

## INVESTIGATION OF APPOINTING TEACHERS EMPLOYED IN THE PUBLIC EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN TURKEY

### TÜRKİYEDEKİ KAMU EĞİTİM KURUMLARINDA ÇALIŞACAK ÖĞRETMENLERİN ATANMALARINA İLİŞKİN BİR İNCELEME

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study is to examine the appointment procedure of the teachers employed in public schools in Turkey. Specifically, this study explores the correlation between the pre-service teachers' Civil Servant Selection Examination (KPSS) performance and their "cognitive ability" represented by Student Selection Examination (ÖSS) and their "quality of academic performance" represented by Undergraduate Grade Point Average (ÜNO). A random sample of 125 pre-service teachers was selected from the Pamukkale University. A survey was used to collect participants' information and Pearson correlation and multiple regressions were used to analyse the data. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between ÖSS and ÜNO. Additionally, there is no significant relationship between ÜNO and KPSS performance. However, ÖSS is a significant and valid predictor of KPSS performance. These findings suggest a proposed policy revision for appointing teachers employed in the education institutions operating under the Ministry of National Education.

**Keywords:** civil servant selection examination, predictive validity, teacher recruiting

**ÖZET:** Bu araştırmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki kamu okullarında çalışacak öğretmenlerin atanma işlemlerini incelemektir. Özellikle bu çalışma, Kamu Personeli Seçme Sınavına (KPSS) dayalı olarak yapılan öğretmen atanması uygulamasını incelemekte ve KPSS ile Öğrenci Seçme Sınavı (ÖSS) ve Üniversite Not Ortalaması (ÜNO) arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyerek ÖSS ve ÜNO değişkenlerinin KPSS'yi ne derece yordadığı belirlenmeye çalışılmaktadır. Araştırmaya Pamukkale Üniversitesine devam eden 125 öğretmen adayı rasgele örneklem yolu ile seçilmiştir. Katılımcılara ait veriler anket aracılığı ile toplanmış ve sonuçlar Pearson korelasyon ve çoklu regresyon hesaplama tekniği ile analiz edilerek yorumlanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, ÖSS ile ÜNO arasında ve ÜNO ile KPSS arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişkinin olmadığı belirlenmiştir. Öte yandan, ÖSS'nin KPSS performansını istatistiksel olarak yordayan bir değişken olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu bulgulara dayanarak, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığına bağlı kamu okullarında çalışacak öğretmenlerin alan bilgilerini de dikkate alan yeni atama kriterleri belirlemesinin daha uygun olacağı önerilmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** kamu personeli seçme sınavı, yordama geçerliliği, öğretmen atamaları

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Turkish Nation is going through a fast and dynamic process of social change parallel with scientific and technological developments and socio- cultural and economical conditions. In order to be a developed country and received full membership from the European Union, Turkey has engaged in series of reforms in education last 10 years. Some of these reforms are listed below:

1. Turkey established closer ties between vocational schools and industry (Law no 3308) in 1986.
2. Turkey expanded its higher education system by establishing 15 new state universities in addition to the existing 88 in 2007 (YOK, 2007). Moreover, Turkey allowed establishing non-profit foundations universities.
3. The compulsory primary schooling was extended from five to eight years in 1997.
4. Three years of high school was extended into four years in 2005.
5. Finally, vocational school graduates were admitted to vocational schools of higher education without going through the centralized entrance exams (Aypay, 2003).

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Because of these recent developments and dynamic process in education, teachers need improved professional qualifications in order to fulfill their increasing responsibilities and duties. Extension of the education period, the increases of enrolment rates, new professional areas and fast changing conditions in the education sector have resulted in the need for a greater number of better-trained teachers. Therefore, the regulations for appointing teachers employed in the education institutions operating under the Ministry of National Education (MEB) in Turkey has been reorganized in conformance to the concept of norm staffing and become effective upon being issued in the Official Gazette dated 03.05.2002. According to these regulations, MEB requires a standardized test results, called Civil Servant Selection Examination (KPSS), to be taken by students seeking a teaching appointment. It is believed that KPSS was developed to improve quality of college education and standardize the chaotic job offering requirements to MEB. In addition, KPSS gave MEB an easy way to compare pre-service teachers' performance. Therefore, standardized testing has had a significant effect on the appointment of teachers to the public schools and play crucial roles for pre-service teachers' social and educational future.

