

Choosing Teaching as a Career: Examination of Motivational Sources of Special Education Teacher Candidates

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the sources of motivation of teacher candidates who graduate from any higher education institution and then re-enter higher education, choosing the special education department.In the research, firstly, the motivation resources that enable teacher candidates to continue higher education were examined. Then, the sources of motivation that are effective in choosing teaching as a career and in the last stage, the motivation sources of the process of choosing the special education department were examined. The research carried out within the framework of qualitative research methods was structured in the phenomenology design. The participants of the research are the students of the special education department of the faculty of education. Participants were included in the scope of the study in accordance with the criterion sampling techniques, which is one of the purposive sampling methods. In this context, ten teacher candidates who had graduated from any higher education institution before constituted the participants of the research. Research data were collected using a semistructured interview form developed by the researcher. Datas were collected through focus group interview. Content analysis technique was adopted in the analysis of the data. According to the results of the research, the factors that motivate teacher candidates in the process of continuing higher education and choosing a faculty of education generally depend on external motivation sources. While explaining the factors that motivate them both in the process of continuing higher education and choosing teaching as a career, teachers candidates emphasized the element of "employment", which can be considered within the scope of extrinsic motivation. It has been concluded that in the preference of the special education department of the teacher candidates, the elements such as the sacredness of special education teaching, which can be considered within the scope of altruistic motivation, and the happiness of teaching something to children with special needs, come to the fore.

Keywords: Teacher candidate, special education, source of motivation.





Introduction

In Turkey, individuals' choice of profession is shaped by factors such as economic and social conditions, employment conditions and working conditions. Difficulties experienced in the process of being employed and employed in line with the field of specialization affect the choice of profession and career development. Employment anxiety of individuals who graduated from higher education institutions has led them to turn to teaching programs with high employment opportunities (Yazıcı, 2009). Watt et al. As (2012) stated, choosing teaching as a career does not depend on altruistic reasons such as "only being useful to society". Especially, psychological counseling and guidance, pre-school education and special education programs with high employment opportunities are preferred because these programs ensure that high employment opportunities (Yazıcı, 2009). The Decree Law No. 573 on Special Education was adopted in 1997 in order to regulate the principles for individuals who need special education to use their right to receive general and vocational education in line with the general objectives and basic principles of Turkish National Education. In the decree, a general framework was determined regarding the basic principles of education, identification, placement, inclusive education levels, education in special education schools, special education support, education programs and evaluation. In 2006, 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2018, extensive changes were made in the Special Education Services Regulation and policies were adopted to expand special education services and increase the quantity and quality of special education services (Citil, 2020). The increase in the number of teachers paved the way for developments such as the allocation of more quotas to the special education department in teacher appointments. It is thought that these developments will enable the Special Education department to become a more preferred department in recent years in Turkey and will affect the motivation processes of the students studying in the special education department.

Conceptual Framework

Motivation Concept

Motivation is defined as the power that activates and directs an individual's behavior towards a goal (Eggen & Kauchak, 1994). Motivation is characterized as "a general concept that includes wishes, desires, needs, impulses and interests" (Cüceloğlu, 2005: 229). In other words, motivation is all of the efforts that direct individuals to reach their goals (Ertürk, 1995). Ryan & Deci (2002) defined motivation as the underlying cause of behavior. According to Bentley (2006), who associates motivation with emotions, motivation is the emotions that an individual feels or experiences in relation to that job during the process of doing something enthusiastically and willingly.

It is emphasized that the motivation process has three basic structures that take action, sustain action, and direct action in a positive direction. Therefore, motivation is what activates, directs and sustains a behavior (Steers & Porter, 1991). Motivation is considered as a process that starts with the need and ends with the fulfillment of this need. In order to meet the needs, some activities should be carried out and these should produce results that will meet the needs (Tevruz, 1999). In this direction, it is seen that motivation is associated with needs or requirements in studies on motivation (Hersey & Blanchard, 2001). Güney (2017) states that motivation has three basic features: "to take action", "to keep moving" and "to direct it in a positive direction". According to Güney (2017), the stages of the motivation process are needing, providing a suitable environment, desire, seeking alternatives, trying and being satisfied. Arık (1996), on the other hand, states that motivation has four functions: initiating the behavior in individuals, determining the violence and energy level of the behavior, directing the behaviors and ensuring the continuation of the behaviors.

