

## **Pre-service Social Studies Teachers' Views about the Teaching Knowledge Test**

**Adem Beldag<sup>i</sup>**

Recep Tayyip Erdogan University

### **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to determine pre-service social studies teachers' views about the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT). The study was conducted within the framework of case-study which is one of the qualitative research methods. The study-group consists of 13 pre-service teachers. Two semi-structured interview forms were used to collect data. Descriptive analysis approach was utilized for the analysis of the collected data. Upon reviewing of the results, it was seen that during the interviews both before and after the exam, pre-service teachers were of the opinion that the content knowledge test should be continued to be conducted; that the number of questions in the exam is not sufficient to measure the content knowledge; that giving weight to undergraduate academic lessons will have an affirmative contribution to this exam.

**Keywords:** Social studies, Teaching Knowledge Test, teacher training

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<sup>i</sup>**Adem Beldag**, Assist. Prof. Dr., Faculty of Education, Recep Tayyip Erdogan University, Rize, Turkey.

**Correspondence:** adem.beldag@erdogan.edu.tr

## Introduction

A nation's best self-expression form can be summarized with the behaviours it desires the next generations to embody. The features which must be owned by next generations constitute the character of education curriculum. It goes without saying that the most important element involved in implementation of the curriculum is the teacher (Yaylacı, 2013). When an education system is examined, it is understood that everything changes and is replaced inevitably –blackboards replaced by glass boards and smart boards eventually. However, teachers remain as the most important element unaffected by this change. They represent the basic element of education and the main practitioner of any education policy and curriculum.

Departing from this conceptual framework, different policies have been followed in teacher preparation as one of the most important elements of education in Turkey. In the bottom of the educational policies, the desire to reach the best and bring up the practitioners of the curriculum to meet the needs of the era lies. Mistakes in the selection of teachers will adversely affect not only students' education life but also educational institutions and overall education system (Safran, Kan, Üstündağ, Birbudak & Yıldırım, 2014). It is emphasized that success in school can be achieved only with teachers who comply with certain standards; for this reason, it is necessary to identify the standards in the selection of teachers (Hartley, 1998; Eryaman & Riedler, 2009). Stephens and Crawley (1994) list these standards as content knowledge, teaching skills, classroom management, student level (performance) determination and recording, and understanding that teaching is a lifelong profession.

In Turkey, the Ministry of Education (MEB) lists general qualifications required for teaching profession as: (a) personal professional values, (b) recognition of students, (c) teaching and learning process, (d) monitoring and evaluation of learning and development, (e) school, family and community relationships; and (f) curriculum and content knowledge (MEB, 2004). When considered in the particular context of this study, field-specific qualifications for social studies teachers are determined as; (a) planning and regulating the teaching process, (b) learning-teaching process, (c) monitoring and evaluation, (d) collaboration with the school, family and the community; and (e) ensuring professional development (MEB, 2008). Abovementioned qualifications imply that the teaching profession is a field of specialization.

One of the goals of teacher preparation curricula implemented in our country is to bring up candidate teachers with specialized knowledge in a particular area (Çelikten, Şanal & Yeni, 2005). Many studies can be carried out to enhance the education of candidate teachers. Among others, teachers should receive a good education and develop themselves in their fields as the most important priority. In short, teachers should first learn so that they can teach students (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997; Eryaman & Riedler, 2010). To keep pace with this change, a proposal was offered in the 18th National Education Council as "In the tests performed in teacher recruitment, candidates should be asked questions relating to their specific fields of graduation along with professional knowledge of teaching and world knowledge."

