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Social studies teachers' conception of postgraduate education preferences and its contribution to their professions

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Abstract

In this research thought as qualitative study, the survey method was used. The aim of this research is first to determine the factors effective in social studies teachers' deciding to continue their postgraduate education who completed their postgraduate education and on duty in primary education and then to consider the contribution of this postgraduate education to their professional performance from various aspects. For that purpose, why the social studies teachers' prefer the postgraduate education, what they expect from that program, in what level their expectation is satisfied and the contribution of the education they took to their teaching professions are considered from various aspects motioned by their own words. In data collection, semi-structured interview form prepared with the help of the expert ideas and called "The Views of Social Studies Teachers on Postgraduate Education" was used. 15 social studies teachers who are on duty in different cities in the academic year 2010- 2011, who have different professional experiences from each other and who graduated from postgraduate programs of universities were taken into interview. Data were analyzed by using content analysis method. According to research results, the reasons why teachers prefer postgraduate education are, in general, "to maintain personal development, to make the professional seniority easier and to be in academic staff". The research results show that the contributions of postgraduate education to professional performance are to make it possible to practice the developments in the field in both class and school, to view different point of views about the educational system, to discuss the practices of education with colleagues and to increase self-confidence in working life.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays effects of globalization are felt evidently, giddy developments related to different disciplines disclose that knowledge is not static; even one more is added day by day. As occurred in each area, knowledge and researches in education field are developed constantly. In addition to developing scientific knowledge, social environment in which individual live and their opportunity of attaining technology change with each passing day. At that point, teachers' developing their professional knowledge and following current developments are important. When teacher training is the subject, their becoming expert on their own field, developing their own qualifications, following educational developments and being able to applying these qualifications during the class can be done thanks to postgraduate education.

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2. Social science teacher and postgraduate education

Recently, postgraduate educations that teacher training oriented on master and doctorate degrees are increasing. Teaching is a field that has been trying to be a profession sine 19th century. (Güven, 2001). Teacher training system that laid that foundation by opening a professional school named Daruülmualimin in Fatih, Istanbul on 16th March 1848 has continued with various applications till today in Turkey. Nowadays, choosing social science teacher of the primary schools is done by central examination system in Turkey. Students who have taken enough point from the exam which is done by Higher Education Council Student Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM) and added point taken from by multiplication their secondary school graduate point with certain coefficient are able to have opportunity of education in Education Faculties. When the students who have four years (eight semesters) education complete their teacher training education, they qualify to be a social science teacher by getting their graduate diplomas. According to current law (No 2547 Higher Education Law, Item 50) social science and other license graduates who desire to have postgraduate, doctorate degree or proficiency in medicine are chosen by an exam that is hold by higher education institutions according to its own rules and bases that are determined by Board Among Universities. In postgraduate education, students' ambitions are vital. Finishing postgraduate degree is both teachers' their own ambition and supported by Ministry of Education as promoting in career steps, etc. or advantage in some conditions such as promotion, nominating, etc.

3. Aim and method

The aim of this research is first to determine the factors effective in social studies teachers' deciding to continue their postgraduate education who completed their postgraduate education and on duty in primary education and then to consider the contribution of this postgraduate education to their professional performance from various aspects.

For this aim, questions below are tried to be answered:

What are the reasons of the students who choose postgraduate education after graduate degree?

What are the effects of the teachers who have postgraduate education on their professional performance?

In this research that is figured as qualitative, hachure method is used. This research is defined as “a qualitative research which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis is used; qualitative process that perception and events in their natural area, real and absolute is followed” by Yıldırım and Şimşek 2005.

3.1. Participants

Interviews are done with 15 teachers who are from different provinces of Turkey, graduated from different universities' social science teaching postgraduate education, have different professional experience in 2010- 2011 academic years. Whereas 8 of the participants are male, 7 of them are female.

3.2. Data collection means

By collecting data, semi-structured method, “The Views of Social Studies Teachers on Postgraduate Education” is used. Data collection tool is formed from two sections. First section is consisted of participants' personal information. The second one is formed from open-end questions related to their postgraduate choice reason and effects of the education on their professional performance.

3.3. Data analysis and coding

Interviews are done with the teachers are typed to the papers and analyzed by content analysis. Main aim in content analysis is to reach the concept and relations can define collected data. (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005:227). In the teachers' disclosures, names are not stated and each participant is numbered from 1 to 15. To define gender, "M (male)" is used for male and "F (female)" is used for female participants. For instance, "T.M.3" coding is used for a male teacher who has interviewed as the third order. (T=Teacher, M=Male)

4. Results (Findings)

Findings are obtained from research are presented under two titles below:

Social Science Teachers' reasons of choosing postgraduate education,

Postgraduate Education's contributions to Social Science Teachers on their professional performance.

