



INVESTIGATION OF TEACHERS' VIEWS ON PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES AND ROLES

Lütfi Üredi¹,
Ersin Çopur²ⁱ

¹Assoc. Prof., Mersin University,
Faculty of Education,
Mersin, Turkey

²Dr., Çukurova University,
Faculty of Education,
Adana, Turkey

Abstract:

The aim of this study is to interpret the professional identities of teachers, in general term the social duties and responsibilities of teachers, how they interpret the differences between the teaching profession and other professions, the aspects of teaching that they see advantages and disadvantages. In the research conducted according to the semi-structured interviewing approach, the definitions of professional identities of teachers are examined in the context of issues that will make a difference in the analysis and are expected to be diversified, such as gender, seniority, the status of the tasked school. The survey was conducted with 18 teachers working in Tarsus (10 female, 8 male) in Mersin province. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the research data. In general, teachers have stated that the training of useful collective people is guiding the people and preparing the students for the future, the tasks and responsibilities of the teachers. The main point that teachers distinguish their teaching profession from other professions is about raising individuals and shaping the future. Teacher identity is defined as a profession that develops itself, has an obligation to be an example to people, prepares individuals for their life, and has prestige. Among the advantages of the teaching profession, it has been given that the teaching profession is the most respected occupation, the opportunity for self-improvement, the opportunity for teaching-learning, the happiness of being helpful to people, and the working hours being appropriate. It is seen as a disadvantage that the teacher is a weary profession, destroying the reputation of the teaching profession, finishing the energies at school, taking homework, having to bear the weight of being a teacher at all, and changing working conditions from school to school. The answer given by the teachers is that in light of the fact that the teachers think that they are the number one actors in society. Although the income level of teachers is relatively low compared to other professions

ⁱ Correspondence: email e.copur33@hotmail.com

that require training at the undergraduate level, the social status of the teacher is still high and defended by the intellectual teachers.

Keywords: teacher, professional identity, the role of teacher

1. Introduction

Education is the development of a person's mental, physical, emotional, social skills, behaviors in the most appropriate way or in a desired way, and all of the activities that are aimed at gaining new abilities, behaviors and knowledge for some purposes. In this respect, education is a process that begins with the birth of man and is a life-long process (Akyüz, 2007).

Since the beginning of human history, education and training have been one of the issues that human beings have been focusing on. The training of the workforce that is appropriate to the needs of the age and society depends on the importance given to the students, teachers and training programs which are the three basic elements of the education system. Undoubtedly, the most important element affecting the education system is the teacher. In the education process, the teacher is an element that gives meaning to other elements and has a great effect on the realization of education. In the education process, the teacher is an element that gives meaning to other elements and has a great effect on the realization of education (Hacıoğlu ve Alkan, 1997).

In the Basic Law of National Education which numbered 1739 (1973), the profession of teaching is a specialization profession which takes on the duties of teaching, education, education and related management. Teachers are obliged to perform these duties in accordance with the objectives and basic principles of Turkish National Education. Preparing for the teaching profession is provided by general culture, special field education and pedagogical formation. In order to achieve the qualifications mentioned above, it is essential that teacher candidates are provided with higher education, regardless of the level of teaching. This learning is arranged in such a way as to enable horizontal and vertical transitions at undergraduate, undergraduate and graduate levels.

The teaching profession is the art of cultivating as a good, constructive, creative good person and a good citizen, useful for individuals, family, environment, nation, state and homeland. These people raised by the teachers make their family and nation happy, develop their homeland and strengthen the state. In this respect, the future of our nation, our country and our state, the economic development depends on the success of the teachers in their profession (Tekişik, 1987).

Although the history of teaching was based on old times, its emergence as a profession began with the birth of modern school. The institutionalization of education as a discipline has made it necessary to educate people with special expertise and skills to take care of the child's education (Eskicumalı, 2002).

According to Uçan (without a date), the history of the teaching profession in our country dates back about a thousand years. The teaching profession should be handled

in three sections: Seljuk, Ottoman and Republic of Turkey. In Seljuk, the teaching profession, in general, was intertwined with the clergy. In this period, the teaching profession is a religious multifunctional profession.

In the Ottoman Empire, the situation regarding the teaching profession was almost the same as in the Seljuk period until the middle of the 15th century. In the Ottoman period, for the first time, Fatih Sultan Mehmet took a very important step towards saving the teaching profession from being religiously important, secularization and secularization. This step is the first real breakthrough for the teaching profession in Turkey. While the reform movement started in the second half of the 18th century in the first half of the nineteenth century, the teaching profession became a vocational school and teacher school. After a while, the legal status of teachers who graduated from teacher school was thought, legal rules related to certain rules and professionalization of teaching began. In the second decade of the twentieth century, this process has developed a little more, and there has been a significant accumulation about the teaching profession. In light of this accumulation, in the light of concrete science, the innovative teaching profession has been clearly revealed.

