

# The Views of New Teachers at Private Teaching Institutions about Working Conditions

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## Abstract

The main purpose of the research was to determine the views of teachers about working conditions working at private teaching institutions for 5 years or less. The research was designed as a phenomenology model. The data were collected by focus group interview technique of qualitative research method. 10 teachers from private teaching institutions working for 5 years or less underwent focus group interview by homogeneous sampling, which is one of purposeful sampling techniques. The video recorded focus group, then interview was deciphered. In the analysis process, descriptive analysis techniques were used. Generally, the participants said that working at private teaching institutions was not their first choice, the working conditions there were very difficult and they affected the teachers negatively in general and despite such conditions, their wages were too low. While talking about the private teaching institutions, the participants used such metaphors as maze, ant home, lacework, carrying water with a bucket, castle, watch, horse race, slavery and workmanship.

## Key Words

Working Conditions in Private Teaching Institutions, Teachers at Private Teaching Institutions.

Turkish Education System has been struggling with big problems for a long time. Some of these problems can be those: inadequate number of teachers employed, problems in teacher training system, quality of teachers, training of education administrators, prevalence of information and communication technologies, problems in the access to education, inequalities in schooling ratios, updating of education programs, transition between education levels, extreme centralist structure of the system, too many central exams, working conditions of education staff (Tekeli, 2004). One of the important problems in Turkish education system is private teaching institutions and working conditions of teachers working in these private teaching institutions. That there are important problems concerning the place of private teaching institutions in education system has also been determined with some researches (Akgün, 2005; Ay, 2008; Çağlayan, 2008;

Gök, 2004, 2005; Şahin, 2006; Uğraş, 2009). Private teaching institutions in Turkey have been giving education in a wide spectrum from primary school students to university students and from foreign language to computer courses. Namely while it's necessary that the center of education should be school, private teaching institutions have become the center of education. The dimensions of monetary sources the families transferred into these institutions which have become almost alternative education institutions reach trillions (Akgün, 2005; Türk Eğitim Derneği [TED], 2005, 2010).

In Turkey, 50.432 teachers have been working at private teaching institutions since the year 2010 (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2010). The number of students attending private teaching institutions is 1.174.860. In each Turkish town, especially in metropolitan cities, there are a lot of functioning private teaching institutions. The number of private teaching institutions increased by about 245%, the number of teachers increased by about 350% and the number of students increased by about 270% between 1997 and 2010. Private teaching sector is a big business in terms of the number of

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teachers and the number of students (MEB, 2008, 2009, 2010) and this case was highlighted in various studies (Eğitim Sen, 2008; Bağımsız Eğitimciler Sendikası, 2008; Türk Eğitim Sen, 2010). The private teaching institutions exist not only in Turkey, but also in such countries as the USA, Japan or Greece (ÖZDEBİR, 2010; Subaşı, 2005). There are similar institutions in England, Germany or France, but they are not as common as in Turkey or Far East countries (Baştürk & Doğan, 2010).

Although private teaching institutions constitute a large part of our education system, the number of studies on private teaching institutions is low in Turkey. Most of these studies were conducted to define the effects of private teaching institutions on student academic achievement or achievement in the central examination system (Arslan & Öztürk, 2001; İskender, 2007; Kılıç, 1997; Kırbacı, 2004; Korkut, 2008; Morgil, Yılmaz & Geban, 2000; Okur, 2002; Terzioğlu, 2001; Üren, 1999; Üstün, 2003). Some of the studies discussed the function and the role of private teaching institutions in the Turkish Education System (Dağlı, 2006; Kutluer, 2001; Öztürk, 1994; Şahin, 2002; Tunay, 1992; Yıldız, 2005). The number of studies to define job satisfaction of teachers at private teaching institutions (Ağan, 2002; Çifçili, 2007), organizational citizenship behavior (Yılmaz, 2009), burn out levels (Ay, 2008) and general issues (Çağlayan, 2008; Gök, 2004, 2005; Şahin, 2006; Uğraş, 2009) is low. The aim of this qualitative research was to determine the views of teachers about their working conditions at private teaching institutions working for 5 years or less. The aim the present study is not to obtain objective and generalizable data. It is to obtain detailed data regarding the meaning of the world of the individuals (teachers at private teaching institutions) as a part of complex social world. The study results of perceptions and attitudes were significant to show that such views existed in the society and they reflected the way they appeared.

