# Motivations and Concerns: Voices from Pre-service Language Teachers

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# Motivations and Concerns: Voices from Pre-service Language Teachers

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*Abstract: Contemporary interactionist theories conceive identity formation as a dynamic process that is continuously co-constructed within a social context. For pre-service language teachers, teacher education programs constitute the context in which their professional identities are formed. This cross-sectional qualitative study aims at exploring variations in pre-service language teachers' motivations, and concerns in order to understand how their identity is developed throughout teacher education programs. Data were collected from 121 pre-service language teachers at a state university in Turkey through their written reports. The differences across years with respect to their motivations and concerns indicated that as pre-service language teachers proceed along their education; their professional identity does not remain stable. The fluctuations observed among different year levels demonstrate the interplay between the context and the self. We suggest that these personal attributes need to be monitored in order to enhance language teacher education programs.*

**Keywords**: concern; motivation; pre-service teacher; teacher education; teacher identity.

## Introduction

Contemporary interactionist theories conceive identity formation as a dynamic process that is continuously co-constructed within a social context. Theories of psychology on identity argue that individuals perpetually organize their personal and professional "selves" based on their experiences (Cruess et al., 2015). Correspondingly, professional teacher identity, which is pertinent to how teachers see themselves as teachers (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004), is developed on the basis of teachers' interpretations and customizations of contextual factors (Webb, 2015). In other words, a teacher's professional identity is shaped by the interaction between person and his or her context. An individual's occupation might be a stabilizing and integrative force in the formation of one's professional identity since individuals interpret and internalize certain norms of professional behaviors dictated by the society in different ways (Flores & Day, 2006). For this reason, professional identity formation is considered as an outcome of the interaction between the context and the self. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argue that "identity shifts may occur throughout a teacher's career as a result of interactions within schools and in broader communities" (p. 175). Furthermore, in a recent paper published in a special issue of TESOL Quarterly devoted to Teacher Identity in (Multi)lingual Contexts, Song

(2016) posits that narrative accounts of language teacher identity accentuates teachers' emotions as a critical constituent in self-transformation and requires attention to context in language teacher education. With this respect, for pre-service teachers, teacher education programs form the context in which teacher candidates are provided with the necessary conditions that help them create clear self-images and professional identities.

Studies in educational research suggest that the social conditions, personal and professional beliefs, and practices are integral to each other (Day et al., 2006). Given this reciprocal relationship between identity and certain factors that influence teacher practices, investigation of these factors is essential. Motivations and concerns are two major factors that might affect pre-service language teachers' (PSLTs) identity. While student teachers gain new experiences during their initial teacher education, they acquire new perspectives and perceptions regarding their motivations to choose the profession. Studies conducted with practicing teachers as participants have shown that compared to other professional groups, teachers can easily lose their occupational motivation (Neves de Jesus & Lens, 2005), which most of the times leads to high attrition rates and burn-out (Jalongo & Heider, 2006). Results of studies with student teachers as participants have indicated that prospective teachers with high motivation and low concern demonstrate more willingness to commit to their education and they are likely to be more involved in teaching as professionals (Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006).

This article reports an account of pre-service language teachers' motivations, and concerns about teaching profession as articulated by PSLTs at different levels of their initial teacher education. Such exploration will provide insights into the effect of the program implemented and thus will offer valuable information about the steps that should be taken to improve the program as regards to decreasing their concerns and increasing their motivation. In this study, the ways pre-service teachers' identities were shaped and reshaped through the process of teacher education were investigated using their motivations, and concerns as indicators of their professional identity development.

The rationale behind focusing on motivations and concerns derives from the assumption that although student teachers hold certain lay theories and conceptions at the commencement of the program, during teacher education, they develop new conceptualizations about the profession. Additionally, the findings of our earlier study with senior year PSLTs on prior experiences indicated the influence of initial teacher education program as a variable affecting their motivations and concerns about teaching (Yüksel & Kavanoz, 2015). Therefore, we hypothesize that during their education, the aspects they find motivating and challenging about the profession will evolve as they are exposed to new skills, knowledge, and competencies they will need. For this reason, this research was designed as a cross-sectional study delineated by the following questions.

1. Do PSLTs' motivations to become language teachers change across years?
2. Do PSLTs' concerns about language teaching change across years?


## Background to the Study

Professional teacher identity has been explored extensively in recent teacher education research particularly for enhancing teacher quality (for example, Beijaard et al. 2004; Freese, 2006; Korthagen, et al., 2001; Olsen, 2008; Sachs, 2005; Morgan, 2004). Findings of previous research indicate that throughout initial teacher education programs, student teachers undergo certain changes that contribute to their identity development (Bennett, 2013; Chong, Low, &

Goh, 2011; Sheridan, 2013). Yet, since each context imposes a range of different interactions and influences on their identity formation, defining and investigating identity is a complicated endeavor.

