The Social Status of the Teaching Profession: A Phenomenological Study

Özgül Mutluer[1] and Sedat Yüksel[2]

Abstract
This qualitative, phenomenological study aims to determine teachers' perceptions of the social status of the teaching profession in Turkey, and the factors have shaped this perception over time. The data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 26 teachers, 16 of whom were retired. The findings of the study reveal that teachers have negative opinions about the social status of the teaching profession. Teachers base their views on a variety of professional and non-professional factors. The most effective factors are financial gain, relations between the Ministry of National Education and teachers, the teacher education system, and teacher employment.

Key Words: Social status, teacher, teaching profession

Introduction

The term status comes from the concept of 'standing' in Latin and refers to the position of people in society (Turner, 2001). Parsons (1967) defines status as a position within the social structure, which is shaped according to various criteria, based on evaluations of the dignity and reputation of the individual. In the 1966 *ILO/UNESCO* Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, the concept of status is expressed both according to the importance of teachers' duties and the degree of value given to their abilities, as well as their recognition in the community in terms of working conditions, wages and the financial benefits from which they benefit. This report emphasises providing the teacher with an important role in the development of humanity and the progress of education because the teacher's status is also an indication of how robust the education system is (Cameron, 2003).

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In the past, when education was accessible only by a smaller part of society, the teaching profession was considered to be a highly respected and high-status profession (Giddens, 2001). However, the changing living conditions, the development of information technologies, the increase in both the level of education globally and access

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to education services have led to the failure of the teaching profession to maintain its past position. There has been a significant decline in the social status of teachers from the 1960s onwards (Bell, 1988; Cunningham, 1992; Hargreaves et al. 2007; Freedman, Lipson & Hargreaves, 2008; Judge, 1995). The reasons for this decline vary from country to country. For example, researchers from the Universities of Cambridge and Leicester interviewed teachers and other stakeholders in the education system (education assistants, administrators, parents), and found that factors such as the negative effects of education reforms, central assessment methods, common curricular applications caused teachers to lose their autonomy. Moreover, the negative teacher images portrayed in the media reduced the social status of teachers in England (Hargreaves et al. 2007) (Graph 1).
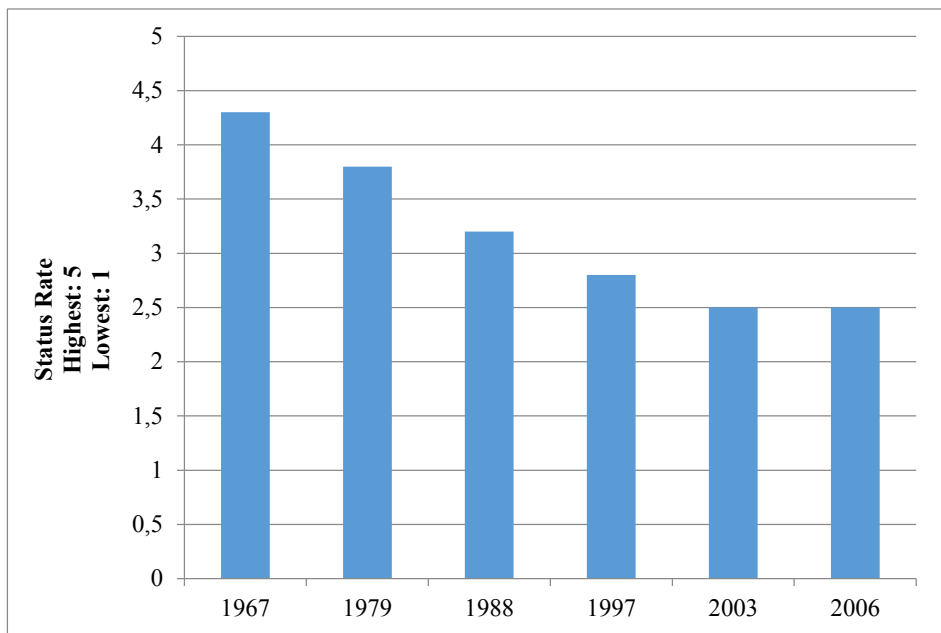
Graph 1. Perceptions of teachers' status according to years
- Hargreaves et al, 2007.