In the Republic of Turkey the teaching profession was based on a national and secular basis, understanding resulting from these basic and restructured approaches, robust and taken into a consistent framework was based on the actual orbit with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's guidance. With the legal regulations and practices carried out in this direction, the teaching profession in the Republican period has gained a very respectable and effective profession. In 1924, the teaching profession was defined by law, thus becoming a legal profession.

A number of studies have been conducted in order to educate teachers and to develop this profession. American educator R. J. Maaske came to Turkey and prepared a report on teacher education in Turkey in 1956. In this report, some suggestions were made in order to increase the professional efficiency of teachers. Some of these recommendations are:

- The teaching profession should be accepted as an important profession that generates good income by both teachers and citizens in general.
- Teachers should be attracted to a continuous professional upbringing and self-improvement (on condition that their salaries are raised) (Hesapçioğlu, 2011).

R. J. Maaske's proposed in 1956 to increase teachers' professional productivity is not taken into consideration even today. It should be noted that the development of the teaching profession means the development of society. Because teachers start their professional roles from their personal beliefs, theories and expectations of society. Activities in the classroom and in the school are also under the influence of the wider community. Therefore, teachers' professional activities, personal beliefs and social value judgments are in relation with each other. The two main elements of the education and training activities that will not change are the students and teachers. In some periods, the status of the teacher has been partially strengthened with the value given to the education and in these periods the teachers have fulfilled their duties more successfully (Bek, 2007).

When the problems of the teaching profession are solved, teachers' professional and personal problems are minimized, their professional performance is at the highest level and the best service is provided to the students and the society.

The general aim of this study is to examine and interpret the thoughts of teachers about the teaching profession, who are working in the district of Tarsus, Mersin in the context of their experiences. In line with this general aim, the question "What are the views of teachers on the teaching profession?" was sought.

This study is important in terms of ensuring that teachers understand the importance of their professions from a social perspective, know their advantages and disadvantages, and teachers feel that their profession is different from other professions.

2. Methods

In this section, the model of the study, the participants of the research, the measurement tools used in the research, collection process and analysis of the data are included.

2.1. Research Model

This study was conducted according to the semi-structured interview approach. This interview approach covers a list of questions or topics to be addressed during the interview. The interviewer has the freedom to ask for additional questions in order to ask for pre-prepared questions and to get more detailed information about these questions by remaining loyal to the subjects or areas he/she has prepared before. It is not mandatory for questions or topics to be assigned a specific priority. The interview form is an improved method to ensure that all dimensions and questions related to the research problem are covered. The interviewer may change the sentence structure and order of the questions during the interview, enter some details or adopt a more chatting method (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

2.2. Sample

This study is based on easily accessible status sampling. The research group consists of teachers working in schools in Tarsus, Mersin. A total of 18 (10 female and 8 male) teachers with different characteristics in terms of gender, seniority, duty status were studied.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

An interview form was created to gather information about the participants. The first part of the interview form consists of questions about the biographical information of the teachers. The second part includes questions about the Teachers' Perspectives on Education, Their Perspectives on the Teaching Profession, Role of Teaching Profession. The interviews with the teachers were carried out at their own time, in a place away from the noise, which was suitable for the interview of the school they worked. The researcher stated that the names of the participants were not going to go anywhere. The

voice recording was made while the interview was being made, and then the recorded ones were written. The duration of the interviews ranged from 25 to 40 minutes.

2.4. Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the research data. Descriptive analysis is a study in which the data are shown, depicted, depicted, as described. There is no detailed and theory-based separation in descriptive analysis. The researcher cannot write the question he/she asks during the research while writing the research. This error happens if he/she writes. Instead, he/she should write the question in a title, concept or sentence (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2013). After the data collection was completed, the interview texts were read by the researcher and the theme titles were created and analyzed within this framework.

3. Findings

The findings of the study are discussed under three main headings. In the first chapter, the findings of the teachers' perspectives on education, the second headings about the perspectives of the teaching profession, and the third chapter the findings of the roles of the teaching profession were transferred.

3.1. Findings on Teachers' Perspectives on Education

All of the teachers participating in the study made a definition about education.

“Education is a process in which a number of activities are carried out inside or outside of school to prepare the individual for life”. (T 9)

“Education, through experience, observing, experiencing, trial-and-error through the person’s self-structuring and realization”. (T 10)

12 of the teachers who participated in the study stated that the definition of education was the same as in the first years of the profession, and 6 of them stated that this definition changed over the years.