In literature, the concept of teacher identity is defined in various ways. For example, Beijaard et al. (2004) define teacher identity as the way teachers perceive themselves as teachers. Olsen (2008), however, looks at the construct from a socio-cultural perspective and uses the term to refer to "the collection of influences and effects from immediate contexts, prior constructs of self, social positioning and meaning systems" (p. 139). Sachs (2005) highlights its dynamic nature by arguing that "teacher identity is not something that is fixed, nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience" (p. 15). Although no consensus has been reached regarding its definition, researchers seem to agree that it is a complex and life-long process of discovering oneself throughout which they get to know their "self" images. Current research on language teacher identity focuses on the importance of understanding the professional and individual identities of language teachers with the claim that teachers are crucial elements in determining how language teaching is performed (Varghese et al., 2005).

Literature review on teacher motivations focuses on extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motivations as three factors why teachers choose the teaching profession. Intrinsic motives refer to the enjoyment one gets from working with young people, while extrinsic motives involve rewards like job security, long vacations, and suitability of working hours. Altruistic motives, on the other hand, resonate contributing to creating a positive environment or acting as role models for students (Bastick, 2000; Richardson & Watt 2005; Yüce et al., 2013). Depending on the context, teachers' motivations for choosing the profession can show variations. As remarked by Boyd et al. (2006) pathways that individuals follow to enter the career as well as cultural and contextual factors may influence career choice motivations. Despite extensive research on teacher motivations, little is known about pre-service teachers' motivation, and even less is known about their concerns. Extensive attention has been paid to teacher motivation in developed countries mainly arising from the need to address teacher shortage and retention problems (OECD, 2005). Previous studies conducted in the Netherlands (Canrinus & Fokkens-Bruisma, 2011; Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012), USA (Hayes, 1990), Australia (Watt & Richardson; 2007, 2008) and Korea (Jeong, 2016) reported intrinsic and altruistic reasons such as love of children and desire to make a positive impact in pupils' lives to be primary motivations for education majors. On the other hand, the findings of studies conducted in developing countries such as Brunei (Yong, 1995), Zimbabwe (Chivore, 1998), and Indonesia (Mukminin, Rosmiati, & Ariyanti, 2016) revealed that teachers were extrinsically motivated due to reasons such as salary, job security, and career status.

Unlike developed countries, the situation in Turkey is different in that the basic problem is not the teacher shortage but teacher quality. As reported by Kılınç et al. (2012) in most of the teaching areas, there is an oversupply of teachers. According to 2017 projections of Ministry of National Education (MoNE), teacher shortage can be experienced only in the following areas: English language teaching, special education, pre-school, and elementary school (MONE, 2017). Despite this need, much of the research on motivations focuses on teacher education in general neglecting domain specific motivations as stated by Topkaya and Uztosun (2012). In Turkish context, results from empirical motivation studies paint a blurry picture. Eren and Tezel (2010), for example, presented findings similar to those of developed countries. In their study, perceived teaching ability, intrinsic career value, career choice satisfaction, and social contribution were highly valued motives for prospective language teachers. On the contrary, in their exploratory

study examining the background characteristics, socio-cultural values and pedagogical beliefs of 18,226 first-year student teachers from 51 faculties of education Aksu et al. (2010) reported that more than half of their participants had chosen teaching as their future profession because of job security, flexible hours and holidays, which refer to extrinsic motivations.

Most of the studies on motivation are quantitative in nature and hence limited in giving complete descriptions of participant responses. In addition, there is not much research that allows us to understand the extent of change in pre-service language teachers' motivations through their university education. There is, therefore, a need for more empirical research to investigate the process of motivation, understand whether motivations change, and examine the contextual conditions where such changes occur. In our qualitative study, we attempted to probe into the ways in which PSLTs think or feel at different levels of teacher education.

As aforementioned, teacher identity is context bound and its development is influenced by different internal and external factors. In the case of pre-service teachers, the teacher education program is considered as the context. The connection between teacher identity and concern has been established in previous studies (Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012; Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Brown, 1975; Stair, Warner, & Moore, 2012; Zembylas, 2003). Concerns are mainly described as topics or areas perceived as problematic by teachers (Fuller, 1969; Reeves & Kazelskis, 1985). As postulated by Fuller and Brown (1975), determination of pre-service teachers' concerns before their first contact with students in real classrooms may be crucial for teacher educators as it will allow them to become aware of these discouraging factors and develop instructional strategies that will help them eliminate their concerns (Stripling, Ricketts, Roberts, & Harlin, 2008). Following Fuller (1969), we assume that if certain concerns are commonly articulated by PSLTs, then these concerns should be considered as a vital contextual factor indicating a discrepancy between what is needed and what is offered in the program.

