, primary school prospective teachers are perhaps among the most disadvantaged candidates for the PPSE, because the scope of PPSE is very broad for them due to their branch. Sure, this further complicates their process of preparing for the PPSE. In recent years, some factors such as the number of graduates from the faculties of education is more than that of the positions declared by MoNE, appointment in some branches is limited; candidates should get high scores from the PPSE to be appointed, cause increasing prospective teachers' anxiety (R. Baştürk, 2007; Cüceloğlu, 2016; Karaçanta, 2009). One of the major concerns for people is to not know what will happen in the future. Finding a job after graduation, unemployment, job selection and different responsibilities are some of the factors which increase the university students' anxieties in the last years (Temur, Özkan, Atlı, & Zırhlıoğlu, 2011). Table 2 reveals the number of prospective primary school teachers entering the PPSE and appointed as teachers by years:

**Table 2:** Number of prospective primary school teachers entering the PPSE and appointed as teachers by years

| Years       | Number of candidates entering the PPSE | Number of candidates appointed as teachers | Percent Rate (%) |
|-------------|--|--|------------------|
| <b>2013</b> | 18500                                  | 3500                                       | 18.9             |
| <b>2014</b> | 25074                                  | 7400                                       | 29.5             |
| <b>2015</b> | 26700                                  | 4150                                       | 15.5             |
| <b>2016</b> | 24739                                  | 2494                                       | 10.1             |

(Source: "2016 Şubat atamaları sınıf öğretmenliği branş analizi," n.d.)

From Table 2, we consider that there is a very serious difference between the number of prospective teachers entering the PPSE and that of prospective teachers appointed as teachers and the difference continues to increase year after year. This is also a clear indication of why the prospective teachers and their families have such a high future concern.

### **1.1 The significance of the study**

The obligation to get high scores from the PPSE to be appointed increases the psychological pressure on prospective teachers. The number of prospective teachers is rapidly increasing due to incorrect teacher training policies. Existing quotas of teachers to be appointed cannot meet this increase. This reduces the chances of appointing prospective teachers from year to year and accordingly it is becoming more difficult for them to get the desired score in this exam. Because of all these, the issue of teachers' appointment and the PPSE become one of the most important agenda items in the country in recent years (Karataş & Güleş, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the primary school prospective teachers' perspectives of the PPSE. We think that the results of the study are important for contributing to get a general idea of the PPSE and to reveal the current situation. In this context, we hope that the revealed results will contribute to the improvements that will be made in order to make the exam more functional. As underlined by Memduhoğlu and Kayan (2017), studies to be conducted on the PPSE will make this exam more qualified and a qualified PPSE will provide important contributions leading to decision-makers and practitioners, especially in the selection of qualified teachers playing a leading role in the development of the people who meet the needs of the age.

## **2. Method**

The research design used for this study was a descriptive survey method. This research design asks to observe and describe the behaviours of a subject without affecting it anyway (Karasar, 2009). In social science and psychology, descriptive survey method is often used to obtain a general overview of the subject.

### **2.1 The research group**

This research was conducted in 2015-2016 academic year spring semester with 108 prospective teachers in the last year of the department of primary school education at a public university in the north of Turkey. The research group consisted of 78 females (72.2%) and 30 males (27.8%).

### **2.2 Data collection and procedures**

Data was collected via a questionnaire administered to the prospective teachers by the researcher. The items of the questionnaire were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree". In the generation of an item pool, the researcher's experiences, the informal interviews with prospective

teachers and the literature review played a pioneer role. The final questionnaire consisted of 24 items. A panel involving three faculty members having a doctorate degree in education from the department of primary education examined the questionnaire to establish the content validity of the questionnaire. Furthermore, an exploratory factor analysis presented in detail below was used to convert the numerous variables into limited number of meaningful and independent factors. At the end of this analysis, seven factors were determined as follows: concern for the future, anxiety of not having an appointment as teacher, preparation process to the PPSE, overlap between the teaching and learning in the faculty and the PPSE, intensity resulting from the faculty lessons, a PPSE based on the application, and debates about the PPSE.

