

Full Length Research Paper

Turkish geography student teachers' concerns towards the teaching profession

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The aim of this study is to determine the levels of concern of Turkish geography student teachers towards the teaching profession. The study was conducted with 293 geography student teachers who are enrolled in the last class of the Geography Student Teachers Program of the Faculties of Education and enrolled in a Non-Thesis Master's Degree Program of Geography Student Teachers of Social Branches in Secondary Education and programs focusing on the educational sciences / social sciences of various universities. In the study, the concern scale with regard to the teaching profession has been used as a data collection instrument. The following results have been achieved in the study: (1) The level of concern of the geography student teachers about the teaching profession is low; (2) The geography student teachers have self-centric, task-centric and impact-centric concerns about the teaching profession, and (3) The gender and enrolled program variable is not a factor in the concerns of the geography student teachers about the teaching profession.

Key words: Concern, teaching profession, geography student teachers, teaching concerns.

INTRODUCTION

Concern can generally be identified as a state of unrest and worry that will be felt by the individual in cases of threat (Scovel, 1991; Işık, 1996), or an emotional reaction against environmental and psychological events (Sargin, 1990). Concern is a natural event based on fear that takes place in the brain (Mears, 2007). However, the notion of concern is different from that of fear (Armaner, 2003). Fear includes an objective danger which frightens, but the basis of the experienced unrest in concern is not objective (Atabek, 2000).

Concern may arise depending on cases such as if the individual is concerned with suffering damage, if threats are perceived that are directed at the values of the ego, and if the individual is obliged to show more performance than he is able to show (Atkinson and Hilgard, 1995: 581-584). The state of concern reflects a psychological state, which shows that the individual is ready, or will be ready, to overcome an approaching negative situation (Barlow, 2001).

Concern will be accepted mainly as a feeling that human beings do not want to experience and which hinders one's learning and success. Yet, there are some authors who defend that concern is not an unfavorable feeling since it has the characteristics of protecting and

motivating the organism in some cases (Akgün et al., 2007) and stimulates the human being, encouraging them in a creative and constructive manner in some other cases (Allwright and Bailey, 1991).

Concern, which may be a part of a human being's identity and also be continuous in some human beings, has been categorized in three different groups as being identity-based, case-based which develop at certain times and against certain cases and event-based that might be experienced in distinct cases (Ellis, 1994).

Concern is a significant hindrance in the functioning of social and vocational lives in some cases (Ameringen et al., 2003). Therefore, it is very important to know the concerns related with the teaching profession, which have great impact on the professional development of the student teachers (Guillaume and Rudney, 1993). The concerns related with the teaching profession can be categorized under three groups: Self-centric, task-centric and impact-centric with regard to the students (Fuller, 1969; Fuller and Brown, 1975; Meek and Behets, 1999).

The concerns that the student teachers experience related with the question if he or she will be able to continue in the teaching profession with success are the focus of self-centric concerns. Further, while the focus of

the task-centric concerns is the duty to teach, the focus of the impact-centric concerns is the influence on the students (Saban et al., 2004).

The teachers experience these concerns in their professional lives, respectively (Fuller, 1969). The experiences that will be formed with the obligations, events out of control of the teacher, etc., are an important factor that determines the time of experiencing the concern (Zeicher and Liston, 1996). The education received by the teacher candidates in their teacher education programs, as well as their application of that education in the schools, helps to form their professional identities. Additionally, the concerns that are formed due to the actual situation arise as a part of the professional identity (Yaylı and Hasırcı, 2009).

In Turkey, the duration of training for a geography student teacher is five years (10 terms). During these five years, the geography student teachers will be given orientation on all the dimensions of the profession through their education. The student teachers undergo changes vocationally (knowledge, skills, attitude), from the beginning of the educational process until its end, even after starting to work in the profession (Kagan, 1992). It will be accepted that one of the changes undergone by the teachers takes place in his or her concerns about the teaching profession (Fuller, 1969).

