

The Effect of Teacher Employment Policies on Teacher Candidates' Personal and Professional Development in Turkey

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Abstract: This study has been conducted for the purpose of determining the effect of teacher employment policies on teacher candidates' personal and professional development and developing suggestions in the light of obtained results. In this context, there are no studies that in direct relation to teacher employment policies so, this study is the first research regarding teacher employment policies in Turkey. The research is a descriptive study that tries to determine teacher candidates' perceptions and it has been conducted in Dumlupinar University in 2006-2007 academic years. A Likert scale was used in order to determine views of samples. Statistical operations such as Chi-square, frequency and percentage taking methods, one way variance analysis, LSD test were made. Research results indicate that, employment policies increase teachers' stress and anxiety for future. In addition, majority of teacher candidates expressed that examinations towards employment are a source of stress for them and they don't contain the quality of occupational preparation. Examinations towards employment are becoming the highest priority issue of teacher candidates and this situation leads them to not being able to develop themselves adequately in personal and occupational aspects.

Keywords: Employment policy, teacher candidate, training, examination, development.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the fundamental means for a person to reach success in individual and social respects; and ideals of peace, freedom, social justice and universal integrity. Therefore it is necessary to achieve a constant change and development in education in individual, national and global dimensions. In this age where knowledge is regarded as power, education forms the fundamental dimension of universal change and development^[5,17,20]. Since educational institutions are social institutions as well, they have to support social improvements. The aim of a society is to survive forever, for which it has to meet its requirements and sort out the odds against this end. Educational institutions that contribute to the development of societies are also responsible for raising the individuals that will undertake the survival of the society^[4].

The objective of an educational institution is to raise its members as individuals who can analyze the circumstances carefully, is environmentally conscious, thinks, researches and questions. From this perspective, it is impossible to consider efficiency in education without qualified teachers, because a teacher is the most crucial element affecting the efficiency of education. Therefore, teachers should be well-equipped

and conscious of their responsibility; there is no room for mistakes^[3,15]. Even the unbelievable developments and changes in education technologies cannot make up for the very existence of teachers in the system. Teachers have a strategic importance in preparing students for their adult-lives and minding their responsibilities for the society. Therefore, their physical, mental, spiritual and social development is proportional to the quality of the education they receive at school where teachers remain as the crucial factors. The primary objective of schools is to educate the student and to improve his attitudes. Every element of the education system has duties to perform in order to achieve this aim^[23]. However in educational institutions, teacher is the person responsible for developing understandings and attitudes that form the base of democratic management and life style. Teacher can also be viewed as the professional person who creates desired behaviors in educational environment and one of the most strategic parts of the social system. In this context, implementation and development of various strategies for forming social and academic synergy in teacher training institutions are important^[32,6]. A teacher is without doubt one of the most crucial elements of the education system. In general terms, training a teacher is really a hard job, because it has two

dimensions; one of science and the other of art. Whether a prospective teacher can apply his knowledge to teaching is proportional to their university education. Therefore, they should be given conceptual and applicable training simultaneously and they should be taught that teaching is a sacred profession.

No matter by what means or in which medium education is served, teacher will preserve its existence as one of the indispensable elements. In every occupational branch today, there are initiatives towards training and employment of professional people institutionalized by government^[12,21]. However it is expected that this employment will be carried out in concordance with country's supply and demand, and with cooperation of all service units because the most important matter that forms the basis of this cooperation is the mutual correspondence between teacher training programs and skills expected from teachers^[13].

Teacher's possession of effective instruction skills at the desired level has to be related to their occupational and personal value judgments before all else^[19,22]. As a result of the research Demirel^[8], conducted about the qualities of teacher, it was determined that the necessary qualities that a teacher must have fundamentally professional and personal qualities.

In literature concerning teacher qualities, it is seen that teacher's educational approaches come into view with his professional and personal skills^[33]. Skill criteria classified in the world more broadly are limited to dimensions reflected on their learning-instruction lives in Turkey; the sufficiency of training received before the service is evaluated after the service. Especially at this point, field studies^[10] and examinations of people who are in this process which aims to increase the quality of implementations in current situations are suggested^[9]. Another important problem about the quality of teaching profession is that absolute knowledge is overemphasized in education system and has become the sole objective of schooling. In other words, while shallow knowledge is overrated as the final end, such educational objectives as the improvement of social and personal values and attitudes are neglected^[34].