### **2.3 Data analysis**

The data collected were analysed and interpreted using the methods of quantitative analysis with the help of SPSS 21.00 (Statistical Program for Social Sciences). The arithmetic mean values of the items were calculated and used in the comments. Principal components method and varimax rotation were performed to test the construct validity of the questionnaire and the factor structure of items.

As we previously mentioned, we determined seven factors at the end of the factor analysis. As shown by Table 3, seven factors whose loading value was more than 0.40, eigenvalues greater than 1.0, and explained 65.202% of the total variance, were determined. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was calculated as 0.711 and the Bartlett test was significant (i.e. a significance value of less than 0.05). This means that the variables were correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis (Sipahi, Yurtkoru, & Çinko, 2010). According to Büyüköztürk, (2017), the significance of the result of this test can be interpreted as a proof of normality of scores. The general reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was found to be 0.755. Factor loadings, eigenvalues, variance percentages and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the factors, were presented in Table 3.

Each of the factors was entitled according to their factor loadings and variables contained. For instance, factor 1 was grouped under the name "thought of failure in the PPSE" and refers to prospective teachers' anxieties resulting from the thoughts of failure in the PPSE. This factor with 5 variables had high factor loadings (0.57-0.80) and explained 22.825% of the total variance. Factor 2 was grouped under the name "anxiety of not having an appointment as teacher" and refers to prospective teachers' concerns resulting from not having a job after graduation. This factor with five variables had factor loadings varying between 0.55 and 0.82, explained 12.231%, and with the first factor, 35.06% of the total variance.

**Table 3: Factors and Variables**

| Factors and variables  | Factor loading | Eigenvalue | Variance | Alpha coefficient |
|--|----------------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| <b>Factor 1: Concern for the future</b>  |                | 5.478      | 22.825   | .804              |
| - The PPSE has an active role in the formation of my concern for the future.                                     | .798           |            |          |                   |
| - I am living physical problems due to the PPSE stress.  | .756           |            |          |                   |
| - The belief that I cannot be successful in the PPSE affects me psychologically in a negative way.               | .750           |            |          |                   |
| - The idea of failure in the PPSE frightens me.  | .709           |            |          |                   |
| - The PPSE increases my sense of responsibility towards my family.   | .567           |            |          |                   |
| <b>Factor 2: Anxiety of not having an appointment as teacher</b>   |                | 2.935      | 12.231   | .809              |
| - The frequent changes in the teacher appointment system negatively affect my preparation process to the PPSE.   | .820           |            |          |                   |
| - The fact that the number of teachers to be appointed is limited, negatively affects my studies of examination. | .807           |            |          |                   |
| - The effort of exactly meeting our family's expectations is another element of psychological pressure           | .654           |            |          |                   |
| - The PPSE worries me.   | .588           |            |          |                   |
| - The idea that I would fail in the PPSE negatively affects my preparation process.                              | .548           |            |          |                   |
| <b>Factor 3: Preparation process to the PPSE</b>   |                | 1.781      | 7.421    | .725              |
| - The lack of my family support for the PPSE increases my anxieties.   | .798           |            |          |                   |
| - My family thinks that I will fail in the PPSE.   | .722           |            |          |                   |
| - Thinking my family's reaction when I am not appointed as a teacher negatively affects my preparation process.  | .642           |            |          |                   |
| - I think that I neglect my lessons in the faculty due to the PPSE.  | .554           |            |          |                   |
| - I feel happy when I study for the PPSE.  | .508           |            |          |                   |
| <b>Factor 4: Overlap between the teaching and learning in the faculty and the PPSE</b>                           |                | 1.712      | 7.134    | .668              |
| - The teaching and learning during the undergraduate education is suitable for the PPSE.                         | .784           |            |          |                   |
| - I think that our lecturers are sufficient to prepare us for the PPSE.  | .780           |            |          |                   |
| <b>Factor 5: Intensity resulting from the faculty lessons</b>  |                | 1.411      | 5.878    | .559              |
| - I cannot focus on the PPSE because of the intensity of my faculty lessons.                                     | .772           |            |          |                   |
| - I believe that all lessons in the faculty should be taught in accordance with the content of PPSE.             | .760           |            |          |                   |
| <b>Factor 6: a PPSE based on the application</b>   |                | 1.199      | 4.995    | .574              |
| - The interview is a more appropriate examination system for teacher selection.                                  | .800           |            |          |                   |
| - I think that an application exam to be made would be suitable for the purpose.                                 | .662           |            |          |                   |
| <b>Factor 7: Debates about the PPSE</b>  |                | 1.133      | 4.719    | .476              |
| - I think that the removal of PPSE would give better results.  | .753           |            |          |                   |
| - Talking about the PPSE bothers me.   | .643           |            |          |                   |
| - I do not believe that one can succeed in the PPSE without going to cram school.                                | .485           |            |          |                   |