Failure to make good planning regarding employment of teachers as well as to plan well the process of teacher employment beginning from opening education faculties to their recruitment has caused an accumulation of pre-service teachers before recruitment. To prevent the accumulation, a selection examination has been applied for recruitment of teachers since 1999 (Atav & Sönmez, 2013). The examination was held as "Civil Service Exam" (DMS) in 2000 and "Public Vocational Exam" (KMS) in the following year. Lastly, it has been held under the name of "Public Personnel Selection Examination" (KPSS) since 2002 (the Cabinet decision dated 18.03.2002 numbered 3975) (Ercoşkun & Nağacı, 2009). While the recruitment of teachers is performed through the test called KPSS in Turkey, similar tests are carried out under different titles in other countries. For example, in Germany, state exams I and II are applied; in France, pre-service teachers take a test in the introduction of the teaching profession; on the other hand, several European countries have interviews for recruiting teachers (Kilimci, 2006). The issue of improving quality in education is brought up to the agenda in

not only Turkey but also all other countries, and studies are carried out to improve the quality of education (Berliner, 2005). Applying of such examinations may be a criterion to eliminate the idea that pre-service teachers are not at the desired level considering the qualities they are required to have (Yaylacı, 2013). First, pre-service teachers took world knowledge, general skills and educational sciences tests in the KPSS. Thus, they did not attach importance to undergraduate courses during their higher education (Erdem & Soylu, 2013). However, considering that teaching is a profession which requires specialized knowledge and skills, candidates need to have a number of competencies in order to be able to fully perform requirements of the profession (Şişman, 2001). One of them is to have content knowledge in respective areas. Content knowledge is of critical importance for teachers (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). In this regard, in the National Education Basic Law of 1739, teaching was defined as the “specialized profession” which assumes the state's education, training and administrative duties associated with them. In addition, this specialized area consists of world knowledge, field-specific content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Teachers with the content knowledge know how students will create the knowledge, acquire the skills, and use the mental skills supportive of learning (Koehler & Mishra, 2006). In the light of these, in order to train more qualified teachers with mastery in their fields, it was started to apply teaching content knowledge tests besides other skills such as world knowledge, general skills and educational sciences.

KPSS Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) consists of 80% of field-specific courses including history, geography, political science, the foundations of the social studies, social psychology, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, economics, science, technology and social change, art and aesthetics, human relations and communication, today's world problems, and social project development; and the rest of 20% is composed of questions about respective field of specialization. The latter exam covers a substantial part of the lessons learned during the undergraduate education. In the field of social studies teaching, TKT was applied for the first time in 2013 for pre-service teachers who completed their undergraduate studies during that year.

In the literature, studies about candidate teachers' views regarding KPSS Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) are available (Erdem & Soylu, 2013; Demir & Bütüner, 2014; Özkan & Bağçeci, 2015; Yiğit & Alev, 2015). The current literature provides information about opinions of pre-service teachers after taking the Teaching Knowledge Test. The significance of our study arises from its attempt to shed light onto expectations of pre-service teachers regarding the Teaching Knowledge Test, which was applied for Social Studies Education area during the 2012-2013 school year for the first time, to determine their views after the exam and finally to make an overall assessment. The aim of this study is to determine expectations of pre-service teachers that graduated from the social studies education department of the education faculty of a state university in Turkey during the 2012-2013 academic year from the Teaching Knowledge Test, and to find out their post-test views. For this purpose, the study was carried out to seek answers for the following research questions before and after the Social Studies teachers took the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT).

- What views do candidate Social Studies teachers hold regarding applying of the TKT?
- What views do candidate Social Studies teachers hold regarding whether the TKT measures field-specific knowledge or not?
- What views do candidate Social Studies teachers hold regarding their level of preparation for the TKT?
- What views do candidate Social Studies teachers hold regarding the contribution of the university education to the TKT?
- What views do candidate Social Studies teachers hold regarding the support obtained from private teaching institutions in preparation for the TKT?

## **Method**

The study was designed as a case study since it offers the most suitable method for both the topic and aim of our study, which intends to make an in-depth analysis and to determine the pre-service social studies teachers' views on the teaching knowledge test before and after taking the test.

