

THE VIEWS OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS ON THE READING HABITS IN TURKEY

TÜRKİYE'DE SINIF ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN OKUMA ALIŞKANLIĞI ÜZERİNE GÖRÜŞLERİ

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ABSTRACT: Data of the study were collected through use of survey questionnaire administered to 434 classroom teachers. In the study, the following questions are answered. What is the reading habit level of the classroom teachers? What are the subjects they read both in-profession and others? Which subjects they prefer to be included in their professional publications? What are their views on professional publications? What are their expectations from the Ministry of National Education regarding professional publications? Is there any relation between their gender, experience, socio-economic status of the school and the responses of the classroom teachers involved? To analyse, chi-square test was employed. Some of the findings are as follows: Classroom teachers can not read the professional publications frequently. They mostly read news magazines, bibliographic novels, and Hürriyet which is a daily newspaper. They not easily access to professional publications. The impact of the socio-economic status of the school on the responses of the classroom teachers is significant on most of the questionnaire items. However, neither gender nor experience do have such a significant impact.

KEY WORDS: *Teacher, reading, book, magazine, professional publication, newspaper.*

ÖZET: Araştırmanın verileri 434 sınıf öğretmenine anket uygulanarak elde edilmiştir. Araştırmada şu sorulara cevap aranmıştır: Sınıf öğretmenlerinin okuma alışkanlıkları ne düzeydedir? Meslek içi ve dışı okudukları konular nelerdir? Mesleki yayınlar içerisinde yer almasını istedikleri konular nelerdir? Mesleki yayınlar üzerine düşünceleri nelerdir? Mesleki yayınlar konusunda, Eğitim Bakanlığından beklentileri nelerdir? Cevapların, öğretmenlerin cinsiyeti, kıdemi ve okulun sosyo-ekonomik düzeyi ile ilişkisi var mıdır? Yanıtların okulun sosyo-ekonomik düzeyi, cinsiyet ve kıdem ile birlikte değişip değişmediğine bakmak için chi-square testi kullanılmıştır. Bulgulardan birkaçı: Öğretmenler, mesleki yayınları sık okuyamamaktadır. Daha çok haber içerikli dergiler, anı içerikli romanlar ve Hürriyet gazetesi okumaktadırlar. Mesleki yayınlara kolay ulaşamamaktadırlar. Okulun sosyo-ekonomik düzeyine göre, öğretmenlerin verdikleri cevapların dağılımları arasındaki fark, çoğu soruda anlamlı

bulunmuştur. Cinsiyet ve kıdeme göre ise, çoğu soruda anlamlı bulunmamıştır.

ANAHTAR KELİMELEER: *Öğretmen, okuma, kitap, dergi, mesleki yayın, gazete.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher is an important factor in education. Therefore development of a country is dependent on its education system and teachers (1). Teachers also play an important role in the success of the school in which they work (2). In Turkey, the importance of the teachers of the basic education is higher, since the Turkish people regard both republic and democracy as their way of life. And this way of life is taught in the basic education schools. Many families can not provide their children this life style (3). Furthermore the behaviours acquired during this education level form the foundation of future behaviours. Basic education is the basic of the Turkish educational system. Many problems of the education system in Turkey are resulted from the ignorance of basic education. In the past, basic education was highly valued during 1935-1945 and literacy rate in this period increased. During the next decade, basic education was not given so much importance and gains were lost. During 1955-1968, new ways were tried. In the mid 1990s there was an activation in the basic education in Turkey. As it is seen, such efforts take long time in the country of which population is 65 million. 4 examples of this fact are as follows: In August 18, 1997 duration of basic education was extended to 8

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years. In 1996, in the teacher training institutions a new organisation was set up to increase the number of the classroom teachers. Although the number of teachers increases, it is not enough to provide high quality education to students since the number of students increases much more. In Turkey population density is high and one million children begin their basic education at each year. In the 1997-1998 school year 229.000 classroom teachers were assigned. However it is estimated that in 2000 year, 60.000 basic education teachers must be added to the current number of teachers (4). Thirdly, beginning by the school year 1998-1999 foreign language teaching course is added to the curricula. Fourthly, in 1999 it was decided to hire teachers after a professional examination. However, this decision has not been implemented because of insufficient number of teachers. (5). In Turkey only central examination for teachers is not enough. Teachers should be successful in verbal examination.