*Principal components factors with varimax rotation  $p < 0.000$*

*Keiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy: .71 Barlett's Test of Sphericity: 276*

### 3. Results

In this section, we presented the results of the questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation of items were presented in Table 4:

**Table 4:** Mean and Standard Deviation Value of the Items of the Questionnaire

| Items  | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|--|------|-----------|
| <b>Factor 1: Concern for the future (<math>\bar{X}=3,74</math>)</b>  |      |           |
| - The PPSE increases my sense of responsibility towards my family.   | 4.19 | 1.024     |
| - The idea of failure in the PPSE frightens me.  | 3.97 | 1.139     |
| - The PPSE has an active role in the formation of my concern for the future.                                       | 3.91 | 1.098     |
| - The belief that I cannot be successful in the PPSE affects me psychologically in a negative way.                 | 3.62 | 1.302     |
| - I am living physical problems due to the PPSE stress.  | 3.04 | 1.373     |
| <b>Factor 2: Anxiety of not having an appointment as teacher (<math>\bar{X}=4,09</math>)</b>                       |      |           |
| - The fact that the number of teachers to be appointed is limited, negatively affects my studies of examination.   | 4.2  | .993      |
| - The frequent changes in the teacher appointment system negatively affect my preparation process to the PPSE.     | 4.19 | .971      |
| - The effort of exactly meeting our family's expectations is another element of psychological pressure             | 4.19 | 1.034     |
| - The PPSE worries me.   | 4.04 | 1.118     |
| - The idea that I would fail in the PPSE negatively affects my preparation process.                                | 3.81 | 1.139     |
| <b>Factor 3: Preparation process to the PPSE (<math>\bar{X}=2,89</math>)</b>                                       |      |           |
| - I feel happy when I study for the PPSE.  | 3.39 | 1.393     |
| - I think that I neglect my lessons in the faculty due to the PPSE.  | 3.14 | 1.343     |
| - Thinking my family's reaction when I am not appointed as a teacher negatively affects my preparation process.    | 3.00 | 1.347     |
| - The lack of my family support for the PPSE increases my anxieties.   | 2.55 | 1.512     |
| - My family thinks that I will fail in the PPSE.   | 2.36 | 1.264     |
| <b>Factor 4: Overlap between the teaching and learning in the faculty and the PPSE (<math>\bar{X}=3,18</math>)</b> |      |           |
| - The teaching and learning during the undergraduate education is suitable for the PPSE.                           | 3.47 | 1.279     |
| - I think that our lecturers are sufficient to prepare us for the PPSE.  | 2.89 | 1.376     |
| <b>Factor 5: Intensity resulting from the faculty lessons (<math>\bar{X}=3,63</math>)</b>                          |      |           |
| - I cannot focus on the PPSE because of the intensity of my faculty lessons.                                       | 3.73 | 1.173     |
| - I believe that all lessons in the faculty should be taught in accordance with the content of PPSE.               | 3.53 | 1.350     |
| <b>Factor 6: a PPSE based on the application (<math>\bar{X}=3,11</math>)</b>                                       |      |           |
| - I think that an application exam to be made would be suitable for the purpose.                                   | 3.31 | 1.343     |
| - The interview is a more appropriate examination system for teacher selection.                                    | 2.92 | 1.461     |
| <b>Factor 7: Debates about the PPSE (<math>\bar{X}=3,29</math>)</b>  |      |           |
| - Talking about the PPSE bothers me.   | 3.49 | 1.293     |
| - I think that the removal of PPSE would give better results.  | 3.31 | 1.287     |
| - I do not believe that one can succeed in the PPSE without going to cram school.                                  | 3.06 | 1.352     |