Case study is a qualitative research approach in which the researcher gathers detailed and in-depth information, puts forward a state description or condition themes about real life, a current limited system (a case) or multi-limited systems (cases) within a specific time through multiple information sources (Creswell, 2009). In the context of qualitative research, case study refers to intensively studying an event or a phenomenon (Glesne, 2006). In this type of research, answers are sought for the questions about how and why the cases arise (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

### **Participants**

The study group consists of 13 pre-service teachers attending the social studies department affiliated with the education faculty of a Turkish state university during the 2012-2013 academic year. The participants were selected by using the criterion sampling method as a type of purposeful sampling. The main point of this sampling method is the study of all cases that meet a set of predetermined criteria (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In this study, the predetermined criteria were identified as having graduated from the department of social studies education, being about to take/having taken the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT), and willingness to participate in the study. Interviews were held with the participants both before and after the TKT.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

In order to collect data, semi-structured interview forms consisting of open-ended questions were used in this study. Open-ended questions include a certain number of questions covering the headings/areas the researcher is interested in, and, consequently, these questions offer the possibility of more detailed discussion of the headings to both the researcher and interviewees while defining the area under investigation (Hancock, 1998). In order to determine pre-test expectations of the TKT and post-test evaluations, two interview forms were prepared. The interview form was developed by a number of sequential steps such as the literature interview, writing of the questions, receiving opinions from experts in the field, pilot scheme and finalizing the questions accordingly. The participants involved in the pilot scheme were excluded from the main implementation. The most powerful aspect of interviews is that they allow to obtain information about what is not seen and to make alternative explanations about what is seen (Glesne, 2006).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is defined as exporting of the data (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the data collected from pre-service social studies teachers about their expectations prior to the TKT and their assessments after the examination were analyzed with the descriptive analysis approach. In this approach, obtained data are summarized and interpreted in the light of predetermined themes. In order to reflect the views of interviewee(s), excerpts are frequently cited from the interview. The data are described and then interpreted. Next, some conclusions are drawn and proposals are put forward for future researchers (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). During data analysis, expert opinion was obtained to ensure reliability and sub-themes were created separately. The formula  $Reliability = (Consensus / (Consensus + Dissidence)) \times 100$  was applied. Matching of 83% was reached between two coders in pre-test analysis, and 89% in post-test analysis. Matching rate equal to or greater than 70% is regarded sufficient (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The participant teachers were coded as P1, P2... when cited in direct quotations as a rule of descriptive analysis techniques.

### **Results**

The findings from the research were evaluated according to the research questions. As a result, pre-service social studies teachers' expectations and assessments regarding the Teaching Knowledge Test were grouped under five main themes. The findings relevant to the study aim were presented by supporting with direct citations from the participants' views in accordance with the descriptive analysis approach.

## **Views Regarding Application of the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)**

### **Results from the interviews before the TKT;**

The pre-service social studies teachers were asked about their views regarding necessity of applying the TKT. Of the candidate teachers interviewed before the examination, 12 participants stated positive opinions about necessity of the exam while one person stated negative opinion. The participants expressed their expectations of the exam while expressing their views on this matter.

As a result of the analysis, the positive views were collected under three sub-themes as "there must be the test but the timing is wrong", "it will bring quality" and "just field-specific exam should be applied". The negative statement was placed in another sub-theme as "knowledge of practicum should be measured".

Examination of the positive opinions regarding the necessity of the TKT shows that the highest frequency falls under the sub-theme "there must be the test but the timing is wrong" (8 participants). Two of the participants expressed their views in this direction as following:

*With the changes made during the term, our study schedule has completely changed and our focal points have differed. We did not even have enough time to study for the field exam (P10). It is a system which needs to be implemented for the students who are currently in the first grade, not in the 4th grade. This field education must begin from the first class and students should develop themselves accordingly (P11).*

Also, the analysis of data revealed that the pre-service social studies teachers emphasized the opinion that quality of education will be enhanced by the test (3 participants). According to the proponents of this view:

*...It should have been done from the beginning. We have already passed the general culture and general ability tests, what is important is measurement of the field knowledge (P9). and Now that we are going to perform this profession, of course we need to be proficient in our field (P13).*

One participant stated that only field-specific examination should be applied as following:

*I find it right; I think that there should be just the field exam. So, the courses required for teaching should be included in one exam without causing such chaos (P2).*

The respondent holding a negative view regarding this matter stated that measurement should be for practicum instead of content knowledge as following.

