

The examination of the Public Personnel Selection Examination (PPSE) in the of light pre-service teachers opinions

Sema ALTUN YALCIN*

Department of Science Education, Erzincan University, Erzincan, Turkey

Meryem OZTURAN SAGIRLI

Department of Math Education, Erzincan University, Erzincan, Turkey

Sinan YALCIN

Science Institute, Ataturk University, Erzurum, Turkey

Pasa YALCIN

Department of Science Education, Erzincan University, Erzincan, Turkey

Article history

Received:
17 May 2012

Received in revised form:
01 June 2012

Accepted:
06 June 2012

Key words:

The PPSE (KPSS),
Pre-Service Teachers,
Mathematic Education,
Science Education

The study was based on a qualitative research approach, and included a case study and content analysis. The study was conducted on a total of 131 students who studied Mathematic Education and Science Teaching, Department of Primary Education, Faculty of Education, Erzincan University, during the spring term of the educational year 2010-2011. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Public Personnel Selection Examination (PPSE) with all its dimensions in accordance with students' opinions. An analysis was made of the 5 open-ended questions addressed to the students. It was concluded that the PPSE has certain limitations.

Introduction

There is measurement and evaluation at every stage of educational activities as there should be. Otherwise, it would not be possible to determine whether an educational activity is sufficient or whether or not it achieves its aim. Educational measurement provides the opportunity to determine the degree of readiness of students, to follow their development process, to give feedback, to determine the adequacy of education and training activities, to identify the sufficiency shortcomings of the curriculum, and to obtain data about the future.

Various methods are used to measure student achievement in Turkey. At the end of each stage of education, the state holds central exams to measure students' achievement and to place them in an

* Correspondence: Sema ALTUN YALÇIN, Erzincan University, Department of Science Education, Erzincan, Turkey, saltun_11@hotmail.com

appropriate section according to their score (Tümkiye, Aybek and Çelik, 2007). During the academic life, the grades obtained from these exams are considered an indicator of students' competence. The students of faculties of education as well have obtained the right of education at that faculty through various central exams at earlier stages of their education. However, this series of exams do not end here and pre-service teachers have to sit for another examination to become teachers.

Education is very important in creating a future vision for countries. As individuals who practice educational activities that are so important in the development of societies, teachers should have the knowledge, skills, equipment and capabilities required by their profession. The appointment of applicants with lower qualifications as teachers would disrupt educational activities and lead to the failure in achieving the short-term and long-term objectives of education. Occupations are exalted with experts. The profession of teaching gains its meaning thanks to those who have the qualifications in teaching.

The training of pre-service teachers and the appointment process have been carried out in different ways throughout time depending on the conditions of Turkey (Kuru and Uzun, 2008). Some of these practices were the Reserve Officers Teacher Practice (1960), Substitute Teachers (1961), Initial Teacher Training (1970), Correspondence Teacher Education (1974), Accelerated Teacher Training Program (1975), Serving Military Service as Teachers (1987), mass appointment of anyone with a higher degree as teachers without further requirements (1996), and Distant English Education and Pre-School Teacher Training (1999) (Eraslan, 2004: 6; Açıl, 2010).

Today, the appointment of teachers requires a selection process. The method applied in the selection of pre-service teachers is a series of multiple-choice exams. However, it would be right to point out that this system is towards screening rather than selection as these exams measure one or few aspects of the candidates and they do not use a grading system based on the quota or available positions (Bulut and Doğar, 2006; Kuru and Uzun, 2008). The examinations for the selection of pre-service teachers in Turkey are as follows:

- **Teacher Proficiency Exam:** A preliminary-selection exam organized between 1985 and 1991 by the Ministry of National Education for the appointment of teachers.
- **Civil Service Exam:** A central preliminary and selection examination held by the state in 1999 for appointment to any kind of state institution (including teacher appointments) (Gündoğdu et al., 2008).
- **Public Professional Exam:** A central selection examination held by the Student Selection and Placement Center (SSPC) in 2001 for appointment to any kind of state institution (including teacher appointments). It replaced the Civil Service Exam (Yüksel, 2003).
- **Public Personnel Selection Examination:** A central selection examination held for the selection of the individuals to be appointed to public service for the first time and for the pre-screening of the individuals who will later sit for a competitive examination to be appointed to professions at public institutions and organizations (The Official Gazette, 2002). This exam consists of two parts, namely, group A and group B.

The Public Personnel Selection Examination (PPSE) is a central examination that selects the individuals who will be accepted to the entrance examination organized by institutions according to their own legislation for the positions in group (A), and determines the scores to be used for the placement of the individuals into the positions in group (B) (Official Gazette, 2002).

The PPSE is a central examination held by the SSPC and used for determining the people who will be assigned as civil servants for the first time. Civil servant candidates can begin their professional career depending on the scores they get from this exam. Pre-service teachers who will be appointed

for the first time as well can become a teacher after having sat for the PPSE. For the pre-service teachers, the PPSE is held in two sessions on Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon. The session on Saturday morning is composed of the 'General Ability' and 'General Knowledge' tests, and the Saturday afternoon session is composed of the 'Educational Sciences' test. Those who obtain the minimum scores to be determined after the examination have the right to apply for the quota determined by the Ministry of National Education (Baştürk, 2007: 164).

The PPSE is highly significant for pre-service teachers from a psychological, economic and social perspective. It is not the teacher but the state central examination system that decides the region of appointment, the capacity of the class and the circumstances under which s/he will work. In addition, what worries pre-service teachers more is to be appointed as a permanent staff or on contract as soon as possible, and passing successfully the PPSE to this end (Özsarı, 2008). For a teacher candidate, not being able to begin his/her professional career at an educational institution signifies, from an economic perspective, not earning money for at least one academic term; from a psychological perspective, failure at the end of a long and laborious educational life, and from a social perspective, lack of insurance or being considered from outsiders as an unemployed person despite his/her university (Üstüner, 2004).

