



**Becoming a Teacher Educator: Journey of a Primary School Teacher\***

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**ABSTRACT**

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**Purpose:** After graduating from the faculties of education in Turkey, some of the teachers start working gravitate towards graduate education. Within or at the end of the process, these teachers start working as teacher educators at universities by finding positions or at least try to accomplish that. We do not have considerable knowledge of what these individuals experience in the process of transition from being a teacher to being a teacher educator. In this study, an attempt was made to examine the experiences of a primary school teacher

who began doing graduate education while he was teaching at a public school and subsequently became a teacher educator at a university. With these experiences, we aimed to understand the dynamics of similar individuals in Turkey

**Research Methods:** This study was designed as - narrative research. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with a research assistant who had transitioned from being a primary teacher to being a teacher educator and continued his doctoral studies. In the analysis of interview data, narrative analysis was used.

**Findings:** The findings showed that it can be argued that the perception of teaching in society, the cultures of national schools, economic and socio-cultural factors are effective in teacher's transition to university. Public schools, with their existing cultures and regulations, are unable to respond to the graduate education demands of teachers who work within the schools. This situation causes teachers who receive graduate education to move away from national public schools.

**Implications for research and practice:** Move away from national public schools can be prevented by removing obstacles of the teachers' graduate education. In the process of educating teacher educators, the quality of teacher education can be increased by attaching importance to field experience.

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## Introduction

Although teacher education is a commonly-studied subject, it can be said that the subject of educating teacher educators is often omitted, which remained under-researched. Murray and Male (2005) have stated that even though a lot has been said about teacher education, not much has been reported concerning teacher educators themselves. Concordantly, it can be argued that there is little research on the process of transition from the profession of teaching to teacher education. Dinkelman, Margolis and Sikkenga (2006) have stated that there is no theory that accounts for the professional development of teacher educators who are in transition into teacher education from the profession of teaching. The current studies in the literature discuss the transition to teacher education in the context of educating teacher educators. Mayer, Mitchell, Santoro and White (2011) have stated that recently a small but growing literature has started to emerge about the profession of teacher educators, the path to become teacher educators, and the need to understand teacher educators' experiences, objectives and career goals in the process.

After graduating from the faculties of education in Turkey, some of the teachers start working gravitate towards graduate education. Within or at the end of the process, these teachers start working as teacher educators at universities by finding positions or at least try to accomplish that. We should note that we do not have much knowledge of what these individuals experience in the process of transition from being a teacher to being a teacher educator. In this study, an attempt was made to shed light on the process of transition from being a teacher to being a teacher educator through the story of a primary school teacher who had managed to become a teacher educator in Turkey. With this story, we aimed to understand why and how similar individuals who transitioned from being teachers to teacher educators in Turkey entered this path, their expectations, and their experiences related to the process. Towards an understanding of these experiences, it will be worth providing general information about teacher education, being a teacher, educating teacher educators in Turkey and to elucidate the current situation.

### *Teaching in Turkey*

Teacher education in Turkey is carried out through the faculties of education. Selection of students to faculties of education, as in other faculties, is carried out through a central examination administered by the Student Selection and Placement Center (SSPC) and by considering high school grade point averages. Since 2017, for students to be admitted to faculties of education, it has been required that students are within the first 240 thousand students in the central examination (Hacettepe University Faculty of Education [HUFoE], 2017). According to the data of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE, 2019), a total of 94 faculties of education, including 78 in public universities and 16 in foundation universities in Turkey, educate teachers in different fields.

Students who are admitted to faculties of education and successfully complete their undergraduate education are eligible to become teachers. In Turkey, certificates of teaching have been granted to graduates of certain departments of some faculties

other than faculties of education from time to time through different applications, using Pedagogical Education Programs for Teachers. The candidates who are granted the certificate to teach are appointed as teachers according to the central appointment exam and interview results administered by the SSPC.

When the profiles of the individuals who prefer the teaching profession in Turkey are examined, the following characteristics emerge. Although the individuals who prefer to be teachers come from families with low socio-economic level, their parents are largely primary school graduates. Two of the variables that are most effective in candidates' preference for the profession are the comfort of working conditions and candidates' scores on the university entrance exam. The least effective variables in candidates' preference for the profession are the desire to be with children and the prestige of the profession. More than half of them who prefer the teaching profession prefer it because they cannot score enough points to be admitted to the department they desire. The majority of them who prefer the profession consist of graduates of general high schools and teacher high schools. Given that teacher high school graduates (teacher high schools were shut down in 2014) are granted, an additional point in the university entrance exam is effective in their decision to prefer the profession. One of the biggest concerns of preservice teachers about the profession is failing to be appointed after graduation (Aksu, Demir, Daloglu, Yildirim & Kiraz, 2010; Eret Orhan & Ok, 2014; Ok & Onkol, 2007; Ozsoy, Ozsoy, Ozkara & Memis, 2010).

The report titled *Teaching Profession in the Eyes of Teachers* presents important data regarding the teaching profession in Turkey (TEDMEM, 2014). According to the report, teachers in Turkey think that the prestige and image of the profession is worn to the extent that cannot be repaired; as the time they spent in the profession increases, their beliefs in the prestige of the profession decrease; the society is not sensitive to the problems teachers experience; and the society treats them as educated babysitters. However, teachers express that the profession is regarded to be ideal by society, not because of the prestige of the profession, but because of the working hours and holiday times. Of the teachers who participated in the study, 75% did not want their children to be teachers. The number of teachers in public and private schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education [MoNE] in Turkey is 1 million 30 thousand 130 (MoNE, 2018). According to the data from 2017, 49.3% of teachers are under 35 years old, 41.5% are between 36 and 50 years old, and 9.2% are over the age of 50 (MoNE, 2017). According to the MoNE data from 2015, 0.1% of the teachers in Turkey have a PhD degree, and 7.7% have master's degree (HUFOE, 2017).