The initiation of the motivation process seems to depend on the emergence of the needs of the individuals and the stimulation of the fulfillment of that need. It is stated that these stimuli activate the individual and the motivation process is completed with the satisfaction of needs. Depending on the continuation of people's needs and goals throughout life, the motivation process is constantly repeated (Can, Aşan Azizoğlu, & Miski Aydın, 2015: 103). Motivation is seen as the main reason why people strive to achieve their needs and goals. For this reason, it is stated that it can change depending on individual characteristics, as well as depending on the differentiation of the individual's needs and goals over time (Ünsalan & Şimşekler, 2015).

In the literature, motivational tools that are effective on motivation and increase motivation and ensure its continuity are discussed in three groups: economic tools, psychological and social tools, and organizational and managerial tools (Eren, 2000). Economic factors have important effects in terms of meeting the basic needs of the individual as well as gaining social status and respect. In addition, the wages and additional incomes that individuals receive in return for their efforts are an important motivation tool (Özkalp & Kırel, 2011: 116).

Factors such as status and value, taking initiative at work, adaptation to the organization, promotion and career opportunities, socio-cultural relations, competition, problem solving, and attractiveness of work are among the psycho-social motivation tools (Tarakçıoğlu, Sökmen, & Boylu 2010). In addition, the development opportunities of the job, the meaning that the job brings to the life of the individual, independent work, and the sense of security represent psycho-social motivation tools. Psycho-social motivation tools feed the individual's inner feelings such as love, compassion, responsibility and achievement. (Isgorir, 2020: 24).

Participation in decisions, delegation of authority, professional development opportunities, communication, job security, leadership practices, and job design are organizational and managerial motivation tools (Tarakçıoğlu, Sökmen & Boylu. 2010).

Types of Motivation

Studies on motivation show that motivation can be examined in two ways, internal and external (Öncü, 2006). Internal motivation is expressed as the pleasure and satisfaction that individuals get as a result of performing a job without the need for any external reward (Gagne, et al., 2010). Individuals' enjoyment and interest in their work is a result of internal motivation (Guay, Morin, Litalien, Valois, & Vallerand, 2015). Factors such as individuals' liking for their jobs and having a strong work ethic are internal motivators (Çiçek-Sağlam, 2007). Satisfaction in internal motivation stems from the work itself (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

The elements that come to the fore in internal motivation are curiosity, development and providing psychological satisfaction. In addition, a quality and efficient motivation is formed at the end of a natural process with internal motivation. (Gömleksiz and Serhatlioğlu, 2013). Internally motivated individuals focus on activities they need to perform without the need for reward or pressure (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991: 328).

Extrinsic motivation is the type of motivation in which the behavior is performed for a result (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Factors such as promotion opportunities, awards and salary in the individual's business lines are examples of extrinsic motivators (Çiçek-Sağlam, 2007). Individuals who are motivated by external sources take action for rewards such as gaining prestige, gaining office, promotion, and salary increase (Demir, 2018).

Teaching Motivation (Motivation to Choose Teaching as a Career)

Students studying in education faculties need to have a high motivation in order to become qualified teachers in the future (Uyulgan & Akkuzu, 2014). Determining the teaching motivation of teacher candidates is seen as an important step in taking measures to increase their motivation levels and making the necessary changes (Guzel Candan & Evin Gencel, 2015:74). One of the factors that ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the teacher in the teaching process is the motivation to teach (Gün & Turabik, 2019). Teaching motivation can be defined as being willing to be involved in the teaching process (Michaelowa, 2002).

Teaching motivation can be divided into three groups: motivation for internal, external and altruistic goals (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992). Internal motivation regarding the teaching process is expressed as enjoying teaching and getting satisfaction from the teaching process (Roness, 2011).