The pre-service teachers who do not want to go through all these negative experiences are enrolled to courses in order to pass the PPSE, postpone pursuing their interests, limit their social life, reduce the time spent with friends and put a significant effort in getting high scores from the PPSE. However, what needs to be done is not over with these efforts; the pre-service teachers need to obtain above a certain score to be appointed and they should make it to the quota in the ranking.

The content and validity of the PPSE are questioned by many institutions and individuals. With this examination system, the appointment to some fields of study requires very high scores, while some others very low scores. In the end, the teachers appointed through these two groups of appointments are evaluated in the same category and the pre-service teachers' chances either increase or decrease according to their fields of study. Due to all these aspects, the PPSE serves as a preliminary examination rather than a measurement exam.

Despite its negative aspects, shortcomings, and criticism, the PPSE is still held (Yılmaz, 2010) and the employment of the teachers by the Ministry of National Education is based on the results of this examination (HEC, 2007). On 10 and 11 July 2010, the PPSE was held but the validity of the exam was called into question due to the claims about cheating and wangling of the questions. The SSPC stated through an online press release that the necessary investigations were carried out by the Police Department in some provinces and later it was decided to repeat the examination only partially, and the Educational Sciences Section of the examination was repeated on 26 September, 2010 (SSPC, 2010). With these developments, issues regarding the validity and reliability of the examination were raised again and debated, and the idea of a new exam was put forward. The authorities reported that there would be changes in the exam format but an official statement has not been made yet. This study aims to be informative about the possible changes in terms of content, format, method and timing towards alternative practices to the PPSE, and by taking students' opinions as a reference, to examine this highly debated and criticized exam through its aspects that are adopted and non-adopted, functioning and nonfunctional, and its shortcomings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate all aspects of the Public Personnel Selection Examination through the opinions of pre-service teachers. These general purpose line; sub-goals of this study are:

1. Do pre-service teachers think an examination like the PPSE is necessary for teacher appointments, and why?
2. Do pre-service teachers think there could be a practice for the appointment of teachers instead of the PPSE? If you think so, could you explain the contents of this practice?
3. Do pre-service teachers think the PPSE measures the qualifications required by your field of study?
4. Do pre-service teachers think the PPSE is a fair examination?
5. Did what pre-service teachers heard about the 2010 PPSE in the media influence you?

Method

This study was conducted in accordance with the qualitative research approach, case study method was used (McMillan and Schumer, 2006) and content analysis was conducted. Case study takes place in an everyday environment such as a classroom, a neighborhood or an organization and aims at the holistic interpretation of the environment or events that are subject of the study. Content analysis aims at the conceptualization of the data collected, the organization of the data in a logical way according to the emerging concepts and the determination of the themes that explain the data according to this (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2004: 227, 277).

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were 131 pre-service teachers enrolled to the Educational Faculty Department of Elementary Education, Mathematics and Science Education during the spring semester of the 2010-2011 academic year at a university in a medium-sized city in Turkey. 40 pre-service teachers from the department of mathematics education and 91 pre-service teachers from the department of science education participated in the study.

Data Collection

In this study, the students were asked to fill in a form, prepared in advance and composed of five open-ended questions, within a specific period of time. After the forms were collected, the students expressed their opinions and the unreadable and incomprehensible responses and the unanswered questions were excluded from the evaluation.

The five open-ended questions in the study were prepared through interviews with students, news in the written and visual media, reading and examining scientific documents, and expert opinion in line with the purpose of the study. In order to ensure the content validity of the open-ended questions, the questions were examined by three experts in the relevant field and the necessary changes and corrections were made. In addition, a pilot study of the open-ended document was conducted with three students to determine the sequence and the format of the questions.

Yıldırım and Şimşek (2006; 265) stressed that in qualitative studies, validity is assured through expert view, participant confirmation, and detailed descriptive methods, and reliability is achieved through consistency and confirmation analyses. In order to assure the validity of the current study, the findings were confirmed by three participants in the study group. In order to assure the reliability, the raw data collected in the study were provided to an expert, and the findings, evaluations and the suggestions were compared and contrasted with the expert's findings, evaluations and suggestions. Moreover, the findings of the study included the quotations which would reflect the general nature of the responses provided in the related theme, and every effort has been made to improve the quality of the study.

Data Analysis

This study obtained student opinions through five open-ended questions prepared in advance and the unreadable and incomprehensible responses and non-responses were excluded from the evaluation. The data were analyzed through content analysis, and similar data were grouped together with certain concepts and themes. This was done separately by three experts and the codes were later compared by the experts together to determine the consistency of the codes. It was observed that the codes were similar to a great extent. Together with the three experts, the excerpts at the bottom of each code were assessed one by one and the final version of the codes was prepared. The data were organized and interpreted according to the final version of the analysis.

Results

This section evaluates the answers given by the pre-service teachers during the semi-structured interview question by question.

Question 1: Do you think an examination like the PPSE is necessary for teacher appointments, and why?

