

Preferences and Reasons of Teacher Candidates Why They Do/Do not Read

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Abstract

In this study, the main and primary goal is to find out whether teacher candidates enjoy reading books or not and whether they prefer printed books or digital versions with the reasons behind these choices. Through the study, qualitative research method phenomenology is exercised. Sample group of the study is consisted of 178 Ahi Evran University Department of Education Primary School Teaching and Turkish Language and Literature program students selected through purposive sampling. All the data is acquired via open-ended interview forms. In these forms featured questions similar to;

“I enjoy/do not enjoy reading books, because...”

“I prefer reading digital books, because...”

“I prefer reading printed books, because...”

And the participants were requested to fill in the blanks.

The data is analyzed with content analysis method. As a result of the study, it is determined that more than half of the teacher candidates do not regularly read books, 10% of them do not enjoy reading books at all, approximately 85% prefer digital books over printed ones and nearly a quarter of them spend 20 minutes or more reading daily. Moreover, the teacher candidates that barely spend time for reading books do so because they allocate their free time to preparing themselves for the forthcoming exams.

Keywords: Book, reading, e-book, printed book, reading culture

1. Introduction

To read is, “to see letters and characters that compose a text and recite them or comprehend the idea conveyed by these characters”. (Turkish Language Association [TDK], 2017) Reading is the first step of an individual’s introduction to culture. This skill that is the most crucial and fundamental aspect of education in the initial years also influences the success of the student through the eventual phases of education directly.

Reading habit is the continuation of reading activity regularly and critically through the individual’s life as a result of personal needs. (Yılmaz, 2004, p. 116) A habit is “the natural tendency that develops after many times of repetition; repeating of behavior due to internal and external factors, the conditioned behavior or reaction manners.” (TDK, 2017) Reading habit involves deliberately continuing the reading activity, learn from what is read, free and creative thinking, incorporating what is learnt, associating what is read with earlier knowledge and analysis-synthesis processes. (Yıldız, 2013) In order to cultivate a reading habit it is crucial to introduce right models to the individuals. In this regard, best possible and effective role-models are family members and naturally, teachers. In a study by Baccus (2004) this is affirmed and determined that “experiences of teachers about reading and their guidance over students have an impact on students’ motivation and tendency to read.” Likewise, studies demonstrate that educating families about reading habit makes the children of these families more interested in reading books. (Batur, Gülveren and Bek, 2010; Janes, 2008; Netherland, 2004)

Phillip (2005) evaluates the reading habit regarding its benefits to the society from the perspective of the individual and the society, and concludes that reading, firstly contributes to the logical development of the individual and secondly, contributes to the economic growth and the overall system of the society to which the individual belongs to. Individuals that do not adopt a reading lifestyle continue their lives in a framework in which production, thinking and challenges rarely occurs and knowledge to cope with problems never acquired. (Arslan, 2013)

Bestowing reading habit is one of the most important aims of the education. Naturally, it is expected that all individuals that go through the educational system acquire this culture. There are many activities such as PSA campaigns, symposiums, conferences are organized in Turkey and abroad to bring in reading culture to people. A good example of this is the “100 Principal Books” campaign that encompassed elementary and middle school students in Turkey between 2004 and 2005. From the teachers that graduate from mandatory education, having read at least these 100 books is expected as a must.

However, despite all expectations and efforts, it is widely known that reading habit amongst the children and the youth in Turkey is decreasing. Statistical data shows that readers’ ratio to the overall population was 27% in 1965, 5.7% in 1980, 2.5% in 1990 and 3.5% in 1997. (Özen, 1998) It can be estimated that this downwards trend continued to this day.

Teachers are expected to encourage their students to read and more importantly, be role models for their students. In order to be a good role model, these teachers have to be good readers in the first place. However, in many studies it is found that teachers and teacher candidates are not good readers at all. (Arı and Demir, 2013; Aslantürk and Saracaloğlu, 2010; Balcı, 2003; Filiz, 2004; Esgin and Karadağ 2000; Kurulgan and Çekerol, 2008; Mavi and Çetin, 2009; Odabaş, Odabaş and Polat, 2008; Sağlamtuñ, 1990; Saracaloğlu, Karasakaloğlu and Yenice, 2007; Yalınkılıç, 2007; Yılmaz, Köse and Korkut, 2009).