Unlike motivations, research on pre-service teachers' concerns is relatively few in number. In his earlier study, Fuller (1969) investigated concerns of prospective teachers and identified three phases of concerns: pre–teaching, early teaching, and a late teaching phase. Based on this study, Fuller et al. (1974) developed a model that involves a three-stage classification of teacher concerns: (1) concerns about self, (2) concerns about tasks, (3) concerns about the impact of teaching. In addition to these three stages, they suggested another category, which they labelled as non-teaching concerns. Non-teaching category includes concerns such as looking for a job and financial issues. Teaching concerns, on the other hand, develop through three stages. The first stage is self-concerns that relate to the teachers' feelings of self-adequacy and concerns for their ability to perform teaching successfully. The second stage is task concerns, which refer to daily teaching duties such as instructional methods and particularly to perceived constraints that deter them from effective teaching. The third stage involves concerns about impact, which represent teachers' fears concerning student outcomes (Christou, Eliophotou-Menon & Philippou, 2004; Fuller, Parsons, & Watkins, 1974).

One strand of research on concerns focuses on what challenges pre-service teachers regarding teaching. An earlier synthesis study on teacher entrants' transition into teaching identified pupil motivation, teacher-parent relationships, classroom management, classroom organization, resource concerns, and discipline as being major concerns for beginning teachers (Veenman, 1984). Baum and McMurray-Schwartz (2004) also found that pre-service teachers are more concerned about building positive relationships with parents, and addressing children's needs. In a more recent study, Berg and Smith (2014) compared perceptions of teacher efficacy and concerns about teaching in teacher education students from New Zealand, Malaysia, and England. Finding significant differences in both constructs between Malaysian pre-service

teachers and pre-service teachers from New Zealand and England, they concluded that both culture and context make an important impact on pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching and teacher efficacy beliefs.

The other line of research seeks to identify change in pre-service teachers' concerns over time. Calderhead and Robson's (1991) investigation of the experiences of 12 British pre-service elementary teachers over a year revealed that participants were more concerned about teacher's tasks than about the impact they would make on students. Adapting the same perspective, Smith and his colleagues (2013) conducted a longitudinal study exploring the effect of practicum experience on pre-service teachers and the change in their concerns over time. They observed that the participants' concerns about teaching became more realistic and differentiated eventually. Similarly, Conway and Clark (2003) observed a transition from self-concerns to impact concerns. However, findings of some other research did not support the existence of change in pre-service teachers' concerns (Weinstein, 1990 as cited in Berg & Miksza, 2010). These contradictory findings call for more studies to understand the development of pre-service teachers' concerns.

The need for investigating concerns along with motivations is guided by the rareness of studies in which these two constructs co-occur. Most of the studies in the field of initial teacher education have explored motivation and concern as separate entities without taking into account the interconnectedness between the two. However, Dörnyei (2001) views motivation and demotivation as two constructs, which often co-exist and diffuse into teaching career. Likewise, Conway and Clark (2003) state that teacher fears are indeed teacher concerns and they are compensated with aspirations; therefore, attention to both motivations and concerns together can provide the opportunity to present a more comprehensive view of prospective teachers' anticipations about teaching. To our knowledge, in Turkish context no known studies have so far investigated motivations and concerns of undergraduate language student teachers as two related concepts. In addition to filling this gap, we also aimed at exploring the impact of context on PSLTs' motivations and concerns with the belief that the impact of the context would appear in a cross-sectional study.

## The Study
### Context and Participants

It is necessary to begin this study with some contextual information about language teacher education in Turkey. Similar to most developing countries, which encounter global challenges, ensuring quality in education has been an important issue in Turkey for the last two decades. This task has necessitated taking steps for reforming teacher education that can cater for the demands of the 21st century characterized by development of communication and information technologies. Accordingly, the Turkish Higher Education Council (HEC) made amendments in teacher education in all universities in 1999, and teacher education programs were restructured in a way to integrate the most recent content material into the curriculum in all subject areas including English Language Teaching. Following this restructuring, additional changes were made in programs in 2006 and the basic components of language teacher education programs are framed into a four categorical structure: language proficiency courses, general pedagogical courses, theoretical and pedagogical foundations of language teaching courses, and general cultural information courses. While language proficiency courses are given in the first year, the other components of the curriculum are distributed across second, third and fourth

years. In the fourth year, in order to introduce the PSLTs to real school settings, the students are required to do their school practicum in primary and secondary schools. While in the first semester, they carry out certain observational tasks, in the second semester they teach under the supervision of their mentors in real classroom settings. For both semesters, they prepare practicum dossiers to be submitted to their university instructor at the end of the semesters (for further information see Kırkgöz, 2007 and Mahalingappa & Polat, 2013). It is important to note that PSLTs undergo a generic language teaching pedagogy rather than preparing for a specific school or age level. This enables the graduates to be recruited as English language teachers in both state and private institutions at all levels from pre-school to tertiary education.