The pre-service teachers' responses to this question were grouped into three: positive (necessary), negative (unnecessary), and both positive and negative (both necessary and unnecessary). One teacher candidate did not respond to the question and the non-response was excluded from the assessment. The categories and codes are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Analysis of the Answers Given to Question 1 by Pre-service teachers

| Categories | Codes | | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| Positive Answers Frequency | Screening 40 | Overcoming inadequacies 4 | Proof 2 | Justice 2 | No Reason 1 |
| Negative Answers Frequency | An exam is not necessary for appointment 17 | Limiting the quota 10 | It does not measure teacher proficiency 6 | It should be an applied examination 3 | Tired of No examinations reason 3 |
| Both Positive and Negative Answers Frequency | This exam should be held but it needs changes 20 | | | | |

The positive response category was grouped under 5 codes. The response with the highest frequency in this group was 'screening' with 40 responses. The pre-service teachers whose responses led to this code stated that an examination such as the PPSE is necessary due to the difference between the vacancies and the number of graduates, and furthermore, as the exam selects the best ones with the knowledge on the field of study and pedagogical training. Among the pre-service teachers that formed the code 'screening', the teacher candidate with the code S21 told that such an exam is compulsory as it chooses the best candidates in terms of pedagogical knowledge and motivation, while the teacher candidate M29 stated that the economic conditions in Turkey and the problems in the staff of institutions make such an exam necessary.

4 responses in the category of positive responses made up the code 'overcoming inadequacies'. The pre-service teachers that formed this code stated that they were able to obtain the knowledge they could not get from the university or partially obtained from the university especially in the field of educational sciences through studying for the PPSE. The teacher candidate S35 reported that s/he could complete the subjects that s/he thought to be partial by studying for the exam.

In this category, the responses of two pre-service teachers made up the code 'proof', while the responses of other two the code 'justice'. The pre-service teachers thought such an exam is necessary to prove their skills and knowledge in the code 'proof' and to ensure equity and balance between the candidates to be appointed in the code 'justice'.

In this category, one teacher candidate expressed the necessity of the exam without explaining the reason.

The category of negative responses was made up by the responses of the pre-service teachers who thought that the PPSE is not necessary. The code ‘an exam is not necessary for appointment’ had the highest frequency in this category with 17 responses. The pre-service teachers who formed this code stated that their aim in studying at faculties of education is to profess teaching in the future, so they studied in order to become teachers and received training for this purpose. Moreover, they said that their graduating from the university depends on whether they are successful or not at the end of this process, and thus, an extra examination is unnecessary. The pre-service teachers S32 and S62 whose responses made up this code stated that holding such an examination signifies distrust in university education and the teacher candidate M41 stated that the question whether the state trusts in the teachers it raises comes to mind.

The code with the second highest frequency in this category was ‘limiting the quota’. The common aspect of 10 responses that made up this code was that the number of pre-service teachers at faculties of education is high and introducing a measure to limit the quota would abolish the need for such an exam.

In the category of negative responses, 17 pre-service teachers made up the code ‘there should be questions about the field of study. These pre-service teachers stated that there should be an examination in line with their education, that is, an exam composed of questions about their fields of study. In addition, they underlined that the questions in the PPSE are about subjects that would not be helpful in their professional lives. These pre-service teachers added that losing time for studying about the subjects they will not encounter in their future professional lives is unjust. The teacher candidate S24 explained this injustice as: “As a science teacher candidate, I am evaluated by an examination that is not related to my own field of study. But for a social science teacher candidate, the exam is at least partially about the subjects s/he is trained in”. The teacher candidate S16 states that this examination does not contribute to the knowledge to be used in the professional lives of teachers.

In the category of negative responses, the responses of 6 pre-service teachers made up the code ‘it does not measure teacher proficiency’. This code was in general shaped by the idea that the PPSE does not measure the professional knowledge, and basic knowledge regarding the field of study and skills a teacher should have. The teacher candidate S57 expressed that the few questions that make up the PPSE are not sufficient to evaluate pre-service teachers. In addition, the teacher candidate S23 emphasized that as the exam is based on rote-learning, it cannot measure the teacher proficiency.

The responses of three pre-service teachers in this category formed the code ‘it should be an applied examination’. These pre-service teachers stated that the exam should be able to measure both the knowledge and skills required by the profession of teaching.

In this category, the responses by three pre-service teachers made up the code ‘tired of examinations’. They explained that they are constantly subject to a ‘marathon of exams’ throughout their educational life, which makes them get tired, and that every phase of their lives should not consist of exams. The pre-service teachers S40 and S47 stated that the appointment could be made according to the students’ success level at the university and that this exam is not necessary in any case.

In this category, 3 pre-service teachers underlined that the examination is not necessary, but did not give any reason.

The category of both positive and negative responses was formed by the responses of the pre-service teachers who considered the PPSE both necessary and unnecessary. The code with the highest frequency was 'this exam should be held but it needs changes' with 20 responses. The pre-service teachers S13, M39, and S44 stated that a four-year effort could not be measured in such a short time of two to three hours, and occasional exams should be held as one exam is not sufficient for the evaluation. The teacher candidate M49 told that the exam should be held but the students' grade average should be taken into consideration, while the teacher candidate M50 stated that the exam should be held after the teachers receive proficiency and specialization training.

Question 2: Do you think there could be a practice for the appointment of teachers instead of the PPSE? If you think so, could you explain the contents of this practice?