Beyond enjoying the teaching process, believing in the nobility and sanctity of the process and seeing the act of teaching as valuable is explained by altruistic motivation (Thomson & Palermo, 2014). According to Piliavin & Charng (1990), one's behavior towards meeting the needs of others rather than one's own wishes and needs can be defined as altruism. In altruism, it is critical to devote enough time to pay attention to the person in need. As an emotional cycle is created by focusing on one, the sense of empathy becomes stronger (Goleman, 2007: 66). For teachers, altruistic motivation is about seeing the teaching process as a valuable endeavor that can make a difference for children and society (Rutten & Badiali, 2020). The fact that the act of teaching is seen as socially valuable and the feeling of taking a role in the development of individuals has been interpreted as an indicator of the development of altruistic motivation (Roness, 2011). In addition, altruistic motivation is associated with helping students who have difficulties in the learning process and shaping the character of students (Rutten & Badiali, 2020). Kyriacou & Coulthard (2000), on the other hand, associated altruistic behavior with seeing teaching as a socially valuable and important job, with the desire to help children succeed, and with the desire to help society develop.

External motivation in the teaching process includes structures such as career expectation, reward or profit (Thomson & Palermo, 2014). The fact that teaching work provides a tangible benefit, being paid a salary and having a vacation is related to external motivation (Roness, 2011; Rutten

& Badiali, 2020). In addition, individuals' choosing the teaching profession for their salary or turning to this profession because they are teachers in their family is a result of external motivation (Gün & Turabik, 2019).

Compared to other teachers, special education teachers need to spend more time and energy to reach learning goals (Jennett, Harris, and Mesibov 2003).Considering the different educational needs of children with special needs, it can be said that the motivation of teachers and teacher candidates working in the field of special education teaching should be at a high level.

Purpose: The aim of this research is to investigate the sources of motivation of teacher candidates who graduate from any higher education. The main problem addressed in the research is "What are the motivational sources of teacher candidates studying in the special education department regarding the teaching profession?" determined as. The sub-problems of the research are:

1. What are the tools that motivate teacher candidates about higher education?

2. What are the factors that enable teacher candidates to choose education faculty?

3. What are the factors that make teacher candidates prefer special education teaching?

4. Do the teachers candidates have a plan for graduate education?

• What are the reasons for wanting to pursue graduate education, if any?

METHOD

The research was structured within the framework of qualitative research methods. It is possible to define qualitative research as a process of making sense of social life and human problems by questioning it with unique methods (Creswell, 1998). In the qualitative research process, researchers study their research in its natural environment and interpret it as the people in the event make sense of it (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The research was structured in the phenomenological research design, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The research was structured in a case study design, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Phenomenology aims to reveal the personal experiences of the participants and focuses on explaining the meaning of individuals' personal experiences (Creswell, 1998). In this study, it is aimed to examine the factors that motivate pre-service teachers to start a higher education institution again after graduating from any higher education institution and to prefer special education teaching. In this direction, a phenomenological design was preferred in order to examine the experiences of pre-service teachers regarding the process.

Participants

The participants of the research are the students of the special education department of the faculty of education. Participants were included in the scope of the study in accordance with the criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling techniques. Criterion sampling refers to studying and reviewing all cases that meet some predetermined criteria of importance (Patton, 2014). The participants of the research are 10 teacher candidates who continue to the special education department of the faculty of education and have previously graduated from a higher education institution.

Table 1 includes some demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

Participant code	Gender	Age	Graduated Higher Education Program	Employment Status
TC-1	Woman	25	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	-
TC-2	Man	32	Sosiology	Civil servant
TC-3	Man	30	Turkish language and literatüre	-
TC-4	Woman	33	Turkish language and literature	-
TC-5	Man	35	Turkish teacher	Teacher
TC-6	Woman	25	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	-
TC-7	Woman	39	Turkish teacher	Teacher (Study center)
TC-8	Man	30	Turkish language and literature	Teacher (Study center)
TC-9	Man	34	Turkish language and literature	Teacher (Study center)
TC-10	Man	35	Turkish language and literature	Night watcman

6 of the participants are male and 4 are female. Participants graduated from Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Sociology, Turkish Language and Literature and Turkish Teaching departments. It is seen that 6 participants work in a business line and 4 participants do not work in any business line.

Data Collection and Analysis

Research datas were collected through focus group interview. Content analysis technique was adopted in the analysis of the data.