### 1.1 Predictive Validity Studies

Standardized tests and their predictive validities are one of the hot topics around the world in the last two decades. Several studies have been conducted to determine about Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Graduate Record Examination (GRE), Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) or Test of English as a Foreign Students (TOEFL), and their predictive validities in undergraduate and graduate school success as measured by Undergraduate Grade Point Average, (UGPA), or Graduate Grade Point Average, (GGPA), (Nilsson, 1995; Wright & Palmer, 1994; Hofer & Gould, 2000; Koys, 2005; Dobson *et al.*, 1999).

While the validity studies that have been revealed moderate to good validity coefficients for GRE, GMAT, SAT or other standardized tests around the world, only a few studies have been evaluated standardized tests, such as Student Selection Examination (ÖSS) and Civil Servant Selection Examination (KPSS), used in Turkey and their predictive validity (Askar, 1985; Dogan, 1999; Tezbasaran, 1991; Karaman, 2001; Emre, 2002; Kelecioğlu, 2003).

The purpose of this study therefore is to examine the appointment procedure of the teachers employed in the education institutions in Turkey. Specifically, this study explores the correlation between the pre-service teachers' KPSS performance and their "cognitive ability" represented by ÖSS and their "quality of academic performance" represented by Undergraduate Grade Point Average (ÜNO). The goal is to determine whether or not there is a positive linear correlation between KPSS and ÖSS performance and ÜNO of the pre-service teachers.

Even though ÖSS and ÜNO score are generally accepted references as accurate pre-service teachers' success in KPSS, their predictive validity needs to be questioned. ÖSS represents "cognitive ability" of the pre-service teachers. ÜNO represents the quality of undergraduate success. As a result, it should be examined to ascertain whether its pre-service teachers had performed at the level indicated by the students' ÖSS and ÜNO scores. The standard that they used for such determination was KPSS performance of the pre-service teachers.

### 1.2 Civil Servant Selection Examination (KPSS)

KPSS is designed to be one of the final hurdles in pre-service teachers' career. It is created by *The Student Selection and Placement Center* (ÖSYM) and required for licensure to enter the K-12 teaching profession in Turkey. In addition, KPSS can be taken only one time during a calendar year. KPSS is divided into three components:

1. *General knowledge and skills*: This assessment measure general ability of pre-service teachers in two major areas: Turkish and Mathematics. General ability part requires that students understand the basic principles of Turkish and Math and apply this to their academic skills.

2. *General Culture*: These assessments measure five areas: Principals of Kemal Atatürk, Geography of Turkey, Civics, Popular Topics and Turkish Culture.

3. *Educational Sciences*: This assessment measure pedagogical background of pre-service teachers in three areas: Principles of learning and teaching, Curriculum and instruction and Counseling. All of these three components of the test feature multiple-choice items.

### 1.3 The Student Selection Examination (ÖSS)

All institutions of higher education in Turkey have accepted students in accordance with the results of the ÖSS organized by ÖSYM. Since 1999, the entrance examination system has been essentially based on a one-stage examination, namely the ÖSS. It is administered one time a year, throughout the country at a single session and at the same time in all test locations. ÖSS consists of two tests, *Verbal* and *Quantitative*, and each test also has its sub tests. Verbal sections of the test attempt to measure candidate's ability to understand and evaluate what is read in Turkish and to recognize basic connections and rules of standards written Turkish. The quantitative sections assess a candidate's basic mathematical skills and understanding of elementary concepts as well as the ability to reason qualitatively, to solve quantitative problems and interpret data given in graphs, charts and tables. The total time allowed to answer the items in the two tests is three hours. Therefore, ÖSS is one of the important "High Stake" test in Turkey.

According to ÖSYM (2005), ÖSS has two main objectives: First, to select those candidates who will be considered in the placement decisions to the higher education program and second, to select and place those candidates qualifying for the placement decisions, in the higher education programs of their highest preference, compatible with their relevant weighted composites as the criterion measures. After the examination, three different score (ÖSS - *Verbal*, ÖSS - *Quantitative* and ÖSS - *Equally weighted*) are calculated for each candidate, and used in (a) selection of those candidates who will be considered for placement in the four-year undergraduate programs, and in (b) placement in the two-year vocational higher education programs and/or in initial selection for programs such as performing arts, physical education and painting (ÖSYM, 2005). In addition, all candidates are given information about their performance in the verbal and quantitative sections of the test, i.e., the numbers of their correct and incorrect answers, their composite scores and whether they have been successful or not in qualifying for consideration for placement in four-year undergraduate programs.

