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## THE REFLECTIONS OF THE BASIC PROFICIENCY TEST SUCCESS RANKING THRESHOLD ON THE PAINTING AND ART EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The primary aim of this study is to examine the implications of the BPT (Basic Proficiency Test) success ranking threshold on Art Teacher Education Programs, based on the opinions of faculty members. A single case study design, one of the qualitative research methods, was employed in the research. Purposeful sampling was used to select the study group, utilizing the maximum variation sampling strategy. In this context, interviews were conducted with ten faculty members. The interview form was prepared based on a literature review and consisted of four questions. The data collected were analyzed through content analysis. As a result of the analyses, it was found that faculty members expressed both advantages and disadvantages regarding the BPT threshold applied in the special talent exam for Art Teacher Education Programs. A majority of the faculty members made performance-oriented evaluations concerning the impact of the threshold on the student profile. Additionally, it was determined that most faculty members suggested either lowering or removing the threshold. To gain a deeper understanding of the effects of the threshold scores applied in art education programs, it is recommended that comparative studies be conducted on models from different countries and educational systems. Based on the findings, suggestions such as the removal of the pedagogical formation requirement and the allocation of additional points to graduates of Fine Arts High Schools were also presented.

Keywords: Art teaching, special talent exam, BPT threshold.

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Art education is a process that fosters creativity by bringing together art forms such as painting and sculpture, while teaching the historical and social dimensions of art (Buyurgan, 2020). This education, delivered systematically in art academies, has evolved over time and reached its present form. Contemporary art education today not only imparts artistic knowledge but also aims to transform students from passive recipients of information into active thinkers and creative individuals. This approach enables students to discover their own identities and develop a unique perspective (Artut, 2009).

Visual arts, encompassing plastic arts such as painting, sculpture, photography, ceramics, printmaking, and graphic design, not only provide an aesthetic experience but also play an active role in social transformations (Grierson, 2008). In order to unlock the full potential of this rich and multifaceted field, visual arts education should be organized as practical or theoretical programs offered to different age groups, from early childhood to higher education and beyond, within a structured framework (Buyurgan, 2020; Yılmaz & Bastaban, 2020). In this context, quality art education not only enhances individuals' aesthetic perception but also strengthens their creative thinking and critical perspectives. Visual arts education at the higher education level, in particular, aims to further develop students' artistic skills.

In our country, higher education institutions that train visual arts teacher candidates (CoHE) admit students through talent exams. These exams, which assess students' artistic abilities, are a crucial step in enhancing the quality of art education. In this context, students applying to the Art Teacher Education program are required to take a two-stage practical exam to evaluate their artistic talents. In the first stage, students are expected to create a drawing based on a live model, while in the second stage, they are asked to produce an original design using their imagination. However, the structure of these talent exams may vary between universities. The entry requirements for the talent exams are organized in accordance with the guidelines set by CoHE, which are published annually.

The Measurement, Selection, and Placement Center (MSPC) organizes the Higher Education Institutions Examination (HEIE) annually to place students in universities. Through the BPT and the Field Proficiency Test (FPT) included in this exam, students' ranking positions are determined. This ranking is one of the most important criteria influencing students' chances of being admitted to various university programs. In Turkey, departments that train visual arts teachers are generally housed within the faculties of education, specifically under the departments of fine arts education. Candidates wishing to enter these programs must take the BPT exam and surpass the 800,000 threshold (ÖSYM, 2024). In this context, the rankings determined by MSPC not only shape students' academic careers but also guide the future of visual arts education in Turkey. Therefore, conducting a more in-depth analysis of the criteria for entry into these departments and the impact of the examination system will contribute to both the development of educational policies and the enhancement of the quality of art education.