#### *Education of Teacher Educators in Turkey*

Unfortunately, no special requirement is sought about the teaching profession to employ educators in faculties, who educate preservice teachers in Turkey. For example, academic staff to be employed in faculties of education are expected to have a master's degree to be a lecturer (sometimes to have experience only, rather than a master's degree), and a doctoral degree to be a faculty member. However, there are no criteria like "the master's degree should be in educational sciences or teacher

education” for graduate education as reported earlier. What is more, the academic staff to be employed is not required to have teaching experience.

Apart from the above-mentioned situation, the stages that are completed by a teacher educator – who is a graduate of a faculty of education and will complete a master’s and doctoral degree in the relevant field – can be summarized as follows: A teacher graduating from a faculty of education can continue his master’s and doctoral education while continuing to teach in public or private institutions. Because receiving an education is not considered an excuse for appointment in a different public school, teachers who go to a university at a place that is different from the province where they work can experience difficulties concerning round-trip travel. Even the teachers who continue their education in the same province may have trouble attending graduate courses. Some school administrations do not lean towards giving these teachers permission. Even if this problem is resolved, teachers’ current course loads can make it impossible to continue graduate courses. In the study of Toprak and Tasgin (2017), teachers have stated that one of the most important factors that influence them not to receive a graduate education is that they are unable to get the schedule of their courses adjusted in public schools. Teachers may be exhausted in this process due to the aforementioned circumstances. However, teachers who cannot get involved in the university environment cannot establish robust academic relations (academic network), and due to their current employment status, they can have difficulties in finding jobs in universities after doctoral education. Another way to become a teacher educator is to work in a suitable staff position at the university during the graduate education process or to be sent abroad as a beneficiary student with a scholarship from the state for graduate education. Those who continue their graduate education or are sent abroad as a beneficiary student sponsored by the state while working as a research assistant at the university are able to complete the process relatively more comfortably, but they transfer into teacher education while lacking experience in the teaching profession.

It is thought that the factors that cause teachers – who are to become teacher educators in Turkey – to prefer this profession and their experiences regarding the process are important. Thus, in this study, we aimed to investigate the experiences of a teacher who was on a path to becoming a teacher educator. These experiences provide important clues on the processes of how the participant became a teacher educator concerning how he began his graduate studies, his process of transition to university and what he experienced after the transition.

In this study, we aimed to investigate the process of transition from being a teacher to being a teacher educator. This research study set out to examine a primary school teacher’s process of becoming a teacher educator with his own story. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought.

1. How did the teacher’s decision to become a teacher educator develop?
2. What are the teacher’s experiences in the process of becoming a teacher educator?

3. What are the opinions of the teacher concerning the fulfillment of his expectations as the outcome of the process?

## **Method**

### *Research Design*

This study was designed as narrative research. Pinnegar and Daynes (2006) have described the narrative research as a study describing a series of events explaining human experiences and told that the narrative begins with experiences that have been embodied in the stories of individuals. Creswell (2007) have expressed that narrative research consists of the stages of data collection through the individual's stories, reporting the experiences of individuals, and organizing the meaningful experiences chronologically. In this study, we aimed to shed light on the experiences of a teacher about his transition from being a teacher to being a teacher educator by discussing the teacher's experiences of becoming a teacher educator in chronological order through his own narratives. According to Creswell (2007), narrative research is the best method to capture the lived experiences of one or a few individuals. In this respect, this study was designed as narrative research. In this research study, the approaches proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Creswell (2007) and Creswell (2012) on the conduct of narrative research were considered.

### *Participant*

The participant, who had a bachelor's degree in physics education, taught at a private teaching institution for a while before starting to teach at a public school. He started his teaching duties as an elementary school teacher in multigrade classes and as an administrator at the same school in the village of a province in the southeast region. The participant began a search for a better career as he thought that the reasons, for example, the following situations did not satisfy him: the processes in public civil service were uniform, salaries were low, and teaching had a poor social status. For bureaucratic, economic and sociological reasons, the participant, wanted to quit teaching and set out on a path to become a teacher educator. Approximately six years after he started teaching, he began his graduate studies at the age of 30, married during his graduate studies and had a child. The participant graduated from the undergraduate program in 2001 and started teaching at a public school affiliated with the MoNE in 2002. He completed his master's degree between 2007 and 2010 while he was teaching. He ended his nine years of teaching life in 2011 and began to work as a research assistant at a university. After two years of waiting for the department to establish a doctoral program, he started his doctoral studies in 2012 and completed his doctorate in 2017. The participant who was waiting for the faculty position to be available at the time of the last meeting was assigned to the faculty member position after a year of finishing his doctoral studies.

The participant thought that teacher educators must have teaching experience. He claimed that the best students who graduated from faculties of education became teacher educators without gaining field experience and that institutes of educational sciences educated educational scientists/researchers but not teacher educators.

Moreover, the participant advocated that students of faculties of education could not be taught teacher qualifications. He thought that the factors that caused this were the current student profile and the quality of undergraduate education.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

In this study, data were obtained using three consecutive semi-structured interviews with a research assistant who had transitioned from being a teacher to being a teacher educator and continued his doctoral studies. After the interviews were recorded using a voice recorder, the interviews were transcribed along with the field notes taken during the interview. After each interview, analyses were carried out, notes were taken about the uncovered points, and the next interview was conducted according to these analyses. Creswell (2007) has stated that in interviews, the participant's narrative will not be in chronological order and that the researcher should establish a causal connection between ideas in the process of restoring. In this study, the narrative of the participant was addressed and storied within the scope of the pattern of "personal and social interaction, continuity (time), and event" in the framework of the 3-dimensional narrative research space introduced by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Fiction was created by adhering to the three dimensions mentioned in the process of storing. During the analyses for confirmation of the accuracy and suitability of the storing that was carried out, many interviews – independent of the actual interviews – were conducted for confirmation, and the participant's approval was obtained. Five themes were created as a result of the analyses as follows: (1) Deciding on the postgraduate education, (2) Transition to university: Causes, (3) The purgatory, (4) Doing PhD: Twisted roads, and (5) The thing at the end of the tunnel: Expectations vs. reality.