*I think that practical teaching knowledge must be measured rather than information because this is more important than the content knowledge (P6).*

### **Results from the interviews after the TKT;**

From analysis of the interviews following the Teaching Knowledge Test, all of the pre-service teachers reported positive opinion for continuation of the exam and expressed their expectations regarding the contents of the examination. These opinions were collected under three sub-themes as "the content should be changed", "the test is decisive" and "the weight of the field knowledge test needs to be increased in the exam".

Examination of the participants' views on this matter yielded the highest frequency for continuation of the exam, but according to the participants the content should be changed (9 participants). As an example:

*...some changes should be made in the content of the field exam. Teacher candidates should be questioned on how well they can teach their subject courses, rather than the knowledge of the field (P11). "Redundancies should be reduced in the course area. After all, everyone does not have to be knowledgeable in all areas, it is better to be proficient in their own field (P13).*

In addition, the participants' views indicating that the field exam is decisive seem at a remarkable frequency (4 participants). The following comments were extracted from the analysis of the interviews:

*...Many department graduates unfortunately are thrown into a career by answering a lot of questions with nothing to do at all with their respective field; field examination should be conducted to prevent this (P3). ...If one fails the exam, s/he hopes to do better in another. Also the challenges brought by the education system and difficulty of eliminating the pre-service teachers who will be recruited have made such a test obligatory (P4).*

In interviews after the exam, the pre-service teachers (2 participants) stated that the weight of the knowledge test in the exam should be increased. These views are cited as follows:

*Now that I'm studying social studies education, don't let them ask me maths questions because I will not teach mathematics at school... in my opinion, questions about necessary courses and topics should be asked (P7).*

### **Views Regarding Measurement of Field-Specific Knowledge by the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)**

#### **Results from the interviews before the TKT;**

During pre-test interviews, the pre-service teachers were asked for their opinion regarding measurement of the field knowledge by the TKT. It was found out that all of the respondents expressed negative opinions. The views in this regard were divided into four sub-themes as "small number of the questions," "uncertainty," "test anxiety" and "being late of the institution".

It seems from the interviews that the views indicating the small number of the questions (10 participants) are at a remarkable level. Some of the opinions expressed in this direction are given below:

*Since the field examination is an examination consisting of 50 questions, the number of questions will be consequently very limited for an area like social studies. In short, the content validity will be too low (P4). When we look at the distribution of the topics in the field exam, there are questions mainly about history, geography and citizenship as well as other social sciences... If there were 80 questions, it would be more reliable and valid (P11).*

When the pre-service teachers' opinions on whether the TKT would measure field-specific knowledge or not were taken into consideration, an uncertainty was identified regarding the examination (2 participants). A citation from this sub-theme is given below:

*Since we are the first victims of the field exam and we do not know what sort of questions will come up, it is a bad situation; I do not believe that it will fully measure our knowledge (P12).*

The views concerning measurement of the field knowledge by the TKT include test anxiety (1 participant) and belated timetable of the institution for arranging the examination (1 participant). In this sub-theme, one of the views is given below:

*This is readily impossible due to test anxiety... we will take the field exam unpreparedly and worriedly; in addition, we do not know if this is an advantage or disadvantage; after all, nobody is ready (P1).*

### **Results from the interviews after the TKT;**

After taking the Teaching Knowledge Test, the pre-service social studies teachers were asked about their opinions regarding whether the test measures the field knowledge. When the teacher candidates' answers were examined, negative responses were found to be given by 12 people, while 1 person responded positively. During the analysis, the negative responses were collected under two sub-headings as "small number of the questions," and "quality of the questions". On the other hand, the positive opinion constituted of the sub-theme "the exam covers the field".