Educational objectives of 2000 in Turkey are stated as follows; providing basic education to all, eradicating the inequality between women and men, increasing the rate of illiterate adults (6).

Those teachers who study with the grades from 1 to 5 are called classroom teachers. They teach all the courses. They are trained through 4 year graduate programs after high school. Recently there are 33 teacher training departments within various universities (7).

Efforts to improve basic education have been going on but these can not solve the problem so that there are still problems such as; in 1997, of 237.538 classroom teachers, 44.000 teachers were assigned with different fields rather than basic education (8). Anyone who have graduate degree becomes classroom teacher. They have insufficient knowledge on classroom management which is an important aspect of successful teaching (9). Ministry of Education develops its policies according to

political forces. This its decisions are made centrally. And authorial decisions have no chance to be successful (10). For example during 1970s nearly 70.000 graduate students took the teacher certificate. In 1974 teachers were trained through correspondence education. So students were taught by unprepared and unexperienced teachers. It is worth to emphasise that basic teaching tool of teacher is their knowledge (11). But such problems are also seen in other countries (12). Classrooms are crowded. Such facilities as laboratory, library, etc. are not sufficient (13). Teachers have economic problems. They should deal with other jobs to survive. However economic power forms the basic of being respected (14,15). In service teacher training has been regarded as a solution for the problems of unprepared teachers. In-service teacher training began after 1960. However it was not administered properly (16,17,18,19).

How does teachers learn about innovations in their fields given the in-service training offered to them is insufficient? In this case, continuous learning becomes important (20,21,22).

Teachers should follow publication both in-field and in other fields. Profession of teaching requires the continuation of knowledge and skill. Furthermore comprehension in one's native language develops by reading a lot. However, some teachers do not have a fluent Turkish (23,1).

In the literature, there are many research on the reading habits of teachers. Such research is very frequent in other countries. According to these studies; teachers read the teaching journals more frequently (24,25).

According to Hughes and Doyle's study (26) teachers of basic education prefer to read publication on theoretical matters and educational research. George & Ray (27) found out that there was a relation between the background of teachers and their professional

reading and that experienced teachers regularly follow professional publications. Litman & Stodolsky (25) concluded that female teachers read professional journals more frequently than males.

In Turkey there is no data on the reading habits of teachers. This fact indicates the importance of the current study.

1.1. Aims

In this study, following questions are to be answered;

1-What is the level of reading habits of classroom teachers?

2-What are the subjects they read both in-profession and others?

3-Which subjects they prefer to be included in their professional publications?

4-What are their views on professional publications?

5-What are their expectations from MNE on professional publications?

6-Is there any relation between their answers and their genders, experience and the SES of the school in which they work?

2. METHOD

2.1. Sampling

The study includes the classroom teachers working in the central districts of Ankara in the 1999-2000 school year. The number of basic education schools in the related area is 525. The criteria of school selection are as follows. The number and SES of the schools vary in the related districts. Therefore the schools were classified according to their socio-economic status (SES) as high-medium-lower. In determining the socio-economical statuses of the schools, the State Statistical Institution supported us. Then the number of schools was determined through "stratified random sampling". The number of schools selected is

given below; Altındağ 28 (8 lower, 10 medium, 10 high), Çankaya 42 (10 lower, 16 medium, 16 high), Etimesgut 9 (4 lower, 3 medium, 2 high), Gölbaşı 16 (5 lower, 7 medium, 4 high), Keçiören 35 (10 lower, 13 medium, 12 high), Mamak 38 (17 lower, 12 medium, 9 high), Sincan 15 (6 lower, 5 medium, 4 high), Yenimahalle 34 (12 lower, 11 medium, 11 high). The total number of schools is 217 (72 lower, 77 medium, 68 high). Since the number of schools are very high, their names are not presented here. The number of classroom teachers working in the study area during 1999-2000 school year is 9,291. From each school 2 teachers were selected randomly. Then the total number of teachers involved in the study is 434.