The responses given by the pre-service teachers to this question were grouped after the analysis into five categories: re-arrangement of the current exam, suggestion for another exam, satisfaction with the exam, abstention and the futility of the exam. The categories and codes are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The Analysis of the Answers Given to Question 2 by Pre-service teachers

| Categories | Codes | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| Re-arrangement of the current exam | Inclusion of knowledge of field of study | Inclusion of practice | Inclusion of both field of study and practice | Grade average | Holding the exams on different days | Decreasing the scores | | | |
| Frequency | 22 | 15 | 10 | 4 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Suggestion for another exam | Quota reduction | Pre-service exam | Grade average | Exam upon starting the university | Multi-staged exam | | | | |
| Frequency | 12 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 4 | | | | |
| Satisfaction with the exam | | | | | | | | | |
| Frequency | 18 | | | | | | | | |
| Abstention | | | | | | | | | |
| Frequency | 15 | | | | | | | | |
| The futility of the exam | | | | | | | | | |
| Frequency | 4 | | | | | | | | |

It is seen from the analysis of the responses given by the pre-service teachers to Question 2 that the majority of pre-service teachers (43 pre-service teachers) ask for the re-arrangement of the exam. In this respect, the change that most pre-service teachers advocated for is the inclusion of the knowledge of the field of study (22 pre-service teachers). Pre-service teachers agreed that if the exam includes questions related to their field of study, the examination results will be more objective. Moreover, 15 pre-service teachers believed that the inclusion of a practical part is necessary. The pre-service teachers who made up this code thought that it would be appropriate to test their proficiency in teaching. The teacher candidate M37 stated that such a practice would allow the moral evaluation of teachers, albeit it might lead to abuses such as favoritism. 10 pre-service teachers in the category of re-arrangement of the current examination thought that the inclusion of both the field of study and practice would be better. The response of the teacher candidate M39 in this code stated that the evaluation of pre-service teachers at a university different than the university which s/he graduated from would be better. 4 pre-service teachers who made up the code 'grade average' stated that the grade average from the university should affect the eventual appointment and this score should be reflected in some way in the results of the PPSE. In this category, there is one teacher candidate who supported the change in the day of the examination, which is composed of two sections entitled general knowledge and general ability and held in the morning and in the afternoon of the same day. Moreover, in the code 'decreasing the scores', one teacher candidate stated that the minimum score used in the appointments should be decreased.

The responses of 36 pre-service teachers formed the category 'suggestion for another exam'. There

were five codes in this category. 10 pre-service teachers stated that the authorities should decide whether a person can become a teacher or not before s/he spends several years in the teaching profession. The teacher candidate M42 stated that all pre-service teachers who graduated from the university should be appointed, and once appointed, they should be later evaluated during their services in terms of their performances by experts who will take the decision regarding whether they can perform this profession or not. 4 pre-service teachers suggested an interview to be held before starting the university. The pre-service teachers in this code explained that the pre-service teachers who are eligible to faculties of education could be interviewed by university authorities and the candidates with successful results from this interview should be given the right to direct appointment at the end of university education without a further examination. On the other hand, the teacher candidate M38 stated that only the graduates of teacher high schools should be accepted to education faculties, and that an interview upon graduation from education faculties could determine the appointment. The code 'grade average' composed of the responses of 6 people indicated that appointment according to the university grade point average is a better practice than the PPSE. The responses of 12 student teachers who formed the code 'quota reduction' suggested the reduction of the number of pre-service teachers accepted to faculties of education and supported that the acceptance of the necessary amount of pre-service teachers according to the needs of the country would prevent the masses waiting for appointment. 4 participants who made up the code 'multi-stage exam' stated that a one-time exam cannot fully measure the qualifications of pre-service teachers and suggested several exams held at various time intervals to measure different attributes of the candidates. The teacher candidate M17 stated that examinations that first evaluate the teachers in terms of education, then knowledge of the field of study, followed by practical skills, and lastly their personality should be organized. The teacher candidate S77 said that the exams should be held occasionally throughout their university education, while the teacher candidate S6 suggested that the first grade pre-service teachers at faculties of education take all courses, and if they are successful, an interview should be conducted which will determine whether they can obtain the right to study at that faculty.

The category 'satisfaction' consisted of 18 pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers in this category expressed that the current exam is the best practice applicable under the present circumstances, and thus, they are satisfied with the current exam.

15 pre-service teachers abstained. These pre-service teachers stated that they had no idea about the answer to this question. However, it cannot be said that the pre-service teachers who make up this category are satisfied with the current examination. As stated by the teacher candidate M31, appointment according to a practice-based exam or grade average as well might lead to injustice, and thus, they could not make any suggestions.

4 pre-service teachers underlined the futility of the exam with their responses to Question 2. These pre-service teachers explained that they already have studied to become teachers, and thus, they cannot understand the meaning of being subject to such an examination.

Question 3: Do you think the PPSE measures the qualifications required by your field of study? Please explain it with reasons.

After the analysis, the responses of the pre-service teachers to this question were grouped into three: I think so, I do not think so, I think so and I do not think so. The categories and codes are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. The Analysis of the Answers Given to Question 3 by Pre-service teachers

| Categories | Codes |
|----------------------------------|--|
| I do not think so | There is no knowledge regarding field of study Questions about field of study are not sufficiently qualified Field of study and practice should be included Based on rote-learning No opinion Teacher qualification cannot be measured by an examination It does not measure general knowledge |
| Frequency | 72 9 6 6 2 2 1 |
| I think so and I do not think so | Yes to education, no to general knowledge Yes to education and field of study, no to general knowledge |
| Frequency | 19 3 |
| I think so | Sufficient Practice should be included |
| Frequency | 7 3 |