In post-test interviews with teachers, the highest frequency corresponds to the candidates indicating the small number of questions (8 participants). Some of the views are as following:

*... When we finished the exam, everyone thought the same thing, the field exam did not measure the field. ... For example, there were questions about economy, politics, philosophy, arts and aesthetics and a question from a huge book on citizenship or the Constitution. So, does this test have the content validity? (P1). I think that the KPSS field exam does not measure my knowledge of the field and it is not a synthesis of four years of my knowledge. One question asked was randomly from the course I studied for one semester, nothing but luck (P6).*

Analysis of the data on this matter revealed another noteworthy sub-theme as lower quality of the questions (5 participants). Some of these views are as below:

*...it is the first field test, so the questions were not much at the level to measure the field knowledge. ... For me, they were not very good quality questions (P11). This year's questions must have been prepared in a little rush (P13).*

The positive opinion on the exam was found under the sub-theme that the examination covers the field (1 participant).

*Almost all the questions in the exam are about the field that a social studies teacher is supposed to know, but the degree of difficulty of this exam will rise slightly in the future, I think. (P10).*

### **Views Regarding the Level of Preparation for the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)**

#### **Results from the interviews before the TKT;**

During the pre-test interviews, all of the participants provided negative responses meaning that they did not prepare well enough for the teaching knowledge test. Their views in this regard were collected in three categories as "belated announcement of the exam", "uncertainty" and "intensity of the faculty courses".

Scrutiny of the views on this matter indicated a marked frequency of the sub-theme of belated announcement of the exam (9 participants). The participant teachers pointed out their views as follows:

*... developments and changes in the educational process have negatively affected me. I have lost all my concentration. Then, panic occurred. Which one will we review: general culture, general abilities, educational sciences or field content? (P4). The content of the exam was published in April and 3 examples of questions do not sample the content ... (P6).*

Another marked sub-theme in the interviews was found as uncertainty related to the exam (5 participants). In this regard, one participant's expression is given below:

*We have neither books to refer nor a guidance. One must be very lucky or genius to be able to predict what we will face with the 4 questions published. ... Especially the idea of being the guinea pig for such an unknown system takes one into pessimism demotivating for studying...(P10).*

Lastly, intensity of the faculty courses was mentioned by 3 participants. Relevant opinions on this matter include the following expressions:

*... I think that the faculty management should collect the courses on a certain test to leave us free time to study for the exam, especially the courses regarding school practice should be given in the 3rd grade. (P3). I had a busy year. I do not remember more intensive time in my life. University courses, school practice, attending the private teaching institution; I did a combination of these three (P7).*

### **Results from the interviews after the TKT;**

The pre-service social studies teachers' views regarding the level of preparation after the test were grouped under two sub-themes as "giving importance to the faculty courses" and "planned study".

In the interviews, all of the respondents were seen to pay attention to their school courses (13 participants). Some of them are cited as below:

*I studied the lessons to learn, not to pass the exam (P2). If I started university today, I would buy a notebook for each course and take notes of what the lecturer tells. For example, I took the economy course in the first grade and I was studying just to pass the course, like most of our friends (P10).*

The other striking view reported during these interviews was about the opportunity for planned study (8 participants). Some of the views on this sub-theme are given below:

*...I had a field book and started studying. This exam is beyond some students' depth. This year I realized that I underestimated the exam, I shouldn't have done (P4). A student who has followed the courses on a regular basis for 4 years can be very successful in his/her field (P4).*

### **Views Regarding Contribution of University Education to the TKT**

#### **Results from the interviews before the TKT;**

Regarding the contribution of the education received at university to the field exam, teachers were found to indicate negative opinions. These negative views were found to fall under three sub-themes as "the course lecturers having a background outside the field," "candidate teachers' ignorance of the lessons" and "not teaching of the courses according to the content".