A review of the literature related to this study revealed that Demirel and Sözer (2023) conducted an in-depth examination of how the BPT threshold score impacts candidates' participation in the Art Teacher Education special talent exams. Çoruh (2020) analyzed the effects of the exam scoring criteria used in Fine Arts Faculties on both exam success and students' academic performance. Additionally, research on teachers' opinions regarding the removal of the threshold score in the HEIE (Atik & Kasapoğlu Tankutay, 2023), studies examining the contribution of AOBP (Weighted High School GPA) and YGS (Transition to Higher Education Examination) scores to placement scores in special talent exams (Arapgirlioğlu & Tankız, 2013), and studies focusing on the effects of the BPT success ranking threshold on special talent exams in music teacher education programs (Başbuğ & Kaya, 2022) were identified. Taşkesen's (2019) study, titled "An Examination of Special Talent Exams in the Art Teacher Education Department," provides a detailed assessment of the structure and functioning of these exams. Moreover, Taşkesen's (2020) study, titled "The Views of Fine Arts High School Teachers and Students on the Talent Exams for Fine Arts Education and the Impact of the Applied Threshold Scores on Their Motivation," focuses on the effects of the threshold scores applied in these exams on students' motivation. Additionally, studies in the literature examine the reflections of placement scores in special talent exams on candidates both within and outside the field (Ece, 2007). However, the absence of a comprehensive study addressing the impact of the BPT success ranking threshold on Art Teacher Education programs based on the views of faculty members indicates that this topic has not been sufficiently explored in the literature. This highlights the importance of the present research in filling this gap.

The primary aim of this study is to examine the impact of the BPT Success Ranking Threshold on Art Teacher Education programs based on the views of faculty members. In line with this aim, the following research questions have been addressed.

- 1- What are the views of faculty members regarding the BPT success ranking threshold applied for admission to Art Teacher Education programs?
- 2- What are their opinions on the effects of the BPT threshold on the student profile?
- 3- What are the views of faculty members on the appropriateness of the BPT success ranking requirement as a prerequisite for the Art Teacher Education Special Talent Exam?

## **METHOD**

#### Research Design

In this study, a case study design, one of the qualitative research methods, was chosen to examine the reflections of the BPT success ranking threshold on Painting and Art Education programs based on the opinions of faculty experts. This design encompasses research types that involve in-depth investigation of a specific phenomenon, program, institution, or group (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2013).

# Study Group

In this qualitative research, purposive sampling was used to determine the study group, and the maximum variation sampling strategy was adopted. The maximum variation sampling strategy is a method in which the researcher includes individuals or cases in the sample group that vary according to specific characteristics, criteria, and qualities (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2018). In this context, faculty members teaching in Art Teacher Education programs at various universities and regions were included in the study group. The demographic information of the participants who contributed to the research is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Faculty Members Comprising the Study Group.

Region	Faculty Experts (FE)
Eastern Anatolia	5
Central Anatolia	2
Black Sea	1
Marmara	1
Southeastern Anatolia	1

#### **Data Collection Instruments**

In the process of creating the interview form, a draft form consisting of nine questions was initially developed based on a literature review. This draft was then reviewed by two expert Visual Arts academics, and revisions were made according to their suggestions. As a result of the revisions, three questions were merged, and three questions were removed from the form. In this context, the final form was designed to consist of four questions. The form includes two questions aimed at determining the views of faculty members on the BPT Success Ranking applied in the Art Teacher Education Special Talent Exam, one question on the implementation of the BPT threshold, and one question on the relationship between the BPT Threshold Score and the success of teacher candidates.

As part of the research, interviews were conducted with ten faculty members to gather their views on the BPT threshold requirement applied in Art Teacher Education programs. The responses to the interview questions were recorded using a recording device.