The factor "preparation process to the PPSE" has the lowest average (with an average of 2.89) and the factor "anxiety of not having an appointment as teacher" has

the highest average with an average of 4.09. The factor “system of PPSE” with an average of 3.11 is the second lowest factor of perspectives of PPSE. Regarding the items of the factors, the anxiety of not having an appointment as teacher plays an important role in the prospective teachers’ perspectives of PPSE ( $\bar{X}=4.09$ ). Thus, their preparation process to the PPSE was negatively affected by the limited number of teachers to be appointed ( $\bar{X}=4.2$ ), and the frequent changes in the teacher appointment system ( $\bar{X}=4.19$ ). Moreover, in this process, we understand that the willingness to exactly meet their family’s expectations causes an important psychological pressure on the prospective teachers ( $\bar{X}=4.19$ ). Therefore, the PPSE worries them ( $\bar{X}=4.04$ ), and the idea that they would fail in the PPSE negatively affects their preparation process ( $\bar{X}=3.81$ ).

One of the factors that occupy an important place in the PPSE perspectives is the prospective teachers’ future anxiety ( $\bar{X}=3.74$ ). Thus, the PPSE increases the prospective teachers’ sense of responsibility towards their family ( $\bar{X}=4.19$ ), the idea that they fail in PPSE frightens them ( $\bar{X}=3.97$ ), the PPSE plays an important role in creating the prospective teachers’ future anxiety ( $\bar{X}=3.91$ ), and the fact that they think about the possibility of failure in the PPSE psychologically affects them ( $\bar{X}=3.62$ ).

The Intensity resulting from the faculty lessons is another cause of anxiety for the prospective teachers ( $\bar{X}=3.63$ ). Therefore, they are unable to focus on the preparation to the PPSE due to the intensity of the faculty lessons ( $\bar{X}=3.73$ ) and according to them all faculty lessons should be taught in accordance with the content of PPSE ( $\bar{X}=3.53$ ). On the other hand, in some factors we consider that the prospective teachers have difficulties in exhibiting a clear stance. For instance, we cannot state that they are sure whether debates about the PPSE ( $\bar{X}=3.29$ ) worry them. The prospective teachers are not happy to talk about the PPSE ( $\bar{X}=3.49$ ). They are not clear that the removal of PPSE would give better results ( $\bar{X}=3.31$ ) and going to cram school is very necessary to succeed in the PPSE ( $\bar{X}=3.06$ ).

The prospective teachers also seem a little confused about the association of the teaching and learning process in the faculty with the PPSE ( $\bar{X}=3.18$ ). They think that the teaching and learning during the undergraduate education is suitable for the PPSE ( $\bar{X}=3.47$ ), but they are not sure that the lecturers are sufficient to prepare them for the PPSE ( $\bar{X}=2.89$ ). The present PPSE is very criticized because of its format which only takes into consideration theoretical knowledge, but the prospective teachers neither agree nor disagree about the fact that an application exam to be made is suitable for the purpose ( $\bar{X}=3.31$ ), and that the interview is a more appropriate examination system for teacher selection ( $\bar{X}=2.92$ ).

