

The Opinions of Teachers and Head Teachers about Head Teacher Competencies in Turkey

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The future of a country depends on the education of the citizens. Education assures the future of the community and provides its continuity. For that reason, education managers, i.e. head teachers, responsible for education institutes have important responsibilities. Head teachers should have certain competencies in order to cope with these responsibilities (Henden 1995).

The education system is in continuous interaction with social, political, economical systems, which surround it. Affecting education system, the changes and developments in those systems cause various expectations and rise in the current expectations in education systems. Satisfying these expectations necessitates qualified leader managers (Sahin 2000). Headteachers should have responsibilities in the development of the quality of education and share these responsibilities with teachers. Head teachers should be the education leaders who try to create a school climate and a learningcentred atmosphere that encourage professional development of the teachers and the highest success level of the students (Karip and Koksal 1996, Dunham 1984). In addition, the head teachers need to possess some competencies such as human resources management, financial resources management, instructional leadership, etc. (Hale and Moorman 2003). Competence, which consists of two components, namely knowledge and skill, is defined as "possessing the necessary knowledge and skill to be able to exhibit a behaviour" (Basaran 2000). This situation necessitates that head teachers need to be trained in both cognitive and psycho-motor competencies (Donmez 2002). However, there are different views on which competencies head teachers should possess. Especially in studies done recently, head teachers are referred to as school leaders (Daresh 1999, Malone and Caddell 2000, Morris 1999, Murphy 1998; Stronge 1998).

Griffith, Stouth and Forsyth (1988), who highlight the importance of head teachers acting as leaders, emphasize

the fact that educational administrator training programmes should be based on five aspects; theoretical, technical, problem-solving, controlled applications and completion projects which offer chance to exhibit acquired skills. The responsibilities and duties of headteachers have been summarized under five similar categories by Aydin (1988). These are "working effectively with people", "an effective business management", "preparing a sufficient school building and environment", "developing the education program" and "serving the profession".

The most important difference between educational organizations and other organizations is that educational services are directly related with people and are the result of interpersonal interaction (Taymaz 1995). That is why it is essential for a head teacher to work effectively with school staff, students, parents and outside people who can aid him in achieving educational aims (Basaran 2000). Those outside people can be the staff of other schools, people working at higher educational institutions such as town, city or ministry organizations, or people working in other organization in that area. Being able to work effectively with those people who have various characteristics and expectations gives the school administrator the chance to set-up a positive learning environment and to receive help in solving problems faced at school (Balci 2001).

In education, which is defined as "the process of changing the individual's behaviours towards wanted behaviours" (Erturk 1977), it is important to provide the necessary tools and materials and to use those effectively in order to achieve wanted objectives. Besides materials and tools, cooperation is also needed for setting-up the educational environment, for maintenance and control, and for sharing materials and tools with institutions nearby (Taymaz 1995). Thus, despite being an organization that works for public interest, like profit organizations, schools also carry out activities such as

supplying monetary resources, effective use, and employer services. To be able to achieve the educational aims, which are the reason of existence of schools, the head teacher has to realize these activities.

It is said that schools, as the most functional and concrete organizations of the educational system, determine their own activity borders and environment (Bursalioglu 1999, Acikalin 1995). Suitable physical arrangements are needed so that students can acquire behaviours in accordance with the identified aims (Tutkun 2002, Basar 2001). It is expected that the teacher does the necessary physical arrangements in the educational setting, as a part of classroom management (Basar 2001, Aydin 1998). However, for the teacher to be able to make those arrangements suitable for his/her course, school administration needs to keep the school and its environment at a satisfactory condition. It is the responsibility of the school administration to supply the equipment needed by the learners, to search for places that might serve educational purposes... both inside and outside the school building (Balci 2001).

Head teachers are the first responsible for ensuring that curriculum are applied and developed in educational institutions. When starting with curriculum development in an educational institution, it is important that the institution responsible, i.e. head teacher, considers it essential. Unless the head teacher is interested and willing, starting the curriculum development process is impossible.