2.2. Questionnaire And Procedure

Data were collected through the use of a questionnaire that was developed by the author. Before developing it, related literature was reviewed. Then the questionnaire developed was administered to a group of classroom teacher as a pilot study. After making necessary corrections it developed as a final product. The items of the questionnaire are as follows. Their reading frequency, the mostly read journals and newspapers, the preference to read, their access to professional publications, sufficiency of the number of professional publications, their expectations from the Ministry National Education regarding professional publications. The journals were classified according to their themes such as news, technical. The books are grouped as educational, psychological, political, etc. data are analysed through the use of f and $\%$. The Chi-square test was used to analyse the relation between SES of the school and the gender, experience of the teachers.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Personal background of the teachers involved.

Table-1 shows that teachers from three different SES leveled schools were involved.

Majority of the teachers is female (56,9%). Of them, 35,7% has a 11-15 year experience, 32,9% 16-20 year experience.

Table-1. Personal Background of the Teachers and SES of the Schools

Characteristic	Frequency	%
SES		
High	146	33,6
Medium	144	33,2
Lower	144	33,2
Gender		
Female	247	56,9
Male	187	43,1
Experience		
0-10 year	83	19,1
11-15 year	155	35,7
16-20 year	143	32,9
21and +	53	12,2

3.2. Frequency of reading the professional publications.

As seen in Table-2, more than half of the teachers (50,5%) stated that they read professional publications not so much. Only 7,6% of them read such publications. There is a statistically significant relation between SES of the school and the experience on the frequency of reading professional publications (SES $\chi^2=52,808$ $p=0,0001$. Experience $\chi^2=46,694$ $p=0,0001$).

Table-2. Frequency of reading the professional publications.

	never	rare	sometimes	frequently
Frequently of reading the professional publications	f 54	219	128	33
	% 12,4	50,0	29,5	7,6
SES: $\chi^2=52,808$ $p=0,0001^{**}$ gender: $\chi^2=1,709$ $p=0,635$ experience: $\chi^2=45,694$ $p=0,001^{**}$				

****Difference important**

3.3. Reasons of not reading frequently

As seen in Table 3, 68,9 % of teachers could not access to publication, 12,7 % of teachers have no time to read, 8,8 % of teachers could not buy because of high prices and 7,8 % of teachers do not have reading habit. 68,9% of teacher indicated that, they can not reach professional publications. Teachers of schools with lower SES and teachers of experienced more than 21 years complain that, time is not enough for them (SES $\chi^2=26,386$ $p=0,0001$. Experience $\chi^2=64,097$ $p=0,0001$). It is also found out that reading habit of male teachers is lower. ($\chi^2=8,823$ $p=0,032$).

Table-3. Reason of not Reading

	f	%
1-I could not access to publications	299	68,9
2-I have no time to read	55	12,7
3-I could not buy because of high prices	38	8,8
4-I do not have reading habit	34	7,8
SES: $\chi^2=26,386$ $p=0,001^{**}$ gender: $\chi^2=8,823$ $p=0,032^{**}$ experience: $\chi^2=64,097$ $p=0,0001^{**}$		

****Difference important**

3.4. Journals and newspapers read by teachers.

As seen Table-4, 34,3% of teachers reads news journals. 30,2% of teachers does not read journals.

The rate of those who read educational journal is 19,6% and the number of those reading novels is 41,9% and that of those reading educational books is 10,6%. Of newspapers, the most read ones are as follows; Hürriyet (24,2%), Milliyet (16,8%), Cumhuriyet (16,8%). The relation between SES of the school and reading is significant. In the schools with lower SES, mostly educational journals ($\chi^2=42,142$ $p=0,0001$), autobiographic books ($\chi^2=21,240$ $p=0,0007$) and "Zaman" newspaper

are read. The relation between gender and theme of the material read is not find out significant.