### 1.4 Undergraduate Grade Point Average (ÜNO)

Undergraduate grade-point average is calculated to represent numerically a student's quality of performance in undergraduate education. This average is used to determine if a student qualifies for certain academic actions (e.g., academic warning/drop and graduation) and programs (e.g., student aid, study abroad). All course work was completed at any university in Turkey must have average 2.0 or higher. To compute a student's grade point average, the total number of credit units is divided into the total number of grade points. Course units count only once toward graduation requirements. "Incomplete," "Withdrawal," "Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory," "In progress," etc. designations carry no grade points and are not considered when figuring the grade point averages. When a course is repeated, the higher grade is included in the calculation, but the lower grade remains part of the permanent record and is not calculated in the grade point average.

### 1.5 Statement of the problem

ÖSS and ÜNO could be two indicators to predict KPSS for pre-service teachers. However, it should be tested regarding whether or not the ÖSS and ÜNO are effective predictors of success in KPSS performance. Therefore, the following general and specific problem statements were developed: General statement of problem: Can the success of pre-service teachers' in KPSS be predicted?

1. Specific statement of problem: Do the ÖSS and ÜNO predict pre-service teachers' success in KPSS?

Hypothesis:

1. ÖSS is not valid predictor of KPSS performance.
2. ÜNO is not valid predictor of KPSS performance.
3. Combination of ÖSS and ÜNO is not valid predictor of KPSS performance.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Population and Sample

The population for this study is all senior pre-service teachers in Pamukkale University, Faculty of Education between 2005-2006 academic years. At the end of the academic year, a survey included five questions distributed to the participants. Questions in the survey were: Gender, academic major, ÖSS scores, cumulative ÜNO and 2006 KPSS score. In order to receive their KPSS scores, republic of Turkey identification numbers were used. A random sample of 125 pre-service teachers was selected using a list provided by student admission office (SAO). SAO indicated that Faculty of Education has 400 senior pre-service teachers. The SAO list includes pre-service teachers' names and addresses. The list was downloaded into spreadsheet. Each name was assigned a number. The researchers entered these numbers into a computer program that, in turn, generated a list of random numbers to match the pre-assigned numbers; thereby yielding a random sample of 155 that is the target population of this study. To find out an appropriate sample size to represent the population, the table generated by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) was used. Pre-service teachers in senior level participated in the final survey. A total of 125 teachers returned their completed survey.

### 2.2 Statistical Analysis

For the study, the raw score on ÖSS, ÜNO and KPSS variables were entered into a spreadsheet. From the spreadsheet, plots of raw scores were generated. Thereafter, descriptive statistics were computed. Pearson Product-Moment correlations between (a) the ÖSS and KPSS, (b) ÜNO and KPSS and (c) ÖSS and ÜNO were calculated. Statistical significance was tested at the .05 level. Finally, multiple regression analysis was used to identify the predictive validity of KPSS.

## 3. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics that were compiled from raw scores. It can be seen from the Table 1 that % 62.4 of the participants consist of female students. For major, % 45.6 of the participants was elementary school teachers and % 36.8 of the participants was entered to the university based on their Equally Weighted scores.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Sample of 125 Students**

Variables	Levels	n	%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	78	62.4
	Female	47	37.6
<b>Major</b>	Science Education	17	13.6
	Early Childhood	10	08.0
	Elementary	57	45.6
	Social Sciences	12	09.6
	Arts Education	19	15.2
	Music Education	10	08.0
<b>ÖSS</b>	Verbal	41	32.8
	Quantitative	38	30.4
	Equally weighted	46	36.8

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of the ÖSS, ÜNO and KPSS. ÖSS also divided by three sub sections: Verbal, Quantitative and Equally weighted.