Head teachers' inadequacies and deficiencies related to curriculum development can hinder the curriculum development process. Demirel (1999) lists the impediments in curriculum development caused by the attitude and behaviour of the head teachers as follows:

- Giving insufficient information to the school personnel about the curriculum development process at school,
- Not considering the curriculum development process as part of the teachers' duties and responsibilities,
- Not taking any precautions to ensure teacher participation in the curriculum development process, or not eliminating teachers' negative attitudes towards curriculum development,
- Not supporting the curriculum development staff with the necessary hardware and software.

Every head teacher would want the success of the students. For this wish and expectation to come true, head teachers need to possess the necessary competencies regarding curriculum development, which meets all the conditions needed for students' learning.

Headteachers, besides being responsible for people, physical environment (setting up the learning environment and using the environment effectively), and programme, are also expected to enlarge their knowledge as educators, share their knowledge with their colleagues and engage in educational activities at large. As a pre-requisite to those duties which can be put under the heading of "Serving the profession", head teachers can follow the literature on school problems and education, carry out research, share the knowledge gained from those with others (teachers, parents, other people), organize conferences on educational topics, etc. (Aydin 1988).

Head teachers in Turkey and their training

In Turkey, the common view is that leadership does not have a school, therefore, the training of education administrators in general, and head teachers in specific has been neglected for many years (Agaoglu, Gultekin and Cubukcu 2002). Even

though there are undergraduate programmes in existence for about 40 years in training headteachers, the Turkish Educational System failed to make use of the people who completed those programmes (Isik 2002). It can be claimed that this is the result of the fact that educational leadership is not being considered as an occupation.

Together with the effect of globalization, the Turkish Educational System, with its mechanism has been the centre of discussions, and the developments in educational and administrative sciences have made existing applications insufficient. This situation has led to a new system search, and thus a search for educational leaders who will solve the chaos in the system and lead it towards the future (Ozden 1998).

In the centre of this search, there are headteachers and their training (Karip 2004), because headteachers are expected to play an important role in improving quality in schools as they are the ones who are responsible for establishing an environment that encourages students to learn better and for giving the necessary support for better learning (Lodge 1998). This fact has led to a change in rules governing head teacher appointments, which once was done considering teaching experience only. Furthermore, an attempt is being made to eliminate the mismatch between scientific studies up to 1990's and the current applications in the system (Isik 2003).

As a result of a cooperative work with the Ministry of National Education and Higher Education Institution, the "Legislation on Appointing Educational Institution Administrators for the Ministry of National Education and their Location Change" was put into effect on 23.09.1998, Official Gazette 23472. A two-step examination system was added as a prerequisite to be head teacher. The candidates were expected to get a minimum score of 70 in the first exam to be entitled to join an in-service training programme of 120 hours (head teacher training programme), run in cooperation with universities. In the second part, they were again expected to get a minimum score of 70 to be appointed headteacher (Celik 2001).

The 120-hour in-service training programme prepared in cooperation with the Ministry and Higher Education Institution covered the following subjects (MNE 1999):

- Foundations of educational administration
- Field and content of administration sciences
- Human right and democracy
- School community relations
- Communication and social interaction skills
- Theories and techniques of teaching
- Change and reform
- Human resources management
- Supervision and evaluation
- Counselling
- Administration law

This arrangement has been considered by researchers in the area of educational administration as a starting point for school administration to become an occupation. However, some problems have been observed in the initial applications. Besides delayed appointments, head teacher candidates criticized that the training programme was too short and the course lacked application (Karip and Koksall 1996).

In order to eliminate these problems and criticism, the "Legislation on Appointing Educational Administrators for the Ministry of National Education and their Location Change" were adapted and put into effect on 11.01.2004, Official Gazette 25343. This legislation continued the obligation for the in-service training programme; however started the process of becoming a head teacher from the position of assistant head teacher, which requires success in an exam.

Although some applications were made related to these

Legislations, some problems were observed about pre-service and in-service education of headteachers because of neglected competencies and standards. In the light of these reasons, a descriptive study was designed to determine the opinions of teachers about what competencies their head teachers have and the opinions of headteachers about having their own competencies.