In all studies conducted in Turkey it is clear that reading habit in the overall population is at very low levels. (Yalman, Özkan and Kutluca, 2013) In this regard, teachers which are seen as architects of the society and the future do not act as role models for their students only, but for the entirety of the population. In this study, which is planned due to the reason that these teacher candidates will have a direct influence over their future students' reading culture, main purpose is to determine whether teacher candidates enjoy reading books or not and whether they prefer printed books or digital versions with the reasons behind these choices. In this regard, answers for questions are sought:

- How frequently these teacher candidates read?
- Why these teacher candidates enjoy or do not enjoy reading books?
- Why these teacher candidates prefer printed or digital books?

2. Method

Through the study, qualitative research method phenomenology is exercised. Phenomenology method focuses on phenomena that we perceive yet do not conceive in depth and detail. (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016)

2.1 Sample Group of the Study

The sample group of the study consists of 178 senior students studying at Primary School Teaching (PS), Turkish Teaching (T) programs of Ahi Evran University Department of Education, as well as senior students studying at Turkish Language and Literature (TLL) program while having pedagogical formation courses in addition; all selected through purposive sampling. This sampling method involves picking an analogous subgroup that is related to the study's main questions from the population and an analogous situation. (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2013; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016) Demographic info about the teacher candidates in the sample group are given in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the teacher candidates

Department Değişken		Turkish Language Teaching		Turkish Language and Literature (Formation Program)		Primary School		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Gender	Female	35	70,0	50	89,3	50	69,4	135	75,8
	Male	15	30,0	6	10,7	22	30,6	43	24,2
	Total	50	100	56	100,0	72	100,0	178	100,0
Age	21-22	22	44,0	27	48,2	41	56,9	90	50,6
	23-24	23	46,0	25	44,6	30	41,7	78	43,8
	25 +	5	10,0	4	7,2	1	1,4	10	5,6
	Total	50	100,0	56	100,0	72	100,0	178	100,0

In Table 1, it is observed that 75.8% of the teacher candidates are females while 24.2% are males, 50.6% are aged 21-23, 43.8% are aged 23-24 and 5.6% aged 25 or above.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

All the data is acquired via open-ended interview forms. In the form that consists of two sections, first section surveys the demographic info of the participants. In the second section of the form, participants are surveyed about the frequency of their reading activities. Additionally, in this section, the participants are requested to complete the sentences below:

“I enjoy/do not enjoy reading books, because...”

“I prefer reading digital books, because...”

“I prefer reading printed books, because...”

2.3. Analysis of the Data

After the half-preconfigured interview form are given to the teacher candidates by the researcher, the answers by the participants are read by the researcher and a Turkish Language and Literature teacher, and then transferred to the digital medium. The data, after that, is analyzed with the descriptive analysis method. In the descriptive

analysis, in order to reflect the views of the participants in an efficient way, direct quotes are used. Finally, content analysis is conducted and the results are interpreted. (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011; Büyüköztürk, 2009)

3. Findings

Table 2. Frequency of teacher candidates' reading activity

Department Reading Frequency	Turkish Language Teaching (n=50)		Turkish Language and Literature (Formation Program) (n=56)		Primary School (n=72)		Total (n=178)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Do not read at all	3	6,0	1	1,8	3	4,2	7	3,9
Do not read regularly	31	62,0	26	46,4	39	54,2	96	53,9
Less than an hour a week	1	2,0	0	0,0	5	6,9	6	3,4
1-2 hours per week	7	14,0	6	10,7	12	16,7	25	14,1
At least 20 minutes per day	5	10,0	11	19,7	2	2,8	18	10,1
More than half an hour a day	3	6,0	12	21,4	11	15,2	26	14,6
Total	50	100,0	56	100,0	72	100,0	178	100,0

When Table 2 which shows the findings regarding frequency of teacher candidates' reading activity, it is seen that 3.9% of the teacher candidates do not read at all, 53.9% of them do not read regularly. Percentage of teacher candidates that read less than 1-2 hours in a week is 3.4%. On the other hand, 10.1% of the teacher candidates spend at least 20 minutes a day reading, 14.6% of them read more than half an hour a day.

