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Views of foreign language teacher candidates on teaching profession and teaching practice

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to examine how foreign language teacher candidates make sense of teaching profession and their views and feelings about teaching practice. Basic qualitative research method was used in the research. The research group consists of students in their final year, studying at the foreign language department at university and taking Teaching Practice course. Research data were collected through individual interviews and focus group interviews using semi-structured interview technique. In the analysis of the data, content analysis was performed using the Nvivo Program. Views of the participants on teaching profession were grouped under 3 themes: views on teaching profession, views on practicing teaching profession, and views on practicum. It was observed that the participants generally characterized teaching profession with positive terms. When their views on practicing teaching profession are examined, it is noteworthy that they mention the necessities of the profession as well as the positive and difficult aspects of the profession. It has been seen that the practicum helps them gain experience and increase their self-confidence. In addition, it was determined that they had anxiety in practicum for various reasons.

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Teaching is the most important profession that forms the basis of and gives direction to society. The teaching profession is a critical component of any society as teachers play a vital role in shaping the intellectual and socio-emotional development of students. Teaching practice refers to the practical application of teaching methods and strategies in a classroom setting. It includes activities aimed at initiating and realizing the learning of individuals in line with a certain purpose, and the person who performs the profession is the teacher (Üstüner, 2006). Sünbül (2001) states that no matter how well the objectives in education are determined, no matter how functional and well-organized the content of the course is, it is not possible to get the expected results from education unless it is carried out by teachers who have those objectives and competencies. In order for teaching profession to be practiced well, teacher candidates must first be trained well. A prospective teacher is a student who is studying in teaching programs in a higher education institution and who is doing teaching practice (practicum) in a school environment in the field where he/she will be a teacher (Özenç, 2014). Prospective teachers need to have a

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good knowledge and competence in the field and educational sciences. Qualifications for teaching profession are competencies that include field knowledge, planning, teaching methods and techniques, classroom management, evaluation of student achievement, guidance services and personality traits as a whole. Accordingly, it is very important for prospective teachers to obtain the necessary competencies in field knowledge, planning and preparation, teaching methods and techniques, classroom management and evaluation, to improve themselves and to evaluate themselves at the end of the process of education (Altınay Aksal & Altınay Gazi, 2011). Teacher education is the transfer of knowledge about teaching and learning through organized processes to train individuals as teachers (Johnson, 1996). The delivery of programs and activities in teacher education is the key to success. Learning to teach is seen as a product of skilled teacher learners and the well-structured design and materials of teacher educators. In a broad sense, teacher education is largely based on educational strategies for teaching people how to do things (Freeman, 2001). In addition to their university education, pre-service teachers undergo a teaching practicum in their final year to prepare them for teaching profession in a practical way. Teaching practice refers to the practical application of teaching methods and strategies in a classroom setting. Effective teaching practice is essential for ensuring that students receive the best possible education and achieve their full potential. Teaching practice is a course in which the prospective teacher gains teaching skills and experience in the field and at the level where he/she will become a teacher, in the classroom, and provides guidance on how to teach a lesson in a planned way (Özenç, 2014). During this critical period, prospective teachers may face various problems as teachers due to their lack of professional experience. They need guidance between theory and practice in practicum (Gürsoy & Damar, 2011), an experience that is a part of teacher education (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). Over time, pre-service teachers develop their own effective teaching behaviors in the classroom and the delivery of programs and activities in teacher education is the key to success. Learning to teach is seen as a product of skilled teacher learners and teacher educators' well-structured design and materials. In a broad sense, teacher education relies heavily on educational strategies to teach people how to get the job done (Freeman, 2001).

Foreign language teacher education describes the field of professional activity in which individuals learn to teach foreign languages (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Language teacher education is a microcosm of teacher education, with many of the trends in language teacher education today emerging from general teacher education and practice (Crandall, 2000). Language teacher education comprises three different subfields according to the orientations and practices: foreign language teacher education, foreign language teacher education and bilingual teacher education. Although each area appeals to a different population, they all have a common goal of learning and teaching a foreign language effectively that drives all subfields (Velez-Rendon, 2002).

Foreign language teacher education programs encompass various departments such as applied linguistics, educational sciences, language, and literature. These departments provide a comprehensive knowledge base and opportunities for both aspiring and experienced teachers to develop their skills. However, the focus of language teacher education has shifted over time to practical applications, such as observation, applied teaching, curriculum, and materials development. This shift in focus was highlighted by Crandall (2000). Freeman (2001) finds it ironic that foreign language teacher education emphasizes what teachers should know but pays little attention to how to teach effectively.

This study aims to focus on the teaching practice and the practical aspects of teaching, where pre-service teachers can learn to teach. Although prospective teachers may have their own views towards teaching while choosing their teaching department at the university, their views towards the teaching profession are better shaped during their education and practicum. Foreign language teacher education is a complex and multifaceted field that requires a deep understanding of both the teaching profession and the emotional experiences of teacher candidates. This research aims to contribute to the development of more effective teacher training programs and support systems by exploring the opinions and emotions of

foreign language teacher candidates towards the teaching profession and practicum. This study aims also to focus on the teaching practice and the practical aspects of teaching, where pre-service teachers can learn to teach. Although prospective teachers may have their own views towards teaching while choosing their teaching department at the university, their views towards the teaching profession are better shaped during their education and practicum. The study intends to determine the opinions of foreign language teacher candidates towards the teaching profession and practicum, as well as the emotions they feel. To achieve this aim, the following questions were formulated:

1. What are the views of pre-service foreign language teachers towards teaching profession?
2. What are the attitudes and opinions of pre-service foreign language teachers towards practicing teaching profession?
3. What are the opinions of pre-service foreign language teachers about practicum?

Understanding the opinions and emotions of foreign language teacher candidates towards the teaching profession and practicum can provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing future educators. By identifying the factors that motivate or discourage individuals from pursuing a career in teaching, this study can help inform strategies for recruitment and retention of highly qualified language teachers. Additionally, by examining the emotional experiences of teacher candidates, this study may shed light on the psychological and social factors that contribute to teacher burnout and attrition and could potentially inform interventions to support teacher well-being and job satisfaction. Overall, this study has the potential to inform policies and practices aimed at enhancing the quality and effectiveness of foreign language teacher education programs, ultimately benefiting students and society.