This research aims at identifying teachers' and head teachers' opinions on the extent to which headteachers' competencies. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What are the teachers' opinions on the extent to which head teachers possess competencies, and do these show any differences with respect to
 - a. Seniority
 - b. Job status?
2. What are head teachers' own opinions about the extent to which they possess competencies, and do these show any differences with respect to
 - a. Seniority
 - b. Educational grade of their duty?
3. Is there a significant difference between the opinions of teachers and the opinions of head teachers regarding the extent to which head teachers possess these competencies?

Method

In this descriptive study, which aims at determining the opinions of teachers and headteachers on head teachers' competency level, the population consists of the 110 head teachers and 4571 teachers working in Eskisehir in the academic year of 2004-2005 Fall. For economical purposes, instead of reaching all teachers, a sample group was formed. But, no sampling was done to get more reliable results from the headteachers' group, "Self-Sampling Population" (Cilenti 1979) has been taken as the sample group of the study (Gay and Airasian 2000). In the sampling process, for primary education institutions, a random selection of one school for each of the seven education regions was made, which resulted in 7 primary schools; for secondary education institutions, one school for each of the three different types of educational areas (general, foreign language-based, and vocational education) were selected. As a result of this sampling, a subject group of 428 teachers working at 10 different schools and 110 headteachers was established.

The data was collected through "Head Teacher's Competencies Inventory" prepared by Agaoglu, Gultekin and Cubukcu (2002), which was developed based on the views of teachers, educational administration experts and headteachers. In this study, it is used two different versions of the inventory, one for teachers and one for headteachers. In the inventory for the teachers, Part I, which is about personal information, contains two items, which elicit seniority in teaching and job status; in the inventory for headteachers, the same part asks for personal information about administrative seniority and the school grade they work at.

In the inventory there are 97 items gathered under five subtitles. In the light of the related literature, these five subtitles are: Interpersonal communication and working effectively (21 items); effective business management (20 items); serving the profession (11 items); preparing an adequate school building and environment (22 items) and developing curriculum (23 items). The items in the inventory have been ranked from positive to negative, corresponding to the scores of 4, 3, 2, and 1, matching answers to this scale being "Completely Agree", "Agree", "Disagree", and "Completely Disagree". In order to avoid neutral indications, "Neutral" as an answer was not included

in the scale (Bulbul 1996). The internal validity of the items in the inventory has been found to be .9805, which is acceptable according to the values of Cronbach Alpha (Cronbach 1990).

In the data collection process, the researcher delivered the inventory of the teachers by going to the schools during May 1-15, 2005; and 288 inventories were returned. The inventory for headteachers was delivered during the "Headteachers' Meeting" held by the National Education Directorship on June 3, 2005. Out of the 110 headteachers who attended the meeting, 75 returned the inventory. After having collected the inventories, an examination was done to eliminate unacceptable inventories, thus 258 inventories for teachers and 60 for headteachers were evaluated. Table 1 demonstrates the personal information distribution of the teachers and headteachers sample groups.

Table 1 Teachers' and school administrators' distribution based on personal information

Personal Information	Teachers (n= 258)		Headteachers (n= 60)	
	n	%	n	%
SENIORITY				
5 years and less	16	6,20	14	23,33
6-10 years	79	30,62	11	18,33
11-15 years	50	19,38	7	11,67
16-20 years	42	16,28	8	13,33
20 years and above	71	27,52	20	33,33
JOB STATUS				
Primary Education	63	24,42	---	---
Teacher	195	75,58	---	---
Subject Teacher				
EDUCATIONAL GRADE				
Primary Education	---	---	41	68,33
Secondary Education	---	---	19	31,67

As can be seen in Table 1, 30,62% of the teachers are in the 6-10 year seniority group. The rest is as follows: 6,20% have seniority of less than 5 years, 19,38% between 11-15 years, 16,28% are in the rank between 16-20 years, and 27,52% of the teachers have a seniority of above 21 years. When the distribution of seniority of head teachers is examined, it can be seen that 33,33% are in the above 21 years of seniority group. The rest is as follows: 23,33% have seniority of 5 years and less than 5 years, 18,33% between 6-10 years group, 11,67% between 11-15 years group and 13,33% with those who have seniority between 16-20 years.

In terms of their job status, one quarter of the teachers (24,42%) are primary education teachers whereas three-quarters (75,58%) are subject teachers. Two thirds (68,33%) of the headteachers are working at primary schools whereas about one third (31,67%) is working at secondary schools.