"Focus group interviews can be defined as a qualitative data collection technique that is carried out within the framework of predetermined instructions, in accordance with the logic of this method, prioritizing the subjectivity of the interviewees, and attention should be paid to the discourse of the participants and the social context of this discourse" (Cokluk, Yılmaz, & Oğuz, 2011:97). The purpose of this process is not to reach information that will make generalizations; It is the description of the views and perspectives of the participants (Cokluk, Yılmaz, & Oğuz, 2011). At the stage of data collection in the research, with the help of the

focus group interview technique, the motivation sources of the participants for the teaching profession were described. A semi-structured interview form was used to conduct focus group interviews.

In order to confirm the clarity of the questions that asked to the participants in the focus group interview, firstly, expert opinion was sought. In line with the expert opinion, the interview form was rearranged and a pilot interview was conducted with three teacher candidates who were not among the participants, and the interview form was finalized in line with the pilot interview.

During the interview, teacher candidates were given codes as TC-1, TC-2. The focus group interview was recorded with a voice recorder and then the recordings were transcribed and the datas were made ready for analysis.

Content analysis method was used in the analysis of the qualitative data collected from the participants through the focus group interview. In the content analysis process, themes and codes were created based on the research data.

Ensuring Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure validity (credibility) in the research, the participant's confirmation regarding the interview records was obtained after the interviews were transcribed. Merriam (1998) states that one of the methods to be used in ensuring credibility is to get expert opinion. In this direction, in addition to participant confirmation, expert opinion was also sought in the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985), on the other hand, recommend working with data sources for a long time to ensure credibility, checking the raw data with its sources, and checking the findings by a person who is not in the research group. In this direction, in order to ensure credibility in the research, the findings and raw data were presented to a field expert and expert opinion was obtained.

In order to ensure transferability, direct quotations are included in order to provide adequate description of the data, as suggested by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013). In addition, all stages of the research (method, determination of participants, development of data collection tool and data analysis processes) were explained in detail. In order to ensure the reliability (consistency) of the research, the coding made by the researcher and the expert opinion was compared and the percentage of consistency was examined.

RESULTS

Elements that enable teacher candidates to continue higher education

In order to examine the motivation sources of teacher candidates for the teaching profession, firstly, the factors that enable them to continue higher education were examined. It has been observed that teacher candidates' desire to continue higher education after graduating from any higher education institution is generally dependent on external motivation sources. Table 2 shows the themes and concepts created in line with the views of teacher candidates on the factors that enable them to continue their higher education.

Table 2

Continuing Higher Education					
Disliking the current job					
Establish an orderly life					
Participate in employment					
Changing institution					
Status anxiety					
Desire to learn					
Being a teacher					

Themes and Codes Related to the Reasons of Teacher candidates for Continuing Higher Education

In Table 2, which includes themes and codes of the reasons for the teacher candidates to continue higher education, it is seen that the codes that can be considered under the themes of external factors and internal factors are formed. The codes of not liking the current job, establishing a regular life, participating in employment, changing institutions and status anxiety are external factors that enable teacher candidates to continue their higher education. The desire to learn and being a teacher are internal factors.

TC-10's opinions explaining the reason for continuing higher education within the framework of external factors,

"...The third reason for me to continue my higher education is that I am not satisfied with my current profession. I work as a Night and Neighborhood Watcher at the General Directorate of Security. I'm having a lot of difficulty because the watchman's shift is always at night. It is difficult to work at night and this difficulty is now reflected in my life. So, because I'm married, I can't spend much time with my family. So there is a disorder in my life..."

He stated that he continued higher education in order to establish a regular life.

TC-4, who explained the reason for continuing higher education within the framework of external factors, expressed his views as follows:

"The first department I read was a department with a low score and not appreciated by the society. However, I was able to find a job with a low salary in the private sector. This situation bothered me, I decided to study at university again, as I thought that if I continued in a department with a higher social status and better employment opportunities, the conditions would improve in my favor".

TC-1, who explained the reason for continuing higher education within the framework of internal factors, expressed his views,

"Since my childhood, my only dream was to be a teacher. I read the first chapter I read, a bit forced, but after graduation, I saw that my chances of being appointed from that department were very low. I prepared for the exam again with a little more effort and chose a department with a high probability of being appointed, in this respect, I feel that I am one step closer to my dreams".