Today, one of the basic requirements of existing as an individual or a society is to be able to develop the ability to adapt to the rapid changes in all fields all over the world. The pathway to this development is the education of the individual and the society in accordance with today's conditions. The role of the teachers undertaken in raising a sound society and qualified individuals is very important (Güneyli and Aslan, 2009).

Three different programs for the training of geography student teachers will be applied in Turkey. The students, who follow the Geography Student Teachers Program of five years in the Education Institute, take the Teaching Profession Vocational Knowledge courses together with the Field and General Culture courses starting in the first class. In the 3.5+1.5 program, the students complete the Field and General Culture courses in the Geography Departments of the Faculties of Arts and Sciences of three-and-half years and take the Major Teaching Profession Vocational Knowledge courses subsequently during the one and half years in the Faculty of Education, Geography Teaching Profession. The students who graduate from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences take the Teaching Profession Vocational Knowledge courses for a short period of one year, if they participate in the Non-Thesis Master's Degree Program, and they will be entitled to act as geography student teachers, in case they graduate from the program.

The purpose of this study is to determine the levels of concern of the Turkish geography student teachers about the teaching profession. At the same time, it had been observed that the levels of concern of the said student teacher candidates change, depending on their gender

and the program in which they are enrolled.

METHODS

The study was carried out with the relational survey method. The study group comprised 293 students; 130 female and 163 male, who were enrolled in the last class of the Geography Teachers Program of Faculties of Education of the universities Atatürk, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart, Selçuk and enrolled in the Non-Thesis Master's Degree in the Program of Geography Teachers. 51.2% of the geography student teachers in the study group was enrolled in the Non-Thesis Master's Degree Program; 33.4% in the 3.5+1.5 years program of the Education Institute; and 15.4% in the 5 years program of the Faculty of Education.

Data collection instruments

In the study, the "concern scale with regard to the teaching profession" was used as a data collection instrument developed by Meek and Behets (1999) and translated to Turkish by Kaya and Büyükkasap (2005). The scale consists of 15 articles. The scale has three sub-dimensions with five articles being self-centric, task-centric and impact-centric concerns. The purpose of the sub-dimension of self-centric concerns was to determine the concerns related with the question: If the identity of the student teachers conforms to the teaching profession? The purpose of the sub-dimension of task-centric concerns was to measure the concerns of the teacher candidates related with the fulfillment of the requirements of the teaching profession. The purpose of the sub-dimension of impact-centric concerns was the determination of the concerns related with the influence on the students during the professional teaching process of the teacher candidate. Each term included in the Likert scale was arranged in five choices. The identification levels of the terms of the participants were graded as 1: Not concerned; 2: A little concerned; 3: Moderately concerned; 4: Very concerned, and 5: Extremely concerned. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) of the scale was determined to be 0.83.

Analysis of data

In the analysis of the data obtained during the study, t-test was used in order to determine if the concern point averages of the geography student teacher candidates differ from each other in accordance with the gender variable; and the variance analysis (One-Way Anova) has been used to determine if the concern point averages differ in accordance with the enrolled program variable. The mathematical averages and standard deviation values have been calculated in order to demonstrate the concern level.

For the grading scale during the comparison of the mathematical averages of the scale, the formula $\text{Range width} = (\text{Sequence Range}) / (\text{Number of Groups to be established})$ was used and the point ranges have been determined as $4/5 = 0.80$ (Tekin, 1996). Accordingly, the ranges of the scale have been determined as: I will not be concerned (1.00-1.79), I will be a little concerned (1.80-2.59), I will be medium concerned (2.60-3.39), I will be too much concerned (3.40-4.19), and I will be extremely concerned (4.20-5.00).

FINDINGS

According to Table 1, it was determined that the concern level of the geography student teachers about the teaching profession is low (2.36: I will be a little bit concerned

Table 1. Concern point averages of the geography student teachers towards the teaching profession.