Table-4. Journals, Books and Newspapers Read by Teachers

Journals	f	%
Education	85	19,6
News	146	34,3
Technique	69	15,9
Not read	131	30,2
SES $x^2=42,142$ $p=0,0001^{**}$ gender: $x^2=4,115$ $p=0,128$ experience: $x^2=5,158$ $p=0,24$		
Books		
Education	46	10,6
Psychological	29	6,7
Political	18	4,1
Autobiographical	61	14,1
	182	41,9
SES $x^2=21,240$ $p=0,0001^{***}$ gender: $x^2=4,579$ $p=0,333$ experience: $x^2=$ not calculate		
Newspapers		
Hürriyet	105	24,2
Milliyet	73	16,8
Cumhuriyet	73	16,8
Posta	50	11,5
Sabah	64	14,7
Radikal	33	7,6
Zaman	19	4,4
SES $x^2=73,955$ $p=0,0001^{**}$ gender: $x^2=10,592$ $p=0,102$ experience: $x^2=$ not calculate		

**Different important

3.5. Subjects they want to read

As seen Table-5, teachers want to read the following topics in the journals; classroom management (24,7%), educational methods and techniques (23,7%), innovations (22,4%). The relation between SES of the school and the topics that teachers want to read is found out significant. In the schools with high SES, teachers mostly wish to read journal articles on classroom management ($x^2=64,226$ $p=0,0001$).

Table-5. The Topics That teachers Want to read in The Educational Journals

	f	%
1-Classroom management	107	24,7
2-Innovations in education	97	22,4
3-Instructional methods and techniques	103	23,7
4-Problems and solutions regarding teachers.	94	21,7
5-Children psychology	18	4,1
SES: $x^2=64,226$ $p=0,0001^{**}$ gender: $x^2=0,103$ $p=0,999$ experience: Not calculate		

3.6. Views of teachers on reading professional publications

As seen in Table 6, majority of teachers (85,7%) regards insufficient the number of professional publications. The relation between SES and their answers is significant. Teachers working in the schools with lower SES do not assume that the number of professional journals is insufficient ($x^2=16,127$ $p=0,0001$).

72,4% of teachers stated that they could not find the topics they needed. The relation between SES of the school and the teachers' answers is important. The teachers of the schools with medium SES, stated that they couldn't reach to professional publications ($x^2=26,383$ $p=0,0001$).

82,9% of teachers stated that they could not access to professional publications . Regarding this aspect, the relation between the gender of teachers and answers is significant. Female teachers could reach professional publications easier ($x^2=9,385$ $p=0,009$).

Nearly half of the teachers (47,7%) stated that not following professional publication affects themselves at a medium level. According to SES of the school, the answer of teachers vary significantly ($x^2=24,509$ $p=0,0001$). The teachers working in the schools higher SES stated that not following professional publications, do not affect themselves in a negative way (50,4%).

Table-6. Views of Teachers Regarding Professional Publications

1-Sufficient of the number of professional publications	insufficient	less	fair	high	very sufficient
	f	372	59	---	---
	%	85,7	13,6		
	SES:	x ² =16,127 p=0,0001**			
	gender:	x ² =0,204 p=0,651			
	experience:	x ² =2,903 p=0,407			
2-Finding the necessary topics in the professional publications	I could not find	ess	fair	hair	frequently
	f	314	55	34	19
	%	72,4	12,7	7,8	4,4
	SES:	x ² =25,757 p=0,0001**			
	sex:	x ² =0,059 p=0,996			
	experience:	x ² =nat calculate			
3-Easy access to professional publications	Yes	No	no idea		
	f	59	360	15	
	%	13,6	82,9	3,5	
	SES:	x ² =1,546 p=0,818			
	gender:	x ² =9,365 p=0,009**			
	experience:	Not calculate			
4-The effects of not following professional publications on teacher	no effect	less	fair	high	very high effect
	f	158	25	207	25
	%	36,4	5,8	47,7	5,8
	SES:	x ² =24,509 p=0,0001**			
	gender:	x ² =5,155 p=0,161			
	experience:	Not calculate			

