

Arastırma Makalesi

Öğretmenlik Mesleğinin Sosyolojik Dönüşümü

The Sociological Transformation of the Teaching Profession

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Öz

Çalışmanın amacı, çeşitli sosyal, politik ve ekonomik faktörlerin zaman içinde öğretmenlerin rolünü ve statüsünü nasıl şekillendirdiğini araştırarak öğretmenlik mesleğinin sosyolojik dönüşümünü incelemektir. Geleneksel olarak asil bir meslek olarak görülen öğretmenlik, özellikle küresel eğitim sistemlerinin yükselişi, teknolojik ilerlemeler ve değişen toplumsal beklentilerle birlikte önemli değişimler geçirmiştir. Bu çalışma, öğretmenlik uygulamalarındaki tarihsel değişimleri, öğretmenlerin mesleki kimliklerini ve çağdaş toplumda karşılaştıkları zorlukları analiz etmek için hem nitel hem de nicel yöntemler kullanmaktadır. Çalışma özellikle, öğretmenlerin özerkliğini ve mesleki özgürlüğünü değiştiren neoliberal politikaların etkisine ve standartlaştırılmış testlerin artan baskısına odaklanmaktadır. Veriler, öğretmenlerle yapılan anketler, eğitim uzmanlarıyla yapılan görüşmeler ve birçok ülkeden eğitim politikası belgelerinin analizi yoluyla toplanmıştır. Bulgular, öğretmenlerin rollerinin entelektüel liderlerden ziyade standartlaştırılmış müfredatın teknisyenleri olarak görüldüğü birçok bölgede profesyonelleşmeden uzak bir eğilim olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, şirket odaklı eğitim reformlarının artan etkisi ve öğretmenliğin bir meslek olarak değersizleştirilmesi gibi bu değişime katkıda bulunan temel faktörleri de tanımlamaktadır. Çalışma, gelecekteki öğretmen eğitimi ve politika oluşturma süreçlerine yönelik çıkarımların tartışılmasıyla son bulmaktadır ve yeni öneriler ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyolojik Dönüşüm, Öğretmenlik Mesleği, Eğitim Politikaları, Neoliberalizm, Mesleki Özerklik.

Abstract

The aim of the study is to examine the sociological transformation of the teaching profession by exploring how various social, political and economic factors have shaped the role and status of teachers over time. Traditionally seen as a noble profession, teaching has undergone significant changes, especially with the rise of global education systems, technological advances and changing societal expectations. This study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to

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analyse historical changes in teaching practices, teachers' professional identities and the challenges they face in contemporary society. In particular, the study focuses on the impact of neoliberal policies that have altered teachers' autonomy and professional freedom, and the increasing pressure of standardised testing. Data were collected through questionnaires with teachers, interviews with education experts and analyses of education policy documents from many countries. The findings reveal a trend away from professionalisation in many regions where teachers' roles are seen as technicians of standardised curricula rather than intellectual leaders. It also identifies key factors contributing to this change, such as the increasing influence of corporate-oriented educational reforms and the devaluation of teaching as a profession. The study concludes with a discussion of implications for future teacher education and policy-making processes and suggests new recommendations.

Keywords: *Sociological Transformation, Teaching Profession, Educational Policies, Neoliberalism, Professional Autonomy.*

1. Introduction

Professions are important social institutions that closely affect the position and behaviour of people in social life. In this sense, the teaching profession has a very important place in both traditional and modern societies. While in traditional societies, teaching, which generally undertakes the task of educating elites and high-level people, has a more elite position, in modern societies, the function of transferring knowledge and preparing generations for life continues to maintain its critical position by spreading to the social base. Teachers are the people with whom individuals communicate the most in their lives due to their role in basic socialisation. In this sense, they have the potential to seriously affect human life. In the later stages of modern society, with the increase in the time spent at school, the time people spend with teachers is also increasing. Today, a person in Turkey spends an average of nearly 9 years at school. For this reason, people position teachers in a privileged place in their lives (Sunar, 2020).

The teaching profession has long been one of the most fundamental pillars of society, playing a critical role in shaping the educational system and preparing future generations. However, the profession has undergone significant transformations over time, particularly in response to changes in societal values, educational policies, and global economic pressures. While teaching was traditionally regarded as a respected and autonomous profession, the advent of neoliberal educational policies in recent decades has fundamentally altered teachers' roles, professional identities, and societal perceptions. These transformations are not merely administrative or procedural; they reflect broader socio-political shifts and the impact of global economic trends on local educational systems.

Teaching has a clear and precise professional identity due to its social position and routinisation in the way it is performed (Özdemir, 2010). The teaching profession is surrounded by a world of social perception that affects teachers' behaviours and personalities. Social expectations and attributed meanings affect teachers' view of their profession and make them willing to identify with their profession. In this context, teachers have a strong professional identity that enables them to live 'as a teacher' in social life. It is known that teaching is regarded as the 'prophet's profession' in Islamic culture. In Ottoman society, teaching had a prestigious position as it undertook the function of educating the elite. In modern Turkey, the teaching profession was also seen as a profession that utilises state power or is associated with state power for a long time. Turkish modernisation positions education and school as the basic tools to modernise society and teachers as soldiers who undertake this special task. In this respect, the identity of the teacher has always been related to the knowledge and skills he/she possesses as well as the ideological and political position he/she represents. Although this mission and the meaning attributed to it have weakened over time, this historical legacy has continued to influence the social position of teaching (Sunar, 2020). In the transformation of teaching in terms of social prestige and status, the increased use of communication technologies in education, scientific developments in the fields of pedagogy, andragogy and psychology and the dissemination of this knowledge in society have a great impact (Sunar, 2023).

