

The Gender-Related Role of Teaching Profession in Turkey

Selçuk Uygun*

Akdeniz University, Turkey

Abstract

Teaching is a professional job that requires expertise. The characteristics of the professionals can affect the quality of the profession. One of these characteristics is gender. In this study, the gender-related role of teaching profession in Turkey is examined. The analysis in a historical perspective of gender distributions of students who have teaching education and teachers employed in educational institutions and the gender debate in order to make teaching a profession are the subjects of this study. The basic data of the study is the official statistics and the literature on the profession with gender. Qualitative analysis performed on the data and change in the gender distribution of professionals, and the effects of this change on the reputation and the quality of the profession are evaluated in this study. Based on the findings of the study, it can be said that the teaching profession in Turkey tends to be a female profession and some of the teaching branches are associated with gender, and that this determines the status, reputation and effectiveness of teaching profession.

Keywords: Turkey, teaching profession, gender, teacher role, qualitative research

* Selcuk Uygun is associate professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey.

Corresponce: selcukuygun17@gmail.com

Introduction

The quality of a school can be best measures by the quality of its teachers. For this reason, the most crucial element in education is teacher. There are many factors affecting the qualities of the teachers. One of them is gender. Whether the teachers are male or female may affect the importance and aspects of the profession.

Teaching is one of the oldest professions in Turkey where women also played role; it is also one of the first public professions as well (Kurnaz, 1997,p. 50). The first female teachers' school was opened in Turkey in 1870. The purpose was to train female teachers for the girls' schools that were introduced for the first time to the Turkish education system back then (İKMM, 1933). Previously, women did not serve as teachers in the public schools with the exception of "homeschooling for kids" (Akyüz, 2004).

It could be said that women's visibility and involvement in teaching profession has increased since 1870s. Female teachers were allowed to work at male schools as well since 1918 (Koçer, 1972,p. 124). Number of female teachers in different levels of education is increasing in Turkey.

The interest by women in teaching profession led to discussions as to whether it is actually a job that is best for women (Tan, 1995; İçli, 1997). The basic idea in this assumption is that teaching is appropriate for the role and status of women as spouse and mother; for this reason, women tend to become teachers.

Although some studies were done on training the teachers and their qualities, the direct role of gender in teaching profession was not analyzed so far (Öztürk, 2005; Uygun, 2007). It could be said that some accounts reviewed some issues pertinent to the lives and profession of women (Weiler, 1994). In reaction to the research findings that women tend to become teachers because it is seen a part-time job and a low-status profession, feminist scholars offered alternative and critical studies (Gürses, 2003; Gök, 2005; Tan 2005). To this end, it could be said that the role of gender in picking the teaching profession in Turkey deserves further attention.

This study asks the following questions to investigate the role of gender in selecting teaching profession in Turkey with particular reference to the change in the number of teachers by gender and the female teachers:

- What are the reasons for the creation of institutions where female teachers are trained?
- What are the approaches that establish linkage between teaching profession and gender?
- How is the visibility of female teachers in the education institutions?

Relying on the research findings and the official statistics, this study attempts to define the role of gender in picking teaching profession in Turkey.

Findings

This part reviews the teachers' schools for women and the reasons for the creation of these schools; subsequently, the studies suggesting that teaching is a profession suitable for women are analyzed and the gender breakdown in the profession is considered.

Institutions where female teachers were trained

The training of the female teachers has become important in parallel to the education of girls. The opening of girls-only schools raised the need for female students (Akyüz, 2000; Özger, 2012). For this reason, female teachers were trained to serve in girls' schools. The first institution to train female teachers was Darülmualimat (literally means house of female teachers) İKMM, 1933).

The 1968 Maarifi Umumiye Nizamnamesi (Directive on General Education) states that a girls' school (elementary school) and a female teachers' school (Darulmuallimat) would be opened in Istanbul for the first time (MUN: articles 68-78). This school was opened on 26 April 1870 in a ceremony in Istanbul where Minister of Education Saffet Pasha delivered an opening speech. 17 graduated from this school in 1873 and they started working in girls' elementary schools (İKMM, 1933).

Darülmualimat has played an important role in the increase in the number of girls in schools by training female teachers (Öztürk, 2005). After the opening of this school, girls' elementary schools were also launched in different parts of the country because the idea that female teachers should serve in girls' schools was prevalent back then (Kurnaz, 1997,p. 44). The development of the institutions training female teachers by the types of the schools was also different.

The training of female teachers who would serve in preschool, primary and elementary schooling institutions was ensured by the creation and improvement of Darulmuallimat. Ana Muallime Sınıfı (Main Female Teacher Class) was founded in 1913 as part of the Darulmuallimat, followed by the establishment of Ana Muallime Mektebi (Main Female Teacher School) in 1915 which was closed in 1919. Another main school was opened in Ankara in 1927 and it was transferred to the Istanbul Girls' Teacher School in 1930 (İKMM, 1933). The practice by which the preschool teachers were trained in an institution offering exclusive training for women for the first time was based on the idea that preschool teaching was suitable for women.