As we attempted to see how student teachers' motivations and concerns change across years, in order to be able to compare different cohorts at a specific point in time we purposefully opted for a cross-sectional study design (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Our participants were full-time undergraduate students of English Language Teaching program who had successfully completed their first year language-focused study, and were undertaking second, third and fourth year education in the program. In our view, the reflections of teacher candidates in each year group would provide us with valuable insights regarding their identity formation. Considering that they were taking the courses from a set curriculum, the differences observed were evaluated as indicators of their professional development.

At the end of the fall semester of 2014-2015 academic year, all the second, third and fourth year students were invited to volunteer in the study. They were informed about the objectives of the research and requested to return their written responses to a set of open-ended questions. In total, 181 student teachers (62 second year, 65 third year, and 54 fourth year) were contacted. Returned responses were considered as positive consent. Finally, 121 student teachers' comments were analyzed (50 second year, 36 third year, and 26 fourth year).

**Data Collection and Analysis**

In their comprehensive review, Beijaard et al. (2004) categorize previous research on teacher identity into three groups: studies on professional identity formation, characteristics of professional identity, and representation of professional identity through teachers' stories. As the conceptual framework of our study falls into the third type of categorization, PSLTs' personal narratives were used as an analytic lens to get through to our participants. Therefore, we collected data from PSLTs through written responses to the questions such as "Why did you choose teaching as a profession? What do you think are the challenges regarding teaching?" (see Appendix). In addition to these questions, participants were asked to indicate the year level they were currently enrolled in. The questions were asked in Turkish in order to allow the participants to reveal their inner thoughts and provide extended answers.

Data was analyzed through qualitative content analysis. An inductive approach was used in this process and the themes were defined as they emerged from the data. The process of data analysis was conducted in two stages (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the vertical analysis part, each participant's responses were analyzed separately by reading and dividing each response into minimum meaning units, and then each unit was coded. The second stage, horizontal analysis, was then carried out, in which the codes were grouped into categories and themes. In this phase, two researchers cross-checked the coding of responses and the categorizations, and filtered the set of codes in the light of impressions gained from reading written comments of the participants.

In the case of coding differences, researchers reached consensus upon discussions on differences. The reliability of the data analysis was enhanced through this cross-checking process. The results of preliminary coding were used for quantitative analysis: frequency of each code was counted, and percentage of each code over the total was calculated.

## Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented according to two main questions: motivations and concerns. For the analysis, responses to the open-ended questions asking for their motivations to choose teaching as a profession were categorized into three main categories: intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic factors for joining teaching. Statements from participants were selected to represent their motivation type and reported verbatim in Table 1.

| Motivation Category | Sample Statements |
|---|---|
| Intrinsic Motivation | *"I think teaching is the most appropriate job for women, especially if you plan to have a family" (4th year)* <br> *"Concentrating on a job that I like a lot and sharing my knowledge with others as much as I can excites me." (2nd year)* |
| Extrinsic motivation | *"Comparatively short working hours, weekend and semester holidays make teaching an attractive occupation for me." (3rd year)* <br> *"Having a prestigious job in the society is a rewarding aspect of becoming a teacher" (3rd year)* |
| Altruistic Motivation | *"The most important reason for me to choose this job is to educate new generations, as well as helping them to have a character equipped with values" (2nd year)* <br> *"Knowing that I will also be learning during my instruction and contributing to their [students'] lives gives me joy." (3rd year)* |

**Table 1. PSLTs' sample statements with explicit references to motivation**

From these main categories (intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic), common elements were identified (Table 2). Each of the responses was coded according to the identified elements. The frequency counts for each category were tabulated across years as in Table 2.

| Category | Example | 2nd year (N=50) % of responses | 3rd year (N=36) % of responses | 4th year (N=26) % of responses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intrinsic Motivation | *love of children / English, personal satisfaction* | 25.6 | 26.4 | 26.5 |
| Extrinsic motivation | *job security, holidays, flexible hours* | 29.5 | 37.7 | 23.5 |
| Altruistic Motivation | *social contribution, leadership, knowledge transfer* | 44.9 | 35.9 | 50 |
| **Total[a] responses** | | **78** | **53** | **34** |

Total[a] responses represent all responses given by student teachers. The responses are not ranked.