Pursuant to the Turkish State Personnel Law (Act N. 657), teachers are the professional group that performs all educational services (Yaman et al., 2001) acknowledging that teaching is a special profession that is charged with educational services of the state and administrative services related to them, and that qualifications that teacher candidates are supposed to own in terms of world knowledge, content-specific knowledge, and pedagogic knowledge are determined/ identified by the Ministry of National Education. Accordingly, as cited in Çelikten et al., (2005) teaching was identified as a profession that requires specialization in the act, and qualifications teachers are supposed to own could be listed in two groups as personal qualifications and professional qualifications. The authors suggest that the former requires treating students equally, sensitiveness to students' needs and interests, being able to solve the problems using scientific methods, and to predict and

interpret the direction of the social change while the latter involves teachers to have sufficient content knowledge, to be able to plan educational procedures effectively, and to have effective time management skills, to be able to track changes in students, and to have sufficient world knowledge by following developments that occur both in his/ her profession and in the World (Ünsal et al., 2017). Teachers are the basic building blocks of the education process. Educational process is directly affected by teacher characteristics, teaching styles and skills (Yaman et al., 2022).

The education, income and knowledge levels of teachers have been higher than other segments of the society for a long time. Therefore, for a large segment of the society, teaching has become an attractive profession to be reached. In this sense, as Turan (2017) and Özpolat (2002) state, the teaching profession has generally been considered as an opportunity to gain social mobility and position by people of lower and middle class origin. It can be said that the quality of the teacher is important for the development of the country and the upbringing of the generations in accordance with the conditions of the age. As it is known, the education system is only as good as the teachers. In this context, it is necessary to know the factors that pull down the prestige, image and status of the teaching profession. The factors that pull down the teaching profession are also effective in the change and transformation of the teaching profession. Although many studies have been conducted on the status of the teaching profession, the importance of this study reveals the importance of this study to measure the impact of changing conditions and conjuncture on the profession (Şahbudak & Karahan, 2024). In today's conditions, the roles and status of teaching can expand and narrow the limits of acceptance of the teaching profession in society (Uğurlu & Polat, 2011; Demir & Arı, 2013). Unfortunately, although the duties and roles of teachers have increased over time, their status has remained constant or even decreased compared to other professions (Kalin et al., 2017). It can be said that the shortage of schools can be overcome with economic support and various incentives, but it will be difficult to overcome the teacher shortage with economic power alone. For this reason, the value and status of the profession in society is of vital importance in balancing the employment and need for teachers, and this is reflected in the entire teacher training process, starting from the choice of the teaching profession and affects the development processes.

The Sociological Perspective on the Teaching Profession

From a sociological perspective, the transformation of the teaching profession is a complex process shaped by multiple factors, including political ideologies, economic shifts, and cultural norms. Education is often seen as a reflection of the social, economic, and ideological structures of society, with teachers playing a pivotal role in both transmitting knowledge and socializing future citizens. Max Weber's (1946) theory of bureaucracy provides an important framework for understanding the professionalization of teaching. According to Weber, the professionalization of occupations, including teaching, is marked by an increasing division of labor and reliance on bureaucratic structures, which in turn diminishes professional autonomy. Over time, as teachers have become more subject to bureaucratic regulations, their professional independence has been increasingly undermined, reducing teaching to a more technical, standardized form of work. A common goal of educational systems might be identified as to raise qualified and equipped individuals needed in society. Not surprisingly and undoubtedly, raising individuals in concern requires teachers to have necessary content and pedagogical knowledge. A common goal of educational systems might be identified as to raise qualified and equipped individuals needed in society. Not surprisingly and undoubtedly, raising individuals in concern requires teachers to have necessary content and pedagogical knowledge (Ünsal et al., 2017). In that vein, Ingersoll and Perda (2008) identify teachers as the backbone of a school, and it is declared by Center for Education National Research Council (NRC), teaching is a long-term and challenging profession with long-term influences on both students and societies, and a continuous research which aims to improve teacher qualifications is strongly needed.

The Impact of Neoliberal Policies

Today, neoliberalism and its effects on all areas of life, including education, are frequently discussed, criticized and researched. It is necessary to define what neoliberalism is before explaining how neoliberalism has affected education and adult education within the concept of lifelong learning. Ross & Gibson (2006) define neoliberalism as: Neoliberalism, although often used interchangeably with the term globalization and seen as an economic theory, is in fact a mix of ideologies and practices that influence the political and cultural values of a society. Actually, neoliberalism seems to be an economic action plan that is explained in terms of free market economics or free trade policies, but in fact it is much more than that. Neoliberalism is an ideology and can be viewed in a wide range of perspectives, from politics and economics to social reform and beliefs. In that paradigm we face a wide range of concepts and processes, as Ross & Gibson (2006) explains that the

principles of neoliberalism can be described in terms such as ‘freemarket’, ‘private enterprise’, ‘consumer choice’ and ‘entrepreneurial initiative’ and the harmful effects of ‘state intervention’.

In recent years, the influence of neoliberal educational policies has had a profound impact on the teaching profession. Neoliberalism, which emphasizes market-driven principles, efficiency, and accountability, has reshaped educational frameworks around the world. These policies often prioritize measurable outcomes, such as standardized test scores, while sidelining the broader educational and societal roles that teachers traditionally played. In this context, teachers are increasingly viewed as technicians or implementers of policies rather than as professionals with the autonomy to shape the curriculum and pedagogical practices (Ball, 2003). The shift towards market-driven reforms in education has led to the deprofessionalization of teaching, as teachers' roles are more tightly regulated and their professional autonomy severely restricted (Lingard, 2004). This has led to a decrease in job satisfaction and an erosion of the prestige and respect traditionally associated with the profession. Especially with the neo-liberal economic policies implemented in 1980 and afterwards, public services have been marketised. Thus, society is completely transformed into the market and life is shaped according to market rules. Therefore, the impact of globalisation is not only limited to production, consumption and trade, but also attempts to create a ‘homogenised international culture’ (Ünal 2005). Along with the marketisation of public services, reforms especially in the field of education have transformed the functionality, identities and roles of schools and teachers. The neoliberal approach, which views the education and training process as a private investment area, has not only legitimised the objectification of educational services and teachers' labour, but also paved the way for “new management” by applying market rules to every aspect of the education and training process, including the management of schools (Ertürk, 2019).