Despite many shortcomings in the profession of teaching in Turkey, it can be argued that important attempts have been made to improve its quality and some improvements have even been achieved in some areas. The Ministry of National Education in Turkey has long been striving for better training for teachers. For example, the ministry first transformed the teaching high schools into two-year-colleges, and then added another two years and turned them over to universities. The objective of such an application was to enable them to be trained as experts in their domains^[2,24,25,18].

It is stated that the number of teachers in Turkey rose up to 583 thousand between 2001 and 2002 in private and state schools, whereas this number was 12 thousand between 1923 and 1924. Nevertheless, it is hardly possible to say that the number and quality of teachers in Turkey is at the desired level. Currently, there are 32 students at primary schools, 18 at high schools and 23 at colleges per a teacher. On the other hand, in some developed countries this number at primary schools is 14 in England, 13 in Germany, 10 in Italy, 13 in Portugal and 18 in Japan, while the number of students per a teacher at college level is 15 on average in the same countries^[26,31,1]. As seen from the data, it is clear that the mean number of students per a teacher in Turkey is far behind that in developed countries.

Although the training of teachers used to be the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education in Turkey, it was taken over by universities after the act of High Instruction Committee (YOK) had passed in 1982. On the other hand, their employment remained as the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education. Therefore, these two institutions should cooperate in training and employment of teachers. Despite that teacher training and employment policies are very serious issues in Turkey; they became a structure most affected by periodic policies. This change without a plan affects at most the teacher competence and quality negatively. It is seen that examinations towards employment are affected by these transitions and the solution is perceived as focusing more on examination. These placed exams prevent teacher candidates from receiving an adequate and effective education that would develop their professional-personal values before the service.

It has been revealed that especially over the last decade, the rate of teaching as a preferred profession among teenagers in Turkey has declined and those who cannot achieve other domains become teachers as the last resort, which decreases the quality of the profession and the eagerness of the candidates^[29]. Unfortunately, it is hardly possible to say that there is a stable employment policy for teaching candidates in Turkey who are raised under harsh conditions and with a lot of efforts. While employment of teachers is as important as their training, current employment policy of the Ministry of National Education is far from satisfying the expectations of the teaching candidates and the current conditions of the country. For this purpose, the Ministry of National Education in Turkey should develop and enforce stable, efficient and long-term employment policies taking the needs of the country and global realities into consideration.

Education reforms have affected schools and the educators who work in them^[7]. Occupation of instruction is different from all other occupations.

This profession is respected in all societies. Despite that teacher training and employment policies are very serious issues (problems) in Turkey; it eventually became a structure most affected by periodic policies. This change without a plan affects at most the teacher competence and quality negatively. Teachers are subject to examinations for limited quotas opened by the Ministry of National Education for hiring teachers. Candidates who are waiting to become teachers with their points according to quotas opened by the government focus on exams since their first years in university until graduation and professional instruction knowledge that they have to acquire in university and their personal developments are neglected. These examinations towards employment prevent teacher candidates from acquiring adequate professional education before the service.

In addition, these exams only require passing a certain number of minimum points rather than measuring occupational and personal competence. Teacher candidates are directed only towards passing quantitative boundaries, not instruction quality or competence. Therefore candidates who are waiting to becoming teachers according to their points inevitably live an anxiety of examination and future. Teachers' focus solely on examination to become employed, their spending of effort and money in this direction hamper their education before service where they could gain occupational and personal competence, and decrease their confidence in themselves. This research is considered important in terms of providing an opportunity to determine the effect of teacher employment policies on candidates' personal and occupational development. In this context, there are no studies that in direct relation to teacher employment policies so, this study is the first research regarding teacher employment policies in Turkey. It is hoped that the results obtained and suggestions developed at the end of the research will bring new transformations to employment policies of Ministry of National Education.

Objectives of the Study: The objective of this study is to determine how much teacher employment policies affect teacher candidates' personal and professional development in Turkey. To achieve this purpose, the answers to following questions were sought:

How do current employment policies effect teacher candidates' professional and personal development in Turkey?

Is there a difference between teacher candidates' perceptions related to employment policies in terms of (a) gender, (b) attendance to a preparatory course (c) class level?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Scanning model has been used in this study^[16]. In this framework, the effect of employment policies on teacher candidates' professional sufficiency and performances was tried to be determined. The universe of the research consists of students studying in the Dumlupinar University. Samples consist of 216 students in total chosen among Education Faculty students (teacher candidates) with random method.