3.7. The expectations of teachers from MNE regarding professional publications

As seen in Table-7, the expectations of teachers from the Ministry are as follows; The Ministry should provide lower-price sales to teachers (20%), new publications should be sent to schools (19,4%), the list of new publications and the places from where these could be bought should be sent to schools (17,7%). The relation

between SES of the school and the expectations of the teachers is found out significant. In the schools with lower SES, teachers suggest that, the name of the new publications and their place's lists are send to schools (x²=63,288 p=0,0001).

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Table-7. The Expectations of Teachers from MNE Regarding Professional Publications

	f	%
1-The list of new publications and the places from where these could be bought should be sent to schools.	77	17,7
2-Summary of the new publications should be published in the teachers and education journals.	58	13,4
3-The Ministry should provide lower-price sales to teachers	87	20,0
4-Teacher sections should be in the library.	32	7,4
5-Seminars should be organized about the newness of education.	47	10,8
6-New publications should be sent to schools	84	19,4
	SES: x ² =63,288 p=0,0001**	
	gender: x ² =1,646 p=0,836	
	experience: Not calculate	

** Different important

4. DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study is conducted to determine the professional publications that are familiar to teachers, to determine their needs regarding publications and to emphasise the importance of reading. Data are obtained through administration of an questionnaire to be 434 teachers. Some items were not answered by the teachers involved. It is regarded as another interesting aspect of the study.

Some of the findings are as follows: Teachers stated that they could not read professional publications frequently (50,5 %). They indicated its reason as their inability to access these publications (68,9 %). However the Basic National Education Law states that "the Ministry of National Education is assigned to provide and develop the reference books and supplementary books for teachers" (28). Many researches agree that for teachers, reading continuously is important but they do not read sufficiently. For Turgut (1), teachers are one of those professionals read less. There is no reason not to read. The teacher who does not read himself/herself can not recommend his/her students to read (29). Teachers who know that they can not be removed do not develop themselves (30). Continuous learning increase the performance of the school (11).

MNE also plays a significant role in reading the professional publications. It is the duty of the Department of Publications to procure and distribute the appropriate printed books and documents (28). However the findings indicate that this duty is not achieved completely. The Ministry has not gave importance to the publishing professional books (31). The teachers involved stated that they often read the news magazines and the autobiographical books and that they preferred to read *Hürriyet* among the other newspapers. In another study, it was found out that *Milliyet* and *Sabah*, give positive messages to the readers whereas, *Hürriyet* and radical negative messages (32).

According to the results of our study, teachers expressed that the number of professional publications is not high. They could not find the necessary topics in professional publications. Also they can not reach such publications easily. However they do not think that not following professional publications affects themselves severely. In another study similar conclusions are found out: Teachers are described themselves very well whatever, their conditions (33). However they have some inefficiencies in several aspects (34).

As seen in Table-5, teachers want to read the articles on classroom management, education methods and techniques, innovations in education. Such needs must be taken into consideration. It is the duty of the Department of Publications to implement the service of being publishing house.

It is understood that teachers expect from the Ministry of National Education the followings; publications should be sold to teachers at a lower price, new publications should be sent to schools, list showing new publications should be sent to schools. But the Ministry of National Education implements some improper activities affecting from the political powers (35).

According to the results of our study, SES of the school is observed as having impacts on the teachers' answers. The effects of gender and experience are as follows; experienced teachers read more but they complain about not having sufficient time to read. Male teachers' reading habit is not so high. Female teachers access to publications more easily.

The followings are suggested based on the study findings: The number of professional publications should be increased. Professional libraries should be created in provinces and districts to provide teachers with publications. The topics that teachers want to read should be announced to authors. Publications should be sold to teachers at a lower price rate. Lists of new publications should be sent to schools.

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