**Table 2. PSLTs' motivations about teaching**

The data suggested that in our cohort, motives for choosing teaching could be stated as altruistic, extrinsic, and intrinsic in a descending order for the whole population. As can be seen from Table 2, altruistic reasons accounting for 43%, and extrinsic reasons accounting for 31% of all the propositions were the main motivating reasons mentioned. Compared to these two categories, intrinsic reasons with 26% rate was the least frequently mentioned category. The motives they valued the most and the least show variations across groups. Second and fourth year students focused on altruistic motivation (44.9% and 50%), whereas third year participants were more extrinsically motivated (37.7%). While the percentage of intrinsic motivation did not seem to vary across year groups, we observed a change in extrinsic and altruistic motives. Third year students were more oriented towards extrinsic rewards of teaching and focused altruistic reasons comparatively less than second and fourth year students. Juniors seemed to acknowledge social status, salary and innovative aspect of the profession while second and third year students did not mention this aspect as frequently as senior students did. The following figure explicitly demonstrates the observed variations in motivations across years.
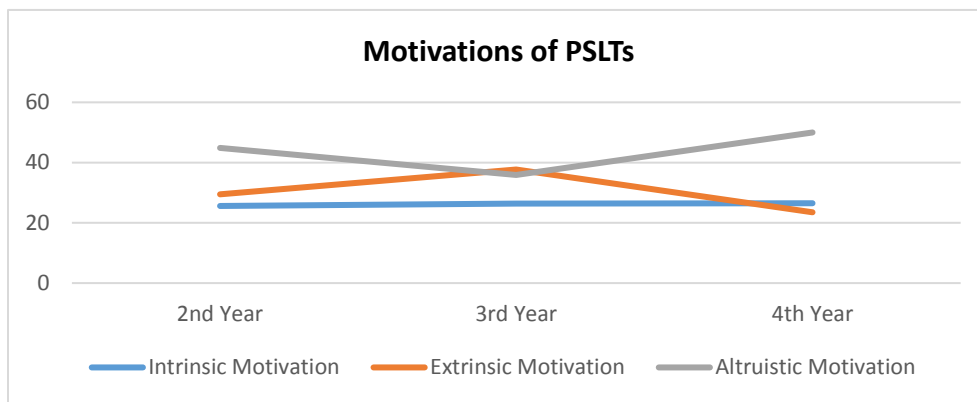


**Figure 1: Line chart showing motivations of PSLTs across year levels**

It is evident from the figure that the top two reasons for second and third year students to join the teaching profession were extrinsic and altruistic, while fourth year students were motivated by intrinsic and altruistic reasons. The findings on motivations obtained from developed and developing counties differ. While intrinsic and altruistic reasons are frequently reported as major driving forces for becoming a teacher in developed countries, such as, in the Netherlands, USA, Norway and Britain (Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012; Hayes, 1990; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000), the studies in developing countries such as Brunei, Zimbawe, Indonesia present extrinsic and altruistic reasons for choosing the profession (Chivore, 1998; Mukminin et al., 2016; Yong, 1995). Our findings related to motivation resonate with the results of previous research conducted in developing countries. We found altruistic and extrinsic motivations to be more important for our participants to choose the profession unlike their counterparts in developed countries. However, studies conducted in Turkish context exhibits inconsistencies. Our results do not lend support to some studies in Turkish context, which show intrinsic and altruistic motives as the most dominant determinants for student teachers entering into teaching (Akar, 2012; Eren & Tezel, 2010). Similar to our findings, Aksu et al. (2010) reported that majority of students in their study had chosen teaching upon being motivated by extrinsic rewards.

The variations in the reasons for becoming a teacher in different settings suggest that the distribution of motivations for choosing the profession is multi-directional (Spittle, Jackson, & Casey, 2009). With respect to differences observed across year levels, Sinclair (2008) reported that novice teachers in their first year choose the profession with altruistic and intrinsic motives but have these motivations replaced by extrinsic motives in the following years. Our study revealed a different pattern; unlike junior and senior students, second year teacher candidates showed a relatively low level of intrinsic motivation. Even though we expected an increase in intrinsic motivation and altruistic motivation levels across years, we were not able to detect any change in their intrinsic motivation level. Yet, their altruistic motivation showed an upward trend as they progressed in their education.