Regarding the preparation process to the PPSE, it cannot be asserted that the prospective teachers are very happy when they study for the PPSE ( $\bar{X}=3.39$ ), are not sure

about whether they neglect their lessons in the faculty due to the PPSE ( $\bar{X}=3.14$ ), cannot clearly say “no” to the statements that thinking their family’s reaction when they are not appointed as a teacher negatively affects their preparation process ( $\bar{X}=3.00$ ), and the lack of their family support for the PPSE increases their anxieties ( $\bar{X}=2.55$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

The issue of how to select persons who will be teachers comes at the head of the most debated topics all over the world. In Turkey, this is also an open-ended question. Because of an abnormal increase of candidate numbers in the face of existing quotas, the problem of appointment grows day after day and consequently the importance of PPSE in prospective teachers’ life increases even more.

The study revealed that the limitation of quotas negatively affects the prospective teachers and their studies of examination. As it is known, the PPSE is a type of competition in which the relative evaluation is important. Therefore, the situation of a candidate is undoubtedly affected by the number and the quality of the other candidates who take this examination. On the other hand, it should be noted that one of the most important handicaps recently seen in Turkey is the frequent change of teacher appointment system or the addition of newness to it. Unfortunately, these frequent changes make the prospective teachers uneasy and negatively affect their motivation to prepare for the PPSE. Furthermore, their feeling of responsibility towards the family also seems to be increased during the exam preparation process. The prospective teachers are sure of family support for, and belief in their success in the PPSE. However, they are not sure of family reactions to their inability to be appointed as a teacher. Accordingly, the psychological pressure on them also increases in any case, the thought of failure in the PPSE becomes insupportable for them and affects them psychologically in a negative way. As they have so much stress, talking about the exam worries them. This shows that the exam occupies an important place in their future concerns and some of them can live physical problems due to the PPSE stress. The fact that there are the studies (Akgün, Gönen, & Aydın, 2007; Bozkurt, 2004; Temur et al., 2011), which revealed a meaningful relationship between the family attitude and the PPSE anxiety, suggests that these concerns of the prospective teachers are not unreasonable. This anxiety can arise from the extreme interest of the family as well as from its extreme indifference.

Another result of the study revealed the following dilemma experienced by the prospective teachers: They cannot focus on teaching and learning activities in the faculty of education due to the intensive preparation for the PPSE and in contrast, they

cannot focus on the PPSE due to the intensity of the faculty lessons. All this indicates that the PPSE requires an extra and intensive preparation. In Turkey, this problem is not valid for only prospective teachers, but also for students at almost every level of education (Baştürk, 2010; Baştürk & Doğan, 2011). By reason that all the given lessons and the done practices in the faculty are not in perfect harmony with the content of the exam, the prospective teachers want that all what they do in the faculty fully adapt to the content of PPSE. Sure, this is not possible in practice. As it is known, teaching profession is largely based on practice. However, the PPSE is largely based on theoretical knowledge. Because many teaching skills cannot be measured with this exam, the PPSE cannot be considered as a sufficient test of teacher selection (Baştürk, 2014; Nartgün Sezgin, 2008; Yılmaz, 2010). In the study of Sezgin and Duran (2011), most of the prospective teachers believe that an exam in teacher appointment is necessary, but the PPSE is not a suitable exam to select a qualified teacher. As a result, these requests of the prospective teachers in our study are very far from being accepted. In the same context, Atav and Sönmez (2013) also revealed that most of the prospective teachers think the teacher education they received in their undergraduate education is not quite related to the content of PPSE. Similarly, the prospective teachers who received the pedagogical formation certificate education (a certificate program given by the faculties of education for undergraduate students who graduated outside the faculties of education to become a teacher) do not consider the content of this education as fully sufficient. As its questions do not exactly coincide with the curriculum of faculty of education, in their opinion the training in this certificate program is not enough to respond educational science and general culture questions of the PPSE.

The prospective teachers are not able to get a complete idea on some issues, so it seems that they are confused. For instance, they are not sure whether their lecturers are sufficient to prepare them for the PPSE. Similarly, they cannot surely say that a prospective teacher who does not go to the cram school (cram schools are private education institutions in which students, typically in week-ends, in many instances, also after the school hours, especially in the last year of their education, are drilled on various aspects of the exams such as the PPSE) can succeed in the PPSE. On the other hand, it seems that the prospective teachers do not question too much the place of the PPSE in the existing teacher appointment system. Contrary to our study, in many studies, the prospective teachers believe that it is absolutely necessary to receive the cram school support in order to be successful in the PPSE (Atav & Sönmez, 2013; Eraslan, 2006; Karataş & Güleş, 2013; Sezgin & Duran, 2011).