## **Results**

#### *Deciding on the Graduate Education*

The teacher explained how the idea of doing graduate studies began to sprout during his undergraduate education. At that time, the teacher realized that he was influenced by the academic staff of educational studies who were from outside the field of physics and assigned to teach courses on the teaching profession. This effect also led him to think that he could become a teacher educator. The teacher explained this situation as follows:

*The process of my decision-making for graduate education has begun during my undergraduate studies. I would say that I was influenced a lot by some of the professors who taught the educational sciences courses and were from outside the field.*

However, he did not consider this idea of becoming a teacher much during his undergraduate studies. Although he was willing to receive education in this regard, he had a lack of knowledge, and his advisor in the science teaching program was not helpful regarding giving him information on graduate education. His advisor also told him that he should teach. All these had led him to postpone doing master's studies. At this point, the teacher stated that he postponed doing master's studies because he had

heard that the graduate education exams in physics had been stricter and that he had had lack of confidence that he would succeed in the science exam. The teacher explained the process of postponing the idea of doing a master's study or working at the academy as follows:

*While I was a senior student, I applied to APGEEE [Academic Personnel and Graduate Education Entrance Exam]. I went to my advisor and asked, "Can I get my transcript? I got enough points on APGEEE, and I also have a language score." He told me, "Finish your school first. Why are you trying to do this? Go teach as a teacher, which is great, and so forth." He did not correctly calculate my grade point average either. And in fact, he stalled the process in my case for 5–6 years. [...] Another reason why I started my graduate studies so late was the science exams, which were a requirement for admission to the department of physics education. When you take science exams in social sciences, you can say something, but there's a little bit of trouble in sciences like physics and math. The professor can bury you there whenever he wants. I don't know whether it's a little bit of self-confidence problem. I didn't want to take the science exam, so I gradually delayed it.*

The idea of the teacher to continue doing graduate studies after being appointed as a teacher at a public school and gaining experience in teaching was strengthened. Given that teaching was not satisfactory for him anymore and that teachers with lower quality were doing or did graduate studies in his environment was effective in the re-emergence of the thought of conducting graduate studies in the teacher. The teacher explained the reason why he desired to do graduate studies while continuing to teach with his following opinions:

*I started to work as an elementary school teacher in Mardin. You know, I liked Mardin, but after a while, I started to get bored. The work I did was not satisfactory anymore. Moreover, I was taking APGEEE and language exams from time to time. When I saw that there were people who had lower scores than mine and started doing graduate studies, I realized that I would be bored after the fifth year.*

The teacher, while continuing to teach, met with a teacher named Ahmet (*nickname*) who was doing master's studies, and this meeting became a milestone in the life of the teacher. Later on, as a result of conversations with Ahmet, the teacher applied to a master's program in his field, passed the exam, and started to do his master's studies in physics. Because the teacher was doing master's studies, he asked to be appointed and was appointed as a teacher to the city where the university of his master's program was. In the end, again with the influence of Ahmet, he started to do master's studies in the field of special education, after quitting his master's studies in physics. The teacher explained his views on these issues as follows:

*Later on, when I was teaching in Mardin, I met a friend, Ahmet. I asked Ahmet, "Where do you work?" He said, "I work in this village, I'm a graduate student. I will ask for reappointment and leave." When Ahmet's process of leaving got prolonged, we naturally started to get closer. Ahmet said, "Why don't you do master's?" I said, "I'm a physics graduate. I'm afraid of science exams. I don't want to feel humiliated." Ahmet said on the phone after arriving here, "X University does not have a science*

*exam." He sent me the booklets. I applied, with his help, to the Department of Physics at the Institute of Science. I got accepted. [...] The field I'm working in is not science. I am working in educational sciences. When I got here, I met my professor here. It is Ahmet who has led me to decide on my current field of study [gifted education]. This is because Ahmet has got his master's degree in our field, too.*

After the teacher realized his master's goal, he set a new goal. That goal was to be a research assistant at the university. Thus, he would be able to fulfill his dream of becoming a professor at the university, just like the academic staff of educational sciences who taught them during the undergraduate years. After that, the teacher made an effort to be a research assistant. The reasons that were effective in the teacher's desire to transition to university and become a research assistant are discussed in the following subsections.

#### *Transition to University: Causes*

The teacher pointed out that the "conflict with the public-school culture", "socio-cultural reasons" and "economic reasons" were effective in his transition to university. These reasons strengthened the idea of obtaining a graduate education in the teacher's mind before and directed the teacher to move in this direction.

#### *Conflict with the Public-School Culture*

The teacher attributed to certain reasons why he did not want to work at a school affiliated with MoNE. The teacher stated that he thought that public schools did not have a structure that could motivate their staff, that the efforts of teachers to develop themselves professionally and personally within the schools were not valued, and that this culture made individuals passive. The teacher – who expressed that he could not find common ground with the environment where he was due to the reasons mentioned – also thought that the Ministry of Education had strict regulations. Due to this structure, he experienced conflicts with public schools on the basis of goals. The teacher explained his views on this issue as follows:

*For one thing, there is no source of motivation in public schools. For another, your work does not have a value. For yet another, you're with a team that you don't have much in common. There is the parent, the test system, the school administration, other teacher colleagues. You know, when you stay among them [...] You know, the system transforms them in such a way that dictates: Freeze, don't move, don't improve yourself, stay where you are! [...] MoNE has certain strict laws. For example, the regulation for chess education says something like this. Maybe it has changed; I don't know right now. Even though I received leadership training from the scouting federation, MoNE says, "No, you can't lead the scout group if you don't get the training offered by my expert tutors." It means nothing to be an expert in that topic. The definition of expert by MoNE is somewhat different. So, I think there were too many conflicts between our [personal] goals in public schools.*

The teacher, additionally, stated that the administrators of public schools do not provide convenience for their teachers concerning graduate education. Because of the intensity of graduate education, the teacher said that he was not able to take care of his

students in the public school, so he did not want to teach too many courses. However, he underlined that this request of him was not taken into consideration by the school where he was working. The teacher stated that his views on this issue were as follows:

*They [school administrators] are not very helpful in the educational process frankly [...] There was a one-year period when I was very uncomfortable conscientiously. Even though we argued with the school administration, and I said that I'd appreciate it if you didn't assign many courses to me, they assigned the courses to me. I wasn't very comfortable conscientiously.*

#### *Socio-Cultural Reasons*

The teacher showed social culture as a reason why he wanted to be in the university because he thought the university would provide a better environment for him and his family in socio-cultural terms. The teacher's views on the subject are given below:

*[...] the environment where I will enter with my family has significance culturally and socially. My child will begin elementary school; I can come to you and ask you. Or the child has something to do with the computer; I can ask a friend from the computer department. You can't provide this environment in public schools.*

The teacher, however, stated that working at the university was a status indicator and that the teaching profession in public schools was no longer valued. The teacher explained that this was one of the reasons that were effective in his desire to transition to the university:

*If I work in the university, there is something to it. You know, it makes a difference in the way people look at you. There are times when we witness this personally. Well, there is also this. What you're doing also has a value. Nobody cares about public schools as before.*

However, the teacher stressed that the effect of the status of this transition was very limited. The teacher expressed that it was more important to have a position that would support the process of graduate education and would not interfere with this process. The teacher's views as answers to the question on the subject are given below:

- *So, did you prefer graduate education to be able to work at the university?*

+ *No, definitely not for that. I came across different positions before, non-academic positions, such as lecturing in the university and specialty, but I did not accept them. The reason was that if you come to the university as a teacher, the permission for your doctoral education has to be given by the university. The institutional chair has to give it. I didn't have much trouble with it, but there were friends who came to the university as teachers and suffered. What matters to me is to become a doctor. I just don't want to get permission from someone else in my educational process. You know, that's what happened to my other friend who took that position. The university didn't let him do his doctoral studies.*

### *Economic Reasons*

Economic factors were also influential in the teacher's wanting to transition from the public school to the university. It can be said that this situation is also related to how the public schools mentioned in the previous sections view graduate education. The teacher had to attend a small number of courses at the public school to continue his graduate education and therefore could not receive additional course wage. As he also had a child during the process, he began to experience economic difficulties. The teacher's views on the subject are given below:

*There are also financial reasons. You know, I was taking as few courses as I could to do my graduate studies here. The additional courses are a 25% contribution to the salary. I didn't take additional courses throughout my graduate education. I don't want any additional courses. I'm going to go to university instead; I'm going to continue my classes there. I thought, "give the courses to another friend." However, I had a child during this process and that began to tire me financially.*

### *The Purgatory*

The teacher explained what he experienced during the process of both being an educator at the university and being a teacher at the public school, with the start of graduate education. The teacher explained this situation with the concept of "the purgatory" and stated that he neither felt belonging to the public school nor to the university. The teacher explained his being in the purgatory by relating it to the concepts of "delayed studentship", "a new profession" and "a teacher at the public school, a teacher educator at the university."

### *Delayed Studentship*

With the start of graduate education, the teacher stated that he had difficulties in getting used to becoming a student again after a long break. He said that the intensity increased with the courses of the major, and fatigue began. The teacher also thought that he was late for graduate education and that his age was effective on these fatigue problems. Considered in the conditions of Turkey, the 30s as an age range had given the teacher a dilemma of changing the workplace and making a decision to transition to the university. The teacher's views on the subject are given below:

*After 5-6 years of teaching, it was hard to start being a student again. When I started taking the major courses, the fatigue began. I remember when I didn't sleep for three days. And then, there is the age, you know. I began studying when I was 30 years old or so. My advisor is 3-4 years older than me. In other courses, I had professors who were younger than me.*

### *A New Profession*

The teacher, who previously worked as an elementary school teacher, became a physics teacher in the province – his current province of employment – where the university was after he started his graduate studies. The teacher stated that he graduated from the school as a teacher of physics, but started working as an elementary school teacher. Because of the lack of experience in physics teaching, he

had difficulties in this process on the one hand; and on the other, he was trying to get used to a new city. A new city, a new job, and being a student caused the process to be painful. The teacher's views on the subject are given below.

*I transitioned to the physics department [to the university] and started doing master's studies. The process was also very painful for me. A new profession, a new city, and you're starting your education again.*

*A Teacher at the Public School, an Educator at the University*

The teacher stated that the public school where he worked was in a different district, and his house was located in the city center where the university was located. The teacher – who experienced an intense process in which he was a teacher during the weekdays, an educator at the weekends, and was taking graduate courses at the same time – said that he was unable to afford the time. The teacher's statements on the subject are given below:

*For me, time was very troublesome. I was in a different district, 40 km from here. Drive there, come here by car all the time, every single day. Do your chores there in the daytime, sit down and try to complete your master's homework in the evening. Teach the courses of the program at the weekend [special education courses at the university], and be an educator there. I was in such a state that I conscientiously felt very uncomfortable when I slept.*

The teacher – who very much felt depressed due to this intensity, said that he was away from his social environment – stated that after a while he began to see himself as a dysfunctional individual at times other than the work he did. The teacher's views on the subject are given below:

*You know, as I started my graduate studies, the weekend courses [special education program] also began, and its responsibilities were also assigned to me, so it was a bit of an issue. I was so depressed that we were sitting right here at the university, and my wife and I could not purchase even a single item during this intensity. I had a 1+1 house from when I was a single person, and I rented it with furniture. We continued our lives in that house. In the public school where I worked, I was teaching six hours per week, and I was not able to socialize with the men there. This was because as soon as I got out of the class, I was coming here to do the work here. I was not able to meet anyone in the evenings. I wanted to meet, but we were going somewhere to eat and drink as a team, and 15 minutes later, the work for the weekend courses would have to start. I started to see myself as a human being, dysfunctional except for the work, who only did graduate studies and was a science educator during the weekend course.*

Because of the concern of socialization, the teacher moved his home to the district where he thought he could improve this situation even if a tiny bit. However, with the intensity of the process, the teacher's exhaustion increased. The teacher's opinions on the subject were as follows:

*I moved house to the district, 40 km ahead, due to my concern for socialization. I stayed there for 1.5–2 years. I was, again, coming here from there every day. When I*

*got there, I could at least call a friend sometime in the evening and drink tea for 1–2 hours or so. This was very good for me. Imagine you woke up at 7 o'clock at the weekend, and you were coming downtown by car. I am not exaggerating; I was thinking, "why don't I have an accident so that I do not attend the class?" I had such big exhaustion and fatigue. You go to class in the public school, you get out of there, you're going home. You open your computer for the master's classes. You have research or something. You deal with them. You wake up on the weekend and come here [the special education program] in the morning. I was coming here on Saturday morning and being at home at 8.00 p.m. on Sunday.*

In the next process, the university wanted to bring the teacher from the public school with an appointment. The teacher, who did not teach additional courses at the public school to attend graduate courses, had to deal with increased economic difficulties meanwhile. In the next process, the teacher was appointed to the university, but this time the teacher had difficulties regarding the personal rights. During this process, the teacher began to feel that he belonged nowhere. The teacher's views on the subject are given below:

*The university asked the public school to appoint me to the university, and there were no additional courses. The lack of additional courses is a problem. This is because your salary is all gone, and you live on your additional courses. It was very troublesome. I was neither the staff of the public school nor the university. The appointment was approved, but I had no personal rights. You don't even have a meal card in the cafeteria, because you are not a university staff. You get a written guest card from the faculty, from the dean or something for the car entrance card. I felt I belonged nowhere.*

#### *Doing PhD: Twisted Roads*

The teacher summarized the doctoral education process in three phases, including the start of the doctoral studies, the process of taking courses and the thesis process. The process was called "twisted roads" because the teacher assumed the role of both a teacher and a doctoral student in the process of doing his doctoral studies.

#### *Problems with Starting*

After receiving a master's degree, the teacher had to wait a while longer because there was no doctoral program in the department. The teacher, who had already begun his graduate education late, began to think that he was even further behind due to the postponement at the doctoral level. The teacher stated that the purpose of coming to the university where he worked then was to do doctoral studies. The teacher started thinking about dropping everything and doing a PhD in other departments because of the delay. The teacher's views on the subject are given below:

*During that time, because I completed my master's studies, I was not a student anymore. I could not begin a doctoral program. The doctoral program could not be established due to CHE's criteria for doctoral programs. I wasted 1.5–2 years of free time of mine. I continued to teach the weekend courses. However, it was troublesome. Imagine, your purpose there was sharp and clear. The reason I came to this city was to become a doctor. I finished my master's degree but couldn't start the doctoral*

*program. It was so stressful and bad that during that 1.5–2 years, I started to apply to different departments in different places.*

In the subsequent period, the Faculty Member Education Program [FMEP]<sup>1</sup> was announced. However, these positions require an undergraduate degree in the same field. Since the teacher was a graduate of physics teaching, he was not admitted to these positions available in the field of special education. The teacher began to feel stuck as he struggled to simultaneously continue to teach at the public school, be an educator at the university, and be a student. The teacher's views on the subject are given below:

*Then, FMEP positions were announced, and everyone was coming. But I could not apply to FMEP, either. I had to come to the university. But I was still going to public school. I was stuck somewhere weird in-between.*

In the process, a position to which teachers could apply became available, but another problem rose here. The teacher asked not to share the interview records here, so that information was not included in the quote. Nevertheless, in brief, the teacher thought he had been hard done by concerning the position that was available. The teacher said the following concerning the subject:

*Later on, a position through a regular procedure became available. ---- The teacher did not want this section to be published. ----- I would like to get this position. It's a research assistantship position, for god's sake! Imagine, they don't want anything else from you. They say, "do your master's and your PhD!"*

After a while, the teacher got the research assistantship position he had desired. However, the department's doctoral program had not yet been established. Other concerns had begun to arise in this process for the teacher waiting for the doctoral program to be established. The teacher tried to retake the central exams and raise his score, with the concern of failing to take the position he had expected. The teacher explained this process as follows:

*In short, I came as a research assistant, but the doctoral program has not yet been established. Meanwhile, a permanent concern has arisen as to what if a PhD program is established, and I fail to get accepted. I took APGEEE<sup>2</sup> and the language exam again.*

In the subsequent period, the doctoral program of the department was established, and the teacher started his doctoral studies. The teacher highlighted in his following opinion that it was a very important development for him to be able to begin his doctoral studies:

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty Member Education Program. Meeting the needs for faculty members is aimed in this program. Candidates are required to work at universities to do compulsory service during graduate education in exchange for employment in the research assistantship position.

<sup>2</sup> Academic Personnel and Graduate Education Entrance Exam. It is a central examination required for admission to graduate education in universities and employment.

*One day, I received a surprise call from the secretary of the institute, who said, "congratulations, your doctoral program has been established." It was really important to me to begin my doctoral studies.*

#### *Waiting for the Lessons*

After the teacher began his doctoral studies, he waited for a while for doctoral courses to be offered. This delay pushed an already-delayed process even further. The teacher's views on the subject are given below:

*You, for example, have completed your doctoral courses in two or three semesters and then taken the qualification exam. In our case, I, for example, have been able to take it after six semesters. I took regular courses for two semesters. We waited for the professor's courses in the four remaining semesters. Why did we wait for the professor's courses? [...] Only after I finished, he could have offered the course to me individually[...] That is, I waited for three years to take the qualification exam [...] The doctoral courses were done in a very stressful way by happenstance.*

#### *Thesis Process*

The teacher worked with teachers from the public school during the development of the measurement instrument he would use in his research study. He trained the teachers in this process and asked them to write appropriate test items, but he was unable to motivate teachers for this job and had some problems with the teachers. The teacher stated that the biggest problem in the thesis process was the problem that he experienced with his colleagues. The teacher's views on the subject are given below:

*The group I work in has problems that arose from teachers now. I am working with teachers in a test development process. The teachers need to develop test items that comply with the training that I gave them. They're not motivated in any way, for god's sake! You offer them training. They don't care. You say, "I will give you certificates. You can use them," but to no avail. I'm paying them. It doesn't motivate. I'm preparing the environment for them to feel comfortable, and I'm trying to prepare food and beverages, and a convenient time for them. I have 10 teachers: four of them are unprepared, and two of them are trying to write something sporadically. Then, they offer the question, which is not suitable for our theoretical structure, not suitable for our age group, and technically problematic. You know, as a teacher and teacher educator, I experienced the biggest problem with teachers during my thesis process.*

#### *The Thing at the End of the Tunnel: Expectations vs. Reality*

In this heading, the focus was on the teacher's expectations of the doctoral education and the stories in which he faced the realities he encountered at the end of the process. The teacher articulated that his expectation initially was to get a good graduate education. However, during the process, getting a position at the university was added to this expectation. The teacher was working as a research assistant at the time of the study and was waiting for the faculty member position to become available. The teacher is currently working as a faculty member. The teacher's views on the subject are given below:

*In the beginning, I did not have much expectation except to get a graduate education. I wanted the educational process to be as efficient as possible [...] In the process, expectations are changing, of course. At the end of the first year of my graduate studies, an expectation was raised to get a position at the university. My doctoral studies have been completed. And now, I have the expectation of an assistant professor position, of course.*

The teacher stated that he wished he finished his doctoral education earlier in this process, but that he could not achieve that (due to the circumstances mentioned in the previous sections). In addition to that, the teacher expressed that he wished he more frequently communicated with undergraduate students and more prominently assumed the role of a “teacher” in the process. The teacher’s views on the subject are given below:

*I wish I could finish my doctoral studies sooner [...] I wish I could more frequently get in touch with the undergraduate students. I wish I could teach more.*

As a result, the teacher said that his expectations about the process were met in general. However, from a familial and individual perspective, he underlined that he would give different answers to the question of whether it was worth it or not. The teacher said he thought he neglected his family in this process. The teacher’s views on the subject are given below:

*I would say that my expectations were met in general. In this process, I was expecting to become a good expert in the field and a bit of recognition, and I think I’ve achieved them. The question of whether it was worth it is a difficult question. I know that it didn’t make up for the time I took away from my family. But I can say that it was satisfactory and worth it personally.*

## Discussion

In this study, an attempt was made to investigate the experiences of an elementary school teacher who began doing master’s studies while he was teaching at a public school and subsequently became a teacher educator at a university. It can be said that there were many factors that affected the teacher’s decision to become a teacher educator and his transition to the university. The teacher expressed that public schools had a structure that made teachers stagnant that did not value them and their efforts to improve themselves. Additionally, the teacher said that his request to continue his master’s education was not supported by the administration of the elementary school where he was working at that time.

The participant teacher stated that “working at the university” was not his primary goal given that he wanted a position that would not prevent his graduate education, and that the position that would make this possible was the academic positions at universities. It would be worth noting to say that there are some difficulties faced by people who would like to continue their graduate education if they are working in Turkish public schools or in non-academic positions of universities. It can be said that institutions are reluctant to permit their staff for graduate education, and they are not facilitative. It is also worth expressing that the current regulations have a perspective

paralleling that. When the participant teacher began his graduate studies, studying as a student was an assignment excuse for teachers working in the public sector. However, in later periods, this excuse was removed from the regulation, which meant that a new problem was added to the problems that the participant mentioned. Another reason why the participant wanted to transition to the university was economic reasons. The participant stated that he taught fewer courses at the public school to be able to continue his graduate education and that he was experiencing economic distress because he did not receive additional course wage. The aforementioned problem can be said to be related to administrators' points of view on graduate education, at public schools where teachers work. The above-mentioned structure of these institutions can push and even enforce teachers, who desire to continue their graduate education, to seek positions at universities.

The participant teacher showed the social environment as another reason for his transition to the university. The teacher wanted to be in the presence of people from whom he could get help for his child's development, and expressed that an environment consisting of teachers in public schools would not be able to provide it. It is noteworthy that the participant thought that this environment consisting of teachers would not be capable of fulfilling the request that the participant was talking about. Eret et al.'s (2014) findings show that one of the most influential variables as to why preservice teachers prefer the profession is the convenience of the profession, and one of the least effective variables is the desire to be with children. Ozsoy et al. (2010) pointed out that more than half of the preservice teachers who participated in their research study said that they preferred being teachers because their scores were not enough for the departments they desired. The current teacher and preservice teacher profile can be considered to have led to the hesitations of the participant.

The published research results show that the process of transition from being a teacher to being a teacher educator is a very stressful and wearing process. Factors, such as the changing target audience in pedagogical terms, the anxiety about conducting research activities, and the transition to a different social environment transform teachers, who transition, to a novice again in the field in which they were experts (Hatt, 1997; Kastner, Reese, Pellegrino & Russell, 2019; Loughran & Menter, 2019; Maaranen, Kynaslahti, Byman, Jyrhama & Sintonen, 2019; Murray & Male, 2005; Sinkinson, 1997; Swennen, Shagrir & Cooper, 2009). What is argued here is what the educators experience – the educators who have completed their doctoral studies and who are about to transition to a university while working at a public school. The difficulties to be experienced will be very intense if the doctoral education process is also included in this equation. The participant teacher was trying to sustain his life for a long time as a teacher at a public school, an educator at weekend courses, and a graduate student at other times. During this period, the teacher began to experience exhaustion and fatigue. The participant teacher was assigned to the university as an educator, after which the teacher could not get additional course wage. Also, the university where the teacher was employed did not grant the rights, which the university personnel benefited from, to the teacher due to the regulations. These were the beginning of the teacher's having the feeling that he belonged nowhere. Although

the processes of graduate education are considered to be painful, it will be worth saying that an important part of the pain that arises from the internal dynamics of institutions, regulations and corporate cultures. Aside from supporting and promoting teachers' self-improvement and realization efforts, institutions may impede the initiatives mentioned due to their current functioning. This situation can deter teachers from experiencing similar processes even before they go on this path. According to Toprak and Tasgin (2014), the first four variables that explain why teachers do not receive graduate education include that the process is weary, that it causes a financial burden, that course schedules at schools are not adjusted, and that people who are doing graduate studies give negative feedback. However, European educational systems regard the Continuous Professional Development [CPD] as teachers' professional duties or obligations for them. Certain European countries offer options for teachers' continuous professional development activities, such as leaves, paid leaves and educational scholarships (European Commission [EC], 2013). In this respect, it is evident that the teachers working in the public who wish to get graduate education in Turkey should be given legal assurance.

