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The meanings attributed to the future characteristics of teachers by prospective teachers: a concept map study

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Abstract

It is a concern that what kind of behavioral characteristics will be displayed by teachers in the future. Changes in economic conditions will undoubtedly have an impact on behaviors, too. This paper includes a discussion on testing whether there will be any change in future characteristics of teachers or not, and if yes, whether they will be positive or negative. In this paper, future behaviors of teachers have been evaluated by prospective teachers. The study has been designed with a qualitative model and we have collected the data through open-ended interview forms prepared with learned opinions. The data has been assessed via content analysis and we have made an attempt to picture the outlook of teacher behaviors regarding the future by making use of concept map. This paper suggests that mostly some changes will be observed in teacher behaviors in the future and they will be both negative and positive. It is also a possibility that there will not be any changes in teacher behaviors. The underlying reasons for this are generally related with qualitative variables. The positive characteristics expected from teachers are personal, occupational, communicational and actual. It is thought that teachers may display negative personal, occupational and communicational characteristics.

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Keywords: The future features of teachers; concept map

1. Introduction

It is a concern that what kind of behavioral characteristics will be displayed by teachers in the future. Rapid scientific and technological change affects behavioral and social values, too. Changes in economic conditions will also undoubtedly have an impact on behaviors. It is rather difficult to predict whether there will be any change in future characteristics of teachers or not, and if yes, whether they will be positive or negative. In order to do this, it is necessary to review the studies on teacher behaviors which have been carried out up to present in a long historical process. When one reviews the previous studies on teacher behaviors in Turkey, he/she can observe that the sensitivity regarding the issue dates back to recent times (Erturk, 1970, 1986; Kucukkahmet, 1976; Paykoc, 1981; Senemoglu, 1984; Gozutok, 1988; Pektas, 1989; Nas, 1989; Sonmez, 1992; Gurkan, 1993; Ergun ve Duman; 1998, 2000; Terzi, 2000; Geban, Cicek, Basaran, Demirbas and Maden, 2001; Can, 2004; MEB, 2004; Erdogan, 2006). It

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is seen that there has been a focus on studies cataloging teacher abilities especially in the last decade. MEB, 2004; MEB (EARGED), 2001.

These studies are followed by many other (nearly 170) which test the teacher behaviors through parameters such as classroom activities and behaviors, communication, student achievement, class management, democratic attitudes and behaviors, etc. (<http://tez2.yok.gov.tr/>)^{**}

On the other hand, in studies which test the teacher beliefs about learning and teaching via a constructivist perspective (Prawat, 1992) the general structure of behaviors are examined while in cognitive studies which test the correlation between teacher opinions and behaviors the mental processes of teacher's behaviors in classroom is examined (Jansma, Wubbels, Korthagen and Dolk (1997). In addition to all these, there are also more radical perspectives on teacher behaviors (Phtiaka, 2002; Anderson, Blumenfeld, Pintrich, Clark, Marx, Peterson, 1995; Burgess and Carter, 1992).

It is thought that there is a limited number of studies on testing how teacher behaviors may be shaped in the future (Horozoglu, 1998). According to Biller (1995), a teacher of 21st century should be "Philosophical Social Worker". The reason for this is that recent happenings suggest a need for a new kind of teacher (Cermik and Turan, 1997). It is possible to use the studies on teacher metaphor (Saban, Kocbeker ve Saban, 2006; Ocak ve Gunduz, 2006; Saban, 2004) since they give a clue about the transformation of teacher behaviors in the future. On the other hand, these studies have limitations in terms of the opinions of prospective teachers, too (Celikten, 2006). It is possible to come across with studies on characteristics of prospective teachers, for example creativity, (Oral, 2006) and their beliefs about subject instruction (for example chemistry instruction) (Boz and Uzuntiryaki, 2006).

In their studies, Bronwlee, Purdie and Boulton-Lewis (2003) state that the prospective teachers' knowledge about learning has been undergoing a change. From this point of view, it can be argued that changes will also be observed in how prospective teachers will regard their profession in the future. Poulou (2005) studied the emotional and behavioral difficulties of prospective teachers. In this context, it can be thought that the basic variables which will determine the prospective teachers' behaviors in the future are the emphasis that learning to teach is the primary difficulty in education (Sumara and Luce-Kapler, 1996) and the factors affecting the learning world of teachers (Kelly, 2006).

It is possible to see that concept maps are commonly used in pedagogy studies and especially in studies on teaching concepts to students and problems related to their concept errors (Sen and Ozgun-Koca, 2003). Developed by Novak and Gowin (1984) primarily as an instruction instrument, the method "concept map" is also used today as a measuring instrument in qualitative studies. Probably the biggest contribution of concept maps to pedagogic studies is that they can be used as a valid and reliable assessment and especially research instrument (Novak and Gowin, 1984).