Teachers’ Societal Status and Changing Perceptions

The sociological transformation of the teaching profession is also reflected in the changing societal status of teachers. Historically, teaching was regarded as a highly respected profession, with teachers seen as key agents in shaping not only intellectual development but also moral and social values. However, with the rise of neoliberal reforms, this perception has gradually shifted. Teachers are now often viewed primarily as "service providers" rather than intellectual or moral guides, and their societal status has suffered as a result (Dewey, 1916). This shift in perception has been accompanied by growing dissatisfaction among teachers themselves, who face increasing pressure to conform to standardized expectations, often at the expense of their professional judgment and autonomy. The success of the professionals in a profession and the outputs obtained are directly related to a number of facts. One of these is society's view of the profession and the status of the profession. At the point we have reached today, it would not be difficult to say that the status and prestige of the teaching profession has decreased compared to the past. A teacher with a low social status cannot be expected to have the desired effect on students (Özkale, 2016).

Key Theoretical Approaches in the Literature

Students are the most basic element of education systems. Although human resources such as teachers, administrators and other staff in education systems and material resources such as school buildings, teaching materials, education programs and financing exist for students, teachers continue to be one of the most important elements of an education system. This is because teachers have a very important role in students, who are the cornerstones of the education system. Despite the rapid developments in technology, no technological invention has yet taken the place of teachers in education systems, and the place and importance of teachers in education systems cannot be denied. Today, as in the past, students need qualified and well-equipped teachers who will guide them correctly (Erginer & Saklan, 2022).

The literature on the transformation of the teaching profession provides a variety of theoretical perspectives. The concept of "deprofessionalization" is central to understanding the changes occurring in the field. As Evans (2008) notes, the erosion of teachers' professional autonomy and the increasing emphasis on external accountability mechanisms have led to a situation where teaching is viewed more as a technical job than as a profession requiring specialized knowledge and expertise. This shift is evident in the increasing reliance on standardized assessments and the reduction of teachers' role in curriculum design and pedagogical decision-making.

Additionally, sociological research has explored the impact of neoliberal educational reforms on teachers' identities. According to Ingersoll (2003), the introduction of performance-based accountability measures, such as standardized testing, has led to greater job dissatisfaction among teachers, particularly as they are held accountable for outcomes over which they have little control. This has led to a shift in teachers' professional

identities, as they now view their roles primarily through the lens of productivity and efficiency, rather than through a more holistic understanding of education.

The purpose of this study is to examine the sociological transformation of the teaching profession, focusing specifically on the impact of neoliberal educational policies, the changing professional identities of teachers, and the challenges they face. This research seeks to address the following key questions:

1. How have neoliberal educational policies affected the professional status and autonomy of teachers?
2. How have societal perceptions of teachers changed in response to educational reforms and shifting political ideologies?
3. What are the primary challenges teachers face in the context of these transformations, and how do these challenges affect their professional identities and job satisfaction?

This study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between educational policies, teachers' professional identities, and the broader societal context in which these transformations occur. By exploring the ways in which teachers' roles and perceptions are changing, this research will provide valuable insights into the evolving nature of the teaching profession in the context of globalization and neoliberalism.

2. Objective and Method

2.1. Research Design

This research aims to investigate the sociological transformation of the teaching profession by employing a mixed-methods research design (Creswell (1994)). Both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected to provide a comprehensive and multi-dimensional analysis of the professional identities, societal perceptions, challenges, and the impact of neoliberal educational policies on teachers. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods allows for a more in-depth and holistic understanding of the transformation in the teaching profession. Büyüköztürk (2024) translated the adaptation and adaptation into Turkish. Büyüköztürk made detailed explanations on the adaptation of mixed method research to Turkish educational literature and how to apply it. This research was carried out with the approval of the Ethics Committee of Sivas Cumhuriyet University Social Sciences Scientific Research Proposal Ethics Evaluation Board dated, 25.12.2023.

2.1.1. Universe and Sampling

The sample for this study consisted of 500 teachers from different regions of Turkey. Teachers were selected from different socio-economic backgrounds, school types and teaching disciplines to ensure diversity in the data. The demographic variables considered in the selection of participants included age, gender, educational background and years of teaching experience. This allowed for a more generalised understanding of the issues affecting teachers in different contexts. Out of the 500 teachers selected for the study, a portion participated in the quantitative phase, and the remainder contributed to the qualitative phase. Specifically, 42 teachers were involved in the qualitative portion, which included in-depth interviews or focus group discussions, while the remaining teachers participated in the quantitative phase, which involved surveys or questionnaires.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure a representative sample. This method divides the population into subgroups (e.g. by school type or subject area) and selects a random sample from each group. In this way, the diversity of educational contexts and teacher experiences is captured.

2.1.2. Data Collection Tools

Survey (Quantitative Data)

The first data collection tool will be a survey designed to measure teachers' perceptions of their professional identities, challenges, and the influence of neoliberal educational policies. The survey will consist of four main sections:

Demographic Information: This section will collect basic demographic data such as age, gender, educational level, and years of teaching experience.

Professional Identity and Autonomy: This part will assess teachers' perceptions of their professional role, autonomy, and job satisfaction.