Figure 1 shows a significant decrease in the perceptions of teachers about their status in England after the 1960s. According to Freedman, Lipson and Hargreaves (2008), the reason for this decline is fast and unskilled teacher training policies for the increasing need for teachers after the Second World War. These policies led to a decline in the rigourousness of the application criteria, thus indirectly deteriorating the quality of teacher education. Thus, teaching became a secondary profession less favored by qualified young people.

The status of the teaching profession in Turkey has also shown a similar development under different conditions. In the years following the establishment of the Republic, teachers took on the role of safeguarding the new regime and the innovations of that time. To carry out this role, teachers, who went to all regions of the country, were much respected in society because they were the only intellectuals and the representatives of the state in the villages. At that time, the inadequacy of developing knowledge and the scarcity of high school and university graduates contributed to the teacher's social status in society. However, technological, economic, social, and political developments led to changes in this status of the teacher. Although the school and teacher were almost the only source of information and learning until the 1950s, the teacher's role changed because of factors such as technological developments and the availability of information sources. On the other hand, accelerated, correspondence-based teacher training courses caused significant damage to the status of the teaching profession (Akyüz, 1999; Yüksel, 2011).

The widespread opinion in the literature is that the professional and social status of teaching is at a medium-low level (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Hall & Langton, 2006; Hargreaves et al. 2007; Macbeath, 2012; Monteiro, 2015; Symeonidis, 2015). Although the factors affecting this situation vary on a country-by-country basis, common and general factors exist. These factors can be grouped under two headings as professional factors and non-professional factors (Ataünal, 2003; Aydın, Demir & Erdemli, 2015; Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Bek, 2007; Cameron, 2003; Gökırmak, 2006; Guerriero, 2017; Hall & Langton, 2006; L. Hargreaves, 2009; Hargreaves et al. 2007; Higginson, 1996; Hoyle, 2001; ILO, 2016; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011; Monteiro, 2015; Musgreave, 2017; OECD, 2005; Özoğlu, 2010; Özoğlu, Gür, & Altunoğlu, 2013; Özpolat, 2002; Rice, 2005; Symeonidis, 2015; World Bank, 2012; Varkey Gems Foundation, 2013; Yurdakul, Gür, Çelik & Kurt, 2016):

Professional factors can be listed as follows: preference and abandonment of profession, training of teachers, employment policies, conditions of admission to the profession, level of income of teachers, career opportunities and professional development, motivation and rewarding, working conditions, participation in professional autonomy and decision-making mechanisms, professional organizations, age of students, female density in teaching. Non-professional factors are social function of the profession, and the view of the society in teaching, the changing role of teaching, the social origins of teachers, the image of the teacher in the media.

In the current study, it is necessary to re-examine these professional and non-professional factors that affect the social status of the teachers in Turkey's current conditions. This study aims to determine the current social status of teachers in Turkish society. To this aim, the study focused on the following research questions:

1) What are the teachers' perspectives on their professions?
2) What are the social status problems of teachers?

3) Do ideas about social status issues vary among teachers?

4) What are the factors that cause social status problems?

Methodology

This study aimed to determine how teachers have perceived the social status of the teaching profession in society over time, and to reveal the factors shaping these perceptions. It was carried out using the qualitative phenomenological research design. This research pattern is used to investigate cases that are aware of concepts but do not have in-depth knowledge about them (Creswell, 2007; Çilesiz, 2011; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Van M., 2016; Yıldırım &Şimşek, 2013).

The study group consisted of 26 teachers, 16 of whom were retired and 10 were working in Yalova, a province in the southern Marmara region of Turkey. The selection of the participants was based on having experience in comparing the social status of the teaching profession over time. Because of the phenomenological design of the current study, the individuals who made up the sample were considered to have experience with the research phenomenon. Accordingly, the sample was determined using the criterion sampling technique, which is one of the methods of purposive sampling. In this context, teachers who had served for at least 25 years or who had retired after serving for at least 25 years were selected.

The data obtained during the research process were collected through a semi-structured interview form that consisted of 12 questions to determine how teachers perceive the social status of teaching profession and what factors affect it. The interviews were recorded by means of a voice recorder, and these recordings were transcribed. To carry out member checking of the data, the transcripts were shared with the participants after the interview, and the stated opinions were confirmed. In two cases where the views of the participants were not sufficient, the interview was held again.