Since comprehending the concepts are necessary for comprehending the principles, solving the problems and understanding the world (Senemoglu, 2001:513), it does not seem irrational to study the future meanings of teacher behaviors through the use of concept maps. A concept map is a graphical description which hierarchically organizes the relations between an individual's thoughts in his/her long-term memory (Jacobs, Joy and Douglas 2002). Concept maps organize knowledge and develop learner skills in associating and distinguishing the concepts (Kalayci, 2001).

In his study on prospective teachers' beliefs about their changing roles, Von Wright (1997) reaches the following conclusions: During their education, prospective teachers tend to carry with them explicit expectations which strongly reflect the values of what is considered pedagogically correct. At the same time students express implicit beliefs and underlying conceptions of human development, which are incoherent in many cases. Besides, the pedagogically correct beliefs may change, but implicit beliefs as affinity to certain pedagogical discourses are not changed or brought to awareness unless they are seriously challenged and problematised. Yet these beliefs direct the students' attention. Changing demands on the teacher role bring about expectations on a shift in thinking about teaching and learning. Teacher education and educators can play important roles in making the students aware of their everyday beliefs and eventually change them.

Determining the perceptions in the change of teacher behaviors in the future can play a substantial role by providing teacher training systems with necessary data. Concept maps about future characteristics of teachers may

^{**} The studies mentioned have been analyzed by the researcher while conducting the study. But, it has not been possible to cite all the studies in the text due to the lack of page restriction in the full text. If interested, the reference list on teacher behaviors can be requested from the researcher through e-mail.

generate a picture in their minds regarding their roles in the future. The meaning to be inferred from this picture may prove an inspiration for the studies of teacher trainers. The model of the study is presented below.

2. Methodology

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the prospective teachers' opinions regarding the potential change in teacher characteristics in the future. This paper tries to shed light on the question how prospective teachers explain the future characteristics of teachers. Modeled on a qualitative method, the study includes an analysis into the meanings attributed to future characteristics of teachers by prospective teachers.

Proofs of validity of the study were tested by learned opinion and we used semi-structured interview forms. For analyzing the data, we benefited from the analysis program Hyperresearch. After the metaphors determined were categorized through content analysis, we made an attempt to produce a conceptual picture of meanings attributed to future characteristics of teachers through use of the method "concept map".

During the reliability analysis of the study, we made an effort to eliminate the likelihood of prospective teachers' being involuntary so as to collect proofs regarding internal consistency (credibility). In order to collect evidence concerning external consistency (transferability), we resorted to learned opinion. Also, specialist approval was ensured for supporting whether the findings will have generalisable characteristics or not when this kind of study is conducted within a different context.

The study was conducted in Gaziosmanpasa University, Faculty of Education, during spring term of the Education Season 2007-2008. Upon an analysis into the population, we determined the sample through snowball method and received the opinion of 221 prospective teachers of 4th grades. Since the aim is only to reach conceptual interpretations, statistical data was not included in the paper.

3. Basic Conceptual Structure in Meanings Attributed to Teacher Characteristics (please, see the figure 1)

Research findings suggest that there was three categorical formations regarding what kind of behavioral characteristics will be exhibited by teachers in the future. These formations are opinions about potential positive and negative characteristics concerning that teacher behaviors will experience progress in the future, and reasons for the fact that teacher behaviors will not experience any progress.

Since personal characteristics, one of positive teacher characteristics likely to occur in the future, seem both personal and social, we made an attempt to express them in two basic concepts. Professional characteristics were grouped under four categories as technical category referring to the professional knowledge and background, self-oriented professional relations, student-oriented professional relations and modern professional understanding. Communicational characteristics were defined under one single category while intellectual characteristics were explained in two ways, actual and intellectual.

Since personal characteristics, one of negative teacher characteristics likely to occur in the future, seem dependent and asocial, we made an attempt to express them in two basic concepts. Professional characteristics were categorized technically as professional knowledge and equipment while other characteristics were classified as related with student and directly related with themselves. This section also includes negative communicational characteristics, but since attitudes are already negative, no intellectual skills came into the picture.

All expressions regarding that no change will be experienced in future characteristics of teachers represent descriptions which are both full of concern and negative. It can be said that the reason why there will not be any positive changes in the future is the conceptual idea that problems caused by educational system will get worse and worse.

The fact that meanings attributed to future characteristics of teachers are mostly interpreted with positive concepts is a pleasing result for teacher training. In addition, formations of pessimistic concepts regarding the future give one the impression that teaching occupation may bring about new problems in terms of professionalization. The fact that an extremely selective and difficult examination system will be waiting for prospective teachers who have graduated from teacher institutions in Turkey might have led to this anxiety.