Concerns	N	Mean	ss
Self	293	2.37	0.984
Task	293	2.34	0.803
Impact	293	2.37	0.985
Total	293	2.36	0.851

Table 2. Results of the t-test related with the difference between the concern points averages of the geography student teachers about the teaching profession related with the gender variable.

Concerns	Gender	N	Mean	Ss	sd	t	p
Self	Female	130	2.44	1.036	291	1.104	0.271
	Male	163	2.31	0.940			
Task	Female	130	2.38	0.816	291	0.696	0.487
	Male	163	2.31	0.794			
Impact	Female	130	2.38	1.008	291	0.156	0.876
	Male	163	2.36	0.969			
Total	Female	130	2.40	0.890	291	.704	0.482
	Male	163	2.33	0.820			

concerned). The findings related with the three sub-dimensions of the scale (self: 2.37; task: 2.34; impact: 2.37) are similar. The average values are very close to each other. The interpretation of this situation could be that the concerns of the geography student teacher candidates are low. Another finding is that the self-centric, task-centric and impact-centric concerns about the teaching profession are being experienced at the same level.

According to Table 2, the average of the concern points of the female geography student teachers about the teaching profession were higher in comparison to the male geography student teacher candidates. However, this difference was not deemed significant statistically [$t_{(291)}=0.704$, $p>0.05$]. Although the point averages of the female geography student teachers were higher in the average of the concern points of self-centric, task-centric and impact-centric concerns, this difference is statistically not significant. In other words, it had been determined that the gender is not decisive for the geography student teachers in their concerns about the teaching profession.

According to Table 3, the difference between the averages of the concern points of the geography student teachers related with the enrolled program variable is not deemed to be significant [$t_{(2-290)}=0.025$, $p>0.05$]. The same is valid for the self-centric, task-centric and impact-centric concerns. In other words, the program in which the geography student teachers are enrolled is not a factor in their concerns about the profession.

DISCUSSION

The concern level of the geography student teachers participating in the study is low. Similarly, the self-centric, task-centric and impact-centric concerns are also low and very close to each other. This result shows that geography student teachers experience the concerns related with the teaching profession together (self-task-impact). According to Fuller (1969) and Fuller and Brown (1975), the first concern experienced by the teacher candidates about teaching is the self-centric concerns. These will be followed by task-centric and impact-centric concerns, respectively. The findings of the study do not match in this respect with the findings of Fuller (1969) and Fuller and Brown (1975). The existence of the geography student teachers who participated in the study, in the social environment of which they will become a member in the future due to the School Experiences and Teaching Applications courses during the period in which the study scale was applied or their past existence in this environment, may be deemed to be the reason hereof. Even if the geography student teachers are educated in different programs, the periods in which they confront with the school and the teaching profession are usually the same.

There are similar findings obtained in the studies made by teacher candidates in different branches in Turkey. In the study that was made by Boz (2008) with the student teachers of natural sciences and mathematics in Turkey,

Table 3. ANOVA test related with the difference between the concern points averages of the geography student teachers related with the enrolled program variable.

Concerns	Source of variances	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Self	Between groups	0.011	2	0.006	0.006	0.994
	Within groups	282.919	290	0.976		
	Total	282.931	292			
Task	Between groups	0.233	2	0.117	0.180	0.836
	Within groups	188.466	290	0.650		
	Total	188.700	292			
Pupils	Between groups	0.163	2	0.082	0.084	0.920
	Within groups	283.310	290	0.977		
	Total	283.473	292			
Total	Between groups: Group decisive	0.037	2	0.019	0.025	0.975
	Within groups	211.611	290	0.730		
	Total	211.648	292			

it was determined that the student teachers experience the concerns not in phases, but at the same time. In the studies that were made by Yaylı and Hasırcı (2009) with the student teachers of Turkish and by Köse (2000) with student teachers of music, it is stated that the student teachers in the last class develop all kinds of concerns at the same time. In the study that was made by Saban et al. (2004) with the student teachers of primary school, it had been determined that the points of task-centric concerns are higher than self-centric and impact-centric concerns. Kaya and Büyükkasap (2005) have ascertained that the task-centric concerns are very high among the student teachers of physics and the impact-centric concerns are the lowest.