The data obtained from the study were examined in the theoretical framework by using the phenomenological analysis method. This method allows certain individuals or groups to understand and interpret the essence of their experiences in a case (Patton, 2002). According to Moustakas (1994), the phenomenological analysis method consists of six stages. These stages are purification of prejudices, phenomenological reduction, creative diversity, tissue synthesis, structure synthesis and integration. At the first stage, the researcher must be free of all prejudices regarding the interview to be held. Secondly, key-words and repeated expressions are identified from the participants ' statements on the case. Then, in the third stage, themes are created and these themes are developed. In the fourth stage, the content of each theme is portrayed. In the fifth stage, all participant experiences as a whole are synthesized, and in the final stage, the data that reveal the essence of the experience are integrated (Moustakas, 1994). In this research, the above-mentioned processes were followed and analysis

studies were carried out. The data obtained during the interviews, which were taken away from prejudices, were conceptualized and these concepts were arranged and codes were determined. In the determination of codes, the parts that are related to each other were combined and these parts created themes. Within the framework of these themes and codes, the findings were interpreted by defining them. In addition, the frequency of some codes determined by statistical content analysis was calculated and the data were quantified. Statistical content analysis refers to the conversion of verbal data into numerical data and contributes to the reliability of the research as well as the objective of interpreting the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

Various measures were taken to increase the validity and reliability of the study. To increase the internal validity (credibility) of the research, interview questions were submitted to expert opinion. As a result of the expert opinion, the form was finalized and then the interview was started. In addition, it was aimed to strengthen the credibility of the research by ensuring long-term interaction and confirming the transcripts after the interview. The findings obtained by giving direct quotations to increase the external validity (transferability) were supported by these quotations. In order for the research to be understood by readers in the same or similar way, the results were expressed in a simple and understandable language. Furthermore, the sample consisted of teachers retired from multiple branches of each level and selected from teachers who completed 25 years in order to provide diversity for the selected participants. Regarding the reliability of the research, to increase the internal reliability (consistency), the answers of the participants in the interview were also coded by another researcher and the codes match percentage created by two researchers was calculated. Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed the use of the reliability formula (Reliability Formula: Consensus / (Consensus + Disagreement) x 100) for the calculation of the percentage of match. The percentage of match calculated according to this formula was 80% for this research. 70% of compatibility in the reliability calculation indicates that the study is reliable (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure external reliability, all stages of the research, from the collection of data to the analysis and interpretation of the data, were written in detail.

Findings

As a result of the analysis of the data obtained from the research, two main themes emerged: (1) the social status of the teaching profession and (2) the factors affecting the social status of the teaching profession.

Teachers' views on the social status of the teaching profession

The teachers' opinions about the social status of the teaching profession emerged under two sub-themes. In the first sub-theme, the socio-demographic variables were related to the social status of the teaching profession; the second included the findings

of the changes in the social status of the teaching profession over time.

In the first sub-theme, according to 18 of the 26 teachers who participated in the research, the social status of the teaching profession was low, and moderate according to the remaining eight. None of the participants expressed a view that the social status of the teaching profession is high.When the views of teachers regarding the social status of the teaching profession are examined in terms of socio-demographic variables, it is seen that there are notable differences according to teachers' being working or retired status and their branch (e.g., mathematics or history).

The retired teachers see the social status of the teaching profession at a better level than the teachers currently employed. 20% of the teachers working in the teaching profession report it to be at a middle level of social status, while this rate is 37.5% in retired teachers. Based on the consensus of the participants that there appears to have been a decline in the social status of the profession over time, it is concluded that the teachers who are working are expressing their opinion on the current situation.

In terms of subjects taught, it is observed that the High School branch teachers who participated in the study evaluated the social status of the profession more positively than the secondary school branch and class teachers. While four of the 10 high school teachers who participated in the study stated that the social status of the profession is moderate, one of the 5 secondary school teachers and three of the 11 school teachers agreed on this. In this context, it is thought that teachers evaluate their social status more positively, especially in some branches, in order to have a greater impact on university examinations at high school levels. It is thought that the attitudes and behaviors of the teachers in these branches of society are more positive due to the importance they carry in ensuring that their students have a profession in the future. For example, the statements of a retired branch teacher confirm this idea:

> P15: So far I have trained 300 students in the Department of physical education. I also contributed to the entrance of students to police academies and military schools. This year we're going to do our twelfth meeting with the students I've graduated. Production is, in any case, the perfect feeling. That's what I do.

The second sub-theme of the research is the changes in the social status of the teaching profession. The teachers who participated in the study have observed some changes in the status of the teaching profession compared to the years they began their profession. A large part of the participants (n=23) stated that this change is negative. These teachers stated that in the first years of their profession, teaching was more respectable, more prestigious and profession in the society, but nowadays this respect has decreased. As an example of this decline, they illustrated the behavior of parents towards them.