2. Literature Review

According to Richards (2008), foreign language teacher education relies on two key factors: adapting the knowledge base and teaching practices to reflect changes in our understanding of foreign language teacher education and meeting the growing demand for language teachers worldwide. When examining studies on language teacher education, there is a notable emphasis on the prior learning experiences of pre-service teachers and teacher education programs. The experiences that teachers have had prior to their training play a significant role in shaping their personal theories and beliefs about language teaching (Vélez-Rendón, 2002). Research has demonstrated that teachers' prior learning experiences are as important as the educational programs they undergo in shaping their perspectives. In fact, some studies have suggested that pre-service teachers' experiences as language learners are more influential to their classroom practice than their teacher training (Freeman, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Moran, 1996).

Furthermore, Moran (1996) has argued that pre-service teachers often view their own previous teachers as role models for their own teaching practice. This highlights the importance of their prior learning experiences and how they can shape what pre-service teachers do or do not do in the classroom. Similarly, Johnson (1994) has emphasized the value of pre-service teachers' language learning experiences. He suggested that these experiences are more effective in preparing them for their teaching profession than teacher training programs. Richards, Ho & Giblin (1996) assert that language teacher training programs provide pre-service teachers with a deep understanding of the target language and an ability to teach effectively. In their study, they observed that pre-service teachers who completed the program were able to use terms such as feedback, target language, intonation, and stress accurately and spontaneously. During the program, pre-service teachers initially focused on effective teaching, but they gradually developed their own unique teaching styles. Numrich (1996) conducted research on the concerns of pre-service teachers and found that their main priorities were to create a comfortable classroom environment and to manage their classrooms effectively. However, pre-service teachers identified managing time in the classroom, giving instructions, meeting students' needs, and focusing on students as the most challenging aspects of their role.

On the other hand, Vélez-Rendón (2002) highlighted that in the absence of alternative models, pre-service teachers often resort to traditional methods for maintaining authority in the classroom. As such, it is important for language teacher education programs to provide pre-service teachers with a range of alternative models for classroom management. Kwo (1996) examined how pre-service teachers develop through reflective practice and found a consistency between their perceived learning and their actual development. This highlights the importance of reflection skills in language teacher education and suggests that pre-service teachers can benefit from reflecting on their own teaching experiences to improve their practice.

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure

In this study, qualitative research method was adopted as it aims to understand the deep knowledge structure as a result of the research conducted by the researchers to reach deeper meanings by personally communicating with the participants (Creswell 2013, p. 245). In qualitative research, researchers are interested in how people make sense of and interpret their lives and world (Merriam, 2018). In this context, basic qualitative research design was preferred in order to make sense of how pre-service teachers make sense of teaching profession and their experiences within the scope of teaching practice (practicum) towards teaching profession.

3.2. Participants

The study utilized purposive sampling to select information-rich situations for in-depth research and obtain a large amount of information (Patton, 2002; Glesne, 2015). The research group was selected through convenience sampling technique. Accordingly, 30 Turkish students who were in their final year at Gazi University, Department of Foreign Languages Education and taking Teaching Practice (practicum) course participated in the study. The number of participants was determined according to data saturation. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the participants, codes were given as P1, ... P30. The age range of the participants in the research group varied between 21-27 and the group consisted of German Language Teaching and English Language Teaching student teachers. While 23 of the participants stated that they chose teaching profession willingly, 7 of them stated they enrolled to this department involuntarily.

3.3. Data Collection

In this research, semi-structured interview technique is employed as a data collection technique. In semi-structured interviews, the questions are prepared in advance, but during the interview, the questions can be expressed flexibly according to the course of the interview, the order of the questions may change, and the answers may vary according to the participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 110). The data were collected through individual interviews and focus group interviews with the participants. Focus group interviews are conducted with a group of people on a specific topic to answer questions about similar experiences on a topic, to look at and express multiple perspectives on the topic (Glesne, 2015).

The questions in the interview form were formulated based on observations, general experiences, and a review of the relevant literature. The interview form includes 7 questions about how the participants make sense of teaching profession, their views and experiences about teaching, and their views on practicum. It was ensured that the questions were not directive and multidimensional and that the participants could express themselves clearly. In order to test the comprehensibility of the questions and

their suitability for the purpose, a draft form was created, a pilot study was conducted, and the questions were evaluated by 2 experts in the field. Necessary corrections were made, and the final version of the form was created. Necessary information was given to the participants before the interview, and it was stated that it would be used only for scientific purposes based on the principle of confidentiality. Interviews were conducted on the basis of the participants' voluntariness. The interviews lasted an average of 30-45 minutes. During the interview, voice recordings were taken with the consent of the participants. Ethics Committee approval was obtained with the decision of Gazi University Ethics Committee meeting dated 21.06.2022 and numbered 12 for the applications within the scope of the research.

The interview questions included in the research are:

1. What does teaching mean to you?
2. What is your approach towards the teaching profession? Can you describe your sense of belonging to this profession?
3. What kind of problems do teachers encounter while doing their teaching profession?
4. What are the positive things that teachers experience while practicing their teaching profession?
5. What are the positive and negative things that teacher candidates experience during internship?
6. What kind of ways can be followed to make teacher candidates love the teaching profession?
7. Can you share a memory about teaching?

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in parallel with the data collection process. After each interview, the data were transcribed and entered into the NVivo program for content analysis. The answers of the participants in the semi-structured interview form were analyzed in detail by the researcher and coding was conducted. Codes with similar characteristics were grouped under the same categories. The findings were presented using direct quotations from the interview data to support the themes and categories identified in the data analysis process. This approach ensured that the participants' voices were represented in the research and allowed for a more in-depth understanding of their experiences and perceptions towards the teaching profession and their practicum.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The criteria for validity and reliability in qualitative research differs from those in quantitative research. The strategies utilized to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research are long-term participation and continuous observation, triangulation, peer review, negative situation analysis, explanation of researcher biases, rich dense description, external experiences, member control, expert review, researcher's stance, and appropriate and sufficient participation in the data collection process (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2018). In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the research, appropriate and adequate participation in the data collection process, long-term participation and continuous observation, member control, expert review and rich description were used in the study. With the findings reaching the saturation point, it was ensured that the saturation point was reached with suitable and sufficient participation in the data collection process, and feedback was requested from the interviewees about the findings, thus member control was ensured. Expert review was taken in the formation of the interview questions and the analysis of the data.