The average of the concern points of the female geography student teachers who participated in the study related with self-centric, task-centric and impact-centric concerns were higher in comparison to the male candidates. Yet, this difference was not deemed significant statistically. In other words, it had been determined that gender is not decisive for the geography student teachers in their concerns about the teaching profession. This result is the same as the findings of Ünalı and Alaz (2009) and Ghaith and Shaaban (1999). However, there are also studies (Guillaume and Rudney, 1993; Pigge and Marso, 1997; Saban et al., 2004; Taşğın, 2006; Yayla and Hasırcı, 2009) determining that the gender is decisive for the formation of concerns about the teaching profession.

The average of the concern points of the geography student teachers related with the enrolled program variable were determined to be low and very close to each other. The lowest point belonged to the geography student teaching program of the Faculty of Education of 5 years. The point averages of those enrolled in the Non-Thesis Master's Degree Program is higher than the

others. The self-centric concerns of the geography student teacher candidates enrolled in the 5 years program of the Faculty of Education are higher than the task-centric and impact-centric concerns. The task-centric concerns of those enrolled in the 3.5+1.5 years program of the Faculty of Education are higher than the self-centric and impact-centric concerns. The impact-centric concerns of the geography student teachers enrolled in the Non-Thesis Master's Degree Program were higher than the self-centric and task-centric concerns. However, the differences between the concern point averages are statistically not significant.

All three programs for the training of geography student teachers applied in Turkey are similar to each other with regard to the terms in which courses such as "School Experiences" and "Teaching Applications" are taken, where direct applications are carried out in the social environment in which the student teachers will take place in the future. If the geography student teachers are enrolled in the programs of the Faculty of Education during the education period of 10 terms, the courses "School Experiences" and "Teaching Applications" will be taken during the 8th, 9th and 10th terms. The geography student teacher candidates who are enrolled in the Non-Thesis Master's Degree Program after completing the Faculties of Arts and Sciences of 8 terms take the same courses in the 9th and 10th terms. This similarity of the programs may explain why the concern levels about the teaching profession are close to each other with regard to the enrolled program variable.

Conclusion

In Turkey, there have been two different opinions related

with the source of teacher formation over the years. One of the opinions defends the idea that secondary educators must only be the graduates of faculties of education. The contrary opinion defends the idea that the graduates of the faculties of arts and sciences may be teachers of secondary education after completing a teacher training program; they even defend that the teachers of secondary education must be fully graduated from the faculties of arts and sciences. In this regard, comparisons will be made between the teacher candidates who are graduates of the faculties of arts and sciences and of the faculties of education.

Senemoğlu (1989) compared the teacher candidates coming from both sources with regard to the general culture, teaching profession's knowledge and field knowledge points. According to the results of the study, neither the faculties of arts and sciences nor the faculties of education are more efficient with regard to field knowledge and general culture; however, the faculties of education are more efficient with regard to educational sciences. According to the results of the KPSS (Selection Examination of Public Personnel), which the student teachers take in order to be teachers in state cadres, the points of the geography student teachers, especially the educational sciences (teacher formation knowledge), are higher than the geography student teachers who completed the Faculty of Education programs, which are higher the Non-Thesis Master's Degree Program after the graduation from the Faculties of Arts and Sciences (ÖSYM, 2007, 2008, 2009). There are also findings in the studies that were carried out in relation with the attitudes of the teacher candidates towards the teaching profession, which show that the programs differences are not efficient on the attitudes towards the profession (Alım and Bekdemir, 2006; Gürbüz and Kışoğlu, 2007).

According to the findings of this study, the ongoing applications related with the training of geography teachers must be reviewed and the training of geography teachers from one source must be secured in order to use resources more efficiently and productively in Turkey.

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