> *P18: In the past, society used to look at teaching differently. In those years, when something happened to the student at school or had a negative impact with the teacher and he told this to his parents, they became angry with the student. Now, the students are complaining teacher to their parents. The parents are pushing the school. They ask to teacher "How can you reprimand my child?" There is no old generation. The parents have no respect for the teacher.*

However, although the social status of the profession has declined, there are also participants (n: 3) who believe that they are in better condition than they were 10 years ago. These teachers think that in the past, the view that "the profession of teaching was not seen as one of the areas of choice preferred by the candidates" was dominant in the society. For example:

> *P9: In the 90s, those who had the lowest scores in the general evaluation exams preferred the teaching profession. The idea of "The one who cannot be anything becomes teacher" was dominant. I think that this understanding has changed with the difficulty of entering the education faculties and the increase in the number of those who choose to teaching willingly.*

The factors affecting social status of teaching profession

The second theme in the study is the factors affecting the social status of the teaching profession. In the light of the findings, the theme consists of two categories as professional and non- professional factors. These factors are shown in Figure-1.
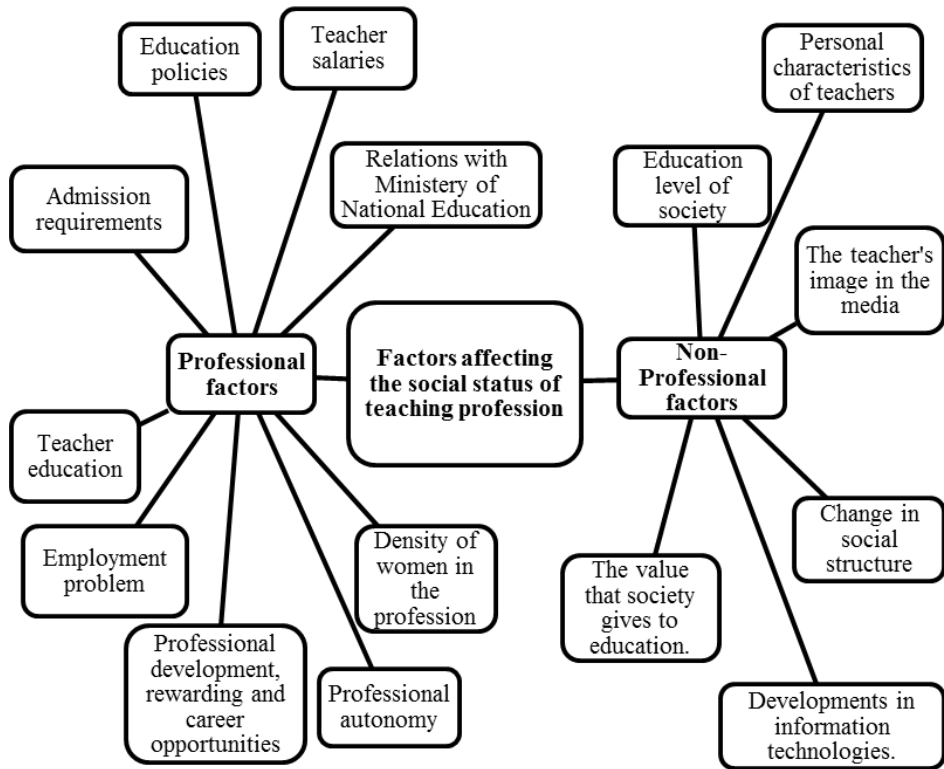
Figure 1. Factors affecting the social status of teaching profession

The professional factors affecting the social status of the teaching profession. Nine different professional factors affecting the social status of the teaching profession are identified.

Teacher education. The findings of the interviews with the participants indicate that the teacher education system and the changes in this system from over time have a negative effect on the social status of the profession. 18 of the 26 participants mentioned the impact of this factor. There are three subjects in which participants frequently focus on teacher training. These are the quality of the teacher training system, the existence of practical training and the emotional side of the profession. For example, the following statements may be examined:

> *P6: Unqualified education has reduced the quality of teachers. We have seen a lot of differences between the interests and behaviors of teachers who graduated from the institute of education (normal schools) and teachers who graduated from the education faculty. Because the goal of those who came to the education institute was to be a teacher and their*

beliefs and professional commitment were higher.
P12: In the past, the teacher education offered an education that allowed
for integration with the public. Now this issue is being ignored. We have
gone through long-term internship both in the city and in the village. Now,
no attention is given to practical training.