In addition to motivations, PSLTs' concerns were also taken as indicators of their professional development in this study. The three-stage concern model developed by Fuller et al. (1974) was chosen as a framework through which the progression of teachers' concerns across different year levels was investigated. Analyses of the sample's coded concern statements from their written reports are presented in Table 3. The following table presents participants' statements regarding the themes about their concerns.

| Concern Category | Sample Statements |
|---|---|
| **Non-Teaching** | *"In today's economic conditions, teachers are paid less than they deserve. It is hard to live." (2nd year)*<br>*"The thought of teaching English in a school in small towns and urban areas where I will have limited materials and technological resources stresses me." (3rd year)*<br>*"Even if you graduate, without passing this teacher certification exam [KPSS-Selection Exam for Public Personnel], you can never have a chance to work as a teacher." (4th year)* |
| **Teaching** | |
| Self concerns | *"I'm scared of not being able to teach well." (2nd year)*<br>*"I don't know if I'll be able to handle parents' expectations regarding their children's language learning, especially in private schools." (3rd year)*<br>*"I am concerned about being negatively evaluated by my colleagues." (4th year)* |
| Task concerns | *"Language teachers are expected to use communicative tasks. I cannot imagine myself moving around and still keeping the class under control." (2nd year)*<br>*"What concerns me the most is to deal with possible discipline problems?" (3rd year)*<br>*"Working long hours to prepare materials for students, and teaching day and night are the most demanding aspects of this job." (4th year)* |
| Impact concerns | *"You have an influence on every student you have. It is unlimited. But what effect should we make, how we can do it? It is a great responsibility." (2nd year)*<br>*"I still have doubts about how to motivate students who resist studying and learning English." (3rd year)*<br>*"I am not sure how I can meet the needs of students in a multicultural classroom." (4th year)* |

**Table 3. PSLTs' sample statements with explicit references to concerns**

The overall response frequencies related to non-teaching and teaching concerns as well as the distribution by percentage in each of the categories are presented in Table 4. Teaching concerns are specifically related to self as a teacher, tasks teachers are involved in and to creating effective learning environments for student achievement. PSLTs' concerns about teaching (63.4%) were greater that their non-teaching concerns (36.6%). It was seen that third and fourth year PSLTs focused more on non-teaching concerns (36.5% and 55.1%, respectively) than any other concern area while second year PSLTs are more concerned with tasks (36.3%). Task concerns ranked the highest with 30.4% followed by self-concerns with 27.3%. Ranked lowest

among concerns by our participants was impact concerns with only 5.6%. This finding is consistent with research in general and mathematics education in which task-related concerns were pervasive among pre-service teachers (Boz, 2008; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Marso & Pigge, 1989). When we analyze their concerns across years, a gradual increase in their non-teaching concerns (such as salary, appointment criteria, and physical conditions of schools) was observed. On the other hand, hardly any changes are observed in their self-concerns across years.

| Theme | Example | 2nd year (N=50) % of responses | 3rd year (N=36) % of responses | 4th year (N=26) % of responses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Non-Teaching** | *Salary, appointment criteria, low-status of the job, schools environment* | 30 | 36.5 | 55.1 |
| **Teaching** | | | | |
| Self-concerns | *Fear of not being able to function effectively, getting the respect of students, appearing competent to parents* | 27.5 | 26.9 | 27.6 |
| Task concerns | *Classroom management, rigid instructional routine, having to deal with extra duties and responsibilities* | 36.3 | 30.7 | 13.8 |
| Impact concerns | *Educational improvement, meeting students' diverse needs, understanding psychological differences among different age groups* | 6.3 | 5.8 | 3.4 |
| **Total[a] responses** | | **80** | **52** | **29** |

Total[a] responses represent all responses given by student teachers. The responses are not ranked.

**Table 4. PSLTs' concerns about teaching**

The figure below displays the extent of changes in PSLTs' concerns across years. The participants' self-concerns do not reflect a decrease across years. Regarding task and impact concerns, a downward pattern was seen as they move along their teacher education program. While the observed decrease in task concerns from second to third year is relatively small, the change is quite remarkable from third to fourth year. This difference between senior and second year students' concerns suggests that PSLTs who are at the point of graduation tend to become more competent and feel ready to handle the challenges they might encounter during teaching. Although our PSLTs expressed few impact concerns, there was still a reduction in this category across years.
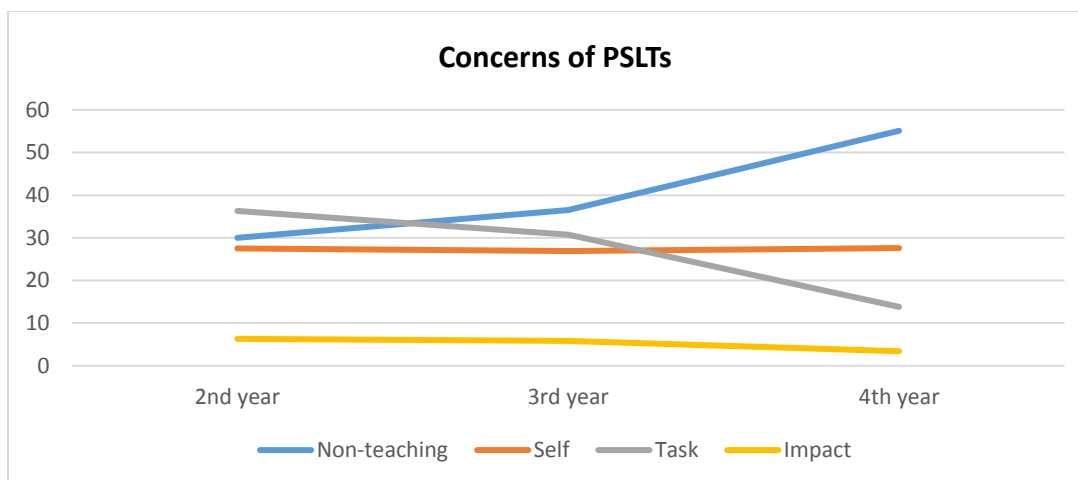
**Figure 2: Line chart showing concerns of PSLTs across year levels**