4. Results

In this part of the research, it is not aimed to obtain generalizable results about pre-service teachers' views on teaching profession, but to achieve an in-depth understanding. For this reason, it should be noted that the research is limited only to the participants who participated in the research. The views of the participants in the study were grouped under 3 themes: views on teaching profession, views on practicing teaching profession, views on practicum. The findings were presented by quoting directly from the participants' opinions. While creating the categories, the answers of the participants who gave similar and/or same answers were grouped under the same categories. For this reason, not all participant responses were included in the study. Only the participant opinions were included in the emerging themes.

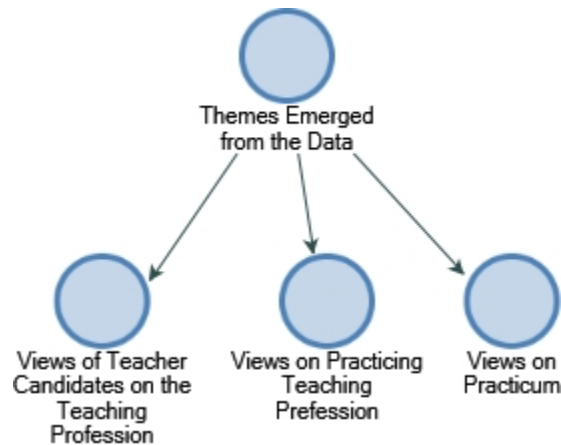


Figure 1. Themes Emerged from the Data

4.1 Views of Teacher Candidates on Teaching Profession

Teacher candidates' views on teaching profession are categorized under two categories: perception of teaching and factors for choosing teaching profession.

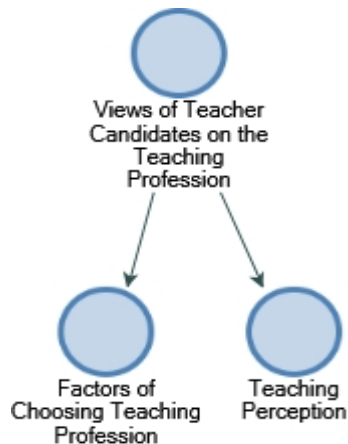


Figure 2: Views of Teacher Candidates on Teaching Profession

4.1.1. Category 1: Teaching perception

When pre-service teachers' perception of teaching is examined, it is seen that they attribute many characteristics to teaching. It is seen that they have different views about teaching such as hope, futurity,

guidance, difficulty, labor, leadership, parenthood, patience, respected profession, responsibility, sacred profession, self-sacrifice and touching students' lives.

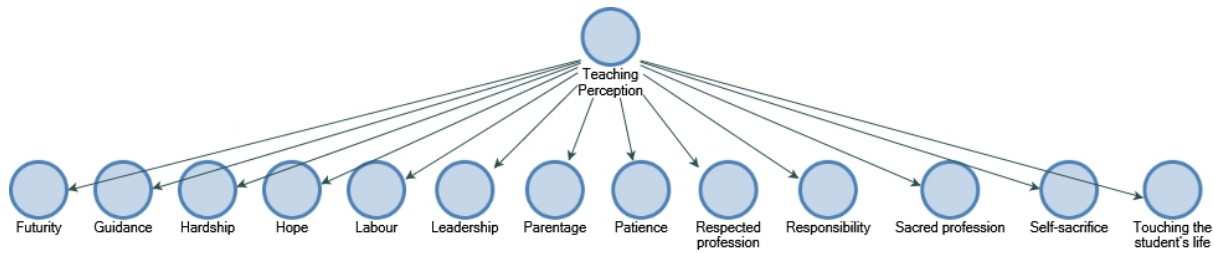


Figure 3: Teaching Perception

P28: *I think teaching is a bit like motherhood to be honest, because our students are at high school age, but we have to deal with their special problems. Sometimes we have to support them in what they do not understand. For example, we had a vivid experience, I mean, there is a child in our practicum school and he has serious problems. His parents are separated. The child is already of Russian origin. And the child has an uncontrollable mobility, and I think a mother's affection is necessary to cope with this, I mean, the more you yell and scream at the child, the more mischievous the child gets, but when you approach the child with such a mother's affection, when you say come here, sit down, honey, etc., the child behaves more moderately.*

P11: *Teaching means being a mother without being a mother. It means being compassionate, tolerant, enlightening, good educator towards students.*

The pre-service teachers in this study likened teaching to parenthood, specifically motherhood, stating that teachers often take on the role of parents for their students and deal with various issues beyond just teaching. This was seen as a great responsibility and a challenging profession. While many pre-service teachers acknowledged the responsibility of teaching, they evaluated it in different dimensions. Some viewed teaching as a responsibility to raise, educate, and teach individuals well, while others believed that teachers are responsible for all kinds of problems that students may experience at school. One noteworthy perspective was that of a pre-service teacher who believed that teaching is more important than parenting, as students spend a significant amount of time in school.

P24: *I think it is a great devotion and responsibility, I mean, among the professions, yes, all of them are very difficult, but teaching is incredibly difficult. Because you are dealing with people and you are dealing with young age groups, you need to understand those children psychologically, you need to know what they need. We need to be aware of everything about them, so I think teaching is a great responsibility.*

P26: *... I also think that the problems that children create among themselves are also the responsibility of the teacher because if they get into each other during recess and think about someone on the ground or hurt someone, that is a problem that can fall on the teacher. A ball hits his head in the garden, he falls down, his friend beats him.*

P25: *You have to have open-mindedness and foresight. You have to constantly physically follow how the students are doing. Did the child learn or not. Well, I mean, in the eyes of the child, he/she has a more important role than the parents. Because most of the time, what the mother and father are not aware of, the teacher realizes at school. So when you look at it, he can spend more time with the mother than the father.*

P6: *First of all, the teaching profession is difficult even because it is a profession that requires dealing with people directly, one-on-one. Because people are difficult. The levels of students can be very different from each other, not every student can be compatible. There may be students who disrupt the order of the class. We can multiply these examples.*

In addition to responsibility, some pre-service teachers perceive teaching as a profession that requires labor, dedication and patience.

Many pre-service teachers perceive teaching as hope, future, guide, leader, guiding and touching students' lives. They stated that teachers build the future of students and society, and that they touch students' lives and guide them.

S4: I think teaching is a way of life that increases the level of the country and creates a future.

S20: Teaching is the work of shaping new generations.