3.1. Detailed Explanation into Meanings Attributed to Teacher Characteristics (please, see the figure 2)

3.1.1. Positive Characteristics

Individual characteristics included among positive teacher characteristics in the future are being consistent, self-confident, self-aware, hopeful, experienced, responsible, humanistic, optimistic, self-assured, calm and well-

behaved. Considering these characteristics, it can be argued that teachers of the future will be equipped with balanced personal characteristics. It can be said that a positive perspective on the future has been conceptualized individualistically. It is also predicted that social personal characteristics of the future will include being kind, flexible, understanding, model, merciful, self-sacrificing, good-humored, fair, patient, affectionate, soft-spoken, charismatic, respectful, reliable, objective, sincere, recognizing their mistakes. From that point of view, we can say that teachers of the future will be equipped with extroversive and admirable personal characteristics.

Positive professional characteristics of teachers of the future will require teachers to be able to be technically professional, to be able to use technology, to think practically, to act well-planned and programmed, to master the field, to attach importance to his/her profession and not to work for money, to work efficiently, to use unusual teaching techniques, to give priority to education rather than instruction, not to present the information in a plain way, to respond to children's development, to be ready, to mind the interests and abilities, to be a guide, to be against the violence and beating, not to be authoritarian. These characteristics suggest that the teaching occupation will be carried out in the future through more pedagogic and scientific criteria. Teachers of the future will have their own professional characteristics such as being able to speak the mother tongue fluently, being used to reading, studying and researching and being free of vices. It can be said that the teachers of the future will have highly intellectual skills and will allocate more time for improving themselves. The teachers of the future are thought to have positive behavioral characteristics which wend their way directly to their students such as making their students actual, acting like parents, addressing them by their names, caring about their problems, making them respectful and honorable, not being frightening, analyzing their personal characteristics, being leader/coach, not being repressive, not judging without questioning, having a sense of discipline which includes love and authority together, attaching importance to the students' opinions, being directive and advising, treating them as human beings, not being prescriptive, getting on with them in a friendly and amicable manner, learning together with their students, being able to take models and not being discriminative. It can be supposed that teachers will have the sense of being student-centered, a characteristic which has been mentioned continuously, in the future. It is thought that the teachers of the future will adopt a modern and original lifestyle, prefer informal outfits and not be conservative. The profile of teachers of the future is thought to represent an innovative and entrepreneurial perspective regarding their occupation.

Positive communicational characteristics of teachers of the future will base on being constructive, open to criticism, transparent, emphatic, flexible, open to dialogue and critical. It is seen that teacher characteristics regarding communication are explained with concepts which are communication-oriented as much as possible.

There is a highly strong belief in the fact that teachers will enjoy positive intellectual characteristics in the future. Teachers of the future can be said to be interested in philosophy and science, to have high cultural level, to be modern, to be free of stereotyped standards of judgments and not to be traditional, to be productive and social, to have leadership characteristics, to be conscious and entrepreneur, to embrace development and change, to be able to improve himself/herself, to be forward looking and to attach importance to Kemalist characteristics. From that point of view, it can be thought that teachers of the future will be patriotic and have an innovative perspective. Teachers of the future can be thought to have a mentality which enables them to able to use technology, to be aware of world affairs, to keep abreast of current events, to lead a satisfying life and to keep up with innovations, and therefore to display the characteristic of being a global world citizen both in a universal and local sense.

3.1.2 Negative Characteristics

Negative dependent personal characteristics of teachers of the future include being in pursuit of their interests, being brought up with parental pressure, being indifferent, not being able to take their own decisions, being imbalanced and inconsistent and being anxious. Considering these characteristics, teachers of the future are likely to have difficulty in accommodating themselves to society and to be among the types who cannot act independently due to their individual personal characteristics. It is seen, on the other hand, that asocial personal characteristics of the future will include being insincere, strict, nervous, intolerant, sulky, adamant, aggressive and disagreeable. From that point of view, teachers of the future are likely to have more introverted and problematic personal characteristics.

Negative occupational characteristics of teachers of future seem to include being information burdened rather than being educational, providing the students with less talking as a result of decent technology, working under heavier conditions, not minding children's development, believing that burden of the profession will increase, believing that the profession will lose its prestige, not loving the profession, being bluntness, occupying themselves with the increase of retirement age and being inefficient. It can be said that the teachers will experience the burnout feeling in the future, too. In addition, teachers of the future may not be able to listen to their students, may be away from them

and may not be able to make themselves listened to. Also, they may develop a negative structure, in terms of communicational abilities, in which they do not listen to their students and like talking. Teachers of the future can be said to display characteristics which prevent themselves from engaging in interaction with their students and others.