The gradual increase in non-teaching concerns among different year groups implies that the more students become aware of the characteristics of the profession that are beyond their control such as the salary or appointment criteria; the more they begin to see these issues as threats. Ramsey (2000) cites low social status of the profession, insufficiency of supplies as factors contributing to teacher concerns. When it comes to concerns related to teaching, their concerns about the "self" appear to be equally balanced in each group (27.5%, 26.9%, and 27.6%, respectively). This finding is in line with the study conducted by Fuller et al. (1974) in which student teachers of various academic disciplines were found to have focused on self-concerns rather than teaching task or impact concerns.

A very notable finding is observed regarding task concerns. It is seen that PSLTs' task related concerns decrease as they go through each year level (36.3%, 30.7%, and 13.8%, respectively). The comparatively low rate of task concerns as expressed by fourth year students signal that they do not find the required responsibilities and duties as challenges. Given that senior students have already completed the first part of their school practice, they were exposed to more teaching episodes. Therefore, they might have fewer task concerns regarding the realities and responsibilities of teaching. Another difference worth highlighting is the change of order observed in the fourth year students. Unlike previous research reporting increase in task concerns and decrease in self concerns (Adams, 1982; Marso & Pigge, 1989), we identified an increase in self concerns and decrease in task and impact concerns. We view the decrease in task concern as a desirable outcome of teacher education and an indication of their professional growth and awareness. The findings from this study suggest that language teacher educators might anticipate lower year students to divert their attention to task rather than self-concerns.

In general, our findings do not support the findings of past research by Fuller (1969) and Kagan (1992) who claimed that self-concerns diminish over time and that teaching concerns have a developmental sequence moving from self towards task and impact concerns. Yet, the participants' concerns in our sample did not remain constant. This finding shows congruence with that of Berg and Miksza (2010) who suggested pre-service teachers' concerns do not change in a linear fashion.

The consideration of pre-service teachers' motivations and concerns together suggests a reciprocal relationship. As PSLTs' altruistic motivations increase, their impact concerns decrease. In line with the affirmation of Moran et al. (2001), altruistic reasons surpass any

substantive benefits that people can gain from the teaching profession. People who choose to enroll in teacher education programs with the intention of contributing to the betterment of society will have a deeper passion for teaching. A reverse pattern between extrinsic motivations and non-teaching concerns was also seen. While extrinsic motivations decrease, their non-teaching concerns increase through time. This inverse relationship implies that any positive change in policies will decrease concerns and increase motivations of prospective teachers. This will eventually improve the efficiency of teachers and affect the education system positively as a whole.

## Conclusion

Professional identity is not only concerned with the perceived self-images of teachers but also with their emotional responses, both positive and negative, to teaching as a profession (Flores & Day, 2006). From this perspective, student teachers' motivations and concerns are two conceptual frames through which pre-service language teachers' professional identity can be explored. Thereby, this study aimed at investigating PSLTs' motivations and concerns using a cross-sectional design. The differences observed across years with respect to motivations and concerns indicate that the context, in our situation language teacher education program, might act as a mediating factor affecting the formation of their professional identity. The differences among different year levels demonstrate the interplay between the context and the self and the dynamic nature of identity. The observed changes support Cooper and Olson's (1996) assertion that pre-service teachers' professional self is in a continuous process of being constructed through the ongoing interaction they are involved in during their training.

Overall, PSLTs were mostly driven to the job by altruistic and extrinsic reasons. The high percentage of altruistic motivations in the sample might imply a cultural relevance. In Turkish culture, teachers are projected as idols who shape future generations. Starting from kindergarten through college, students are exposed to the sayings of the founder of Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk about teachers such as "*Teachers: the new generation will be your masterpiece*" and "*Teachers are the one and only people who save nations*". Moreover, in Turkey, every 24th of November is celebrated as Teachers' Day and teachers, regardless of the level they teach, are honored on this day and appreciated for their efforts. Growing up in an educational culture where teachers are viewed as agents contributing to the development of the future of the nation might affect their perception about the career. On the other hand, the altruistic vision at the initial stage of their education might be susceptible to being blown away under the burden of unmanageable workloads and bureaucratic responsibilities once they get appointed and start the profession (Manuel & Hughes, 2006). In our context, this career was characterized by low pay accompanied with low prestige. In order to attract young people with altruistic motivations to become teachers, a shift in current policies seems necessary. In the light of our findings, we recommend that policy makers establish a system that supports teachers' induction into teaching, involve them in policy making processes and give them opportunities to exercise greater responsibility and leadership.