In the first phase of data analysis, all inventories were grouped and numbered so as to get them ready for data entry. In this study, the following procedure was followed to find each individual's score: as a 4 point Likert-Scale was used, 0,75 was found by dividing 3 as the interval value by 4. Then, 72,75 was found as the interval value by multiplying this value with 97, which is the lowest score than can be obtained in the inventory.

In the analysis of the data, besides descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations, comparative group statistics such as T-test for independent group-same variance and one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) techniques were used. In all statistical analysis, .05 was taken as the level of significance.

Findings and interpretations

The findings and the interpretations arrived at after the statistical analysis, have been discussed following the order of the sub-aims of the study.

Teachers' opinions on head teachers' competencies

The first research question of the study was about teachers' opinions on the extent to which head teachers possess competencies. In order to answer this question, the means and standard deviations of the 97 items in the teachers' inventory were calculated. Table 2 shows these values.

As Table 2 demonstrates, the mean and standard deviation of teachers' opinions on the extent to which headteachers possess competencies are (X) 279,44 and (Sd) 59,01, respectively. When analysed in terms of teacher seniority, these means are: 259,75 for the teachers with a seniority less than 5 years; 273,95 for teachers with a seniority between 6-10 years; 276,18 for the teachers with a seniority between 11-15 years; 281,29 for teachers with a seniority between 16-20 years; and 291,44 for teachers with a seniority above 21 years. According to job status, the mean for primary education teachers is 286,63, whereas the mean for subject teachers is 277,11. In the light of the score intervals mentioned in the methodology section, it can be claimed that these findings suggest that teachers, in general, see the headteachers' competencies as adequate, which supports the results of other studies conducted in Turkey (Dagli 2000, Donmez 2002, Yenipinar 1998).

Table 2 indicated that teachers with higher seniority, when compared to the ones with less experience; and subject teachers when compared to primary education teachers have more positive views on school administrators' competency levels. However, further calculations have been made to see whether these mean differences are also statistically significant. To find out whether there is a meaningful difference in terms of teachers' opinions in relation to their job status, t-test was carried out. The results of the t-test are demonstrated in Table 3.

It can be said that there is no meaningful difference between the opinions of subject teachers and primary education teachers regarding head teachers' competency levels. Even though there is a slight difference in the means between the two groups, this difference is not statistically significant. These findings support the results of Daglı (2000) and Memisoglu (2004). The fact that subject teachers' mean is higher than the primary education teachers can be claimed to be the result of subject teachers' leaving school right after their classes are over. Thus, it can be suggested that their evaluations of head teachers' competencies may be different than the ones of primary school teachers.

Table 4 shows the ANOVA test results regarding teachers' opinions on headteachers competencies based on seniority variable.

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference between teachers' opinions on head teachers' competencies with respect to seniority. The finding related to seniority of teachers supports the results of Memisoglu (2004) and Arslan and Baytekin (2004); however, contradicts with the results of Erarslan (2003). This contradiction may be due to the difference in the sample group of the study.

In general, the findings related to the first sub-aim of the study highlight the fact that, irrespective of their job status or seniority, teachers find the competency levels of the headteachers as sufficient. The results obtained in this study are for most in accordance with other studies carried out in the areas of head teacher competencies, their efficiency and leadership qualifications (Arslan and Baytekin 2004, Buyukdogan 2003, Dagli 2000, Donmez 2000, Memisoglu 2004, Yenipinar1998). The reason why teachers consider head teachers sufficient despite some insufficiencies, may be is that headteachers, within current conditions, try to do their best to

fulfil expectations.

Headteachers' opinions on their own competency levels

The second research question required the identification of head teachers' opinions on their own competency levels. To answer this question, the means and standard deviations of the 97 items in the head teachers' inventory were calculated. Table 5 shows the results of these calculations.