“When I first started the job, I couldn’t feel that we were so valuable in the eyes of the students. At that time, education was nothing more than to teach the student something for me. With the birth of my own child, I realized that my job was to prepare the individual to life completely”. (T 8)

“Of course, my definition of education has changed. My professional life started in a corner of our country, which is very low in realizing the ideals of man. At that time, for me, education was a process in which includes difficulties and impossibilities. But as I left personal challenges behind, my perspective on education became positive”. (T 11)

3.2. Findings on Teaching Profession Perspectives

Teachers who are involved in the research consider the teaching profession as a human and future oriented profession. Teachers stated that their profession is not only about educating students but also a profession that has the power of influence directly or indirectly to all segments of society.

“The teaching profession is a guide that guides people to live first and then to explore their profession or interests” . (T 1)

“Teachers are a group of professionals who are not only responsible for directing students’ school life but also aiming to enlighten themselves” . (T 12)

The teachers who participated in the study stated that their duty and responsibility areas were not only students but also their social responsibilities and duties.

“The social duty of a teacher is to inform the society and set an example to society with its words and behaviors. In general, teachers should be cautious in every respect because they are respected people in the society and they should act with the awareness that they are the followers in every sense” . (T 5)

“To be a guide and example for the society with professional competence and personal equipment. It is not only to help students, but also to help families with all kinds of issues” . (T 18)

All of the teachers who participated in the study stated that there are features that distinguish the teaching profession from other professions.

“Teachers guide students about vocational guidance. Teachers are people who inform students about other professions and who have a great role in choosing other professions. Teaching distinguishes itself from other professions by this feature” . (T 15)

“It is a profession that requires more empathy than other occupational groups. The teaching profession requires sacrifice. When the requirements of the profession are not fulfilled, the life of individuals can be adversely affected. Therefore, it is a profession with a high responsibility” . (T 13)

The teachers who participated in the study stated that most of the teachers have typical features about the teaching profession.

“Teachers are very talkative, they need to interfere with everything, they are stingy, they are rootstock-protectionists, they repeat something many times” . (T 7)

“Teachers’ compassion, conscience, fairness, sacrifice and patience are the typical characteristics of the teachers in general”. (T 3)

All the participants stated that the teaching profession had advantages. Teachers expressed the spiritual advantages of the teaching profession, not monetary.

“Teachers have a respectable place in the society, have the opportunity to direct people to the right and right and the power to provide the development of ideas are the most important advantages of this profession”. (T 12)

“The advantages of the teaching profession are, allow teachers to feel more young and dynamic themselves and let teachers learn new things continuously”. (T 6)

“In terms of working conditions, I think it is more advantageous than most professions. Teaching is not based on body power. You can express your ideas freely. Even though the time has diminished, people’s respect for this profession may have advantages in the teaching profession”. (T 4)

Two of the teachers who participated in the research stated that the teaching profession had no disadvantage. Other teachers stated that the teaching profession had disadvantages. Teachers stated that physically wear and the limited opportunities in schools are disadvantages.

“Sometimes you have to spend all your energy on students. This affects your life negatively. The situation in schools is obvious. Physical inadequacies create some negativity. People are moving us away. This, inevitably, affects our relationships with people”. (T 8)

“We are forced to work with repetitive failed programs. In addition, the physical inadequacy of schools adversely affects us. When the unsuccessful executives are added, the body is worn out both physically and mentally.” (T 16)

3.3. Findings on the Role of the Teaching Profession

The teachers who participated in the study did not limit the role of the teaching profession to the students but also evaluated the social dimension.

“The role of the teacher is not only to make students learn as individuals but also to consider them as a social being and to be in a position to ensure that they are educated as beneficial individuals”. (T 11)

“Acting in a way that can help students to develop their potential to be useful for themselves and the community.” (T 2)

All the teachers who participated in the study stated that they served as guides within the class. Teachers stated that they were interested not only in terms of the course but also in all kinds of problems of the students. They also stated that they continue this role in out of school environments.

"I guide the students to reach the right information, to achieve them in school life and in social life. I take care of my actions to set an example for my students. I continue this role outside of school. I try to set a good example not only for my students but also for other people about relief, positive communication and cleanliness". (T 2)

"I guide my students so that they communicate correctly and interact in the classroom. I continue this task outside. Because the teaching profession is not only limited to the school. We are people who have to set an example to society". (T 17)

4. Conclusion

The results of this study, which examines the views of teachers about their professional identity and roles, are given below.

The architect of a country's future is teachers. Engineers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, military, police, drivers, in short, the people who work in all parts of the community train by teachers. Teachers play a very important role in the fate of countries. Teachers are the basic elements of the education system. Teachers are expected to play a leading role in the development of a country, the development of qualified manpower, the provision of social peace in society, the socialization of individuals and their preparation for the social life and in transferring the culture and values of the society to the younger generations (Özden, 1999). Teachers see themselves as individuals who direct society, educate individuals who are beneficial to society, guide people and prepare students for the future. In light of the answers given by the teachers, it was concluded that the teachers thought that they are real actors in the construction of society.