### Purpose

The main purpose of this qualitative research was to determine the views of teachers about their working conditions at private teaching institutions working for 5 years or less.

### Method

#### Research Model

The research was designed as a phenomenology model. Data was collected by focus group interview

technique of qualitative research method. What is important in focus group interviews is to create an atmosphere where participants freely express their opinions, not to get generally accepted views from them (Gibbs, 1997; Kroll, Barbour, & Haris, 2007; Kuş, 2003). In this context, focus group interviews are mostly used in educational research (Gillfiores & Alonso 1995; Wilson 1997) and have an important function in qualitative data collection.

Qualitative researches are research methods preferred in systematical analysis of the meanings which appear depending on the experiences of the people on which the research is conducted or is planned to be conducted (Ekiz, 2003; Kuş, 2003; Merriam, 1988; Rossman & Rallis, 1998; Uzuner, 1997; Uzuner & Çolak 2004; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Focus group interview is considered as one of the most effective techniques in studies with homogeneous groups (Greenbaum, 1998; Morgan, 1997; Patton, 1987, 2002; Stewart, Shamdasani & Room, 2007; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005).

In the research, a semi-structured form was used during the focus group interview. The following principles were particularly paid attention during the question development stage by the authors: providing clear questions, avoiding non-multi dimensionality and misguiding questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The researcher paid particular attention to the following during the group interview: avoiding guidance, non-deviating from the aim, providing equal right to speak, and time allocation (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). The focus group interview was video recorded. The recording lasted 102 minutes. It was later deciphered. 90-page- data was obtained from the interview. The reliability of the research was calculated using "Reliability = Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement) x 110" formula (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### Participants

In the research, homogenous sampling technique was used to determine the participants. According to this technique, the teachers who will attend the focus group discussion are chosen from teachers who work in private teaching institutions and who have 1-5 years seniority. New teachers experience much more problems among the teachers working in private teaching institutions. Participants work in four different cities. Private teaching institutions in which participants work carry on activities in various areas such as university entrance exam

and preparation for foreign language exams and computer courses. Seniority of participants varies between 2 months and 5 years. Participants work approximately 9 hours daily.

### Results

Private teaching institution teachers generally state that it is not their first preference to work there. But there are also teachers who said that working in Private Teaching Institutions was their first preference. These participants explained the reason of their preference to work in Private Teaching Institutions in order to develop themselves. Below are some examples of expressions:

*Working in Private Teaching Institutions was not my first preference but I first wanted it since I thought I could develop myself more. I want much to work in public schools but it's obligatory for me to work here (P3, Female).*

*My first preference is always to work in public schools as it is desired by all friends (P5, Male).*

Private Teaching Institution teachers stated that working conditions were heavy and very hard. On the other hand, some participants preferred giving examples for their negative experiences rather than telling about heaviness of working conditions. Examples of expressions:

*Working conditions are much harder than public schools (P3, Female).*

*Private teaching institution teaching is very tiring to me as well (P6, Female).*

*It's a very hard occupation especially for women (P8, Male).*

Although there are different views on the questions above, Private Teaching Institution teachers stated that working conditions generally affect teachers negatively. Teachers regard their friends with whom they could solve problems, as their rivals. Although it seems that the competition among teachers results in a positive outcomes like teachers' developing themselves, it generally results in negative outcomes. This situation is understood also from views of participants. Examples of expression:

*...I have an eight months old baby but I can't spend time with him. I know a lot of things about the children of others but I do not know much about my own child, I*

*don't know when his first tooth appeared, I don't know how much his hair grew and I don't know how much his weight is. Because I can't play game with my child and I'm asleep at nights. I hardly have got romantic times to spend with my husband. I haven't got a special time for my self... (P2, Female).*

*That there is no guarantee affects us negatively. When I showed very good performance in Private Teaching Institution I worked, the institution dismissed a science teacher from work. This could also happen to me. They could let me off and find a teacher who could work for less money (P10, Female).*

Due to the stated reasons, employees have low commitment and job satisfaction decreases. Also, their performances are minimized and employees become distressed (Büyükdere & Solmuş, 2006). As a result, organizational atmosphere gets silent, complaints might become reasons for punishments or firing and individuals feel locked in the office (Asunakutlu, 2007).