The course lecturers having a background outside the field was seen to be the most notable sub-theme (9 participants). Two participants expressed their views as following:

*"... the great majority of the courses we took were taught by teachers outside their area of expertise. In short, teachers just applied the procedures (P4). "We had some problems in terms of university teachers in the early years. However, in recent years we have met the teachers qualified in their field (P8).*

Another view drawing attention during these interviews was students' ignorance of the courses. Their views on this issue are exemplified below:



*“... then the learning consciousness was not important to us. The important thing was to pass the course. If I had known that the field exam would be conducted, I wouldn't have been in this situation (P1). ... we feel inadequate. Of course, that we didn't do any research and reading, and we expected everything from the faculty instructors played an important role (P4).*

The last attention-grabbing sub-theme was not teaching of the courses according to the content (3 participants) as reported by participants. This view was expressed as follows:

*The lessons were not given as required by the instructors (P11).*

### **Results from the interviews after the TKT;**

The post-test interviews with the pre-service social studies teachers displayed negative feedback regarding the contribution of the university education to the TKT. The sub-themes are “incompatibility between the courses and the exam content”, “the lecturers having a background outside the field”, and “ignoring of the lessons”.

The most striking sub-theme was found to be the incompatible course syllabus and exam content (5 participants). Some of the views are as following:

*Some courses were enough for the exam. But it was not for measuring the knowledge with questions (P2). ... though I can't say the same thing for the ... course, I do not think it made contribution to the ... course. The field exam questions were not in parallel with the course syllabus (P6).*

Another remarkable sub-theme was noted as course instructors from outside the area by 4 participants. These views include:

*It has not made much contribution because most lessons were taught superficially. Some of the important courses for us were given by the non-specialist teachers (P5).*

Lastly, the participants drew attention to their ignorance of the courses during university education. As an example:

*To speak frankly ... because some of my idealist teachers forced to teach some things, I could do several questions in the field exam... (P10).*

### **Views Regarding the Support Obtained from Private Teaching Institutions in Preparation for the TKT**

#### **Results from the interviews before the TKT;**

As a result of the pre-test interviews about the contribution of private teaching institutions to the preparation for the Teaching Knowledge Test, 8 participants stated negative opinions while 5 participants stated positive opinions. Negative views were summarized under two sub-themes as “width of the field and uncertainty about questions” and “private teaching institutions will not be sufficient for the field”. On the other hand, positive views were described in relation with one sub-theme as “providing the opportunity to study for the exam in a planned way”.

Among the teachers giving negative responses, the frequency of reported width of the field and uncertainty regarding questions seems striking (8 participants). Some of these views are as following:

*There are approximately 40-45 courses ... in the field of social studies. Attending the private teaching institution for all these courses is just a waste of time, because our field is based on reading skills (P4). I do not think it will be useful, because nobody knows exactly what to do (P9).*

Also it was suggested that the private teaching institutions would not be sufficient for the examination (2 participants). One of these views is given below:

*Field courses should be taught by specialist teachers and I do not think that there are such teachers specialised in their areas in the private teaching institutions (P2).*

On the other hand, it was seen that the positive opinions regarding the support from such institutions were combined under the sub-theme of planned study for the exam (5 participants). Some of these views are as following:

*Private training institutions are useful because the courses we learnt in the university are not taught in compliance with the examination system, rather they are taught in a more academic way (as it should be). I think private training institutions have more contribution to the exam since they focus on the examination system and discriminate topics as important and trivial, etc (P6).*

### **Results from the interviews after the TKT;**

In post-test interviews regarding the support of private training institutions to the preparation for the TKT, 8 respondents reported negative opinions, while 5 respondents stated positive views. Both negative and positive views were summarized under one sub-theme for each one as “width of the field and uncertainty about questions” and “providing the opportunity to study for the exam in a planned way”, respectively.