The most frequently articulated non-teaching concerns were related to salary, appointment criteria, low-status of the job, and physical conditions of schools. The participants view teaching as a demanding career with relatively low returns. The asymmetry between teacher's financial gains and the amount of work expected from them does not offer extrinsic motives for them and makes teaching not a "desirable" profession in this sense. Johnson (1986) states that people are more likely to work hard when their efforts are rewarded. Similarly, Wang

and Fwu (2002) found a close relationship between motivation type and commitment level; graduate level pre-service students who are more intrinsically motivated are inclined to be more committed, while the ones driven by extrinsic factors tended to be less committed to teaching profession.

Unfortunately, the social status of teaching career was a major source of concern for participants. The perceived prestige of the job in relation to other professions seems low. The factors that cause this perception include low financial benefit, entry conditions, presentation of teacher image (Hargreaves et al., 2006). Additionally, in Turkey, all the graduates of education faculties are required by the Turkish Ministry of National Education to take Civil Servant Selection Examination (KPSS exam) in order to be eligible for working as teachers at public schools. The exam is composed of three sections. In the first part, candidates need to answer questions regarding general culture and skills. The second part elicits candidate teachers' knowledgebase in educational sciences. The last part consists of questions specifically from their specialized area. The obligation to pass this comprehensive test is a source of tension and anxiety among teacher candidates. The KPSS exam was the most frequently articulated concern for our pre-service teachers. Job security appears as an important factor in the Turkish context. Since the graduates have the option to work at schools, which operate under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education, once recruited, they become state officials, which means job security for them. Compared with the working conditions in private schools, where the maintenance of the position depends on renewable contracts, they are mostly attracted by the prospect of being employed by the state.

In general, teacher education programs explicitly focus on task concerns. Instructors present different cases involving a variety of problematic situations and ask pre-service teachers to reflect on the strategies and techniques for the improvement or solution of the problem. Nevertheless, more effort can be made to address concerns by helping pre-service teachers develop their own strategies to cope with the challenges that might appear while they perform their job.

This study demonstrates differences in the types of motivation and concern expressed by language teacher education students and therefore sheds light on the starting point and the path to follow in order to conceptualize language teacher education for the upcoming generation of teachers. Since research on prospective language teachers' identities are fundamental to teacher educators, it is expected that our findings will make contributions to critical approaches to identity development in language teacher education programs and enable teacher educators to better understand and design the support student teachers need. In order to cater for specific needs and expectations in teacher preparation courses, teacher educators must be cognizant of the motivations and concerns of pre–service students at various stages of their development (Stair et al., 2012).

When teacher educators comprehend such deeply encapsulated professional development processes and factors that influence these processes, they can better provide meaningful professional preparation and create new opportunities for reflection, experiential learning, and school-based research that present the realities of classrooms in university settings (Korthagen et al., 2001). Provided that such opportunities are introduced at the initial stages of the program, pre-service teachers will be able to gain more insights into the realities and challenges of teaching, which in turn will enhance the quality of teacher education programs.

**Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

This cross-sectional study was designed to provide qualitative information about language teacher candidates' identity development across years at a specific setting. The study results are limited to this particular population of PSLTs and bear various limitations in regards to the participants and the study itself. First, our results cannot be generalized across other teaching majors. Our findings articulate the need to examine motivations and concerns of pre-service teachers from different fields in different international settings so that the implications of the findings can contribute to improving teacher education not only in a local sense but at a more global level. Second, because female students made up the majority of the sample in this study, gender was not taken as a variable. However, further studies can investigate to what extent motivations and concerns change according to gender differences. There is also a need for longitudinal studies in order to trace and evaluate the influences of motivations and concerns on identity constructs as teacher candidates start their education. More research is needed to understand how PSLTs' motivations and concerns develop as well as how these constructs are affected by context. Qualitative studies in which interviews, narrative analysis, and action research are used as research designs can deepen and add to our understanding of how teacher identities are co-constructed.

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**Appendix**

1. When did you decide to become a language teacher?
2. Why did you choose teaching as a profession?
3. Were there any people influential on your decision?
4. What motivates you to become a language teacher?
5. What do you think are the challenges regarding teaching career?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add about what motivates and demotivates you regarding the profession?