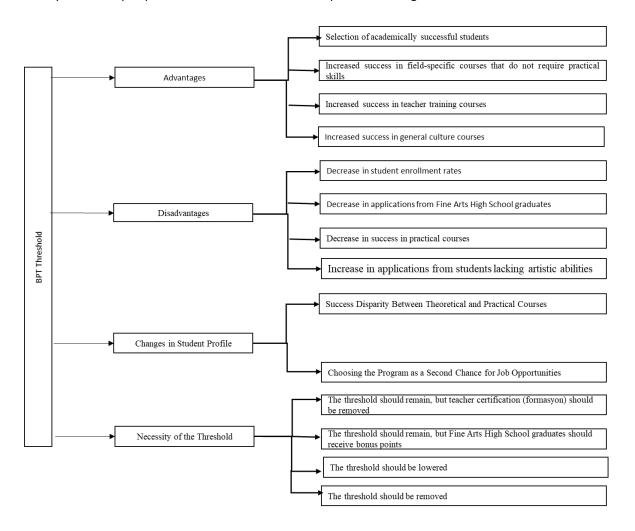
#### **Data Analysis**

The data collected to examine the reflections of the BPT Success Ranking threshold on Art Teacher Education programs based on the views of faculty members were analyzed using content analysis. "The primary aim of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 242). In this framework, the first stage involved carefully listening to the audio recordings and transcribing them into written form with great precision. Subsequently, each faculty member's response forms were labeled sequentially as FM-1, FM-2, and so on. The analysis process began with inductive coding of the written texts, during which additions were made to a pre-prepared code list. Then, existing codes were

associated with the written texts, new codes were derived, and the codes were reorganized. In the third stage, connections between the codes were established, and themes and sub-themes were identified. In the final stage of the analysis, the themes and codes were interpreted based on the participants' statements. To ensure the reliability of the code list, additional coding was performed by two separate experts. The consistency between the experts was determined using the reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (2015), defined as Reliability = Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement). As a result of the calculation, it was determined that the inter-expert agreement was 84%. In the final stage of data analysis, a third expert reviewed the consistency of the coders and the alignment with the literature. This expert acted as a mediator in cases where the coders could not reach an agreement.

#### **FINDINGS**

The findings obtained based on the research questions were analyzed according to the participants' views and systematically presented under four different sub-themes. The themes, sub-themes, and codes derived from the faculty members' perspectives on the BPT threshold are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Themes, Sub-Themes, and Codes Created Based on the Faculty Members' Perspectives Regarding the BPT Threshold.



Table 2. General Views of Faculty Members Regarding the BPT Threshold Applied in the Visual Arts Teacher Aptitude Test.

Sub-themes	Sub-themes	Sub-themes
	Selection of academically successful students	FE1, FE2, FE3, FE4, FE5, FE6,
		FE7, FE8, FE9, FE10
Advantages	Increase in Success in Non-Practical Field	FE2, FE3, FE4, FE5, ÖF9
	Increase in Success in Teacher Training Courses	FE2, FE3, FE4, FFE5, FE6, FE9
	Increase in Success in General Culture Courses	FE2, FE4, FE5, FE6, FE9
	Decrease in Quota Occupancy Rates	FE2, FE3, FE4, FE5, FE6, FE7,
Disadvantages		FE8, FE9, FE10
	Decrease in Applications from Fine Arts High School Graduates	FE2, FE4, FE5, FE6, FE8, FE9,
		FE10
	Decrease in Success in Practical Courses	FE1, FE2, FE4, FE5, FE6, FE7,
		FE9, FE10
	Increase in Applications from Non-Talented Candidates	FE1, FE2, FE3, FE4, FE5, FE6,
		FE7, FE9, FE10

When we examine the "advantages" sub-theme in Table 2, it is observed that the majority of participants believe that the BPT threshold influences the selection of academically successful students. Additionally, faculty members expressed their views on improvements in success in courses that do not require practical application, such as content area courses, as well as increased success in pedagogy courses and general knowledge courses.