During post-test interviews, the width of the field and uncertainty about questions (8 participants) was found as an outstanding negative opinion about the contribution of private institutions to the exam. Some of these views were as follows:

*That the subjects to be asked in the exam were not certain literally until April caused inefficient and ineffective courses held in private training institution. (P3). I regret going to the private training institution, as it provided no benefit. We just used the books (P9).*

On the other hand, positive feedback of participants was gathered under the sub-theme of providing the opportunity to study for the exam in a planned way. Citations are given below:

*...provides the opportunity to study regularly and planned studies give more determination to work (P5). ... learning may be more effective, there may be the environment for talking and discussing questions with friends, and everyone can teach something to each other. There is an environment where collaborative learning could occur (P11).*

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this research, the pre-service teachers' views about necessity of the KPSS Teaching Knowledge Test were found consistent before and after the test. Similar results were found by Şimşek and Akgün (2014); Demir and Bütüner (2014) reporting that the exam is regarded as a positive and belated implementation, and the field exam seems to recruit pre-service teachers with the field knowledge and mastery of the theoretical knowledge in respective field. Also high level of consistency was noted between findings of our study and Erdem and Soylu's study (2013). In both studies, pre-service teachers reported similar views regarding measurement of field knowledge as a pre-requisite for appointment of teachers and planning. The emphasis on the necessity of the exam can be explained with the large number of pre-service teachers leading to difficulty of selection. It can be suggested that the pre-service teachers participating in this study see the Teaching Knowledge Test as a fair selection tool.

Kuran (2012), in his study carried out with pre-service teachers, found out that weight should be given to the questions measuring the field knowledge in the exam, which seems to support our

findings. Regarding this aspect, the studies placing emphasis on the need to change the content of the exam are abundant in the literature (Çimen & Yılmaz, 2009; Erdem & Soylu, 2013; Arslan & Özpınar, 2008). It is thought that the great number of pre-service teachers cause the unemployment problem and thus it is inevitable to conduct an examination to select qualified teachers (Sezgin & Duran, 2011). As a solution, the content knowledge test, which is defined as "having knowledge of the subject to be taught or learnt" (Koehler & Mishra, 2006), will help both facilitate the selection and recruit more qualified teachers knowledgeable about their field. Since the importance of field knowledge will increase along with the level of instruction, teachers need to be well-equipped in their field (Beşoluk & Horzum (2011).

Pre-service teachers noted in both pre-test and post-test that the exam would be incomplete to measure their field knowledge. A similar result was also found by Demir and Bütüner (2014), indicating that 50 questions are not enough to reflect the scope exactly. This could be explained with the fact that social studies represent a wide discipline formed by benefiting from a range of social sciences (Öztürk, 2012) and thus the number of questions to be asked/asked could not be sufficient to measure the field knowledge. In performance of the teaching profession, field knowledge and professional knowledge form the pedagogical knowledge (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). Departing from this, it is emphasized that the number and weight of the questions in the field exam should be increased (Çimen & Yılmaz, 2009). The view that the number of questions is insufficient brings to our mind the idea that other criteria related to the field could be employed (Erdem & Soylu, 2013). In this context, Atav & Sönmez (2013) highlighted that a system should be brought to perform the selection of qualified teachers and consistent policies should be followed. In this regard, the pre-service teachers' opinion that practical skills should be considered besides the content knowledge test seems quite remarkable.

During pre-test interviews concerning their level of preparation for the exam, pre-service teachers stressed that belated announcement of the exam timetable had an adverse effect on their preparation process. On the contrary, they stressed during post-test interviews that giving importance to faculty courses would increase the success. In this aspect, support is extended to our study by Kuran (2012) noting that pre-service teachers will be more successful and negative factors such as stress or anxiety will be reduced if they start studying for the exam in a planned way since the third grade. Moreover, Yeşil, Korkmaz and Kaya (2009) concluded that academic grade average has a positive impact on KPSS. In the light of these findings, it could be suggested that the importance attached to courses at undergraduate level is a determining factor in the success of preparing for the exam.