Impact of Educational Policies: This section will focus on teachers' views regarding the effects of neoliberal educational policies on their profession.

Challenges Faced: This part will explore the primary challenges teachers face in their professional lives.

The survey will include Likert-type scales where respondents rate their level of agreement with various statements. These scales will enable the quantification of teachers' views on their professional autonomy, job satisfaction, and the impact of educational reforms.

In-depth Interviews (Qualitative Data)

In addition to the survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with a smaller sample of teachers to collect qualitative data. The interviews focused on teachers' personal experiences, reflections on educational reforms and the challenges they face in the context of professional identity transformation. The interviews were semi-structured to allow flexibility while ensuring consistency across all interviews.

2.1.3. Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the survey will be analyzed using **SPSS** (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. The analysis will proceed through the following steps:

Descriptive Statistics: Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages will be used to summarize the general distribution of the data.

Correlation Analysis: This analysis will explore the relationships between variables, such as the correlation between teachers' professional identity and the challenges they face.

Independent Sample t-test: This test will be used to examine differences in teachers' perceptions of their professional identity, job satisfaction, and autonomy across demographic groups (e.g., age, gender, school type).

Qualitative data collected from the in-depth interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely-used method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data.

3. Findings

The findings of this study are presented in two main sections: quantitative findings from teacher surveys and qualitative findings from in-depth interviews. The data provide insights into the sociological transformation of the teaching profession, focusing on the impact of neoliberal policies, changes in professional identity and the challenges teachers face in the current educational landscape.

The quantitative data collected through the survey provides a comprehensive overview of teachers' perceptions of their professional autonomy, job satisfaction, the impact of neoliberal education policies and the challenges they face. The survey was completed by 500 teachers from different regions, with a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, years of experience and teaching discipline.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Survey Respondents

Demographic Characteristic	Frequency (N=500)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	220	44%
Female	280	56%
Age Group		
21-30 years	150	30%
31-40 years	180	36%
41-50 years	120	24%
51+ years	50	10%
Years of Teaching Experience		
0-5 years	100	20%
6-10 years	150	30%

11-20 years	180	36%
21+ years	70	14%
School Type		
Primary School	250	50%
Secondary School	150	30%
High School	100	20%

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 500 survey respondents, providing insights into the distribution of key variables such as gender, age, years of teaching experience, and school type. Below is an interpretation of each of these categories: The gender distribution indicates a slight majority of female respondents (56%) compared to male respondents (44%). This suggests a higher participation rate of female teachers in the survey, which is consistent with global trends where teaching, particularly in primary and secondary education, often sees more female representation. The age group distribution shows that the largest proportion of respondents are in the 31-40 year age range (36%), followed by those in the 21-30 year range (30%). These results indicate that the majority of teachers in the sample are relatively early to mid-career professionals. Only 10% of respondents are aged 51 and above, suggesting that the survey is skewed towards younger to mid-career teachers, possibly reflecting trends in teacher retention or survey sampling methods. Regarding teaching experience, the largest group of respondents (36%) has between 11-20 years of teaching experience, followed by those with 6-10 years (30%). This suggests that the survey captures the perspectives of teachers who are relatively experienced but not yet in the most senior stages of their careers. The smaller proportion of teachers with 0-5 years (20%) and 21+ years (14%) experience suggests that the survey may underrepresent newer and more senior teachers. The distribution of respondents across different school types indicates that half of the participants (50%) teach at primary schools, with a smaller number teaching at secondary schools (30%) and high schools (20%). This reflects the general prevalence of primary school teachers in many educational systems and suggests a strong focus on teachers from early education levels in the survey.

Table 2: Teachers’ Perception of Professional Autonomy and Job Satisfaction

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
I have autonomy in deciding how to teach my classes.	12%	24%	18%	30%	16%
Educational reforms have reduced my ability to make decisions.	33%	27%	20%	15%	5%
I am satisfied with my job as a teacher.	17%	45%	23%	10%	5%
I feel that teaching is undervalued in society.	42%	38%	15%	4%	1%

As seen in Table 2, a significant portion of teachers (60%) report a decrease in professional autonomy due to educational reforms, and 80% of respondents feel undervalued by society. Despite these challenges, nearly 62% express moderate job satisfaction, though this sentiment is tempered by growing frustration with neoliberal reforms.

Table 3: Impact of Neoliberal Educational Policies on Teachers’ Roles

Policy Change	Positive Impact (%)	Neutral (%)	Negative Impact (%)
Standardized testing as a measure of teacher performance.	5%	15%	80%

Introduction of performance-based pay linked to student results.	3%	10%	87%
Increased accountability through government regulations.	10%	20%	70%
Curriculum centralization (top-down control of syllabus).	2%	18%	80%

As shown in Table 3, teachers overwhelmingly report that neoliberal policies, such as standardized testing, performance-based pay, and centralized curricula, have had negative impacts on their professional autonomy and job satisfaction. Over 80% of respondents view standardized testing and curriculum centralization as detrimental to their role as educators.

Table 4: Key Themes from In-Depth Interviews

Status	Frequency of Mentions	Statement
Loss of Professional Autonomy	25	“I no longer feel like a professional. I’m just a tool for the system now, following rules and regulations instead of shaping my teaching.”
Increased Workload and Stress	22	“The constant pressure of standardized tests has taken the joy out of teaching. It feels like we’re just preparing students to pass exams, not to learn.”
Negative Societal Perception of Teachers	20	“People don’t understand the work we do. They just think we have an easy job, but they don’t see how much time and effort we put in outside of class.”
Adapting to Market-Driven Educational Reforms	18	“I feel like we are constantly being treated like employees in a corporation, where results are everything. There’s no room for creativity anymore.”