Professional autonomy. 14 of 26 participants made negative evaluations on the issue of teachers' autonomy, that is, their independence in making decisions about their profession. For example;

P4: Teachers are under pressure. A path has been set. They must go that
way. They cannot go any further. It is not possible to talk about the
autonomy of the teacher. This has some effects on the status of the profession.

The opinion of the majority of teachers is that this profession is not autonomous and this situation has a negative impact on both the profession and the teachers. The failure of the teachers to take any initiative regarding his profession damages the intellectual aspect of the profession.

Professional development, awarding and career opportunities. The majority of the participants (n=17) have stated that the possibilities are limited for career, the activities performed are insufficient in terms of the professional development and the rewarding is not objective. According to the participants, the presence of opportunities to rise in the profession, merit-based rewarding and qualified professional development activities will contribute to the increase in the status of the teaching profession in society.

Employment problem. Employment problem includes employment of teachers in different status within the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), appointment of graduates from different sources as teachers in certain periods in the past and the presence of a large number of unassigned teachers, the policies related to these teachers. This problem has a negative effect on the social status of the teaching profession according to the majority of the participants (n: 18). The fact that the graduates of education faculties are faced with the problem of unemployment, the assignment of teachers in different statuses and some of these assignments are made from non-teaching graduates may negatively affect the reputation and prestige of the profession.

Density of women in the profession. Half of the participants (n: 13) mentioned the positive effects of the increasing proportion of women in the teaching profession worldwide and the impact of this increase on the status of the profession while 3 participants mentioned the negative effects of this factor. Moreover, in the opinion of 10 participants, this factor has no effect on the social status of the profession. Those who evaluate the effect of female intensity in the profession positively think that teaching is a profession close to motherhood and that women work more selflessly than men.

On the other hand, those who have negative thoughts suggest that Turkish society is a male dominated society and that the lack of respect for women is effective in reducing the social status of the profession. A participant opinion on the subject is as follows:

> P4: *Society's perspective on teaching is changing gradually. Teaching began to be seen as a woman's job. This situation has a negative impact especially on students. Because our society is a male-dominated society and the male is seen as an object of authority. Students see female teachers as mothers. They have influence over them. They are spoiling them. But this is not the way they communicate with male teachers. This effect can be seen in the rest of society.*

Teacher salaries. The economic gain of the teaching profession is an important factor affecting the social status according to the majority of the participants (n=22). Participants generally mention that there is a direct correlation between the reputation of the profession and the economic situation in the eyes of society. The common opinion among the participants is that salaries are insufficient. They believe the lack of adequate economic conditions has negative implications for both teachers' emotional motivations and the view of society.

Relations with Ministry of National Education. The majority of teachers (n: 20) believe that they are not appreciated by MoNE, MoNE is not interested in teachers ' ideas and wishes, and there is a disconnection between teachers and MoNE. The following statement summarizes the situation:

> P15: *In the eyes of Ministry of National Education, the teacher has no special status. For Ministry of Education, teacher is only an employee.*

Some problems experienced in the relations between teachers and the MoNE negatively affect the social status of the profession. Teachers do not feel valued. It is thought that this thought negatively affects the professional motivation of the teachers and the quality of the services they offer.

Education policies. According to some of the participants (n=4), the rapid and continuous changes in education policies have a negative effect on the education system and hence the status of teachers in society is also affected negatively. The participants state that changing education policies have an impact on the profession as well as the impact on society. It is thought that it is not possible for the teachers, who are at the heart of the education system, not to be affected from the possible problems that the changes will bring.