The processes of graduate education in Turkey also have many problems. The participant teacher stated that he waited for doctoral courses to begin for a long time after he began his doctoral studies. It is necessary to underline that the current problem causes graduate students to experience unjust suffering. Although the aforementioned issues are not isolated, they also overlap with the findings of previous research that researchers have carried out concerning counseling and doctoral processes (see Sever & Ersoy, 2017).

The participant said that he was happy with what he had achieved at the end of the process and that his expectations were largely realized. However, he said that he wanted to be more intertwined with students during his graduate studies, but that did not happen. As the participant mentioned, the qualifications of teaching and field experience can be said to be neglected subjects in the education of teacher educators.

#### *Implications for Research and Practice*

Public schools, with their existing cultures and regulations, are unable to respond to the graduate education demands of the teachers who work within the schools. The aforementioned, current structure of the schools may force teachers who enter the graduate education path to transition to universities. As a result of this, public schools are losing qualified teachers who receive a graduate education. Teachers can be prevented from leaving their schools by changing the existing culture and improving the regulations in public schools. It can be contributed to the improvement of existing teacher qualifications in public schools by removing the mentioned obstacles to teachers' graduate education and encouraging teachers to receive graduate education.

In the course of educating teacher educators, the subject of gaining professional experience/field experience is neglected. Teacher educators complete the process without gaining practical experience in the field during their graduate education. In the process of educating teacher educators, the quality of teacher education can also be improved by attaching importance to field experience.

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## Öğretmen Eğitimcisi Olma Yolunda Bir Sınıf Öğretmeninin Yolculuğu

### Atıf:

- Sever, I. & Ersoy, A. (2019). Becoming a teacher educator: Journey of a primary school teacher. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Sciences*, 83, 81-102, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2019.83.4

### Özet

**Problem Durumu:** Öğretmen eğitimi yaygın olarak çalışılan bir konu olmasına rağmen, öğretmen eğitimcilerinin eğitimi konusunun çoğunlukla ihmal edildiği söylenebilir. Öğretmen eğitimiyle ilgili çok fazla söz söylenmiş olmasına rağmen, öğretmen eğitimcilerinin kendilerine ilişkin pek fazla sözün sarf edilmemiş olduğu ifade edilmektedir. Buna paralel olarak öğretmenlikten öğretmen eğitimciliğine geçiş süreci ile ilgili de pek fazla çalışmanın olmadığı söylenebilir. Alanyazındaki mevcut çalışmalar da öğretmen eğitimciliğine geçişi, öğretmen eğitimcilerin eğitimi bağlamında çalışmaktadır. Türkiye’de eğitim fakültelerinden mezun olduktan sonra göreve başlayan öğretmenlerin bir bölümü lisansüstü eğitime yönelmektedirler. Süreç içerisinde ya da sonunda bu öğretmenler kadro bularak üniversitelerde öğretmen eğitimcisi olarak çalışmaya başlamakta ya da en azından bunu başarmaya çabalamaktadırlar. Öğretmenlikten öğretmen eğitimciliğine geçiş sürecinde bu bireylerin neler deneyimledikleriyle ilgili pek fazla bilgi sahibi olmadığımızı söylemek mümkündür. Bu çalışma Türkiye’deki öğretmen eğitimcisi olmayı başarmış bir sınıf öğretmeninin hikâyesi üzerinden öğretmenlikten öğretmen eğitimciliğine geçiş sürecine ışık tutmaya çalışmıştır. Bu hikâye ile Türkiye’de öğretmenlikten öğretmen eğitimciliğine geçen benzer bireylerin; neden ve nasıl bu yola girdikleri, beklentileri ve sürece ilişkin deneyimleri anlaşılacak istenmiştir.

**Amaç:** Türkiye’de öğretmen eğitimcisi olma yolundaki öğretmenlerin bu tercihlerine neden olan etmenlerin ve sürece ilişkin deneyimlerinin önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir. Bu sebeple bu araştırmada öğretmen eğitimcisi olma yolunda ilerleyen bir öğretmenin deneyimlerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu deneyimler katılımcının lisansüstü eğitime başlama, üniversiteye geçiş süreci ve geçişten sonra yaşadıklarına ilişkin öğretmen eğitimcisi olma süreçleriyle ilgili önemli ipuçları vermektedir.

Bu araştırmada öğretmenlikten öğretmen eğitimciliğine geçiş süreci incelenmek istenmiştir. Bu araştırmanın amacı; bir sınıf öğretmenin öğretmen eğitimcisi olma sürecini kendi öyküsüyle incelemektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda aşağıdaki sorulara cevap aranmıştır.

1. Sınıf öğretmenin öğretmen eğitimcisi olma kararını verme süreci nasıl gelişmiştir?
2. Sınıf öğretmenin öğretmen eğitimcisi olma sürecindeki deneyimleri nelerdir?
3. Sınıf öğretmenin süreç sonucunda beklentilerinin karşılanma durumuna ilişkin düşünceleri nelerdir?