Another result obtained from the study is that university education will not/did not contribute enough to the field test from the participants' point of view. Although in pre-test interviews, it was explained with teaching of the courses by instructors from other fields, after the test it was stated that syllabus of the courses did not overlap with the content of the examination. However, a striking finding in the post-test interviews was that giving importance to faculty courses would increase the success according to the pre-service teachers. Differing views of the prospective teachers before and after the test can be explained with expectations about the content of the exam. Demir and Bütüner (2014) reached similar conclusions and explained this situation with indifferent course instructors, superficial or no lecturing, and their inability to have mastery of the subject and course. The findings seem to be parallel with Atav and Sönmez (2013) reporting that pedagogical formation syllabus at university is not enough for pre-service teachers to answer educational sciences questions in the examinations, and education faculty course syllabus does not match with the content of educational science examination. Apart from that, a lot of studies investigating the KPSS and TKT questions for content validity noted that the content of teaching profession courses at university does not match with the exam coverage (Başkan & Alev, 2009; Eraslan 2004; Karataş & Güleş 2013; Demir & Bütüner 2014). In contrast to the conclusions reached above, Sezgin and Duran (2011) found out that the content of university courses overlaps with the examination content and emphasized that differences are due to the instructors, reaching similar conclusions with a portion of the findings.

Though it was predominantly pointed out during interviews that positive contribution is not expected of private training institutions, opposite views were seen at a marked level. Negative opinions were based on the width of the field area and verbal content of the subject; whereas, positive views were supported with provision of a regular education environment, review of the lessons learned during the four years by private institutions, and they also help narrow the gap between the faculty course syllabus and examination content. These conclusions are also supported by the literature (Kuran, 2012; Eraslan, 2004; Karataş & Güleş 2013; Sezgin & Duran 2011; Şimşek & Akgün 2014). Different views among students regarding potential contribution of private teaching institutions could be explained with students' personal study habits and with the fact that social studies is a large area, which benefits from many different disciplines.

As a conclusion, the most interesting result is that pre-service teachers' expectations and what they encountered in reality were found largely similar in pre and post-test interviews. Participants stated a common view on the need to apply the exam; yet, they claimed arrangements should be better planned and the exam content should be oriented to teaching field and practical knowledge. Another interesting point about the content of the exam is the emphasis on the fact that that fifty questions will be not enough to measure a wide range of content such as social studies. During pre-test interviews regarding the failure to be well prepared for the exam, much attribution was made to the announcement of the exam timetable few months prior to the exam. However, it was underlined during post-test interviews that giving importance to faculty courses would increase the academic achievement. The participants also argued that the education they received at university would not/did not make a contribution to teaching of the courses by academicians with irrelevant backgrounds and incompatibility between the course content and exam content. Another striking result of the study is the belief that contribution can be brought by private training institutions, which is not supported by the literature. It is thought to be due to the verbal nature of social studies area comprised of too many subjects.

Finally, in the light of the study results and evaluations, following recommendations are brought, respectively:

- Planning of changes concerning the education system must be for a long term. Our teacher training model in this regard should be consistent. Other criteria such as graduation degree should be accounted besides KPSS and TKT for the selection of teachers who are in the position to prepare the future of a nation.
- Courses should be assigned to instructors in conformity with their specific fields. Compatibility of contents of the undergraduate courses and the field exam should be maintained.
- The purpose of the exams should be to select highly qualified teachers rather than eliminating most of the candidates.
- Undergraduate academic averages and field exam grades could be studied comparatively.
- Analyses can be performed for content of undergraduate courses and field exam questions. In addition, reference books in classes can be studied comparatively in relation with the course content and exam content.

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