The reasons why teacher candidates prefer education faculty

Another subject focused on in the research to examine the motivation of prospective teachers towards the teaching profession is the reasons for choosing a faculty of education. It is seen that the reasons for choosing the faculty of education of teacher candidates are similar to the reasons for continuing higher education. The themes and codes created in line with the opinions of the teacher candidates regarding the reasons for choosing the faculty of education are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

	Good employment opportunities			
	Good working conditions for the teaching profession			
Theme1: External	Not being appointed from the first department			
Factors	Score based preference			
	Recognized as a respected profession in society			
	Family/social circle advice			
	Loving to teach			
Theme 2: Internal	loving of teaching profession			
Factors	Being a profession at the center of ideals/dreams			
	The influence of role models			

Themes and Codes of Teachers Candidates' Reasons for Preferring the Faculty of Education

When Table 3 is examined, when the reasons for teachers candidates' preference for education faculty after graduating from a higher education institution are examined, it is seen that the factors that motivate them are generally external factors.

TC-6, who dealt with the reasons for choosing the faculty of education within the scope of external factors, expressed her views as follows:

"The first higher education institution I graduated from was the faculty of education. I couldn't be appointed from that department, the KPSS score was too high, so I decided to study another department with a high probability of being appointed or finding a job. If I read the faculty of re-education, I would be exempt from some of the courses I had taken before and I would be able to find a job in a shorter time. That's why I decided to study at the faculty of education again"

TC-7, on the other hand, discussed the reasons for choosing the faculty of education in the context of internal factors:

"I've studied at the faculty of education before. Since my childhood, my only dream was to be a teacher and spend time with students and teach them something. I especially wanted to open new horizons for children who have no means and struggle with difficulties, I wanted to be useful to them, I feel like I was born for this. However, I could not be appointed from the first department I read. I decided to read it again and chose the faculty of education again"

The reasons why teacher candidates prefer special education teaching

In the study, the reasons for preferring the special education department were examined in order to examine the motivational resources of the teacher candidates for special education teaching. It is seen that the subtheme of "altruistic motivation" comes to the fore in the teacher candidates' preference for the special education department.

Table 4

The Reasons of Teacher candidates to Prefer Special Education Department

	The sacredness of special education teaching The happiness of teaching something to children with special needs
Theme 1: Altruistic Motivation	Empathetic approach to individuals with special needs
	Ensuring the socialization of people with special needs
	Individuals with special needs in the surrounding area
Theme 2: Internal Motivation	Being suitable personally for this department
Wouvation	Being useful to society
	Love of profession
	Being a department that needs more teacher
Theme 3: External Motivation	More employment opportunities
	Career opportunities

When Table 4, which includes themes and codes based on the reasons why teacher candidates prefer special education teaching, is examined, it is seen that the codes that can be discussed under the themes of "altruistic motivation" and "internal motivation" come to the fore. It is seen that the codes that can be considered under the themes of external motivation and internal motivation are similar to the reasons for continuing higher education and choosing a faculty of education.

TC-3, who explained the source of motivation with altruistic behaviors,

"I think my level of awareness about individuals with special needs is high, because my brother is also a person with special needs. I can always observe how big a step it is for him to learn any behavior or acquire a skill. Even the smallest skill he acquires makes both him and us very happy."

expressed an opininon

TC-6 expressed the opinion:

"I think special education teaching is a very sacred profession, imagine that every step you take with love, compassion and mercy will illuminate a child's world, you will play an important role in developing their knowledge and skills, in other words, you will be their window to the world, with your support, they will become independent individuals in daily life. they will acquire behaviors towards being..."

In this direction, it is possible to say that the motivation of prospective teachers towards special education teaching is altruistic motivation.

Career plans of teacher candidates

When the career plans of the teacher candidates who continue to teach in the special education department are examined, it is seen that they want to continue their graduate education in order to increase their professional knowledge and be more beneficial to their students. The fact that special education teacher candidates' career plans include the desire to be beneficial to children with special needs by improving their professional knowledge and skills is a situation that can be explained by the altruistic motivation coming to the fore.