4.1. Social science teachers' reasons of choosing postgraduate education

To define teachers' opinions on postgraduate education "Interview Form" is used and these data, collected from interviews are analyzed by content analysis. According to this, participants are questioned to answer "What is your reason of choosing postgraduate education?" Then taken answers are grouped in content analysis as below:

Table 1. Teachers' reasons of choosing postgraduate education

| Expressions | n | Category | Total N |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|---------|
| Expanding Knowledge | 2 | | |
| Learning Innovations on Field | 1 | Personal Development | 6 |
| Research Desire | 1 | | |
| Scoping out Education Problems | 2 | | |
| Professional Teaching | 2 | | |
| Facility in Promoting | 1 | | |
| Serving at Ministry's Upper Degrees | 1 | Professional Career | 5 |
| Advantage of Nominating | 1 | | |
| Becoming Academic Personal | 4 | Becoming Academic Personal | 4 |

As seen on analysis table above, social science teachers who participate in research state that they choose postgraduate education to develop their personal knowledge, professional career and become an academic personal. Some of the teachers' opinions are given below:

T.F.3: "...I have postgraduate education to expand my graduate knowledge and to be more effective on my field."

T.M.1: "Recently, programs have changed in primary schools. To have information on programs' philosophy and checking out these programs; so to follow these innovations on my field effectively ..."

T.F.7: "We come to face some problems at school. Some of these problems can occur because of classroom environment. Thus, I need to deal with these problems and discuss in different atmosphere. Thanks to this, I will be able to find effective solutions for problems..."

T.F.9: “I have had postgraduate education to build a career on my profession ...”

T.M.11: “Postgraduate education has become important at teachers’ professional degrees on last arrangements. So, I had postgraduate education.”

T.M.14: “To lecture at a university is my dream. After becoming teacher, I had postgraduate education in order to meet my wish.”

As seen above, becoming expert on their own field and scientific approaching on education problems on personal development category and to get expert degree at teaching on professional career on social science teachers’ interviews are obtrusive subjects.

4.2. *Postgraduate education’s contributions to social science teachers on their professional performance*

To define postgraduate education’s contributions to social science teachers on their professional performance, a question, “What do you think about contribution of postgraduate education on your professional performance?”, is asked to the participants. Participants’ responses’ content analysis table is as below:

Table 2. Contribution of postgraduate education on teachers’ professional performance

| Expressions | n |
|---|----------|
| Applying innovations to classroom environment | 8 |
| Noticing different point of views on education system | 3 |
| Discussing education applications with colloquies | 2 |
| Self-Confidence on workspace | 2 |

As stated on table above, contribution of postgraduate education on teachers’ professional performance is appeared as “applying innovations to classroom environment, noticing different point of views on education system, discussing education applications with colloquies and self-confidence on workspace.” Some of the teachers’ opinions are as below:

T.M.5: “Contribution of postgraduate education that I had are books that I read, my acquisition on how a research is done on education and applying these experiences with my students in classroom.”

T.F.7: “First of all, I became an expert and a researcher. I developed my foreign language. I have detailed information on theory and approaches. I am an expert on my adopted approach. This education became effective on noticing different views on education system.”

T.F.15: “Dominant point of view affects your confidence to the lesson. So this provides us to be successful.”

T.M.8: “Postgraduate education improved my social relations. Both my scientific thinking ability and my cultural information level are improved. So, I have had self-esteem on controlling the lesson.”

As stated on teachers’ opinions, contribution of postgraduate education is standing out with having detailed information related to field and various applications on applying program knowledge at classrooms.

5. Discussion, conclusion and suggestion

There are a few researches on social science teachers’ reasons of choosing postgraduate education and postgraduate education’s contributions to social science teachers on their professional performance. Teachers’ opinions on postgraduate education and problems are taken in hand from different angles on researches in which are done in our country. (Alabaş and friends 2010, Alhas 2003, Doğusan 2003, Karakütük 2000, Kuzu and Becit 2007, Nayır 2007). Social science teachers’ reasons of choosing postgraduate education and postgraduate education’s contributions to social science teachers on their professional performance are analyzed by evaluating the participants’ their own expressions in this research. According to obtained findings from the research, teachers prefer postgraduate education in order to develop their “personal development, professional career and become an academic personal.” It is certain that professional career is a part of personal development. However, Ministry of

Education's teacher career system and advantage of teachers who have master degree are stated peculiarly. It is known that some of the teachers have negative opinions on postgraduate education. For example, primary school headmasters and teachers have negative attitudes on postgraduate education process and the aftermath of postgraduate education on research that is done by Doğusan (2003). In this research, teachers who have had postgraduate education are taken their opinions find this education effective and express their satisfaction.

Postgraduate education's contributions to social science teachers on their professional performance is appeared as "applying innovations to classroom environment, noticing different point of views on education system, discussing education applications with colloquies and self-confidence on workspace" in research. It is important that teachers who have postgraduate education find that their gathered information during the education is utilizable on their professions. It is estimated that courses on teaching oriented postgraduate programs motivate teachers to apply different applications and gain different point of views on educational events. In a research that is done by Alhas (2003), postgraduate earnings to the teachers whose braches are different are stated in an order as "stating base for academic research, reaching information related to scientific knowledge, developing evaluation and comment ability, colloquial surrounding and having close relationships with the students, facilitating on solving environment, school and classroom's academic problems."

Postgraduate education programs are vital to improve current teachers' qualifications. According to Akyüz (2010:442), no matter teachers and teaching profession have enough power and qualification in any country, education cannot be done even though there are the best education system and the highest education aims. During the process of educating qualified personal, teachers should encourage postgraduate education according to their own ambitions as stated in this research. Postgraduate education programs' quota, oriented to teachers, should be increased. Addition to salary application to who have master and doctorate degrees should be applied. Thanks to this, teachers are supported by economically in order to improve themselves with their own efforts.

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