As shown in Table 3, there were 98 participants who thought that the PPSE does not measure the qualifications required for their own field of study in the category ‘I do not think so’. The reasons stated by the pre-service teachers in the category of ‘I do not think so’ created the codes. 72 pre-service teachers out of 98 stated that either there are no questions related to their field of study or the questions are not sufficiently qualified in the PPSE. 9 pre-service teachers stated that the questions related to field of study lack in quality. However, these 9 pre-service teachers are mathematics pre-service teachers. There are 30 mathematics questions in the general culture general ability section of the PPSE. The common point of the responses that made up this code was that the questions are too simple for pre-service teachers who are evaluated to become teachers. In the code ‘field of study and practice should be included’, 6 participants stated that the exam can be qualified if questions on field of study and practice are included in the exam, as underlined in the analysis of the previous questions. The teacher candidate M32 explained that the exam does not measure qualification but rather tests whether there is knowledge and added that there is need for questions related to the field of study and practice that could render this knowledge useful. 6 participants in this category within the code ‘based on rote-learning’ told that the exam includes only certain courses and subjects and being successful in this exam is possible through memorizing these subjects, which does not mean that the exam measures the qualifications required by their field of study. Two candidate teachers who made up the code ‘teacher qualification cannot be measured by an exam’ stated that measuring the qualifications of teachers through an examination is a meaningless measurement method, while the two pre-service teachers who formed the code ‘no opinion’ explained that they did not want to comment on the issue as the examination is not towards the field of study. One teacher candidate in this category in the code ‘it does not measure general knowledge’ stated that although there is a section on general culture, this section fails to achieve its aim.

The second category of Question 3 was ‘I think so and I do not think so’. This category was composed of the responses of 22 pre-service teachers. 19 pre-service teachers out of 22 stated that the education science section of the exam measures the qualifications regarding their own field of study, while the general knowledge-general ability section does not measure them. Thinking this way, the teacher candidate M24 explained that the quality of the questions in the general knowledge-general ability section should be increased and the questions should not be at the level of the questions of the university entrance examination. The pre-service teachers M27, M28, M39 and M30 stated that the number of the questions about their field of study (mathematics) could be increased. All the three pre-service teachers in the ‘I think so and I do not think so’ stated that the education science section measures the qualifications relevant to their field of study, and that in the general knowledge-general ability section, the general knowledge section measures the knowledge while the general ability does not. The teacher candidate M44 explained this view by stating that “the questions we encounter in the mathematics section of the PPSE are not related to the courses

we took at the university or to the subjects that will come up during out profession”.

Only 10 pre-service teachers in the category ‘I think so’ told that the PPSE measures the qualifications related to their field of study. 7 pre-service teachers in this group thought that the current exam is sufficient without the further need to question it, while 3 pre-service teachers agreeing this suggested that a section on practice be included in the exam.

Question 4: Do you think the PPSE is a fair examination? Please explain.

The responses given by the pre-service teachers were grouped into three categories after the analysis: ‘I think it is fair’, ‘I think it is unfair’ and ‘I think it is partially fair’. The categories and codes are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. The Analysis of the Answers Given to Question 4 by Pre-service teachers

| Categories | Codes | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|------------------|----------------------|--|---|--|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| I think it is fair | Same examination conditions | | | | | No reason stated | | | | |
| Frequency | 22 | | | | | 7 | | | | |
| I think it is unfair | Cheating | Different fields of study, same examination | No reason stated | Quality of questions | It does not measure all aspects of a teacher | Not being appointed despite high scores | State of the person during the examination | Nonstandard education | Conditions of the examination centers | |
| Frequency | 38 | 30 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | |
| I think it is partially fair | If there are questions about the field of study | | | | If there is no cheating | | | | | |
| Frequency | 4 | | | | 2 | | | | | |

As seen in Table 4, 29 pre-service teachers thought that the PPSE is a fair examination. While 22 pre-service teachers thought that the examination is fair as there are same examination conditions, 7 pre-service teachers did not state the reason for this opinion.

The code ‘I think it is unfair’ was composed of the responses of 94 pre-service teachers. This category was detailed with several explanations by the pre-service teachers. 38 pre-service teachers explained that the problems caused by cheating led to this thought. The pre-service teachers added that they have this opinion due to the possibility of canceling the 2011 PPSE caused by a cheating scandal. The pre-service teachers who made up the code ‘different fields of study, same examination’ stated that evaluating pre-service teachers who graduated from different fields of study and thus who had different training by a common examination with the same questions is not fair. The teacher candidate M30 stated that pre-service teachers graduated from sciences have to study social sciences and vice versa, and the teacher candidate S20 told that the examination is not fair as s/he did not study social sciences after high school, and s/he had to study these subjects for the examination. 9 pre-service teachers stated that the examination is not fair but did not specify any reason. 6 pre-service teachers though the examination is unfair in terms of the quality and types of the questions within the code ‘quality of questions’. The teacher candidate M21 explained that the examination is unfair as it does not include knowledge of field of study or practice. 4 pre-service teachers thought the examination is unfair as it does not measure the proficiency of the candidate with all the aspects, while 3 pre-service teachers underlined that not being appointed despite the high scores the candidates get from the exam questions the fairness of the examination. 2 pre-service teachers stated that the conditions of the people sitting for the examination might be different, which might lead to unfairness. These pre-service teachers emphasized that the right to become teachers cannot be evaluated within a short period and the psychological and physiological state might affect the outcome of the examination. For one teacher candidate, the reason for the unfairness of the examination is the appointment of teachers through the same examination despite the nonstandard education that pre-service teachers receive.

The third category in Question 4 was composed of 6 pre-service teachers who thought that the examination is partially fair. Four pre-service teachers in this category stated that the examination can be fair if there are questions about the field of study of every candidate and 2 pre-service teachers explained that the examination can be fair if there is no cheating.

Question 5: Did what you heard about the 2010 PPSE in the media influence you?