In the scope of the study, a Likert scale was developed with the assistance of clauses in instruction occupation general competences form determined by High Instruction Committee (YOK) and Ministry of National Education (MoNE). Alpha reliability coefficient of the developed survey was calculated as Cronbach's alpha=0.83 and this value was considered as a sufficient reliability level. According to Ozdamar^[30], if Cronbach's alpha ranged from a low of 0.80, to a high of 1.00. In the research, variables such as gender, class, attendance to a preparatory course were used. In data analysis, statistical operations such as frequency, percentage taking methods, one way variance analysis (ANOVA), LSD test and t-test were made by using SPSS 11.5 package program. Responses to each item have been marked using a five-point likert-type scale ranging from "totally agree" to "totally disagree". Likert-type scale was graded as totally agree= 4.21-5.00; agree= 3.41-4.20; neutral= 2.61-3.40; disagree= 1.81-2.60; totally disagree= 1.00-1.80. The following criteria have been used. When the mean value is calculated equal to $p < .05$ or higher, the attitude is accepted significant; when the mean value is calculated lower than $p < .05$, the attitude is accepted meaningless.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this research on teacher candidates, the effect of teacher employment policies, consequently exams, on personal and professional development levels of candidates before the service was tried to be determined. In this section, results related to independent variables in the research and views of teacher candidates were analyzed in terms of various variables in relation to sub problems of the research and then shown in tables. All of the items in the measuring instrument were not interpreted but only items that have differences at a statistically significant level ($p < .05$) were interpreted.

Demographical information of teacher candidates who participated in the research is given in Table 1. According to this, 41.7% of participants are male and 58.3% are female teacher candidates. In addition,

Table 1: Demographical information of the participants

Gender	f	%
Female	126	41.7
Male	90	58.3
Total	216	100.0
Class stage	f	%
1 st class	52	24.1
2 nd class	40	18.5
3 rd class	72	33.3
4 th class	52	24.1
Total	216	100.0

Table 2: Participants' status of attendance to a preparatory course

Class level	yes	%	no	%	Total	%
1 st class	18	26.1	32	21.76	52	24.07
2 nd class	11	15.9	29	19.72	40	18.53
3 rd class	12	17.4	60	34.69	72	33.33
4 th class	28	40.6	26	23.83	52	24.07
Total	69	100.0	147	100.0	216	100.0

Chi-square: 1.64, DF: 3, $p < .05$

Table 3: Summary of t-test for the clause which is "teacher employment policies affect my personal and professional development negatively"

Gender	n	Mean	SD	t	p
Male	90	2.22	1.04	2.64	0.001*
Female	126	2.79	1.05		

* Significant at $p < .05$,
SD= Standard Deviation,
p= significance level

Table 4: Summary of t-test for the clause which is "teacher employment policies hinder my determination to fight against hardships"

Gender	n	Mean	SD	t	p
Male	90	2.17	1.03	2.34	0.021*
Female	126	2.70	1.17		

* Significant at $p < .05$,
SD= Standard Deviation,
p= significance level

Table 5: Summary of the one-way ANOVAs for the clause which is "teacher employment policies affect my desire to do my occupation enthusiastically and willfully"

Class stage	n	Mean	SD	F	p
1 st class	52	2.22	1.20	4.572	0.005*
2 nd class	40	2.91	1.41		
3 rd class	72	2.93	1.31		
4 th class	52	3.37	0.96		

* Significant at $p < .05$,
SD= Standard Deviation,
p= significance level

teacher candidates' class levels are broken down as 24.1% in the first year, 18.5% in the second year, 33.3% in the third year and 24.1% in the fourth year. Candidates' status of attendance to a preparatory course was illustrated according to class level in Table 2. As it can be seen from the values, the ratios of attendance to a preparatory course according to class level are 26.1% in the 1st year, 15.9% in the 2nd year, 17.4% in the 3rd year and 40.6% in the 4th year. Cut back of teacher employment by the Ministry of National Education in recent periods has seemingly increased

teacher candidate's personal and occupational anxiety. It is natural that candidates want to start serving on duty as soon as they graduate however they need to be successful in the exams administered by Ministry of National Education. When data in Table 2 are considered, it can be deduced that anxiety for exam affects teacher candidates studying in the 4th year the most. Consequently, teacher candidates experiencing anxiety for future tend towards preparatory courses by neglecting their courses on instruction profession which they need to take in the university.

Views of candidates were compared with t-test according to gender variable in order to find out the effect of employment policies on teacher candidates (see Table 3) and a statistically significant difference was found in the clause "teacher employment policies affect my personal and professional development negatively" ($t=2.64$; $p=0.001$). According to obtained results, we can state that employment policies of Ministry of National Education affect female teacher candidates ($M=2.79$), more (negatively) than the male candidates ($M=1.04$).