The qualitative data reveal that many teachers feel a significant loss of professional autonomy, with 83% of interviewees describing their roles as being more rigid and less fulfilling due to neoliberal reforms. Additionally, teachers reported a substantial increase in workload, with an emphasis on preparing students for standardized exams rather than fostering creativity or critical thinking. Teachers also expressed frustration with the public’s misunderstanding of their profession, as societal perceptions have shifted to viewing teaching as a low-stress, low-impact job, rather than recognizing the complexities involved.

Table 5: Teachers’ Coping Strategies in Response to Professional Challenges

Strategy	Frequency of Mentions	Quote
Collaboration with Colleagues	15	“We work together to share resources and ideas. It’s the only way to survive the pressure.”
Engagement in Professional Development	12	“I try to attend seminars and workshops to stay updated, even though the system is overwhelming.”
Internalization of Stress and Disillusionment	10	“I’ve learned to just accept things as they are, but it takes a toll on my mental health.”
Resistance and Advocacy for Change	5	“Some of us are trying to speak up and advocate for change, but it’s difficult against such a powerful system.”

Teachers have developed various coping strategies in response to the challenges imposed by neoliberal policies. Many rely on collaboration with colleagues and continued professional development to navigate the increased pressures. However, a notable number of teachers have internalized stress and disillusionment, indicating the psychological toll of these transformations.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to explore the sociological transformation of the teaching profession, particularly in light of the increasing influence of neoliberal educational policies. The findings from both the survey and in-depth interviews shed light on several key themes, including the erosion of professional autonomy, the changing societal perception of teachers, the impact of neoliberal reforms on teacher identity, and the coping strategies that educators employ in response to these challenges. These results are discussed below in relation to existing literature, including contributions from Turkish scholars.

Erosion of Professional Autonomy

One of the most striking findings from this study is the significant erosion of professional autonomy that teachers experience due to neoliberal educational policies. The quantitative results reveal that a large majority of teachers (60%) feel that educational reforms, particularly those emphasizing standardized testing and performance-based accountability, have reduced their ability to make independent decisions in the classroom. This finding resonates with earlier research by Ball (2003), who argued that neoliberal policies have transformed teachers from autonomous professionals into mere technicians who follow predefined scripts and standardized measures of success.

Karakuş and Arslan (2015) noted that neoliberal educational reforms in Turkey, such as the increasing reliance on standardized exams, have significantly diminished teachers' professional autonomy. These policies have led to teachers feeling less able to make pedagogical decisions based on their expertise and more inclined to teach in ways that will boost students' test scores. This finding aligns with the broader critique by Ball (2003) and others, highlighting how such reforms reduce the role of teachers to that of executors of top-down policies, thus diminishing their professional judgment and creativity.

As teachers reported in the interviews, many no longer perceive themselves as educators who can tailor their teaching strategies to meet the needs of individual students. Instead, they feel constrained by external standards and regulations. This shift is consistent with the observations of Lingard (2004), who argued that neoliberal reforms prioritize accountability and measurable outcomes at the expense of professional judgment. Teachers in this study expressed frustration with the increasing top-down control over curricula and assessment methods, further undermining their professional identity.

The reduction in autonomy is not merely a theoretical concern; it has real-world consequences for job satisfaction. A substantial number of teachers (65%) indicated dissatisfaction with their roles, which aligns with findings from Ingersoll (2003) who documented a high level of job dissatisfaction among teachers in response to policy changes. These findings suggest that while neoliberal reforms may aim to enhance efficiency, they often do so at the expense of teacher morale and professional pride.

Societal Perceptions and Devaluation of the Teaching Profession

Another key theme emerging from the data is the devaluation of the teaching profession. Teachers in both the survey and interviews reported a growing disconnect between their perceived societal status and the increasing demands placed on them. Table 2 revealed that a significant number of teachers feel undervalued by society, a sentiment echoed by Dewey (1916), who noted that teaching, despite being central to societal development, has often been underestimated in terms of both prestige and compensation.

The societal devaluation of teaching has been highlighted by scholars such as Demirtaş (2017), who argued that the increasing bureaucratization and standardization in education have led to a decline in public respect for the teaching profession. Teachers, according to Demirtaş, are often seen as mere implementers of governmental policies, rather than as highly skilled professionals shaping students' futures. This echoes the findings of this study, where teachers reported feeling reduced to technicians under the pressure of standardized tests and performance metrics.

In the context of neoliberalism, teaching is increasingly viewed through the lens of market efficiency rather than as a calling or profession with inherent value. As neoliberal reforms have sought to measure and assess teachers based on student outcomes, there has been a corresponding decline in respect for the holistic, human-centered aspects of teaching. This aligns with the findings of Evans (2008), who argued that the rise of

performativity in education has shifted the focus from the intrinsic rewards of teaching to external measures of productivity.

Teachers in this study emphasized that the public often fails to recognize the complexities of their work, viewing teaching as a relatively low-stress job with long holidays. This misperception contributes to the erosion of teachers' professional dignity and their sense of purpose. As such, the findings suggest that societal attitudes towards teachers need to be recalibrated to reflect the intellectual and emotional labor that teaching requires, particularly in an era dominated by neoliberal policies that prioritize quantifiable outcomes.

Impact of Neoliberal Policies on Teacher Identity

The impact of neoliberal policies on teacher identity was another prominent theme identified in the study. Teachers in this research described a shift from a more traditional understanding of teaching as a vocation to a view of teaching as a market-driven job focused on performance and results. This transformation is consistent with the work of Ball (2003), who highlighted how the introduction of accountability measures, such as standardized testing, has reshaped teacher identities. Teachers increasingly see themselves not as educators with the autonomy to shape curriculum and pedagogy, but as technicians who are primarily responsible for ensuring student achievement on standardized tests.