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Variables**

Variables	Levels	n	M	SD
<b>ÖSS</b>	Verbal	125	151.15	23.80
	Quantitative	41	142.18	24.76
	Equally weighted	38	153.35	27.80
		46	158.34	18.78
<b>ÜNO</b>		122	73.80	5.75
<b>KPSS</b>		125	72.06	8.99

It can be seen from this Table 2 that verbal section of the ÖSS has the lowest mean, 142.18, with 24.76 standard deviation, whereas quantitative section has the highest mean, 153.35, with 27.80 standard deviation.

Inter – correlations among the variables were calculated to examine the relationship between ÖSS, KPSS and ÜNO and showed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Inter-correlation Matrix for ÖSS, ÜNO and KPSS**

Variables	1	2	3
1. ÖSS	1.00		
2. ÜNO	0.15	1.00	
3. KPSS	0.60*	0.09	1.00

\* $p < .01$

It can be seen from the Table 3 that ÖSS and KPSS have the strongest correlation,  $r = 0.60$ ; the ÖSS score explained 36 % of the variance in KPSS performance, while ÜNO and KPSS have the lowest correlation,  $r = 0.09$ ; the ÜNO score explained by 03 % of the variance in KPSS performance. This table shows that only ÖSS and KPSS correlation coefficient significant at the .01 alpha level.

Table 4 shows the results of a multiple regression analysis. The ÖSS and the ÜNO produced a multiple correlation of .632 ( $R^2 = .400$ ). Notice that this equation explains slightly more variance (40 %) than does ÖSS score alone (36 %). However, ÖSS is the only statistically significant beta weight.

**Table 4: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis**

Variables	B	SH <sub>B</sub>	$\beta$	t	p
Constant	45.58	10.86	-	4.20	0.00
ÖSS	0.25	0.03	0.64	7.74	0.00*
ÜNO	- 0.14	0.14	- 0.08	- 0.96	0.34

$R = 0.632$ ,  $R^2 = 0.400^*$        $F(2, 123) = 29.94$        $p < .01$

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that the ÖSS is a valid predictor of KPSS performance for pre-service teachers. The PEARSON correlation between ÖSS and KPSS is 0.60 ( $p < .01$ ), indicating that the ÖSS explains 36 % of the variance in KPSS. This means that the ÖSS is the applicable predictor of KPSS performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis regarding ÖSS scores must be rejected. On the other hand, the result indicates that ÜNO is not a significant and valid predictor of KPSS performance ( $r = .09$ ,  $p > .01$ ). ÜNO explains just % 3 of the variance in KPSS performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis regarding ÜNO scores must be accepted.

Multiple regression analysis also conducted to see whether the ÖSS and ÜNO together would be more valid than the ÖSS alone to predict KPSS performance. Multiple regression equation showed that when two predictor variables combined and used, they explained 40 % of the variance in KPSS performance and only again ÖSS is statistically significant and valid predictor at .01 alpha level.

This study yielded two great surprises. First, the present study showed that there was no significant correlation between ÖSS and ÜNO. ÖSS attempts to measure cognitive ability of the participants and includes Verbal and Quantitative sections. Verbal sections items suggest that they are measuring reading comprehension and verbal reasoning - an ability to draw logical deductions and inferences from passages of prose. This is a requirement for all university students through their courses. After all, they have to read books and articles and comprehend and draw logical conclusions from them. Verbal reasoning ability is also likely to be an essential requirement of success in essay-style examination paper. The quantitative sections assess a candidate's basic mathematical skills and understanding of elementary concepts as well as the ability to reason qualitatively, to solve

quantitative problems and interpret data given in graphs, charts and tables. This may not a requirement for all university students through their course but some of them. Some departments' courses require basic mathematical skills and calculations. Consequently, it is a really surprising that ÖSS has been found not to be a good predictor of ÜNO.

Second, this study showed that there was no significant correlation between ÜNO and KPSS. Undergraduate grade-point average represents numerically a student's quality of performance in undergraduate education. Another words, ÜNO is used to determine if a student qualifies for certain academic actions and programs. Also, it represents knowledge ability of the subjects they are studying on. It is a really surprising therefore that ÜNO has been found not to be a good predictor of KPSS performance.

It can be said from these result that ÖSS and KPSS have been produced by ÖSYM and both exams aim to measure participants' cognitive ability. In addition, both exams contain similar topics such as verbal ability, knowledge of Turkish history, geography etc. Therefore, ÖSS has been found to be a good predictor of KPSS performance. On the other hand, this study showed that there was no significant correlation between ÜNO and KPSS performance.