Views of candidates were compared with t-test according to gender variable again to determine the effect of teacher employment policies on candidates (see Table 4) and a significant difference was found in the clause "teacher employment policies hinder my determination to fight against hardships" ($t=2.34$; $p=0.021$). When the obtained results are considered, it is clear that employment policies affect female candidates ($M=2.70$), more than male candidates ($M=2.17$). In other words, employment policies affect female candidates' determination to fight against hardships in a higher degree. From this point, it can be stated that employment policies bring down the performance of teacher candidates and hinder their professional development.

One way variance analysis (ANOVA) result that shows the effect of employment policies on teacher candidates is presented in Table 5 according to class variable. As a result of the variance analysis, a statistically significant difference was found only in the clause "teacher employment policies affect my desire to do my occupation enthusiastically and willfully" ($F=4.572$; $p=0.005$). LSD test was done to determine between which classes the significant differences were, and it was determined that the difference was caused by points of the 4th class ($M=3.37$), being greater than points of the 1st class ($M=2.22$). Therefore, emphasis of teacher candidates in the 4th class on that they can't develop themselves personally and professionally and are affected negatively (anxiety for exam, fear of unemployment etc.) due to employment policies can be regarded as a handicap of the Turkish Education System.

Table 6: Teacher candidates' perceptions about exams that come forward in employment policies

Examinations;	Totally agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Totally disagree %
Information centered and memorization based	52.0	34.3	10.8	2.0	1.0
Became the ultimate purpose	48	28.4	18.6	2.0	2.9
Preparatory to profession	4.9	12.7	24.5	35.3	22.5
Source of stress	69.6	13.7	6.9	5.9	3.9
Prevent leading a happy life in the university	46.1	18.6	15.7	9.8	9.8

N=216

Table 6 summarizes teacher candidates' perceptions about exams that come forward in employment policies. 86.3% of the participating teacher candidates state that exams are "*knowledge centered and memorization based*" (totally agree and agree), 76.4% state that they became their "*ultimate purpose*" and 83.3% state that they are a "*source of stress*". In addition, a great majority of the candidates have expressed that exams lack the quality of "*preparation to profession*".

When literature concerning teacher competences is examined, we come up with three characteristics of instruction. These are common knowledge, field knowledge and professional knowledge. Despite these measures of competences vary from country to country, teachers' possession of desired fundamental characteristics is an expected criterion in every society. Examinations towards employment in Turkey today have only one purpose which is to rank students so that candidate selection would be carried out easily. A good training of teacher candidates before the service will effect the quality of education system directly. It is likely that teacher candidate who acquired necessary personal and professional qualities before the service will provide better education in the schools they teach. Therefore, instead of focusing on examinations toward employment, it is necessary to develop and implement new policies that will ensure that teacher candidates attain necessary knowledge and skills before the service.

Conclusion: In conclusion, it was determined that teacher candidates studying in their last year have more distress about employment than other classes. This is caused by teacher employment being turned into a race. The fact that candidates who score the highest points in exams become teachers rather than those better trained in schools has forced individuals to focus on exams. Candidates attend preparatory courses within their limits and spend all their energies in this direction in order to minimize these anxieties. These exams towards employment are becoming the highest priority issues of teacher candidates and this situation prevents them from developing themselves sufficiently in personal and professional respects.

As a result of the research, it was established that anxiety and stress of teacher candidates who are subject to series of examinations increase every day. In addition, candidates focusing solely on exams to have a profession and their spending of money and effort in this direction hamper their education before service where they attain professional and personal competence. Therefore, when Ministry of National Education determines employment policies, it has to be diligent in making these kinds of decisions with the cooperation of related institutions by considering how education will affect all of the shareholders.

It's not a wise policy to drag teachers charged with the duty of building the future into such a chaos with exams towards employment before the service. Teachers' search of solution in exams with pessimism while waiting for employment causes them to neglect their professional and personal competences. As long as periodic employment policies of Ministry of Education continue, training qualified and competent teachers will be a dream in Turkey. One of the solutions, maybe the most important one, may be to decrease considerably the quotas of education faculties responsible for training teachers. Because of the quotas opened without considering supply demand equilibrium, more students than needed are accepted into education faculties and teacher candidates graduating from the university are naturally faced with the danger of unemployment. The only criterion in teacher employment should not be exams; education faculties training teachers should also be improved. Finally, it is necessary to develop and implement long term, comprehensive and consistent teacher training and employment policies in Turkey that conform to European Union standards and conditions of the country.

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