While teachers state that working conditions are so hard, they think that the wage they get does not equal to their efforts. However, they continue to work in Private Teaching Institutions since there is no another alternative. Especially in the first years of the profession, very low wage is paid to teachers. The basic reason of this is that there are a lot of teachers but work possibility is low. Examples of expression:

*I don't think that the wage I earn equals to my efforts. Because all Private Teaching Institution teachers are in with self-sacrifice (P1, Female).*

*I also don't think that the wage I earned is equal to my efforts (P5, Male).*

Teachers have made very different metaphors for Private Teaching Institutions. However that the teachers liken Private Teaching Institutions to the anthill, lacework, a bucket with a hole, castle, watch, slavery or workmanship can be interpreted as general negative opinions about Private Teaching Institutions. Teachers have used these metaphors to depict negative situations in Private Teaching Institutions. Examples of expressions:

*I liken it to an anthill. There is Queen Ant in an anthill. If she dies, other ants die as well. Like that, in Private Teaching Institu-*

*tion if the boss dies, we die and sink as well (P2, Female).*

*I liken Private Teaching Institution to a castle. And I liken the owner of Private Teaching Institution to a king, the manager to a vizier and teachers to soldiers. Whatever the king says happens. If he says to kill, we kill and if he says to give life, we give life. We work every time. We do whatever they say. Sometimes we do works not related with our branches. We are always under the order (P7, Male).*

*I liken teachers to a jockeys who are preparing horses for the horse race. It is like slavery or workmanship when we consider generally. Because you work, but you are not appreciated. (P10, Female).*

### Conclusion

Private Teaching Institution teachers continue to work in Private Teaching Institutions although working there is not their first preference. But some participants have stated that working in Private Teaching Institution is their first preferences. Some of the participants have stated that they preferred Private Teaching Institution, for they want to develop themselves better. These participants think that education given in Private Teaching Institutions is more qualified than the education given in public schools. But the basic delusion lying beneath this view is that the education in the private teaching institutions is not like the one given in the public schools. Private Teaching Institutions do not give education like in public schools. Private Teaching Institutions teach how the information given in public schools can be used fast because these institutions prepare the students for competitive exams. A teacher has stated this situation like that: "We don't educate pupils; we give the pills to students" (Çağlayan 2008). In a study by Uğraş (2009), it was found out that teachers having to work at private teaching institutions were not paid on time and paid only nine or ten months during the year, and the insurance premium for especially less experienced teachers were not fully paid, or it was paid according to the minimum wages not to their real wages.

Teachers think that working conditions in Private Teaching Institutions are very hard and heavy. But they continue to work since they do not have other alternatives. Some teachers argue that working conditions are generally negative but it is not

so in the Private Teaching Institutions they work. They have pointed out that they are very glad and happy as they work there. On the other hand, teachers have stated that these working conditions affect their social life negatively because they work about 10 hours a day and give lectures about 50-60 hours a week. In addition, contractual teachers do not have guarantee because the future is a separate stress source. The future anxiety increases the competition among teachers and these results in negative outcomes. In addition of all these drawbacks, teachers think that the wage they get does not equal to their efforts. Regarding the employment guarantee and social rights, private teaching institution teachers, who are under the unemployment pressure, work under more negative conditions than permanent, contractual and waged teachers.

According to Özdem's (2007) study, school administrators and teachers view "the increase in the number of the private teaching institutions and teachers giving private courses" as one of the indicators of the transformation at elementary schools after 1980. Another important point about these policies is the privatization of education. With the privatization, the government withdrew itself from the field of education and left its place to the private schools, private teaching institutions and universities. While the government do not invest in the education sector, private schools, universities, and private teaching institutions fill in this gap with the tax discounts and aids the government provided (Yıldız, 2008) and this case let the private teaching institutions to be discussed a lot.

One of the negative situations in Private Teaching Institutions is the rivalry among teachers. Although some participants think that this rivalry can have positive outcomes, it generally results in negative outcomes. That the managers and teachers working in Private Teaching Institution regard it as a trading establishment affects the relationships in these institutions as well. The rivalry may cause lack of confidence, communication deficit and interdependence. In this situation teachers may show behaviors unsuitable for the prestige of teaching profession.

Private Teaching Institution teachers working in negative conditions mentioned above think that they cannot get what they deserve in return for their efforts although they work under very heavy conditions. Depending on that, they liken Private Teaching Institutions to the ant nest, lace-work, and a bucket with a hole, castle, watch, slavery or workmanship.

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