On the other hand, it seems that the prospective teachers are not able to reach full clarity in their ideas about other types of exam outside the written exam. Thus, they

are not sure whether an application exam to be made is suitable and the interview is a more appropriate examination system for the appointment of teachers. Sure, it can be asserted that these uncertainties of the prospective teachers are due to the high-level subjectivity of oral examinations. There are studies whose results overlap with ours. For instance, the prospective teachers who participated to Özer and Alkan's (2017) study are also undecided about oral examination. Indeed, according to the results of another new study, prospective teachers mention the negativities of the oral examination as follows: the oral exams allow a subjective and biased evaluation; it is difficult to be certain of their coverage before the exam; during the oral examination, commission members exhibit some attitudes that are able to increase the excitement of candidates, and those who are not experts in the field can be the commission member (M. Yılmaz, 2017).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, we tried to investigate the primary school prospective teachers' perspectives of the PPSE with a quantitative approach. It is one of the open-ended questions that are discussed on how to select teachers in Turkey as well as in many countries. We believe that the results of the present study will contribute to this discussion and provide for the improvement and development of the exam used for the teacher appointment.

In the context of the obtained and discussed results above from this study, the following suggestions can be developed for decision-makers, practitioners and researchers:

- The prospective teachers feel a great sense of responsibility towards their families, and because of this sense of responsibility, they are under extreme psychological pressure. This is a very normal situation and there is a very close relationship with mistakes committed in teacher training from the past to the present. Increasing the number of education faculties uncontrollably, opening pedagogical formation certificate programs in almost all universities, increasing the quota of programs in the faculties of education continuously, not taking into account the supply/demand balance in teacher appointments fully etc., diminish prospective teachers' chances of appointment from day to day, and consume their and their families' hopes for the appointment. Therefore, by considering the supply/demand balance, the quotas of the programs in education faculties should be limited and the pedagogical formation certificate programs should seriously be taken under the control.

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- The PPSE system should not be changed frequently. Frequent changes negatively affect candidates' preparation processes and cause high concern in them. The opinions and propositions of all stakeholders, especially prospective teachers, must be taken into account when changes are made.
  - As in the last year, prospective teachers intensively prepare to the PPSE, the preparation process with the lessons exhausts them both psychologically and physically. They can neither spend the necessary attention to the lessons and nor correctly prepare to the PPSE. For this reason, the last year of teacher training programs can be lightened by re-examining.
  - Theory about teaching science and practice in the field are two main components of teacher training programs to help the development of prospective teachers' learning. The more the gap between theory and practice decreases, the more the efficiency of the program increases (S. Baştürk, 2016). Some researchers (Bahar, 2011; Tösten, Elçiçek, & Kılıç, 2012), consider as a serious shortcoming of not being considered in the teacher appointment of emotional and mental skills that are considered as important in teacher qualifications. However, the PPSE is a purely theory-based exam. In this regard, we believe that this exam cannot adequately fulfil the mission of effective teacher selection. In the oral exam, the answers given by the prospective teachers to some questions are taken into account, not their teaching practice. Therefore, the oral exam should be based on teaching practice, not only on question-answer process.
  - The content of PPSE and that of the teacher training programs should be overlapped as much as possible. However, we have to be sure that this does not undermine the practical side of teacher training programs.
  - This study allowed us to reveal the primary school prospective teachers' perspectives on the PPSE, but as it was designed with a quantitative approach, this was restricted only to their beliefs and so their responses to a Likert-type questionnaire. Further qualitative research to be conducted can examine the problem in a more detailed way and dimensions that cannot be detected by quantitative research can be revealed. For instance, candidates who succeed or failed in the PPSE can be examined to understand which individual characteristics led to success or failure.

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