In terms of relations with people, teaching is a profession that is carried out in a relationship and interaction with a wide range of people, unlike some other professions. Teaching is a profession that is not only in school and classroom environment but also in schools and parents. Expectations from the teacher can be changed by considering the structure and culture of the region and society it serves. In other words, a teacher who works in a small village or hamlet is the most prestigious person in the village for that town. The teacher for that region is *"the knower of all things"* (Çelikten; Şanal; Yeni, 2005). Teachers separate their professions from other occupational groups. According to the teachers, the points separating the teaching profession from other professions, the profession of teaching is a profession that directs the society and in the teaching profession, the future plans are discussed and aimed.

In the 43th article of the Basic Law of National Education dated 1973 and numbered 1739, the teaching profession was defined as the specialization of the state on

education and the management affairs. The close and one-to-one relationships established with the students, the initiatives that go beyond the teaching function and create differences in the student's out-of-school life are factors that make teachers feel good about themselves. In this sense, the professional roles and identity of the teacher are shaped out of the basic activity area and the teaching profession is embodied outside the traditional definition. In other words, the education system, in fact, pushes the teacher out of the teaching profession in the traditional sense (Esen, 2005). Teachers who participated in the research generally defined teacher identity as a profession which develops itself needs to be an example to people and prepares individuals for life. In light of the answers of the teachers, it was concluded that the teachers perceived the teacher identity as far from the traditional meaning.

Teachers agree that the teaching profession has advantages. Teachers, while talking about the advantages of the teaching profession, focus on spiritual benefits. Although teachers' salaries are relatively low compared to other professions, the idea of *"the social status of teaching is still high"* is defended by teachers.

5. Suggestions

Teachers see themselves as architects of the future and they think they have no chance of making mistakes because they think that the individual, and therefore society, will face the consequences of this mistake. This situation shows how important profession of teaching is. The following suggestions can be made about the seriousness of the teaching profession, for understanding by teachers and related institutions:

- For the future of Turkey and the society we live in, the teaching profession should be considered carefully. The most important element of an education system is the teacher. The officials of the Ministry of National Education are required to take steps to make the values and sacrifices necessary for the self-sacrificing members of the teaching profession.
- The teaching profession is not an ordinary civil service. Teachers should be given the role of shaping society and the importance of these missions should be made to the teachers.
- New regulations should be made to cover all teachers and all members should be adopted.
- Steps should be taken to change the understanding of society about school and teacher. It should be ensured that the school is an information center and teachers are the individuals who convey information, and the society should be aware of it.
- The authorities must take into account the fact that the teaching profession is a physically and mentally challenging profession. The compensation for the wear-out situation should be made clear to the teachers in terms of early retirement and financial means.

References

- Akyüz, Y. (2007). Türk Eğitim Tarihi (M.Ö.1000-M.S. 2006). Ankara: Pegem A Yayıncılık.
- Bek, Y. (2007). "Öğretmenin Toplumsal/ Mesleki Roller ve Statüsü" Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Trakya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Edirne.
- Çelikten, M.; Şanal, M.; Yeni, Y. (2005). Öğretmenlik Mesleği ve Özellikleri. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi. Sayı, 2005/2, ss. 207-237.
- Esen, Y. (2005). Öğretmenlerin Toplumsal/Mesleki Kimliklerine ve Rollerine İlişkin Değerlendirmeleri. Eğitim, Bilim, Toplum Dergisi, 3(11), 16-53.
- Eskicumalı, A. (2002). "Eğitim, Öğretim ve Öğretmenlik Mesleği" Öğretmenlik Mesleğine Giriş. Ankara: Pegem A Yayıncılık.
- Hacıoğlu, F. ve Alkan, C. (1997). Öğretmenlik Uygulamaları. Ankara: Alkım Yayınevi
- Hesapçıoğlu, M. (2011). Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim. Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım.
- Özden, Y. (1999). Eğitimde Dönüşüm Eğitimde Yeni Değerler. Ankara: Pegem A Yayınları.
- Sönmez, V. ve Alacapınar, F. (2013). Örneklendirilmiş Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri. Ankara: Ani Yayıncılık.
- Tekışık, H., H. (2014). Türkiye'de Öğretmenlik Mesleği ve Sorunları. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 2 (2), 24-33.
- Uçan, A. Türkiye'de Öğretmenlik Mesleğinin Tarihçesi. 15.04.2017 tarihinde http://www.ogretmen.info/ogretmenlik_tarihce.asp adresinden ulaşılmıştır.
- Yıldırım, A., Şimşek, H. (2016). Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri. (10. Baskı). Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık.
- 24/06/1973 tarih ve 1739 sayılı Milli Eğitim Temel Kanunu. Resmi Gazete. 18.04.2017 tarihinde <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.1739.pdf> adresinden ulaşılmıştır.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).