In Table 5, we can see that the mean and standard deviation values for head teachers' opinions on their own competencies are (X) 312,56 and (Sd) 36,14, respectively. When this general average is analysed based on administrative seniority, it can be seen that the mean of the ones with less than 5 years of administrative seniority is (X) 313,36; the mean of headteachers with a seniority between 6-10 years is (X) 313,36; the mean for the ones with an administrative seniority between 11-15 years is (X) 312,21; the administrators with a seniority between 16-20 years have a mean of 309,13; and headteachers with a seniority of more than 21 years have a mean of 312,56. With respect to the educational institution grade, primary school headteachers' opinions have a mean of 315,26; secondary school headteachers' mean is (X) 306,74. When these values are matched to the score intervals mentioned in the Methodology section, it could be said that head teachers' opinions about their own competency level is close to "Completely Adequate". This finding supports the results of Donmez (2002), who conducted a study on headteachers' competencies. Table 5 refers to slight differences in the means of head teachers' opinions; however further calculations have been done to find out whether these differences are statistically significant. Table 6 shows the t-test results, which indicate whether there is a meaningful difference in head teachers' opinions on their own competencies when educational grade is considered.

In Table 6, it can be seen that there is no meaningful difference between primary and secondary school head teachers' opinions on their own competency levels, despite the slight difference observed in the means.

Table 7 demonstrates the ANOVA test results related to headteachers' opinions on their own competencies in relation to their administrative seniority.

From Table 7, it can be understood that there is no meaningful difference in terms of headteachers' opinions on their own competencies with respect to administrative seniority. The finding that groups with varying years of seniority do not show differences among themselves regarding their opinions is in accordance with the findings of Tas (2003); however, contradict with the results of Arslan and Baytekin (2004) and Izgar et al. (2004). Thus, for the second sub-aim of the research, it can be concluded that head teachers' opinions on their own competency level do not show any differences in terms of the educational institution they work for or the administrative seniority.

Teachers' and head teachers' opinions on head teachers' competencies

The final aim of the research was to find out whether teachers' opinions and head teachers' opinions on head teachers' competencies differ from each other. Table 8 shows the t-test results of this comparison.

As can be seen from Table 8, there is a significant difference between the opinions of the teachers and the opinions of the headteachers regarding headteachers' competencies. This difference refers to an advantage on the side of the head teachers. This result supports many other similar studies conducted in Turkey (Donmez 2002, Agaoglu and Namli1998, Arslan and Baytekin 2004, Izgar et al. 2004). This

can be interpreted as headteachers considering themselves as more competent than the way teachers perceive them. The fact that individuals, while evaluating themselves fail to be objective enough, may also have led to such a result. For self-evaluation to be done, certain competencies need to have been acquired, the first being honest with oneself and to know oneself well enough. Moreover, there need to be objective criteria regarding evaluation. That is why in studies where competency determination is the aim, usually external evaluators are used as well. Therefore, in this study, teachers who the head teachers work with, have also been included. However, in cases of hierarchical relationships, it is possible for individuals to reflect their prior experience into the evaluations. This drawback could be eliminated by explaining in detail the aim of the study, by developing objective criteria, etc.

Another reason why there is a difference between teachers' and head teachers' opinions on head teachers' competencies is that, in the Turkish Educational System, self-evaluation is just being introduced and integrated into performance evaluation studies. It is expected that opinions differences would decrease as those studies continue and individuals gain knowledge and experience in self-evaluation.

Results and suggestions

As a result of the study conducted to determine teachers and head teachers' opinions on head teachers' competencies has borne out the following results:

Teachers view head teachers' administrative competencies as sufficient, which does not vary with respect to teaching seniority or job status.

Head teachers view their own administrative competencies close to completely sufficient, which does not vary with respect to the school they work at or their administrative seniority.

However, teachers' and head teachers' opinions on head teachers' competencies show a meaningful difference. Head teachers perceive themselves as more competent than the way teachers perceive them. This difference is evident in all parts of the inventory, except for the third part, which is "Serving the profession".

As a result of the results arrived at in this study, the following suggestions can be made:

- For external generalizations, opinions of parents, students, inspectors and others need to be determined.
- Qualitative research based on observations and interviewing techniques is necessary to find out whether headteachers exhibit the competencies they claim to possess as behaviour.
- During performance evaluations, administrative competencies should be taken into account.
- Pre-service and in-service training programs need to be organized so as to make headteachers acquire administrative competencies.

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