Among the reasons held by those who believe that no changes will be experienced in teacher characteristics are "No change will be experienced since teacher trainers will train them like themselves", "teachers' duties will remain the same in the future", "it is very difficult to change traditional teacher attitudes", "education is likely to be attached lesser importance", "Curriculum development will not work out unless the mindset changes", "not the curriculums implemented by teachers but teachers themselves should be trained better firstly", "faculties of education cannot train qualified teachers and those who can are classical", "no change will be observed unless the examination system changes". Prospective teachers think that the problems are mostly related with the system. The fact that prospective teachers maintain the idea that the importance should be attached to teacher training rather than curriculum development can be found interesting considering that processes of curriculum development and teacher training feed each other. When one takes into account the reasons held by those who believe that no positive progress will be observed in the future, it can be said that this might have been caused by the conceptual idea which maintains that prospective teachers will face more and more problems caused by educational system.

4. Conclusions and Further Study

This paper suggests prospective teachers believe that some positive changes will be experienced in future characteristics of teachers and these changes will be led by commonly repeated characteristics, namely being patient, affectionate, being focused on student development, being directive and leading. Prospective teachers still maintain that their occupation is not included under professional category but believe that it will be professionalized in the future. Prospective teachers think that intellectual and scientific behaviors in future characteristics of teachers will experience an increase.

Prospective teachers also point out that some negative things may be observed in the future characteristics of teachers in terms of professional, personal and communicational abilities. They believe that especially the use of technology will undermine a teacher's humanistic values and communicational characteristics. Considering the current problems of the system, prospective teachers believe, even if to a very small degree, that no positive change will be experienced in future characteristics of teachers. However, when one analyzes the concept map developed, positive characteristics stand out in the picture of the map. Considering that in each society positive and negative social norms coexist, develop or disappear, the primary conclusion of this study can be accepted as the fact that conceptual sense regarding the change in future characteristics of teachers will be positive. This can be acknowledged as an indicator which suggests teaching occupation will be developed in the future as a professionalizing occupation.

Since they believe that required importance should be attached to teacher training, prospective teachers are concerned about their occupation in the future. Behavioral models on structures and situations which may destroy a teacher's humanistic values should be prevented through the use of technology in teacher training.

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Figure 1: Conceptual relations determining future characteristics of teachers

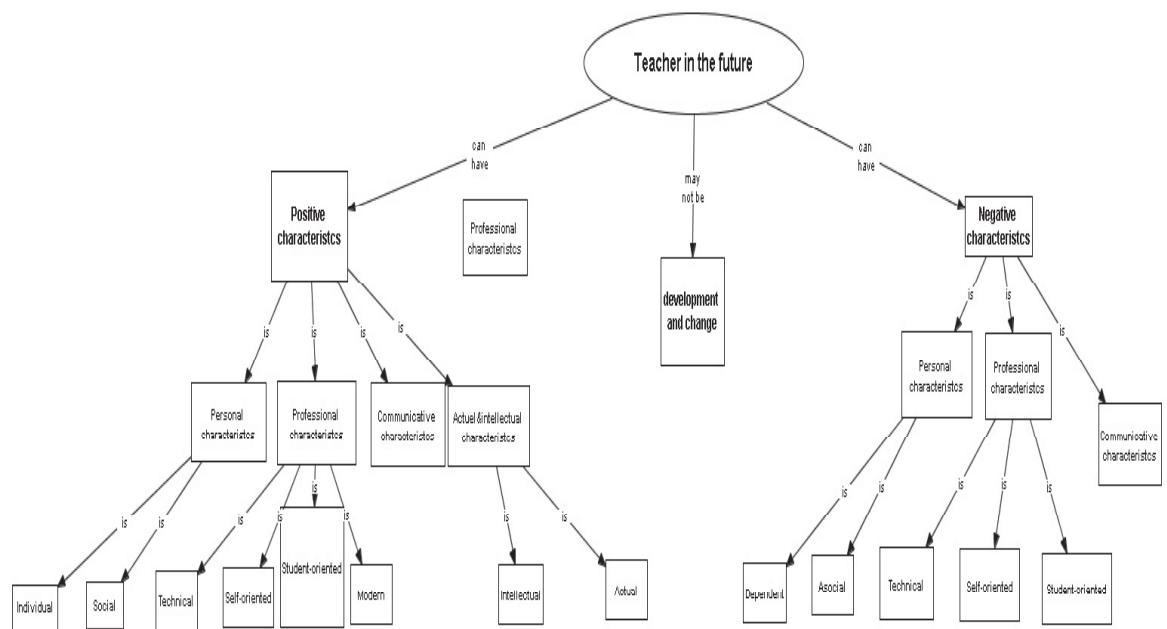


Figure 2: Profile of teacher characteristics in the future