> P1: *Education policies are being changed without preparing the*

> *infrastructure. Everything is tried to rebuild from the beginning with the changes made. These changes affect every part of society. The reputation of the teacher who tries to keep up with change is also undermined.*

Admission requirements. Teacher selection and criteria for admission to the profession are seen as a factor affecting the social status of the teaching profession by some of the participants (n: 14). In addition to emphasizing the need to be more selective in the selection of teachers, it is a common opinion that the selection of teachers should be made during the entrance to the faculties of education. Students who are accepted as a result of a multidimensional examination to the faculties of education are also expected to be appointed as teachers when they graduate. Therefore, they have not got an employment problem. A participant's opinion summarizing this view is as follows:

> *P10: Being a teacher is not enough just to be filled with knowledge. It is important to be able to communicate, to use Turkish correctly, to use the voice tone and even gestures and mimics in the right place and at the right time. Because the children take the teacher as a model. When selecting teachers for education faculties, only measuring knowledge is not sufficient.*

Non-professional factors affecting the social status of the teaching profession. Six non-professional factors affecting the social status of the teaching profession were identified. These factors include:

Personal characteristics of teachers. According to the views of the participant, one of the factors affecting the social status of the teaching profession is personal characteristics of the teacher; that is, the quality of the communication with environment depending on his personal characteristics and the professional image creating in the eyes of the society individually. Eight of 26 participants think that this factor has an impact on the social status of the teaching profession. It is also seen that the participants emphasized the issue of integration with the society.

> *P7: In social life, in school, with the upper units, parents, meet on the street, meet people in the coffee shop, if you show that you are a teacher with your behavior, you get that respect.*

According to the participants, the integration of the teacher with the community, in other words, adaptation to the community, even having understanding the needs of the community contribute to the social status and reputation of the teaching.

The teacher's image in the media. More than half of the participants (n=16) think

that the image of the teacher in the media has an effect on the value attributed to the teaching profession. It is thought that the image drawn by the media for teachers is influential on the social status of the profession through news, films and publications about teachers. A common opinion expressed by the participants, a negative image is drawn in general about the teacher in the media. The following examples summarize this view:

> *P2: Positive news about the teacher is very rare and the duration is short. The good news about the teacher in the media is not already attracted to the public, but when there is a negative news about the teacher, they say "Teachers are like that.". This is very effective on the social status of teaching.*

In addition, the participants thought that giving more negative news than positive ones causes one to think that negative examples represent all teachers.

Education level of society. Some of the participants (n=4) think that the level of education of the society is effective on the social status of teacher. According to this view, the education level of the community and that the teacher is more knowledgeable and educated than the environment in the past or in the eastern provinces have affected the social status of the teaching profession. Especially the comparisons between the east and the west are remarkable. Teachers in the eastern provinces are more respected and prestigious, but it is thought, this situation changes when it comes to the west.

> *P10: Where the education level of the society is low, respect for the teacher is high. The teacher was more respectable in the east and in the villages. But now the teacher is seen as a man who has to do what the parent says.*

As it is seen, as the education level of the society increases, it is thought that the teacher loses his / her superiority in the society. In addition, with the increase in the level of education, parents have begun to approach the teacher in a more critical way.

The value that society gives to education. Two of the participants stated that the value given to education by the society also affects the social status of the teacher. According to this view, the value that society gives to education is equivalent to the value given to the teacher and it is an important factor in determining the social status of the teaching profession. According to the participants, society does not value education and education is considered as a tool to have an occupation. It is thought that not giving the necessary importance to education has led to the teaching profession not being given the value it deserves.

Change in social structure. According to some of the participants (n=3), another factor that determines the change in the status of the teacher in the society is the change

in the social structure. These participants think that social structure changes in a negative way. It is thought that the cultural values of society began to be lost and the social structure is degenerated and the teaching profession cannot maintain its old value and status.

Developments in information technologies. Some of the participants (n=11) think that the technological developments affect all the social areas and affect the teaching profession and the prestige they have in society. The consensus is that information technologies can reduce the importance of the role of the teacher, but it will not be possible to eliminate the teachers altogether. It is among the opinions of the participants if the teacher renews himself, keeps up with the technological developments and engages in continuing professional development, the teaching profession can maintain its status in the society.

Discussion

In the current study, it was revealed that the teachers mostly think that the social status of the teaching profession is low and that a small number of teachers see it as medium. In this context, none of the teachers defined their occupations as high status. This result is in the same line with other studies indicating that teachers have negative judgments against their social status (Akyüz, 1978; Eğitim-Bir-Sen, 2004; Everton, Turner, Hargreaves & Pell,, 2007; Feiman-Nemser & Floden,1984; Gökırmak, 2006; Hargreaves et. al, 2007; Ipsos-MORI, 2003; Kalin, Čepić & Šteh, 2017; OECD, 2014; Özpolat, 2002; Rice, 2005; Short, 1992).