When we examine the "disadvantages" sub-theme, it is observed that the majority of participants reported a decrease in enrollment rates. Faculty members highlighted several disadvantages related to the BPT threshold, including a decline in applications from Fine Arts High School graduates, a decrease in success in courses requiring practical application, and an increase in applications from candidates lacking talent. Some of the faculty members' views on these issues are as follows:

"I think the advantages include the fact that students with higher academic achievement are coming in, meaning students who are successful in theoretical courses or those who can produce more meaningful work because their math and Turkish skills are stronger" (FE5).

"By ensuring the selection of candidates with high academic achievement, it has enabled the training of teacher candidates who are successful not only in studio work but also in theoretical studies" (FE2).

"The 800,000 threshold applied in the talent exams significantly reduced the number of candidates taking the exam. As a result of this decline, instead of selecting the best artists, we ended up taking just enough students to meet the quota, even if their drawing skills were poor. This led to a decline in success in practical courses, while success in theoretical courses increased" (FE4).

"The talent exam applications, which were already in decline before the 800,000 ranking threshold, have been severely negatively affected. It has caused many universities, except for the large ones, to have vacant quotas. Candidates from Fine Arts High Schools, who are more skilled in plastic arts, have been unable to apply because they could not achieve high scores. This situation has led to less talented candidates being able to apply for the talent exam" (FE10).

**Table 3.** Faculty Members' Opinions on the Impact of the BPT Threshold on Student Profiles.

Sub-themes	<b>Sub-themes</b>	Sub-themes
Change in Student Profile	Success Disparity Between Theoretical and Practical Courses	FE1, FE2, FE4, FE5, FE6, FE7, FE9, FE10
-	Choosing the Program as a Second Chance for Job Opportunities	FE2, FE3, FE5, FE9

When examining Table 3, it is observed that most faculty experts expressed their views on the differences in success between theoretical and practical courses regarding the effects of the BPT threshold on student profiles. Additionally, faculty experts addressed the issue of students choosing the program as a second chance for job opportunities. Some sample statements from the faculty experts on this topic are as follows:

"Students coming to the program are not those with genuine talent or who have been drawing for years, but rather students who may have drawn only twice and attempt their third drawing in the talent exam" (FE6).

"Students who see this program as a second chance for employment or who are studying a second degree and taking advantage of university scores can be very eager and successful in theoretical courses such as vocational knowledge. I can say that they don't experience difficulties in practice-based courses and grasping strategies" (FE2).

"It has been observed that students with higher BPT success rankings and scores surpass more talented students. Additionally, university graduates struggling to find jobs choose the Art Teacher Education program, thinking it will be easier to find employment in this field, due to their high scores and the limited practice they gained from art preparation courses" (FE3).

Table 4. Faculty Members' Opinions on the Implementation of the BPT Threshold

Sub-themes	Sub-themes	Sub-themes
	There should be a threshold, but the training requirement should be removed.	FE5, FE6, FE8
The Necessity of the BPT Threshold	There should be a threshold, but additional points should be granted to Fine Arts High School graduates.	FE5, FE6, FE8
	The threshold should be lowered.	FE2, FE3, FE7, FE9
	The threshold should be removed.	FE1, FE4, FE10

When Table 4 is examined, it is observed that the majority of faculty members expressed opinions in favor of lowering or eliminating the BPT threshold. Additionally, some faculty members stated that while the threshold should remain in place, the teacher certification program (pedagogical formation) should be removed, and that

Fine Arts High School graduates should be granted additional points. Some sample opinions reflecting the thoughts of the faculty members on this issue are as follows:

"Unfortunately, the talent exam scores of candidates applying for the special talent exam are very low, and many departments, just to have students, accept very poor candidates as successful in the exam. I believe the success ranking for the special talent exam needs to be reconsidered" (FE7).

"While the number of students taking the talent exam used to exceed 2,000, now it has dropped to a tenth of that, which I believe could lead to the closure of painting teacher education programs at universities across the country. An alternative solution or some flexibility should be introduced to restore student circulation in these programs as soon as possible" (FE1).