The responses of the pre-service teachers to this question were grouped in 10 codes after the analysis. These codes are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. The Analysis of the Answers Given to Question 5 by Pre-service teachers

| Codes | Frequency |
|--|-----------|
| Change in the attitude towards the examination | 28 |
| Anxiety, worry, stress | 26 |
| No influence | 20 |
| Loss of trust | 18 |
| Anxiety about appointment | 14 |
| Difficulty of the examination | 8 |
| Possibility of a new examination | 4 |
| No opinion | 3 |
| Violation of personal rights | 2 |
| Prevention of cheating | 1 |
| Justice was done | 1 |

As seen in Table 5, the most common influence of the news in the media on the pre-service teachers was a negative change in the attitudes towards the examination (28 teachers). The pre-service teachers stated that while they did not use to have any negative thoughts about the examination before the news, they were negatively affected by the news regarding cheating incidence in the PPSE. As Table 5 demonstrates, the second most frequent effect is the code 'anxiety, worry and stress' with 26 pre-service teachers. This code was composed of pre-service teachers who felt insecure, anxious, stressed, worried and angry. The teacher candidate S65 stated angrily that people who benefit from favoritism or those who have money have every right. On the other hand, 20 pre-service teachers stated that what they heard from the media itself did not lead to any positive or negative thoughts and that they were not affected. 18 pre-service teachers stated that they experienced loss of trust in the institution that holds the examination and the state. 14 pre-service teachers underlined anxiety about appointment. Within this code, the teacher candidate S52 explained that s/he realized how high the scores were and how little the number of the appointed was in fact, and thus, the difficulty of being appointed, which created anxiety. The news in the media created the idea that the examination is difficult for eight pre-service teachers, while for four pre-service teachers the possibility of a new examination or even an exam for each field of study in the future (teacher candidate S15). Three pre-service teachers did not express any ideas on this subject. One teacher candidate stated that the cancellation of the examination signified that justice was done and another teacher candidate said that cheating could be prevented.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine all aspects of the Public Personnel Selection Examination (PPSE) prepared by the Student Selection and Placement Center and used for appointing the pre-service teachers who are graduates of faculties of education. Although the examination has been subject to both positive and negative criticism in the media and among teachers, students, academics and administrators, it has not been investigated through a scientific perspective. This study analyzed the opinions of pre-service teachers regarding the PPSE and obtained the following results:

Among 111 pre-service teachers in this study, 49 stated that an examination like the PPSE is necessary for the appointment of teachers, while 42 pre-service teachers thought that such an

examination is unnecessary and 20 people considered it both necessary and unnecessary. In addition, among the pre-service teachers finding the examination necessary, 40 pre-service teachers explained that the screening for teacher appointments is possible only through this means. The pre-service teachers who were positive about the examination stated that it provides them the opportunity to overcoming inadequacies by studying for the examination and to prove their knowledge and skills and it establishes a balance among the candidates to be appointed. Among the 42 pre-service teachers who found the examination unnecessary, 17 reported that an examination for appointment is not necessary, while 10 of them considered the examination unnecessary and suggested limitations be made for admissions to faculties of education, and 6 pre-service teachers noted that it does not measure teacher proficiency. 3 pre-service teachers thought the examination is unnecessary as it does not have a practice-based section, and three pre-service teachers stated that they are tired of examinations and want to be appointed with a system not based on examinations. 20 pre-service teachers said that they are not against the examination on the condition that some changes are made. These results demonstrate that there is no significant difference between the number of people who find the examination unnecessary and the number of people who find it necessary. Moreover, the pre-service teachers who find the examination necessary, unnecessary and who find it both necessary and unnecessary have logical reasons and explanations.

In response to the question ‘Do you think there could be a practice for the appointment of teachers instead of the PPSE?’, 53 pre-service teachers out of 126 suggested re-arrangements be made in the current exam, 36 proposed an examination other than the PPSE, 18 told that they are satisfied with the examination, 15 did not state any idea, and four pre-service teachers stated the futility of the examination. The changes proposed by 53 pre-service teachers were inclusion of the knowledge of field of study, inclusion of both field of study and practice, inclusion of the university grade average, organization of the education science and general knowledge-general ability exams on different days and reduction of the minimum appointment scores. The new practices instead of the PPSE suggested by 36 pre-service teachers were reduction in the quota of faculties of education (12), holding a performance-based examination for teachers who are already pursuing their profession (10), appointment according to university grade average (6), examination held by university authorities upon acceptance to the university (4), examination that measure different qualification held at different time intervals, instead of a single examination (4).

Among the responses to this question, the most noticeable aspect is that the vast majority of pre-service teachers ask for changes in the content, structure, timing and criteria of the PPSE. On the one hand, the new examination formats suggested by the pre-service teachers instead of the PPSE are applicable, and on the other hand, the changes suggested by the pre-service teachers to be made in the current examination provide new perspectives. The proposal of the pre-service teachers advocating for ‘appointment according to university grade average’ is in line with Bastürk (2007) who states that the PPSE ignores university education and it does not include sufficient number of questions on measuring professional knowledge of field of study. However, it is inconsistent with Bahar (2011)’s statement that the university grade average is a significant predictor of the PPSE 10 score. Moreover, the proposal of the pre-service teachers for an ‘examination held by university authorities’ is in line with the statements of Ataunal (200) explaining that the pre-service teachers who are placed at faculties of education without the necessary qualifications for the teaching profession either withdraw from the department or are unable to fulfill the requirements of the profession at an adequate level. This is particularly important when considered together with the suggestion of Açıl (2010) stating that those who are really willing to become teachers and successful at secondary school should be selected in the selection of students to the institutions that train teachers.