S8: It is to ground the future.

S6: They should be a source of light for students. They give hope to new generations.

S5: I had an English teacher in high school. If you want something and try hard, it will happen. He said never let go of your dreams. I had many difficulties in life and I am still experiencing them materially and spiritually, but this statement affected me.

S24: We had an English lesson and I said, "Oh, this is who I am, yes, this is who I am." My teacher helped me discover myself.

S27: It was the teachers around me who raised my awareness. You know, the reason why I am sitting here right now is because of the teachers I met and encountered at the time who guided me.

S21: Every person has teachers who create a turning point in their lives, both good and bad. For me, this is my middle school teacher. I will always remember her well because she showed me that I could do anything when I wanted to when I did not believe in myself and she always made me feel her love and respect.

S22: Teaching is everything for me. Because we cannot easily find the pleasure of being able to teach someone something new, enlighten them or touch their lives in something else.

S12: I think getting positive feedback from our students and touching their lives are the most important things.

In addition, many pre-service teachers characterized teaching as a sacred and respected profession.

P1: Teaching is the most important profession that forms the basic building block of society, it is very sacred.

P11: I think teaching is a sacred profession, it is a great responsibility to raise the individuals entrusted to you within ethical and moral values.

P15: I realized how important and sacred teaching profession is when I got involved in it.

P10: It is a profession of enlightenment and enlightenment, which is an important function of our age that should be respected.

P26: I mean, I can say that it is one of the professions that I respect the most among all professions, or I can say that it is the most respected profession because it touches everyone's life and teachers are the reason why all professions were born.

One of the students who defined teaching as leadership likened the leadership of a teacher to the presidency.

P26: Honestly, it feels like being a President. You know, he is the President in the classroom. Yes, but as I said, the principal of the school, yes. Leadership.

4.1.2. Category 2: Factors of choosing the teaching profession

It is seen that the factors for choosing foreign language teaching and studying in this field are quite different from each other. The pre-service teachers expressed these factors as learning a foreign language, loving a foreign language, valuing foreign language education, loving teaching, taking an active role in the education system and their dream profession.

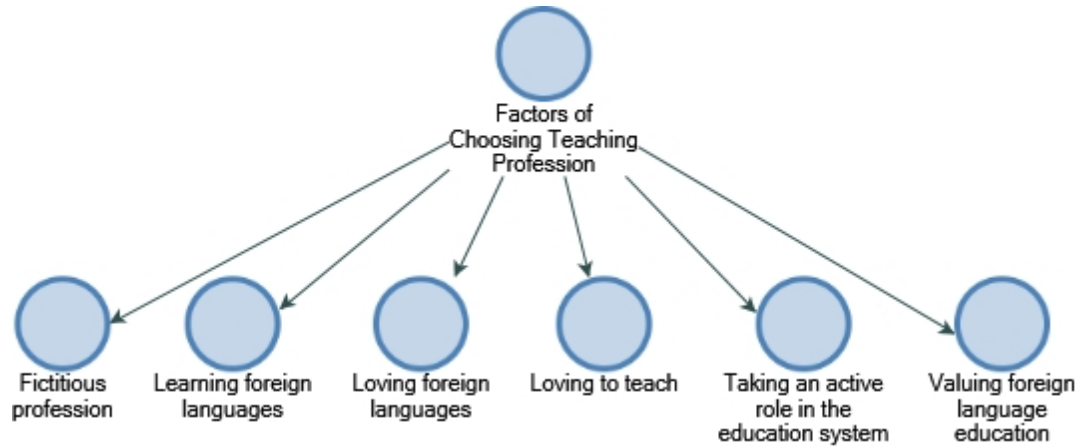


Figure 4. Factors of Choosing Teaching Profession

Most of the pre-service teachers stated that teaching was their childhood dream or their dream profession.

P26: I dreamed of being a German language teacher when I was a child. ... I will be a teacher; I will be a teacher one day and I will make students aware of things.

P28: It was already my childhood dream. At first, I was thinking of teaching English, but my score wasn't enough for English, so I decided to teach German.

In addition, it is seen that the desire to be active in education such as liking teaching, taking an active role in the education system, and ensuring that foreign languages gain value are important factors in their choice of teaching profession.

P6: I feel very close to the teaching profession. I like teaching people.

P8: I chose it to take an active role in combating the problems I observe in our education system.

P1: To make others love the language I love and to have the opportunity to add something to each student.

P4: I want foreign language education to become more important and valuable. I chose it because I want to work for this.

Apart from these, it is noteworthy that there are pre-service teachers who prefer foreign language teaching because they like foreign languages more than teaching and to learn a foreign language.

P2: To learn a foreign language.

P17: To learn a foreign language other than English.

P19: I chose it because I wanted to study a department related to foreign languages.

P15: I came to learn German.

P12: I chose this department because I like foreign languages.

P22: Because I am interested in German language and education.

4.2 Views on Practicing Teaching Profession

When the opinions of pre-service teachers about practicing the teaching profession are examined, it is seen that they are grouped under three categories: positive aspects, difficulties of the profession and the requirements of the profession.

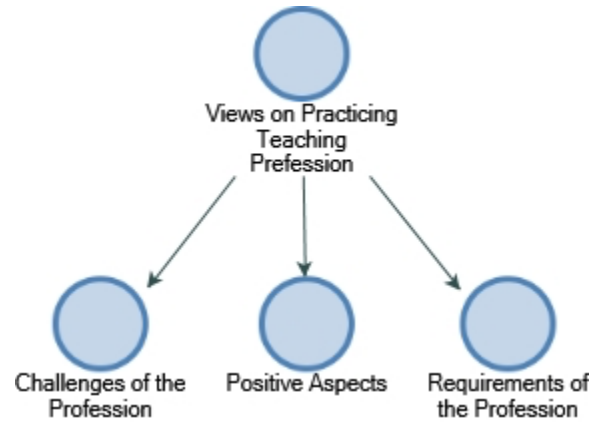


Figure 5. Views on Practicing Teaching Profession

4.2.1. Category 1: Positive aspects

Pre-service teachers expressed many positive aspects towards becoming a teacher and practicing teaching profession. These are being rewarded for labor, learning while interacting-teaching, being an idol, raising people, being respected, receiving attention and love, and social status.