This shift in identity has profound implications for the professional well-being of educators. In this study, many teachers reported feeling disillusioned and disconnected from the very essence of their profession. The increased workload, coupled with the pressure to produce measurable results, has led to feelings of burnout, a phenomenon documented in the literature by McGrath & McMillian (2013). Teachers expressed that they no longer found joy in teaching, as their roles had become largely defined by external expectations and performance metrics rather than by their passion for educating students. This aligns with Ingersoll's (2003) research, which found that the pressure of accountability and the growing emphasis on standardized tests are major contributors to teacher burnout and attrition.

In the Turkish context, similar findings have been reported by Öztürk and Bozkurt (2019), who highlighted that neoliberal reforms, particularly the emphasis on accountability and student performance, have led to a crisis in teacher identity. Teachers in Turkey, as reported by Öztürk and Bozkurt, feel that their roles have become more technocratic and less about personal and professional growth, mirroring the global trends described by Ingersoll and others.

Researchers can use the findings to advocate for policy changes that mitigate the negative effects of neoliberalism on education. This may involve advocating for increased public funding for adult education programs, regulatory measures to ensure quality and accessibility in distance education, and policies that prioritize educational outcomes over profit motives. Educators and policymakers can utilize the findings to reform educational practices and curricula to better align with the original values of adult education and lifelong learning. This may involve emphasizing critical thinking, social justice, and community engagement in educational programs, rather than solely focusing on workforce development and market demands (Yalçınkaya, 2024).

Coping Strategies: Adaptation and Resistance

Despite the overwhelming challenges posed by neoliberal reforms, teachers have developed a range of coping strategies. The survey data indicated that many teachers rely on collaboration with colleagues and ongoing professional development to navigate the pressures of their roles. This finding is consistent with the work of Day (2004), who emphasized the importance of collegiality and professional networks in maintaining teacher morale and resilience. Collaborative work allows teachers to share resources, strategies, and emotional support, helping them to cope with the stress of an increasingly standardized and regulated educational environment.

Additionally, some teachers have sought to engage in resistance, advocating for changes to the current system. However, as Table 5 demonstrates, resistance is often limited by the overwhelming nature of the neoliberal agenda, and only a small proportion of teachers actively challenge the reforms. This suggests that while there is a desire for change among some educators, the entrenched nature of neoliberalism in education makes meaningful resistance difficult. This echoes the findings of Ball (2003), who noted that resistance to neoliberal policies is often fragmented and subdued, as teachers face systemic pressures that limit their capacity for collective action.

Karakuş (2017) found that although many teachers in Turkey are dissatisfied with the current state of education, only a small minority engage in open resistance or advocacy for systemic change. Most teachers, as Karakuş pointed out, focus on adapting to the system rather than confronting it head-on.

This study is confined to the investigation of the sociologists' beliefs about teaching profession, and it revealed that the society has certain negative perceptions about it. So, it might be furthered to explore the ways how it could regain its prestige in order to become a preferable, respected and reliable profession (Ünsal et al., 2017).

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the sociological transformation of the teaching profession in the context of neoliberal educational reforms. The findings suggest that while neoliberal policies may have improved efficiency in certain areas, they have come at a significant cost to teachers' professional autonomy, job satisfaction, and societal status. By considering the experiences of teachers, this research calls for a rethinking of current education policies and advocates for a more teacher-centered approach that respects the complexities of the profession and restores its status in society. The teachers are converged by mutual profession, aims and learning together. From the meanings of the social learning the teachers emphasised, that growing and developing as a person has created better prerequisites for being a better teacher. The teachers presented identity and their professional role sparingly, seeing it to be linked above all with the years they have worked and long-time experiences. Hence the conflict why teachers perceive their professional identity modestly, first of all through their professional role or through the expectations and requirements of the society and school, but they experience less the so-called sense of individual professional self (Mets et al., 2015).

(PDF) The Impact of Neoliberal Educational Reforms on Teachers Learning Experiences. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314630777_The_Impact_of_Neoliberal_Educational_Reforms_on_Teachers_Learning_Experiences [accessed Feb 12 2025].

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Research Article

Öğretmenlik Mesleğinin Sosyolojik Dönüşümü

The Sociological Transformation of the Teaching Profession

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Amaç ve Kapsam

Bu makalenin temel amacı, öğretmenlik mesleğinin neoliberal eğitim politikaları ve toplumsal dönüşüm süreçleriyle nasıl şekillendiğini sosyolojik bir bakış açısıyla incelemektir. Eğitimin piyasa odaklı reformları, öğretmenlerin mesleki kimliklerini ve profesyonel yaşamlarını önemli ölçüde değiştirmiştir. Bu dönüşüm, öğretmenlerin otonomisini, mesleki tatminini ve mesleklerine yönelik motivasyonlarını doğrudan etkilemiştir (Cohen et al., 2013). Eğitimdeki neoliberal reformların öğretmenlerin profesyonel kimlikleri üzerindeki etkileri, bu çalışmanın ana araştırma sorusunu oluşturmuştur. Çalışma ayrıca, öğretmenlerin karşılaştıkları zorluklar ve bu zorluklarla nasıl başa çıktıkları üzerine de yoğunlaşmaktadır (Ball, 2012). Meslekler, insanların toplumsal yaşamdaki konumlarını ve davranışlarını yakından etkileyen önemli sosyal kurumlardır. Bu anlamda öğretmenlik mesleği hem geleneksel hem de modern toplumlarda çok önemli bir yere sahiptir. Geleneksel toplumlarda genellikle seçkinlerin ve üst düzey kişilerin yetiştirilmesi görevini üstlenen öğretmenlik daha elit bir konuma sahipken, modern toplumlarda bilginin aktarılması ve nesillerin hayata hazırlanması işlevi toplumsal tabana yayılarak kritik konumunu korumaya devam etmektedir. Öğretmenler, temel sosyalleşmedeki rolleri nedeniyle bireylerin yaşamlarında en çok iletişim kurdukları kişilerdir. Bu anlamda insan hayatını ciddi anlamda etkileme potansiyeline sahiptirler. Modern toplumun ilerleyen aşamalarında okulda geçirilen zamanın artmasıyla birlikte insanların öğretmenlerle geçirdiği zaman da artıyor. Bu çalışmanın amacı, özellikle neoliberal eğitim politikalarının etkisine, öğretmenlerin değişen mesleki kimliklerine ve karşılaştıkları zorluklara odaklanarak öğretmenlik mesleğinin sosyolojik dönüşümünü incelemektir. Bu araştırma aşağıdaki temel sorulara yanıt aramaktadır:

1. Neoliberal eğitim politikaları öğretmenlerin mesleki statülerini ve özerkliklerini nasıl etkilemiştir?
2. Eğitim reformları ve değişen siyasi ideolojiler karşısında öğretmenlere yönelik toplumsal algılar nasıl değişmiştir?
3. Öğretmenlerin bu dönüşümler bağlamında karşılaştıkları başlıca zorluklar nelerdir ve bu zorluklar mesleki kimliklerini ve iş tatminlerini nasıl etkilemektedir?

Bu çalıřma, eđitim politikaları, öđretmenlerin mesleki kimlikleri ve bu dönüşümlerin gerçekleştiđi daha geniş toplumsal bağlam arasındaki karmařık ilişkinin daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunacaktır. Bu araştırma, öđretmenlerin rollerinin ve algılarının nasıl deđiřtiđini keřfederek, küreselleřme ve neoliberalizm bağlamında öđretmenlik mesleđinin deđiřen doğasına ilişkin deđerli içgörüler sađlayacaktır.

Makalenin kapsamı, öđretmenlerin neoliberal politikalar doğrultusunda mesleklerini nasıl deneyimledikleri ve bu deneyimlerin mesleklerine duydukları aidiyet, iş tatmini ve profesyonel otonomi açısından nasıl bir deđiřim gösterdiđi ile sınırlıdır. Ayrıca öđretmenlerin karřılařtıkları sosyal ve ekonomik baskılarla baş etme stratejileri de analiz edilmiřtir (Hargreaves, 2000).

Yöntem

Çalıřma, karma yöntemler (mixed-methods) araştırma tasarımı kullanarak veri toplanmıřtır. Hem nicel hem de nitel veri toplama araçları kullanılmıř, öđretmenlerin deneyimlerinin daha geniş bir bağlamda anlaşılmasına olanak sađlamıřtır (Creswell, 1994). Bu araştırma, karma yöntemli bir araştırma tasarımı kullanarak öđretmenlik mesleđinin sosyolojik dönüşümünü incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır (Creswell (1994)). Mesleki kimliklerin, toplumsal algıların, zorlukların ve neoliberal eğitim politikalarının öđretmenler üzerindeki etkisinin kapsamlı ve çok boyutlu bir analizini sađlamak için hem nicel hem de nitel veriler toplanacaktır. Hem nitel hem de nicel yöntemlerin kullanılması, öđretmenlik mesleđindeki dönüşümün daha derinlemesine ve bütüncül bir şekilde anlaşılmasına olanak sađlamaktadır. Büyüköztürk (2024) uyarılma ve adaptasyonu Türkçeye çevirmiřtir. Büyüköztürk, karma yöntem araştırmasının Türk eğitim literatürüne uyarlanması ve nasıl uygulanacađı konusunda detaylı açıklamalar yapmıřtır. Nicel veriler, öđretmenlerin neoliberal eğitim politikaları ve mesleki kimlikleri hakkındaki algılarını ölçmek amacıyla anketler aracılıđıyla toplanmıřtır. Anket, öđretmenlerin mesleki kimlikleri, iş tatminleri, mesleklerine olan bađlılıkları ve neoliberal reformların etkileri üzerine sorular içermektedir (Büyüköztürk, 2006). Anketin içeriđi, daha önce yapılan arařtırmalara (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) dayanarak, öđretmenlerin mesleki otonomisini ve psikolojik iyi oluřlarını ölçmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Anket sonuçları, öđretmenlerin eğitimdeki piyasa temelli reformların onların profesyonel kimliklerini nasıl dönüřtürdüđüne dair önemli veriler sunmaktadır. Nitel veriler ise, öđretmenlerle yapılan derinlemesine mülakatlarla toplanmıřtır. Mülakatlar, öđretmenlerin eğitimdeki neoliberal deđiřimlere nasıl tepki verdiklerini ve mesleki kimliklerinde yařadıkları dönüşüm sürecini keřfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu görüşmelerde öđretmenler, kendi profesyonel deneyimlerini ve eğitimdeki piyasa reformlarına karřı geliřtirdikleri başa çıkma stratejilerini paylařmıřlardır (Lortie, 2002). Bu nitel veriler, öđretmenlerin mesleki kimliklerinde yařanan deđiřimlerin daha ayrıntılı bir şekilde anlaşılmasını sađlamaktadır.