"...should the threshold here be 800,000? I think this needs to be examined and discussed. And of course, how the policy for fine arts high schools should be handled is crucial. In addition, all universities I know or have worked with almost unanimously do not want the 800,000 threshold, and some departments are even at risk of closing" (FE5).

"On one hand, the 800,000 threshold makes sense for teaching programs, but on the other hand, it's illogical. Normally, I would support it, but when the threshold is applied to education faculties and fine arts programs are given unlimited access, allowing anyone who passes the threshold to apply there, and then obtain teacher certification even before graduating, bringing the 800,000 threshold to us becomes meaningless" (FE6).

## **CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION**

Based on the opinions of faculty members, the impact of the BPT success ranking threshold on Art Education Programs has been evaluated from various perspectives. Within the scope of the first sub-question of the study, when the views of the faculty members regarding the advantages of the threshold score applied as an entry requirement for the Visual Arts Teacher Training exam are examined, it is noted that students with higher academic success show a marked improvement, particularly in theoretical courses, general culture courses, and teacher certification courses. This suggests that the BPT success ranking threshold positively influences the admission of more competent and academically equipped students into the program. Similarly, Üçer and colleagues (2023) reached the same conclusion in a study conducted on the Music Teacher Training Program. Additionally, some faculty members have warned that the threshold may place artistic talent in the background, potentially neglecting creative potential.

In the next finding of the study, the majority of the faculty members emphasized a significant decline in the enrollment rates of the programs, highlighting a noticeable decrease in the number of applicants from Fine Arts High School graduates. Additionally, concerns were expressed regarding a decline in the success levels in applied art courses and an increase in the number of students with insufficient talent. Similar findings were reported in the studies conducted by Demirel and Sözer (2023), Üçer et al. (2023), and Apaydın and Yazıcı (2024).

When examining the second sub-problem of the study, it was noted that the implementation of the threshold led to changes in students' readiness, motivation, willingness, and experience during their studies. While students were reported to be motivated and successful in courses that did not require practical application, there was a noticeable decline in their experience, motivation, and enthusiasm in practical field courses and art education courses. This suggests that the threshold limits the chances of talented students, who may not achieve sufficient scores in academic exams, from enrolling in art education programs. It can be argued that this situation negatively affects students' motivation and success in applied courses. Similar results were found in the studies conducted by Üçer et al. (2023).

When examining another sub-question of the research, it was found that the majority of faculty experts expressed the opinion that the threshold score should be lowered or completely removed. Similarly, Üçer and colleagues (2023) also encountered findings in this direction in their study on the Music Teacher Education Program. In contrast, Taşkesen's (2020) study highlighted that teachers from Fine Arts High Schools were in agreement about the removal of the threshold score. However, some faculty experts advocated for the necessity of maintaining the threshold and suggested the removal of pedagogical formation requirements. Those in favor of keeping the threshold also emphasized the need to grant additional points to Fine Arts High School graduates. While lowering or eliminating the threshold would offer opportunities to a broader range of students, the support for providing additional points to Fine Arts High School graduates aims to align education in this field with more competent students. These findings suggest the need for a reevaluation of policies that directly shape the structure of art education and the student profile.

#### **SUGGESTIONS**

To conduct a more in-depth analysis of the impact of the threshold score applied in art education programs, it is recommended to examine models from different countries and educational systems comparatively. Such studies can provide valuable insights into the diversity of policies implemented in the field of art education and their effects on students' artistic abilities. Additionally, instead of entry criteria that solely prioritize academic success, it is considered necessary to develop assessment systems that focus on students' artistic talent and potential.

Proposals such as removing the pedagogical formation requirement and awarding additional points to Fine Arts High School graduates could play a significant role in enhancing the quality of art education programs. In this context, there is a need for more inclusive and flexible policies to better support students in the field of art education. These types of policies could not only improve the quality of art education programs but also enable talented students to develop more successfully in these fields.

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#### **CONTRIBUTION RATE**

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