Consequently, these findings have led to a proposed policy revision for appointing teachers employed in the education institutions operating under the MEB in Turkey. Teacher preparation and recruiting system need to be aligned with the new educational curriculum and selection systems. To assure that this can be done, the MEB and the Education Faculties, along with the Higher Education Council, (YOK) will need to agree on the specific definition of the professional skills, knowledge, qualifications, and values that should characterize high-quality teachers. Moreover, they need to work together to develop quality assurance, accreditation, and program assessment mechanisms to guarantee that the Education Faculties are preparing teachers with these characteristics. In addition, they will have to cooperate with the ÖSYM to make sure that KPSS supports the recruitment of teachers with these high-quality characteristics. The results suggest that university education should be a part of pre-service teacher appointing procedure because it symbolizes numerically a student's quality of learning in undergraduate education. In order to overcome these challenges, recently new initiatives to assess teacher candidates' subject performance has been discussed by the MEB. Hopefully, these initiatives will take count teachers' professional knowledge and skills while appointing them.

Further research is needed to determine additional relationship about teacher appointment requirements and other predictor variables, for example qualitative variables, beyond the scope of this study. As teacher appointing system is more valid and accurate, it will be improve the quality of teacher education and teaching performance. Future researches may provide useful information for appointing teachers employed in the education institutions operating under the MEB in Turkey.

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### Extended Abstract

The Turkish Nation is going through a fast and dynamic process of social change parallel with scientific and technological developments and socio- cultural and economical conditions. In order to be a developed country and received full membership from the European Union, Turkey has engaged in series of reforms in education last 10 years. Extension of the education period, the increases of enrolment rates, new professional areas and fast changing conditions in the education sector have resulted in the need for a greater number of better- trained teachers. Therefore, the teacher recruiting system has been reorganized in conformance to the concept of norm staffing and become effective upon being issued in the Official Gazette dated 03.05.2002. According to these regulations, MEB requires a standardized test results, called Civil Servant Selection Examination (KPSS), to be taken by students seeking a teaching certification. It is believed that KPSS developed to improve quality of college education and standardize the chaotic job offering requirements to MEB. In addition, KPSS gave MEB an easy way to compare pre-service teachers' performance.

The purpose of this study therefore is to examine the appointment procedure of the teachers employed in the education institutions in Turkey. Specifically, this study explores the correlation between the pre-service teachers' KPSS performance and their "cognitive ability" represented by ÖSS and their "quality of academic performance" represented by Undergraduate Grade Point Average (ÜNO). The goal is to determine whether or not there is a positive linear correlation between KPSS and ÖSS performance and ÜNO of the pre-service teachers. The population for this study is all senior pre-service teachers in Pamukkale University, College of Education between 2005-2006 academic years. At the end of the academic year, a survey included five questions distributed to the participants. Questions in the survey were: Gender, academic major, ÖSS scores, cumulative ÜNO and 2006 KPSS score. In order to receive their KPSS scores, republic of Turkey identification numbers were used. A random sample of 125 pre-service teachers was selected using a list provided by student admission office (SAO). SAO indicated that College of Education has 400 senior pre-service teachers. A random sample of 125 pre-service teachers was selected using a list provided by student admission office.

The results of this study show that the ÖSS is a valid predictor of KPSS performance for pre-service teachers. The PEARSON correlation between ÖSS and KPSS is 0.60 ( $p < .01$ ), indicating that the ÖSS explains 36 % of the variance in KPSS. This means that the ÖSS is the applicable predictor of KPSS performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis regarding ÖSS scores must be rejected. On the other hand, the result indicates that ÜNO is not a significant and valid predictor of KPSS performance ( $r = .09$ ,  $p > .01$ ). ÜNO explains just % 3 of the variance in KPSS performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis regarding ÜNO scores must be accepted. Multiple regression analysis also conducted to see whether the ÖSS and ÜNO together would be more valid than the ÖSS alone to predict KPSS performance. Multiple regression equation showed that when two predictor variables combined and used, they explained 40 % of the variance in KPSS performance and only again ÖSS is statistically significant and valid predictor at .01 alpha level.

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