**Yöntem:** Bu araştırmada bir sınıf öğretmenin öğretmen eğitimcisi olma deneyimleri, kendi anlatımları üzerinden kronolojik olarak ele alınarak öğretmenlikten öğretmen eğitimciliğine geçiş deneyimlerine ışık tutulmak istenmiştir. Bir ya da az sayıda bireyin yaşam deneyimlerinin yakalanmasında, anlatı araştırmasının en iyi metot olduğu ifade edilmektedir. Bu yönüyle yürütülen araştırma anlatı araştırması olarak tasarlanmıştır. Araştırma verileri; Türkiye’deki bir üniversitenin eğitim bilimleri enstitüsünde araştırma görevlisi olarak görev yapan bir doktora öğrencisinden yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Görüşme verilerinin analizinde anlatı analizi kullanılmıştır. Katılımcının anlatısı; sosyal etkileşim, zaman ve olay örgüsü içerisinde hikâyeleştirilerek sunulmuştur.

**Bulgular ve Sonuç:** Bu araştırmada bir devlet okulunda öğretmenlik yapmakta iken lisansüstü eğitime başlayan, sonrasında üniversitede öğretmen eğitimcisi olan bir sınıf öğretmenin deneyimleri incelenmek istenmiştir. Öğretmenin, öğretmen eğitimcisi olma kararında ve üniversiteye geçmesinde etkili olan birçok etkenin olduğu söylenebilir. Öğretmen milli eğitim kurumlarının öğretmenlere ve onların kendilerini geliştirme çabalarına değer vermeyen, onları durağan hale getiren bir yapısının olduğunu ifade etmiştir. Bununla birlikte öğretmen kendisinin yüksek lisans eğitimine devam etmesinin o zaman çalıştığı ilkökul yönetimi tarafından desteklenmediği söylemiştir. Katılımcı öğretmen “üniversitede çalışmanın” öncelikli amacı olmadığını, lisansüstü eğitimini devam ettirmesine engel olmayacak bir kadro istediğini, bu kadronun da üniversitelerdeki akademik kadrolar olduğunu belirtmiştir. Katılımcının üniversiteye geçmek isteyişinde etkili olan bir diğer neden ekonomik nedenlerdir. Katılımcı lisansüstü eğitime devam edebilmek için milli eğitim kurumundan az ders aldığını, ek ders ücreti alamadığı için ekonomik olarak sıkıntı yaşamaya başladığını ifade etmiştir. Katılımcı öğretmen üniversiteye geçişte bir

diğer sebep olarak bulunduđu sosyal çevreyi gerekçe göstermiştir. Öğretmen, çocuğunun gelişiminde yardım alabileceđi kişilerin çevresinde bulunmasını istemiş ve kamu okullarındaki öğretmenlerden oluşan bir çevrenin bunu sağlayamayacağını ifade etmiştir. Katılımcı öğretmen süreç sonunda geldiđi yerden memnun olduğunu, beklentilerinin büyük oranda gerçekleştiđini ifade etmiştir. Ancak lisansüstü eğitim süresince öğrencilerle daha fazla iç içe olmak istediđini fakat bunun gerçekleşmediđini söylemiştir.

**Tartışma ve Öneriler:** Türkiye’deki milli eğitim kurumlarında ya da üniversitelerin akademik kadroları dışındaki kadrolarda çalışırken, lisansüstü eğitime devam etmenin önünde bazı güçlüklerin olduğunu söylemek yerinde olacaktır. Kurumların personeline lisansüstü eğitim için izin verme konusunda isteksiz davrandığı, kolaylaştırıcı olmadığı söylenebilir. Güncel mevzuatın da buna paralel bir bakış açısına sahip olduğunu ifade etmekte yarar vardır. Katılımcı öğretmenin lisansüstü eğitime başladığı dönemde kamuda çalışan öğretmenler için öğrenim özürlü tayin gerekçesi iken, sonraki dönemlerde bu özür yönetmelikten çıkarılmış, katılımcının sözünü ettiđi sorunlara mevcut durumda bir yenisi daha eklenmiştir. Lisansüstü eğitim süreçlerinin sancılı süreçler olduğu kabul edilmekle birlikte; ortaya çıkan sancuların önemli bir kısmının kurumların içsel dinamiklerinden, mevzuattan ve kurum kültürlerinden kaynaklandığını söylemek yerinde olacaktır. Öğretmenlerin kendini geliştirme ve gerçekleştirme çabalarının desteklenmesi ve teşvik edilmesi bir yana, kurumlar mevcut işleyişleri ile sözü edilen girişimlere ket vurabilmektedir. Bu durum benzer süreçlerdeki öğretmenleri daha bu yola girmeden caydırabilmektedir.

Milli eğitim okulları mevcut kültürleri ve mevzuatlarıyla, bünyesinde görev yapan öğretmenlerin lisansüstü eğitim taleplerine cevap verememektedir. Okulların sözü edilen mevcut yapısı, lisansüstü eğitim yoluna giren öğretmenleri üniversitelere geçiş yapmaya mecbur bırakabilmektedir. Bunun bir sonucu olarak milli eğitim okulları, lisansüstü eğitim alan nitelikli öğretmenleri kaybetmektedir. Milli eğitim okullarındaki mevcut kültür değiştirilerek ve mevzuatlar iyileştirilerek öğretmenlerin kurumlarından ayrılmalarının önüne geçilebilir. Öğretmenlerin lisansüstü eğitimlerinin önündeki sözü edilen engeller kaldırılarak ve öğretmenlerin lisansüstü eğitim almaları teşvik edilerek milli eğitim okullarındaki mevcut öğretmen niteliklerinin iyileştirilmesine katkıda bulunulabilir.

Öğretmen eğitimcilerinin eğitimi sürecinde, mesleki tecrübe-alan deneyimi kazanımı konusunun ihmal edilen bir konu olduğu söylenebilir. Öğretmen eğitimciler lisansüstü eğitimleri boyunca alana ilişkin pratik tecrübe kazanmadan süreci tamamlamaktadırlar. Öğretmen eğitimcilerinin yetiştirilmesi sürecinde alan deneyimine önem verilerek öğretmen eğitimindeki niteliğin de arttırılabileceđi düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Öğretmen Eğitimi, Öğretmen Eğitimcilerinin Eğitimi, Öğretmenlikten Öğretmen Eğitimiğe Geçiş, Anlatı Araştırması