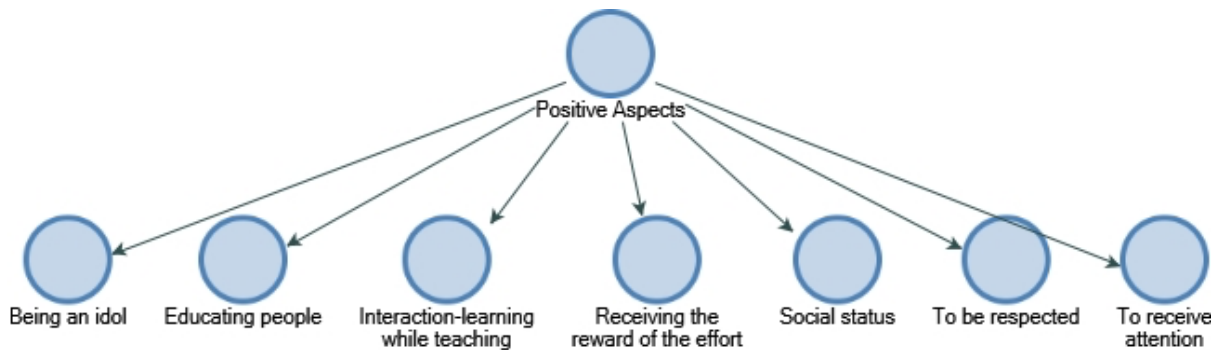


Figure 6. Positive Aspects

Most of the pre-service teachers mentioned receiving attention and love and being seen as an idol by students as positive aspects of teaching and stated that this situation gave them happiness and motivated them. In addition, being respected by students and social status were also described as positive aspects of teaching.

P14: We love you very much, you teach the lessons very well, and then an origami-bird made with love from one of my students.

P18: I think the only and most positive aspect of this profession is the love for you.

P19: Teaching is a profession based on human relations, respect and love, and a teacher who can establish a healthy communication with his/her students has an endless source of motivation with positive feedback from them. Teachers are probably the people who smile the most during the day, a teacher who is attached to his/her students with love will cheer up and have fun with them. The smile we see on students' faces is a great joy for a teacher. If we have a good frequency with the students at the beginning, loving looks and beautiful sentences from them will warm us up to the profession.

P3: Having students who love you even after 20 years.

P26: Receiving a compliment from the students as an idol made me extremely happy. I was in such a position that I felt as if I had reached a new level at that moment. You are followed as an idol. They are always curious about something. Especially the fact that their approach to you, regardless of whether they are girls or boys, is so full of love that it is so obvious from their eyes that they look with admiration towards a person. You know, being an idol to a person was not something I could ever dream of, so I said wow to myself when I first experienced it.

P29: When those children stand up when you enter the classroom, it is a very good motivation, especially for a person who is thinking about teaching profession, it is a great motivation to spend in a good school.

As the positive aspects of teaching, the pre-service teachers stated that being rewarded for their efforts, raising people, being a part of the student's life, raising individuals, and touching future generations are the positive aspects of teaching. They also stated that the positive feedback they received from the students was motivating.

P14: Touching students' lives and helping them to have bright futures. Taking part in a small but important point in their lives.

P21: Raising individuals and knowing that you can leave a positive mark in the lives of these individuals, having a respectable profession, knowing that you are loved by students is a positive thing.

P11: Seeing that you can transfer knowledge to students and be useful, the feeling of satisfaction when you do your job well.

P5: I think the opportunity to be a good part of someone's life is priceless.

P16: The positive characteristics are that the students receive the desired outcomes in a positive way and that the students take their teachers as role models.

P19: What changed my approach to teaching is that I can see that I can be really useful to my students while practicing my profession and the feedback I receive from them full of love and gratitude.

P20: Seeing the reward for the effort given to the students in line with the success of the students in their academic and personal lives.

P9: To be able to guide students, to contribute to their achievement and to see that they have reached good places.

4.2.2. Category 2: Challenges of the profession

Many of the pre-service teachers in this study defined teaching as a difficult profession. The difficulties that teachers face while teaching were expressed in many different ways. It was seen that pre-service teachers had different perspectives on the difficulties of teaching profession such as working hours, discipline, disrespect, educational programs, material shortage, class size, parents, colleagues, students not giving importance to the lesson, lack of independency and communication.

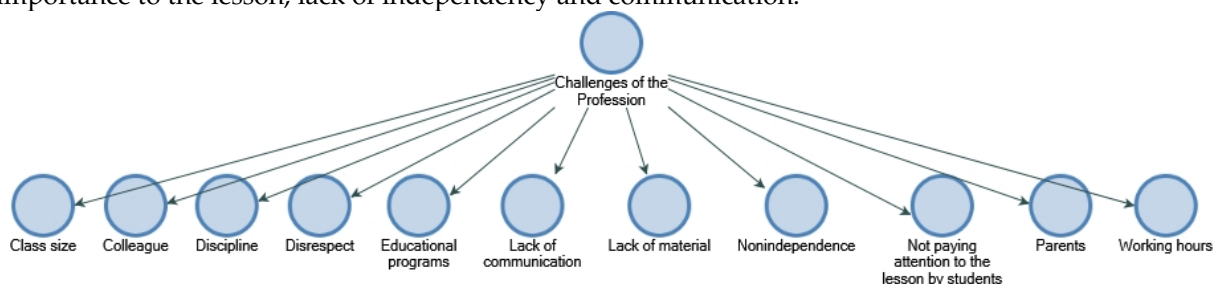


Figure 7. Challenges of the Profession

It is seen that pre-service teachers emphasized that it is difficult to maintain discipline while practicing the profession and not getting enough respect from students. In addition to these, they stated that some problems arise due to lack of communication with students.

P10: They face various difficulties such as students causing chaos or not being able to manage students well.

P11: When the teacher cannot dominate the classroom, the teacher feels inappropriate for this profession.

P14: First of all, students do not respect and love the teacher. No matter how much the teacher empathizes and tries to be sincere, it does not work.

P22: Some students abuse our polite and moderate approach to them.

P27: The biggest problem is disrespect, it is obvious from seven to seventy, so even if you work with an adult, they can be disrespectful. Again, it may be even more difficult with adults because you may be young and that age affects the situation a lot, in our country, he is young, but there is no respect left for the teacher. However, if people respected each other rather than the teacher-student relationship, it would never be like this.

Other difficulties encountered were high working hours of teachers, teachers being subject to training programs, lack of materials in some schools, and high-class size.