The current findings showed that the high school teachers' evaluations about the social status of the profession are more positive than the primary and secondary school teachers. This result supports the research on this subject in the literature. Hall and Langton (2006) stated that the lower the level of education, the lower social status, and therefore the teachers working in high schools have higher status than others. On the other hand, according to Musgreave (2017), this situation depends on that it is more difficult to educate teachers for high schools than other levels. Hall andLangton (2006) suggest that the level of academic knowledge and the degree of difficulty in the subjects are higher in high schools. However, in this study, as well as the reasons stated above, a more potent factor is thought to be effective in the current scale of Turkey on this issue. It is thought that the teachers who work at high school level are more valued by the society because of their roles inprofessional education and the reputation and prestige of teachers working in this level also increase accordingly.

Another important result of this study related to the status of teachers is that the low and medium socio-economic level of people prefer the teaching profession. It is seen that the people from the high socio-economic level do not choose the teaching profession. As a matter of fact, the majority of the participants' mothers are housewife and fathers are farmers or self-employed. In the conditions of Turkey, it is known that the owners of this profession are in the low-middle income groups. The common

opinion in the literature is that teaching is generally a profession preferred by the children of families with low and middle socioeconomic status (Aslan, 2015; Balcı, 1991; Gök & Okçabol, 1998; Özbek, 2007; Özpolat, 2002). According to the results of the research, similar to other studies, although it is not a restriction or a determinant factor in the entrance of the teaching profession, it is seen that teaching is preferred mostly by individuals with similar social origins.

The majority of the teachers have stated that there is a decrease in the social status of the profession compared to the years they began to profession. In the world, it is observed that the teaching profession began to lose its value in the economic, social and cultural sense after 1960s. (Bell, 1988; Cunningham, 1992; Freedman et al. 2008; Hargreaves et al. 2007; Judge, 1995). The survey results are consistent with the opinion of Özyurt (1999) that parallels the developments in the world, Turkey also experienced in the same period of the decline in the social status of the teaching profession. Ünsal, Ağçam and Korkmaz (2017) argued that in Turkey, there is a tendency of that teachers have lost their professional reputation. In this context, the results obtained in the study confirm this tendency. While current conditions in the past have attributed a more credible position to the teaching profession in society, it is thought that there has been a significant decrease today.

Despite the mentioned negative views, there are some positive developments in the social status of the teaching profession. Teachers participating in the research have thought that the teaching profession has started to be preferred of top priority by the candidates in recent years. This result may be a light that the decline in professional status can stop in the coming years, or even the opposite direction of developments will occur. Nowadays, unlike in the 1970s, there is no way of educating teachers by means of temporary methods (Akyüz, 2013; Koçer, 1983; Öztürk, 1996). The appointment of all faculty graduates as teachers like in 1996 (Akyüz, 2013) has not come up again. It is thought that these developments attract the attention of the community and the thought "Who cannot have any occupation becomes teacher." has begun to change. In addition, the idea that teaching is still seen as sacred by society is an indication of the social value that the profession still protects. Ünsal and Bağçeci (2016), have stated that the positive effects of continuing to be seen as sacred, even though various negative reasons influence the social status of teaching.

Today, teaching in countries such as Finland, Japan and Israel is still regarded as a sacred profession (Higginson, 1996). It is known that the teaching profession in these countries has higher status than in other countries. It is thought that the thought of sacredness attributed to teaching in Turkey, although it still continues its importance, cannot stand out sufficiently under the influence of other factors. In other words, factors that influence the social status of teaching profession become more effective than the view that teaching is seen as a sacred profession.

In the current study, the effect of 15 factors including 9 occupational and 6 non-

occupational factors affecting the social status of the teaching profession are mentioned. It is seen that the participants stated that the most effective professional factor affecting the social status of the teaching profession is the salaries. As a matter of fact, although the participants state that spiritual values are in the forefront of teaching, they think that the society evaluates the professions according to the income. In fact, this result is in parallel with the widespread opinion that professional status is largely associated with the financial gain of the profession (Aydın et al. 2015; Gökırmak , 2006; Guerriero, 2017; Hargreaves et al. 2007; Hall & Langton, 2006; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011; Özoğlu et. al, 2013; Symeonidis, 2015; Varkey Gems Foundation, 2013). The majority of the participants do not find teachers' salaries sufficient, and think that the teacher should be free of financial problems before the teacher gives a qualified education.