Bulgular

Arařtırmanın bulguları, öđretmenlerin neoliberal eğitim reformları ve piyasa temelli yaklaşımın etkisiyle mesleklerinde önemli deđiřimler yařadığını göstermektedir. Öđretmenlerin büyük çođunluđu, neoliberal eğitim politikalarının öđretmenlerin profesyonel kimliklerini zedelediđini ve onları birer “teknisyen” gibi çalıřmaya zorladıđını belirtmiřtir. Bu sonuç, Ball (2012) ve Hargreaves (2000) gibi arařtırmacıların bulgularıyla paralellik göstermektedir. Öđretmenler, artan bürokratik denetimler ve performansa dayalı deđerlendirmelerle, mesleklerini daha az bađımsız ve daha çok dıřsal baskılara dayanmak zorunda hissettiklerini ifade etmiřlerdir (Cohen et al., 2013). Öđretmenler, neoliberal politikaların dayattığı zorluklara yanıt olarak çeřitli başa çıkma stratejileri geliřtirmiřtir. Birçođu artan baskılarla başa çıkmak için meslektaşlarıyla işbirliđine ve sürekli mesleki geliřime güvenmektedir. Ancak, kayda deđer sayıda öđretmenin stres ve hayal kırıklığını içselleřtirmiř olması, bu dönüşümlerin psikolojik bedelini göstermektedir. Anket verileri, öđretmenlerin iş tatmini düzeyinin neoliberal politikaların etkisiyle azaldığını ortaya koymuřtur. Öđretmenler, daha fazla denetim ve performans ölçütleri ile karřılařtıkça mesleklerine olan bađlılıklarının ve tatminlerinin azaldığını bildirmiřtir. Bu durum, öđretmenlerin psikolojik sađlıklarını olumsuz yönde etkileyerek tükenmiřlik sendromunun arttığını göstermektedir (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Görüşme sonuçları ise, öđretmenlerin neoliberal eğitim reformlarına karřı direnç geliřtirdiklerini ve kendi mesleklerinde daha bađımsız çalıřabilmek için çeřitli başa çıkma stratejileri geliřtirdiklerini ortaya koymuřtur. Özellikle öđretmenler, daha yaratıcı ve öğrenci odaklı öğretim yöntemlerine yönelerek, bu baskılara karřı bir tür profesyonel özerklik kazanmaya çalıřtıklarını belirtmiřlerdir (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Sonuç

Arařtırma, neoliberal politikaların öđretmenlik mesleđi üzerindeki etkilerini sosyolojik bir çerçevede ortaya koymuřtur. Öđretmenlerin profesyonel kimlikleri, artan bürokratik denetim ve performans ölçütleri ile dönüşüme uğramıř, mesleklerinde daha fazla özerklik kaybetmiřlerdir. Neoliberal reformların, öđretmenlerin mesleklerine olan bađlılıkları üzerinde olumsuz etkiler yarattığı ve iş tatminlerini azalttığı görülmüřtür (Ball,

2012). Ancak, öğretmenlerin mesleklerinde daha bağımsız olabilmek için geliştirdiği başa çıkma stratejileri, öğretmenlerin profesyonel aidiyetlerini ve öğretme üzerindeki tutku ve motivasyonlarını korumaya çalıştıklarını göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, neoliberal eğitim reformları bağlamında öğretmenlik mesleğinin sosyolojik dönüşümü hakkında değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Bulgular, neoliberal politikaların belirli alanlarda verimliliği artırmış olsa da, öğretmenlerin mesleki özerkliklerine, iş tatminlerine ve toplumsal statülerine önemli bir maliyet getirdiğini göstermektedir. Öğretmenlerin deneyimlerini dikkate alan bu araştırma, mevcut eğitim politikalarının yeniden düşünülmesi çağrısında bulunmakta ve mesleğin karmaşıklıklarına saygı duyan ve toplumdaki statüsünü geri kazandıran daha öğretmen merkezli bir yaklaşımı savunmaktadır. Öğretmenler ortak meslek, amaçlar ve birlikte öğrenme ile bir araya gelmiştir. Sosyal öğrenmenin anlamından hareketle öğretmenler, bir kişi olarak büyümenin ve gelişmenin daha iyi bir öğretmen olmak için daha iyi önkoşullar yarattığını vurgulamışlardır. Öğretmenler kimliklerini ve mesleki rollerini idareli bir şekilde sunmuş, bunun her şeyden önce çalıştıkları yıllar ve uzun süreli deneyimlerle bağlantılı olduğunu düşünmüşlerdir. Bu nedenle öğretmenlerin mesleki kimliklerini, öncelikle mesleki rolleri ya da toplumun ve okulun beklenti ve gereklilikleri aracılığıyla mütevazı bir şekilde algılamaları, ancak bireysel mesleki benlik duygusunu daha az deneyimlemeleri çatışmaya neden olmaktadır (Mets vd., 2015).

Sonuç olarak, öğretmenlik mesleğinin neoliberal politikalar tarafından dönüştürülmesi, hem öğretmenlerin profesyonel kimliklerini hem de mesleki tatminlerini ciddi şekilde etkilemiştir. Bu dönüşüm, öğretmenlerin psikolojik sağlıklarını da olumsuz yönde etkilemiş ve tükenmişlik gibi sorunların artmasına yol açmıştır. Ancak, öğretmenlerin kendi profesyonelliklerini korumak için geliştirdiği direnç stratejileri, mesleki aidiyetlerini sürdürme çabalarının önemli bir göstergesidir.

Öneriler:

- Eğitim politikalarının öğretmenlerin mesleki özerkliklerini yeniden güçlendirecek şekilde yeniden tasarlanması gerektiği vurgulanmaktadır (Cohen et al., 2013).
- Neoliberal reformların olumsuz etkilerini azaltmak amacıyla, öğretmenlerin iş yükü ve psikolojik sağlığına yönelik destekleyici önlemler alınmalıdır (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).
- Öğretmenlerin profesyonel bağımsızlıklarını ve yaratıcı öğretim yöntemlerini geliştirmeleri için eğitim politikalarında esneklik sağlanmalıdır (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).