Table 3. How much teacher candidates enjoy reading

Department Liking Situation	Turkish Language Teaching (n=50)		Turkish Language and Literature (Formation Program) (n=56)		Primary School (n=72)		Total (n=178)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes	44	88,0	50	89,3	66	91,7	160	89,9
No	6	12,0	6	10,7	6	8,3	18	10,1
Total	50	100,0	56	100,0	72	100,0	178	100,0

Approximately 10% of the Teacher candidates within the sample group stated that they do not enjoy reading. This is a serious issue and concern considering their branch of teaching, Turkish language. On the other hand, 90% of the candidates stated they enjoy reading. Some of the participants stated the reasons behind their answers as such:

"I enjoy but I cannot find enough time to read due to the horse race I am running in." (T 18; TLL 10)

"I do not enjoy because I am preparing for Public Personnel Selection Examination." (T 24, 25, 31; TLL 13, 18,29; PS 6, 38,71)

"I do not enjoy because I could not develop a habit due to the pressure by my family and teacher when I was a child." (T 34; TLL 1, 16)

"I do not enjoy but I am ashamed of it." (T 16)

"I enjoy, because it improves my cognitive abilities and enlarges my vocabulary. Helps me to think fast and allows me to evaluate situations from different perspectives." (PS 43)

"I enjoy, because it allows me to experience the emotions I have never felt myself, it improves my creativity and enlarges my vision." (T 47; PS 3,4, 38)

I enjoy, because I have psychological problems. When I read, I feel like spiritually relieved." (T 41)

"I enjoy, because I believe the life is too valuable to waste. I prefer reading instead of wasting my time with useless stuff." (TLL 7)

"I enjoy, because I want to improve myself. Besides, I believe it's a must considering what I am studying." (TLL 21)

Table 4. Book preferences of teacher candidates

Table 4 shows findings about whether teacher candidates prefer printed books or digital books. According to the results, 15.7% of the teacher candidates prefer e-books whereas 84.3% stated they prefer printed books. Some of the participants stated their points of view as such:

"I prefer printed books, because it's better for the health of my eyes and it's easier to concentrate." (T 2, 13,17,

26,28, 40, 41; TLL 6, 14, 16, 43; PS 1, 18, 25, 43, 64, 68).

"I prefer printed books, because I want to feel and smell." (T 6,8, 9, 10, 14, 25, 27 38, 42, 43, 44, 45; TLL 1, 8, 17, 20, 28, 30, 37, 40, 41, 42, 45, 48, 50, 56; PS 5, 9, 17, 22, 24, 28, 29, 30, 40, 46, 48, 59, 66, 71).

"I prefer printed books, because I can underline while reading and take notes on the pages." (T 13; TLL 8, 11, 28, 32, 49 ; PS16, 23, 27, 34, 63, 70).

"I prefer digital books, because it provides an enriched medium, and relieves me of the burden of carrying them, I can read whenever and wherever I want." (T 2).

"I prefer digital books, because I download them for free, I cannot afford buying printed books." (T 21; PS 34, 55)

"I prefer digital books, because it's easy to carry, I can have them even on my smartphone, and thus I can read during nights." (T 48; TLL 39; PS 44, 49, 56, 63)

"I prefer digital books, because they are easier to reach in the technology-friendly environment we are in." (TLL 29, 43, 47; PS 21, 45)

4. Results and Discussion

As the conclusion of the study, it is observed that more than half of the senior student teacher candidates do not read regularly; but a quarter of them spend daily 20 minutes or more reading. 10% of the participants do not enjoy reading at all. It is observed that the most common reason for the teacher candidates that do not read regularly is the time-consuming preparations for exams.

There are many studies that say teacher candidates and youth do not read enough. Odabaş, Odabaş and Polat (2008), in their study conducted amongst university students, found that nearly half of the students do not read books at all. Similarly, Andrews (1992); Arı and Demir (2103); Balcı (2003); Batur, (2010); Esgin and Karadağ (2000); Batur, Gülveren and Bek (2010); Gündoğdu, Barata and Çelebi (2015); İpşiroğlu (1997); Korkmaz (2001); Olson and Gillis (1983); Saracaloğlu, Bozkurt and Serin (2003); Yalman, Özkan and Kutluca (2013) have reached similar findings through their research conducted in different universities with various sample groups and times; they all concluded teacher candidates have less than expected reading habit levels.

Batur, Gülveren and Bek determined that there's a decrease in reading behavior among students who reached their senior year. They state that the reason behind this might be the fact that most of these students prepare themselves for Public Personnel Selection Examination to become teachers. Kolaç's (2007) findings also support this view. In a similar manner, Esgin and Karadağ (2000) and Yalman, Özkan and Kutluca (2013) repeated the same finding that teacher candidates cannot find enough time to read due to the heavy burden of the last year's curriculum.

In the study, it is found that approximately 85% of the teacher candidates prefer printed books over digital ones. Çelik (2015) in his study titled "A review of the attitude of students towards e-book reading" states that students' tendency to read e-books is low. Considering the role that the technology plays in our lives today, it is a good field of debate and research to find out the reasons behind this phenomenon.

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Notes

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