P21: Education programs that both deprive students of quality and efficient education and restrict teachers' education and activities.

P22: Lessons should be freed from heavy subjects and should be made more entertaining to encourage students. As a result, the feedback of the students will be more positive and the teacher can do his/her job with more enthusiasm.

P25: The teacher cannot use some of the techniques he wants to use, I don't know, the style of expression. I think it is a problem for the teacher when he wants to take the children to a place, you know, when he wants to show them live. She needs to get permission.

P11: There may be a shortage of tools and materials in the classroom. The province where she teaches is an undeveloped province and she may have problems in this sense.

P14: The lack of materials needed to be efficient while teaching the lesson can be given as an example.

Apart from these difficulties, a few pre-service teachers stated that the students' not paying enough attention to the lesson also posed difficulties for the teachers.

P19: The fact that German lesson is not given importance in line with my own branch and that students are not enthusiastic about it makes the process difficult.

P30: Different foreign languages do not consider German as an important foreign language, so I think it is very difficult to deal with this.

Some pre-service teachers stated that there may be difficulties due to disagreements or conflicts with colleagues and the behavior of parents.

4.2.3. Category 3: Requirements of the profession

While expressing their views on practicing teaching profession, pre-service teachers also mentioned the requirements of teaching profession. The requirements of teaching profession are categorized under the codes of balance, empathy, observation, tolerance, objectivity, self-control, psychology and personal development.



Figure 8. Requirements of the Profession

In order to perform the profession of teaching well, pre-service teachers stated that teachers should establish a good balance between discipline and sincerity, that teachers should have good self-control to ensure balance, that it is important to be fair and objective, to be tolerant and compassionate, to empathize and to have good observation skills.

P18: When they are overly disciplined, they are not liked and their lessons are not liked, or when they show sincerity to students, they are liked but their lessons are not taken seriously. The most difficult but most necessary aspect of teaching is to maintain this balance.

P25: Okay, establish your character, but if you are an aggressive person, no, not that. You will have to change your character at that time. So, you will be like a chameleon. You need to be a chameleon. It's challenging and you need to empathize. Because we all had good and bad teachers in our lives. When you think of good, one comes to mind, and when you think of bad, one comes to mind. When you are 8 years old, you can still remember something you saw at 26 years old. He said this to me, he said exactly this.

P7: It is a profession that requires being fair. It is necessary to approach without judging anyone.

P11: Teaching means being a mother without being a mother. It means being compassionate, tolerant, enlightening, good educator towards students.

One pre-service teacher stated that teachers should be psychologists when necessary and should understand human psychology and child psychology.

P26: I think that teachers definitely need to improve themselves a lot outside of school, in terms of communication and human psychology. They are in contact with an age group. Especially, for example, our department is very troubled. Therefore, it is necessary to understand human psychology, adolescent psychology, child psychology very well. A teacher has to be a psychologist at the same time. I think he has to act like one.

In addition, many pre-service teachers emphasized that teachers should constantly renew themselves and that their personal development is important.

P19: A teacher is not a person who constantly teaches and knows everything, but a person who is constantly renewed, whose knowledge is updated and even learns dozens of new things from his/her students. In other words, it is not possible to become dull if we are doing this profession.

P20: Not everyone can or should be a teacher, only those who have the necessary qualifications should be teachers.

4.3 Views on Practicum

Opinions of pre-service teachers about the practicum are grouped under three categories: advantages of the practicum, problems encountered and expectations.

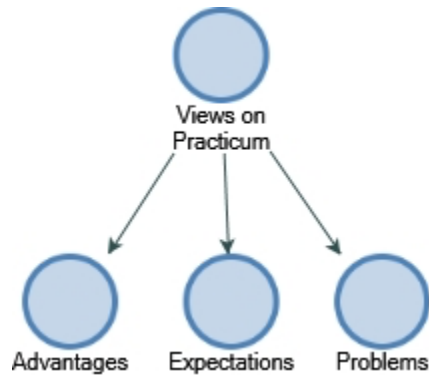


Figure 9. Views on Practicum

4.3.1. Category 1: Advantages

The pre-service teachers stated that the practicum gave them experience, brought them self-confidence and motivated them when they received positive feedback from students and practicum teachers or when they were rewarded for their efforts, i.e. when they were motivated by the success of the students.

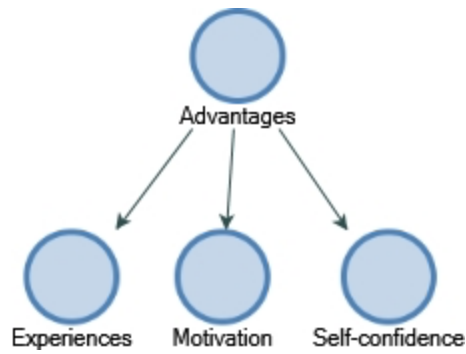


Figure 10. Advantages

P1: At first, I was afraid that I would not be able to transfer what I know, but with the practicum I started to feel that I fully belong. Time passes so quickly and beautifully during the practicum. ...In a class I attended, I taught my subject very well and had the opportunity to chat with the students from time to time, I received good feedback from them and my mentor and this made me very happy. It was the most important day that made me feel confident.

P14: ... I think about how to communicate, let alone how to teach the lesson. There is a little insecurity, of course, the class is new. Anyway, I got used to the class and the class got used to me. At first, I entered the class thinking that I would not be able to teach the lesson, but now I enter the class with confident steps. I always had a wolf inside me, wondering if I could continue this profession, but now I think I will succeed even though I sometimes doubt it.

P19: Being able to teach in many classes prepares you for professional life and gives you experience. Knowledge is transferred from theory to practice during the practicum period.

P4: Since it is a profession that progresses the more experience you have, practicum can sometimes be difficult. But it is also the best opportunity to gain experience and learn from mistakes.

P6: It is definitely gaining experience. It is to be able to lecture in front of a big class without getting nervous.

P26: I can go to the practicum every day on different days and my self-confidence has increased tremendously. I am happy when my mentor supports me in the same way. I realized that I have overcome my fears a little bit.