98 pre-service teachers among 126 responded to the question ‘Do you think the PPSE measures the qualifications required by your field of study?’ with ‘I do not think so’. The reasons for this opinion

were lack of questions related to field of study (72), questions about field of study are not sufficiently qualified (9), lack of both field of study and practice (6), an examination based on rote-learning (6), teacher qualification cannot be measured by an examination (2) and the examination does not measure general knowledge (1). Here, the responses of the pre-service teachers are in line with the responses given to Question 2. In the second question, there were in total 89 pre-service teachers, 53 asking for a change in the current examination and 36 suggesting a different examination instead of the current one. The reason that this number reached 98 could be those who did not comment in the second question or the comments of the pre-service teachers who considered the examination futile. Nevertheless, a striking point here is that 72 out of 98 pre-service teachers (74 %) think that questions on the knowledge of the field of study should be added to the examination. This result is in line with Bastürk (2007) who states that the pre-service teachers consider the PPSE insufficient for the selection of teachers. 10 pre-service teachers said that the examination measures the qualifications related to their field of study, while 7 of them found the examination sufficient in this sense, 3 of them thought that a practical section should be added. On the other hand, 22 pre-service teachers stated that the examination both measures and does not measure the qualifications required by their field of study. 19 pre-service teachers explained that the education science section of the examination measures the qualifications required by their field of study but the general knowledge-general ability section does not do so, while 3 pre-service teachers stated the opposite.

The analysis of the responses to Question 3 shows that there are two responses related to the questions about field of study: 'lack of questions about field of study', and 'insufficient quality of questions about field of study'. As the content of the general knowledge-general ability section of the PPSE is composed of mathematics, Turkish, history, geography and the Constitution, the students of mathematics education who participated in the study considered these questions of quality as they have questions about their own field of study, while the students of science education criticized the PPSE as they do not have questions directly related to their field of study. Moreover, it is not only the students of science education, but several departments about which there are no questions in the PPSE. As stated by Uras and Kunt (2006), the content of the PPSE is detached from the curricula taught at faculties and this leads to its insufficiency as a measurement instrument. Especially the last year curricula of faculties of education do not coincide with the PPSE (Eraslan, 2005).

Responding to Question 4 about the fairness of the PPSE, 29 pre-service teachers stated that it is fair, while 94 pre-service teachers considered it unfair and six pre-service teachers partially fair. 22 out of 29 pre-service teachers who considered the examination fair explained that they are convinced of the fairness of the examination as it is held under same conditions, and 7 of them did not give any reason. The pre-service teachers who considered the examination unfair explained the reasons for this opinion as follows: cheating (38), it is wrong to evaluate people from different fields of study through the same exam questions (30), questions not having sufficient quality (6), the exam does not measure every aspect of teacher qualifications (4), the possibility of not being appointed despite high scores (3), psychological condition of the person during the examination (2), people with different university education tested through the same examination (1) and the physical characteristics of the examination centers that may or may not have the appropriate conditions for the examination (1). 9 pre-service teachers stated that the examination is unfair but did not explain the reason. Among 6 pre-service teachers considering the examination partially fair, 4 of them stated that inclusion of questions related to their own field of study would make it fair and 2 of them said the prevention of cheating would make it fair.

According to these comments, it could be stated that the PPSE is not considered fair by 73% of the pre-service teachers and the reasons for them to think this way coincide partially with the reasons that make them think that the PPSE is not necessary in Question 1, that make them ask for the re-

arrangement of the system in the PPSE in Question 2, and that make them state that the examination does not measure the qualifications related to the field of study in Question 3. Thus, common reasons expressed such as the lack of questions about field of study or their insufficient quality, lack of practice, and the exam not measuring teacher qualifications fully constitute the criteria if a change in the examination will be made. The factors that affected the fairness of the examination for the students are the cheating incident with the largest influence, and the cancellation of July 2010 PPSE due to the theft and distribution of the questions.

Following the theft and the related news in the media, 28 pre-service teachers changed their attitude towards the exam, 26 developed feelings of anxiety, worry and stress, 20 were not affected, 18 lost their confidence, 14 started to have anxiety about appointment, 8 realized that the examination was more difficult than they used to think, 4 thought about the possibility of designing a new examination, 2 assessed the incident within the scope of violation of personal rights, 1 stated that cheating could be prevented, and 1 teacher candidate thought that justice was done through the cancellation of the examination. These results showed that while only 20 pre-service teachers stated that the news did not affect them adversely, the rest of the participants were affected negatively. Authorities could compensate the negative effects of this incident on students by taking the necessary measures regarding this issue and sharing them with the public.

Conclusions

This study was conducted with the participation of 131 students enrolled to Erzincan University, Education Faculty, Department of Elementary Education Mathematics and Science Teaching in the academic year 2010-2011. The purpose of this study was to evaluate all aspects of the Public Service Personnel Selection Exam through student views. The study was conducted in accordance with the qualitative research approach, and case study method and content analysis were used.

The results of the analysis of five open-ended questions asked to the students are as follows: There is no significant difference between the number of pre-service teachers who find the examination unnecessary and those who find it necessary. Moreover, the pre-service teachers considering the examination necessary, unnecessary, and those who find it both necessary and unnecessary have logical reasons and explanations. The vast majority of the pre-service teachers think that the PPSE is inadequate in the selection of teachers and ask for a change in the content, structure, time and criteria of the PPSE. The lack of questions about some fields of study or the insufficient quality of the questions, the lack of an applied section that measures teaching skills and the examination failing to measure fully the qualifications of teachers are the common reasons that should be taken into consideration if the examination will be changed in the future. The cheating incident and distribution of the exam questions adversely affected the majority of the pre-service teachers.

Evidently, this study has some limitations due to the participant group. It is believed that the results of future studies conducted with the same purpose and different participant groups could help the institutions that design and hold the examination.