TC-5, who expressed her opinion on the career plan, expressed her views as follows:

"I want to do a master's degree after I start my job because I want to be a good teacher in my field. But I want this not to be an academician, but to learn the intricacies of the profession. After all, I think it is necessary to have a master's degree in order to learn in-depth knowledge, so that I can be more beneficial to children, so maybe I can learn different applications for them, I think I can direct them in a different way.

Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

In line with the first sub-problem of the research, firstly, the factors that enable teacher candidates to continue higher education after graduating from any higher education institution were examined. In this context, it has been concluded that the factors that motivate teacher candidates about higher education are external sources such as not liking the current job, establishing a regular life, participating in employment, changing institutions and status concerns. In line with the second sub-problem of the research, the factors that enable teacher candidates to choose education faculty after graduating from any educational institution were examined. It has been concluded that the factors that enable teacher candidates to choose the faculty of education are external resources such as the factors that enable them to continue higher education. Unlike the results of the research, Dikmen (2021), in his study examining the teaching motivation of teacher candidates, concluded that the selfmotivation levels of the teacher candidates were high regardless of external factors, in other words, internal motivation was more effective than external motivation. Also, unlike the results of the research, Al-Yaseen (2011) Chong and Low (2009) and Weaver-Hightower (2011) stated that intrinsic and altruistic motivation factors are effective in the process of choosing the teaching profession. In the study conducted by Kaya, Yıldız and Yıldız (2013), in which the effects and importance levels of internal and external motivation factors on teacher motivation were examined, it was concluded that the level of motivation provided by the internal motivation factors was higher than the externalmotivation factors. Similarly, in the study conducted by Kocaağa (2022) to examine the reasons for social studies teacher candidates to choose the teaching profession, it was seen that the reasons for choosing the teaching profession of teacher candidates were mostly internal reasons, and external reasons remained in the background for the candidates. This explained within the framework result was of teacher candidates' ownership of their fields. Dikmen (2021), on the other hand, examined the factors affecting teacher candidates' motivation to teach. Ensuring the will and personal development; It has been concluded that the factors affecting negatively are personal problems. In the same study, the factors that positively affect the external motivation of teacher candidates were the feeling of importance, time flexibility, respect, positive climate, students' interest in the lesson; It was concluded that the factors that negatively affect external motivation are economic problems, bad working conditions, inequality of opportunity, inadequacy of school opportunities, student reluctance, administrative pressure, and not knowing the value of teachers. In the research, the reasons for the teacher candidates attending the special education teaching department to continue higher education and prefer the faculty of education mostly depend on external motivation sources, which is associated with the fact that the teacher candidates graduated from any higher education institution before and were not employed in line with their field of specialization. On the other hand, it can be said that teacher candidates who are currently employed in a business line continue to higher education or education faculty to change their current job. According to the results of the research, the internal motivation sources that enable teacher candidates to choose the faculty of education are liking the teaching profession and teachers who are taken as role models. Similar to this result of the research, Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) stated that role models are effective in choosing teaching as a career.

In line with the third sub-problem of the research, the factors that enable pre-service teachers to prefer special education teaching were examined. Teacher candidates stated that they consider special education teaching sacred, that teaching children with special needs will make them happy and that they feel warm towards children with special needs. In this direction, it has been concluded that the factors that enable teacher candidates to choose special education teaching are the factors that can be considered within the scope of altruistic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Similar to the results of the research, Ölmez-Çağlar (2022) concluded that "altruistic motivation" factors are effective in his research in which he examined the motivation of prospective English teachers to choose teaching as a career. In the study conducted by Özdogru (2021), on the other hand, it was concluded that the factors that motivate teachers are generally external sources. According to the results of the research, the internal motivation sources of the teachers of the mentally handicapped are love, responsibility, belief and satisfaction; The external motivation sources are the multi-faceted development and happiness of the students, the attitudes and behaviors of the school administrators, the behaviors of the parents, the physical infrastructure of the school, personnel rights and the school climate. In the current study, the fact that altruistic motivation sources are generally prominent in the preference of special education teacher can be associated with the nature of special education teaching.

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