In the study, it is seen that communication between teachers and MoNE is the second important factor affecting the social status of the teaching profession. The vast majority of teachers believe that the MoNE is not interested in teachers' ideas and aspirations and that there is a disconnection between teachers and MoNE. It is seen that this communication problem has important effects on the teaching profession. Since MoNE is seen as the figure of authority determining the policies related to teachers, teachers think that the issue of MoNE's appreciation for them would also be effective on society. In other words, the teachers think that they are not considered by the MoNE and think that the society shares the same views with them.

On the other hand, another important conclusion is that the changes in the teacher education system have affected the social status of the profession negatively. The vast majority of the participants mentioned that they had started out in the profession earlier on in their lives, and had a better quality education. This situation is thought to have changed and this change is thought to be mostly related to teacher education. Today, teachers are trained by approximately 70 faculties of education in Turkey. The excess of this number suggests that there are some difficulties in determining the quality of the system. Because, it is thought that the methods and strategies of each faculty of education change on its own scale.

The lack of professional autonomy of teachers also affects the social status of the profession negatively. As a matter of fact, the majority of the participants think that teachers cannot be autonomous as a result of the central education system and the principles on which the profession is based. Since there is a direct relationship between the status of the profession and professional autonomy (Guerriero, 2017; Yurdakul et. al, 2016), it is possible to say that this situation has a direct decline on the social status of teaching.

Teachers think that they were more autonomous in their professional practice in the past years. This can be attributed to the fact that it is more difficult for the central education system to achieve the same level of standards at every point in the country

than it had been in the past. Teachers in the past, while working in the rural areas, according to the characteristics of the region, they could select the activities more autonomously, now, every phase of the education programs are planned in detail and teachers are expected to comply with these plans. Teachers see themselves as passive practitioners of these programs. As a result, this situation damages the teaching profession.

The career and professional development opportunities offered by the teaching profession are insufficient and the social status of the teaching profession is adversely affected. Expert teachers who have achieved a career in teaching think that this gain has no meaning in terms of wages except for limited salary increase and title. Therefore, the practice of raising the career steps, which have been tried shortly in the past, is not seen as effective by teachers. Teachers' views on professional development activities are negative. The majority of participants believe that these activities are not achieving their goals. On the other hand, some of the participants think that the rewards do not represent professional achievements, even if they have received any awards. Failure to reward teachers who have achieved success and not to encourage teachers to improve themselves adversely affects both the social status of the profession and the professional motivation of teachers.

Another negative factor is that teachers are employed in different statuses (permanent teacher, contracted teacher, paid teacher, etc.) within the MoNE. The vast majority of participants think that employment is an important problem for the teaching profession. Due to the need for teachers in the past, a number of measures have been taken, such as appointing graduates from different sources as teachers. However, the surplus of teachers in the present day causes many graduates to join the list of the unemployed. Both cases are thought to damage the position of teaching in society. There are also negative judgments about employing teachers as temporary status. Although employing teachers as temporary status brings less financial burden on the state budget, it brings some problems in practice. These problems indirectly have a negative effect on the social status of the profession.

An interesting result in this study is that the increase in the number of women in the profession would contribute positively to the profession because of their temperament is consistent with the nature of the teaching profession. Although there is an opinion in literature that the idea of "The teaching is becoming a woman's profession" will harm the status of the profession in society (Guerriero, 2017; Monteiro, 2015; Symeonidis, 2015), the majority of the participants do not agree with this view. Besides, there are also opinions about the fact that the classification of women or men in the profession is not meaningful.

The fact that teachers appear more frequently in connection with negative events in the media, and that the success of the teachers is not mentioned, other than on National Teachers' Day (24 November), exacerbates the negative image about teachers.

This situation is due to the fact that the media organisations are not concerned about damaging a teacher's reputation when choosing highly visible news events. Needless to say, teachers should also reflect on their own behavior. Teachers' attitudes and behaviors that are not in line with the consciousness of the profession also has an impact on the social status of the profession. The fact that the media network, which is one of the benefits of the communication age, allows millions to watch in any event within minutes requires teachers to be more careful than ever in their professional lives.

Conclusion

As a result, it is clear that teacher's individual impact on teachers' social status is important and that the position of the teaching profession in society can be improved by teachers. In addition, policy makers need to make the teaching profession an attractive profession for candidates who can strengthen the social status of the teaching profession. To this end, measures should be taken to ensure that the conditions that the teacher has to meet the OECD standards. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that teacher quality is an important prerequisite for the teaching profession to be respected in the society and pre-service and in-service trainings should be given importance to improve teacher quality.

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