P20: *A few weeks ago, I was asked by my mentor teacher at my practicum school to do a review on the subject of clothes. I prepared well, used visuals, designed games that students would like. We had a full lesson as a class. At the end of the lesson, one of my students said to my mentor teacher, "Teacher, I didn't understand how the lesson went, when did the lesson end?". At that moment, I really felt that I had taught a good lesson.*

4.3.2. Category 2: Problems

Problems experienced by pre-service teachers during their practicum are listed as: expecting too much from them and being given too much responsibility; anxiety due to responsibility and fear of teaching incorrectly; excitement, fear and anxiety due to inexperience; and sometimes not being seen as a teacher by other teachers and students at school.

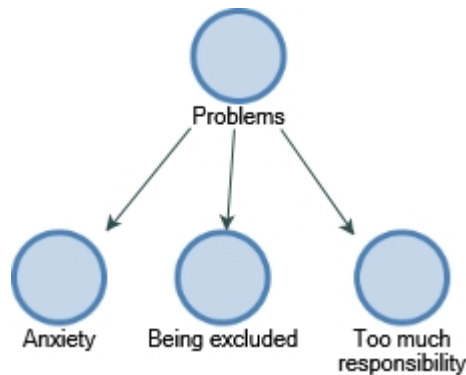


Figure 11. Problems

P11: *Since there is no experience yet, there may be a fear of what and how I can convey and whether I can control the students.*

P19: *From time to time, I may feel academically and psychologically inadequate.*

P28: *There is a fear of teaching wrong. I mean, what if I teach something wrong.*

P14: *The stress of the first day of teaching, the fact that my teacher expects a lot from me when I have no experience, the insecurity that comes from half preparation and the panic attack on the board as a result of lack of material and my teacher taking over the lesson.*

P17: *Treating trainee teachers as if they are much less or much more than they are. Teachers not having a good command of trainees' competencies.*

P24: *I was a trainee for the first time last semester. Suddenly, the teacher told me that the performance assignments were entirely your responsibility. The exam is left in our laps, left to your initiative. I felt so bad that I wondered if I would be unfair, how I should score, there is nothing specific, there is no chart. I said, I hope I didn't violate anyone's rights because in this way, I think it's like throwing a person who doesn't know how to swim directly into the pool.*

Most of the pre-service teachers stated that students sometimes did not see them as teachers, that they were addressed as "sister" rather than "teacher", that they were not considered as teachers because they were the teacher of the course and were not independent in the course, that they did not receive enough respect, that they were sometimes not seen as teachers by other teachers in the school and that they were excluded.

P1: *Teachers may have some negative attitudes towards trainee teachers. Likewise, negative attitudes from students can also be encountered.*

P21: Not getting enough respect from public staff teachers at the school and not being able to intervene in a problem with students because we are not competent is negative.

P9: Students not taking us seriously from time to time. A few students addressing me and my friends as "big sisters"

P26: Some teachers have something against interns. They don't even want them to use the teachers' restroom, they don't want them to enter the teachers' room. Maybe we are not teachers now, but we will be teachers in a few months, we are prospective teachers and as a teacher, I am a colleague of yours, it is very strange for me as a teacher to do this to a colleague of yours.

4.3.3. Category 3: Expectations

The prospective teachers' expectations for practicum and teaching are grouped under the topics such as assignment, employment, support, school conditions, constructive criticism, feedback, seminar, practicum duration, and salary.

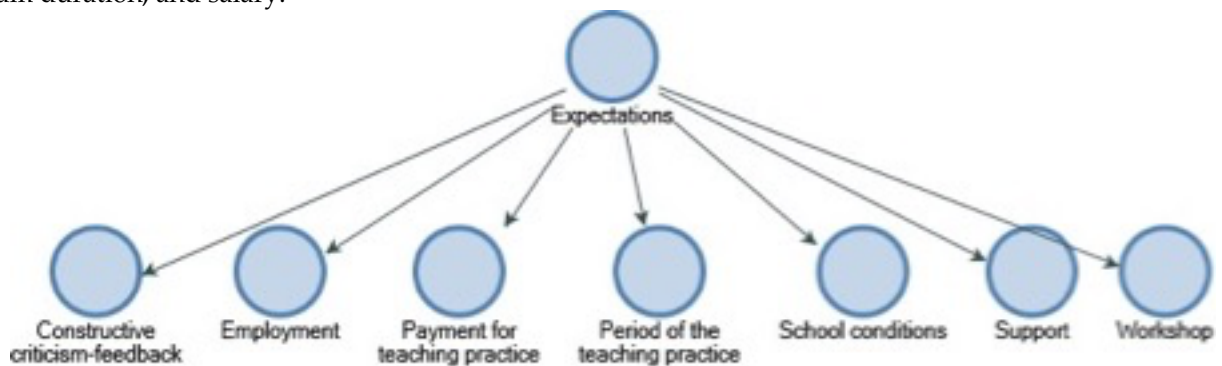


Figure 12: Expectations

Pre-service teachers expressed that they wanted to be supported by their practicum teachers and to receive constructive criticism and feedback.

P1: When I was on practicum, the mentor and other teachers at my school supported me instead of causing difficulties. Giving advice based on their experiences.

P6: More experience can be gained. The advantages of teaching can be conveyed.

P11: Mentor teachers can talk about different, more fun and interesting strategies. Very good examples from foreign countries can be given.

P14: Telling positive memories, explaining one by one how to get out of the chaotic jobs they hear around, showing that they are not actually that chaotic. To tell them who and which authorities they can communicate with in situations that are beyond the scope of the profession. Giving advice on how to behave in unfavorable situations.

P19: On the other hand, I think that many supervisors implement the practicum outside of its purpose and that teacher candidates are not sufficiently supported in this process, this situation affects the candidates psychologically and alienates them from the practicum and even the profession. Of course, this situation varies according to the supervisor and the school where the candidate is, it is not a situation that can be generalized.

P9: To make prospective teachers feel like a real teacher.

P13: Motivating behaviors can be exhibited, and they can be fully rewarded for their efforts.

P24: The practicum teacher can give us feedback with good constructive criticism in order to make us love our profession. I mean, we don't say that, of course, we don't say that we didn't perform very well, but when the teacher came out, he was great, you explained this and that, tell us what it really is. Let him give constructive criticism.

They also stated that they would like to take a workshop where they can practice before going to the practicum.

P19: Seminars and workshops about the profession should be organized and candidates should be supported about the positive and negative aspects of teaching and how to overcome these negativities.

P30: I mean, the opportunity to actually practice before. This should not happen. First of all, I think seminars and activities should be organized within the faculty.