References

The Official Gazette No. 24744, dated 03/05/2002

Açıl, Ü. (2010). *Öğretmen adaylarının akademik başarıları ile kpss puanları arasındaki ilişkinin çeşitli değişkenler açısından incelenmesi*. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Hatay. [*Examination of the relationship between academic success of teacher candidates and civil servant selection examination (KPSS) scores, in*

- terms of different variables. Unpublished master's thesis, Mustafa Kemal University Social Science Institute, Hatay, TURKEY].
- Ataunal, (2000). *Öğretmenlik Mesleğine Giriş veya Nasıl İnsan?* Ankara: Eğitim Kültür ve Sosyal Dayanışma Vakfı Yayınları. [Introduction to Teaching Profession, or How the human? Ankara: Publications of Education, Culture and Social Solidarity Foundation]
- Bahar, H. (2011). ÖSS Puanı İle Lisans Mezuniyet Notunun Kpss 10 Puanını Yordama Gücü. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, 36 (162), 168-181. [KPSS 10 Score Prediction Power of Bachelor Graduation Mark and OSS Score. *Education and Science*, 36(162), 168-181]
- Bulut, H, & Doğar, Ç. (2006). Öğretmen Adaylarının Öğretmenlik Mesleğine Karşı Tutumlarının İncelenmesi. *Erzincan Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 8 (1), 13-27. [The Investigation of Student Teachers' Attitudes Towards Their Occupations. *Journal of Erzincan Education Faculty*, 8(1), 13-27].
- Baştürk, R. (2007). Kamu Personeli Seçme Sınavına Hazırlanan Öğretmen Adaylarının Sınav Kaygı Düzeylerinin İncelenmesi. *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 17(2), 163-176. [Investigation of Test Anxiety Levels of Pre-Service Teachers Taking Civil Servant Selection Examination. *Fırat University Journal of Social Science*, 17(2), 163-176].
- Eraslan, A. (2009). İlköğretim Matematik Öğretmen Adaylarının Öğretmenlik Uygulaması Üzerine Görüşleri. *Necatibey Eğitim Fakültesi Elektronik Fen ve Matematik Eğitimi Dergisi (EFMED)*, 3(1), 207-221. [Prospective Mathematics Teachers' Opinions on 'Teaching Practice'. *Necatibey Faculty of Education Electronic Journal of Science and Mathematics Education Vol. 3, Issue 1, June 2009, pp. 207-221*].
- Gündoğdu, K., Çimen, N. & Turan, S. (2008). Öğretmen Adaylarının Kamu Personeli Seçme Sınavına (KPSS) ilişkin Görüşleri. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Kırşehir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi (KEFAD)*, 9 (2), 35-43. [Perceptions of Prospective Teachers in Relation to Civil Cervant Selection Exam (KPSS). *Journal of Ahi Evran University Kırşehir Education Faculty*, 9(2), 35-43].
- Kuru, M., & Uzun, H. (2008). Türkiye'de Öğretmen Adaylarının Seçiminde 1954 Örneği. *Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 28 (3), 207-232. [The Method for Selecting Teacher Candidates in Turkey in 1954. *Journal of Gazi Education Faculty*, 28(3), 207-232].
- ÖSYM. (2010). Press Release (7 Eylül 2010). retrieved 13.01.2012 from <http://www.osym.gov.tr/belge/1-12125/2010-kpss-lisans-ve-2010-ygs-ile-ilgili-basin-duyurusu-.html>
- Özsarı, İ. (2008). *Eğitim Fakültesi Son Sınıf Öğrencilerinin KPSS Merkezi Sınavı Odaklı Gelecek Kaygıları ve Meslek Beklentileri*. Yüksek lisans tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü. [Future Related Anxiety Levels And Vocational Expectations Of Forth Grade Preservice Teachers Related To KPSS Examination. Unpublished master's thesis. Istanbul University Social Science Institute]
- Uras, M., & Kunt, M. (2006). Öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleğinden beklentileri ve beklentilerinin karşılanmasını umma düzeyleri. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 19(1). [The upper level profession related expectations and the expectations that are hoped to be met in the highest level of pre-service teachers. *Journal of Pamukkale University Education Faculty*, 19(1)].
- Üstüner, M. (2004). Geçmişten Günümüze Türk Eğitim Sistemi'nde Öğretmen Yetiştirme ve Günümüz Sorunları. *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 5(7), 1-15. [Today's Past And Present Problems Of Turkish Education System Teacher Training. *Journal of İnönü University Education Faculty*, 5(7), 1-15].
- Tümkaya, S., Aybek, B, & Çelik, M. (2007). KPSS' ye Girecek Öğretmen Adaylarındaki Umutsuzluk ve Durumluk-Sürekli Kaygı Düzeylerini Yordayıcı Değişkenlerin İncelenmesi. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 7 (2), 953-974. [An Prediction of Hopelessness and State-Trait Anxiety Levels Among Teacher Candidates Before the KPSS Exam. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*. 7 (2), 953-974.]

- Yılmaz, K. (2010). Sosyal Bilgiler Eğitimindeki Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri: Öğretim Elemanlarının Görüşleri. *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 8(4), 839-867.[Issues And Suggested Solutions In Social Studies Education: Views Of Teaching Faculty. *Journal of Turkish Education Science*, 8(4), 839-867].
- Yıldırım, A, & Şimşek, H. (2006). *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*. Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık. [*Qualitative Research Methods in Social Sciences*. Ankara: Seçkin Publication].
- YÖK. (2007). *Öğretmen Yetiştirme ve Eğitim Fakülteleri (1982-2007)*. Ankara: Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu Yayını.[*Teacher training and education faculty (1982-2007)*. Ankara: Council of Higher Education Publication].