One student stated that they found the duration of their practicum insufficient and that they should spend more time at school.

P20: Before the practicum, the necessary training should be given to the prospective teachers by competent teachers. The practicum period should be longer. They should attend the practicum at least 3 days a week for 1 year, 6-8 class hours a day.

They stated that they had extra expenses due to materials and travel money while going to the practicum and for this reason, pre-service teachers should be financially supported for the practicum. In addition, they emphasized that they expect assignment and employment after the practicum.

P21: In order to create motivation during their practicum period, financial aid can be provided in a small amount to meet their needs.

P24: We need to be rewarded for our labor. We definitely need to be compensated for our labor, and I believe in this. We definitely need to be paid for the practicum. Because we go there once a week, one day a week. We go for 6 hours, but we spend money on the road, on food. In this way, we really need to be paid at least for our food and transportation, or if materials are required, for the materials. We are all students now.

P29: Now, it is not possible for the practicum school to be close to everyone's home. For example, this year, especially the road is an incredible expense, a terrible expense. For example, material design is expensive. There should be financial support.

P2: The retirement of our teachers who have reached their retirement age can be provided under quality conditions, paving the way for our prospective teachers and eliminating their doubts about the appointment problem.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the viewpoints of prospective foreign language teachers regarding their attitudes towards the teaching profession and practicum, in addition to the emotions they experience. This research could contribute to better teacher training programs and support systems by providing insights into the perceptions and emotions of foreign language teacher candidates. It could also identify factors that contribute to teacher burnout and attrition and suggest interventions to address these issues. The study could inform the development of more effective and sustainable foreign language teacher education programs and potentially impact education policies and practices.

This research examined the views of pre-service foreign language teachers towards teaching profession and teaching practice using basic qualitative research design. The participants of the study were 30 Turkish foreign language students who were in their final year and taking a teaching practice course. The data were collected through individual interviews and focus group interviews with the participants using a semi-structured interview form. All of the students who participated in the study stated that they did not choose teaching profession willingly. In the study, student opinions were analyzed and codes were

first created, similar codes were grouped under the same categories, and themes were formed by examining the relationships between categories.

When the views of the participants in the study are analyzed, it is seen that pre-service teacher views on the teaching profession are grouped under 3 themes: views on teaching profession, views on practicing the teaching profession, and views on practicum. The views of the participants on teaching profession consist of two categories: perception of teaching and factors for choosing teaching profession. It is seen that pre-service teachers have many different views on the perception of teaching. It is seen that they generally characterize teaching with positive terms such as parenthood, leadership, guidance, sacred profession, as well as adjectives such as difficulty, responsibility, dedication, and patience. While some of the participants stated that the factors for choosing foreign language teaching were their love of teaching and their childhood dream, some of them stated that they chose this profession because they liked foreign language learning and foreign language rather than teaching. Some of the pre-service teachers stated that they took their previous teachers as role models in choosing and practicing the teaching profession. Studies show that pre-service teachers' previous learning experiences play an important role in language teaching (Freeman, 1993; Johnson, 1994; Moran, 1996). While expressing their views on practicing teaching profession, pre-service teachers mentioned many positive aspects of teaching, as well as the difficulties and requirements of the profession. In the difficulties of teaching, apart from the views on education such as material shortage, class size, education program, the problem of students' discipline and disrespect was mentioned a lot. Numrich (1996) determined that the most important concerns of pre-service teachers are providing a comfortable classroom environment and good classroom management. As for the requirements of teaching profession, they pointed out that teachers should constantly renew themselves and that personal development is important, among many other factors. When the opinions of the participants about practicum were examined, it was observed that they were gathered in three different categories: the benefits of the practicum for prospective teachers, the problems they experienced during the practicum and their expectations from the practicum. The participants stated that they gained experience during their practicum, thus their self-confidence was restored, and that the positive things they experienced during the practicum and the feedback motivated them. Mok (1994) and Numrich (1996) observed that teacher candidates become more effective teachers as their experience in internship increases.

One of the problems they experienced during their practicum was that their practicum teachers gave them too much responsibility. From time to time, they feel anxious because of too much responsibility, sometimes because they are afraid of teaching something wrong and because they are not experienced enough. They also stated that they were ostracized by the students and other teachers in the school and that they were not seen as teachers. Pre-service teachers stated that they expected to be supported by the course teacher when necessary and to receive constructive criticism. In addition, financial support during practicum, improvement of school conditions, a workshop where they can practice before practicum, extension of practicum periods and job opportunities after graduation are also among their expectations. As a result, it can be said that all of the pre-service foreign language teachers do not want to perform teaching profession, rather, they prefer to learn a foreign language or have different reasons to choose this department. While most of the pre-service teachers characterized teaching profession in positive terms, some of them defined it as a difficult profession. They characterized teaching profession with many different factors.

6. Suggestions

As the demand for foreign language instruction continues to grow, it is critical to prepare highly qualified language teachers who can effectively meet the needs of diverse learners. Based on our research, several

measures are proposed to enhance language teacher education and support systems to better equip foreign language teacher candidates for the demands of the profession.

It is apparent that by reducing teachers' working hours and limiting class sizes to a certain number, teachers can be more motivated and lessons can be taught more efficiently. The materials necessary for teaching foreign language courses should be provided equally in all schools. Students can be made aware of the importance of foreign language and therefore the importance of foreign language lessons so that they give the necessary importance to the lesson. Comprehensive research can be conducted with the support of parents to investigate the causes of students' discipline problems and disrespect. In order for teachers to be able to understand students and act objectively in their approach to them, they can be provided with a good psychology education before becoming a teacher. In order to prevent the excitement and anxiety of prospective teachers during their practicum, they can be given a training where they can practice before the practicum and the time they spend in the practicum in their senior year can be increased. It is necessary to implement targeted interventions aimed at supporting the emotional well-being of foreign language teacher candidates. Their motivation can be increased by their mentor teachers and advisors by supporting them in classroom management and course operation and giving them feedback. It is necessary to re-evaluate the practicum requirements for foreign language teacher candidates to ensure that they are effectively prepared for the demands of the profession and that their training aligns with current best practices in language teaching. Suitable conditions can be provided in practicum schools for prospective teachers to feel themselves as teachers. A culture of collaboration and support should be cultivated among language teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. This may include facilitating opportunities for networking and collaboration, which can help to reduce stress and improve job satisfaction among teachers.

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