The girls' teacher school, restructured in 1913 in the name of Darulmuallimatı Aliye (Supreme School of Female Teachers) to train teachers for elementary schools as well, was divided into three parts: iptidai (primary), ihzari (elementary) and ali (high) schools. The first trains teachers for primary schools, the second for girls' teacher schools and the last for the high schools offering advanced education and curriculum (Akyüz, 2012).

The first female teacher schools outside Istanbul were created in different cities by adding a few classrooms at girls' elementary schools. These were institutions which were training teachers for the girls' primary schools. Independent Girls' Teacher Schools were also opened in Izmir, Sivas and Erzurum (İKMM, 1933).

İnas Darulfunun (Girls' University) was opened in 1914 to offer higher education for girls. The first female students to enroll in this institution were Darulmuallimat graduates. Some of the graduates also served as teachers in high schools (Gelişli, 2004,p. 125).

After transition to republican regime in 1923, mixed education policy was introduced; however, both female and male teacher schools survived a long time. Male students were admitted in the girls' boarding schools whereas girls were admitted as daytime students in the male boarding schools. However, this distinction was removed in subsequent years. The village institutes were the first boarding teacher schools for both girls and boys (Uygun, 2007). Girls technical and art teacher schools were also offering education for girls only (Öztürk, 2005). However, opposite sex students were also admitted in these schools later.

In 2000s, it is no longer possible to say that there is separate training and education for girls and boys. The gender-based distinction in educating teachers disappeared over the time (Öztürk, 2005).

The idea of female-specific schools disappeared over the time; however, female teachers were seen as key figures holding crucial roles for Westernization and modernization in late Ottoman and early Republican periods (Tan, 1996; Kırkpınar, 1998). In late Ottoman period, teaching was the second most popular profession among women in public sphere after nursing (Özger, 2012, p. 425). We could say that women participated in social life in Republican Turkey as teachers (Doğramacı, 1997, p. 112). The main factor leading the women to become teachers is the idea of creating girls' schools and employing female teachers in these schools. Religious beliefs and cultural features are the main factors behind this idea. However, these factors have become less significant during the process of Westernization.

Gender and teaching profession

Teaching was seen as a profession that clerics would perform in the past (Öztürk, 2005, p. 1). Therefore, the members of this profession have generally been male. Women mostly performed as tutors in "homeschooling" (Öztürk, 2004). Women's becoming professional teachers was related to the opening of female-specific teaching schools. As noted earlier, such a school was first opened in 1870 and the first female teachers were appointed in 1873 (Keçeci Kurt, 2011).

The first teachers' school in Turkey is Darulmuallimin which was opened on 16 March 1848 (Öztürk, 2005). This school admitted males only. According to Selim Sabit Efendi, a graduate from this school (cited in Akyüz, 2000, p. 10), "primary school teachers should be women because kids grow up among the women since their birth; they are close to the kids; and women have greater passion for the kids than the men do. A male teacher may punish and beat a boy for nothing. A female teacher does not do this; they tend to raise the kids with leniency and passion." With these ideas, Selim Sabit Efendi became one of the first Turkish educators to raise a discussion on the role of gender in teaching profession.

Motherhood is the dominant role attributed to women in Ottoman society (Ahmet Rıza, 1324-1908). Namık Kemal, a late Ottoman period intellectual, defended education of girls; but he noted that they should be educated so that they would become a good wife and mother (Akyüz, 2012). He believed that the first educator of a child is his or her mother at home. Mother was seen as the first educator of the child; so it is meaningful to see that the role of education in early stages of the school years is attributed to motherhood as well. Because of the impact of this tendency, at the beginning, preschool teaching was viewed as a female profession in Turkey; as a result, Main Female Teacher School where only girls were admitted was opened (İKMM, 1933; Oktay, 1999). Currently, males are also admitted in the departments training preschool teachers (Oktay, 1999). However, no significant interest by men is observed in this field. The main reason for the lack of interest by men in this field is concern over job security.

According to the research findings, one of the reasons that preschool and primary school teaching is seen suitable for women is the cultural characteristics of the society (Kreiser, 2002). The families relate the appearance of their daughters in public sphere to educating little kids which they feel close to. The best profession found suitable for the girls is service as housewife. If the girls are to work, the best option is viewed as their service as teachers. Even in a research done as late as 1973, one out of four mothers in rural areas wanted their daughters to become teachers (Kırkpınar, 1998, p. 27). This has not changed much today. In addition to the cultural factors, the political approaches may also encourage the women to adopt teaching as profession.

After the announcement of republican regime, a new woman type was created. This style refers to a woman holding the patterns and symbols of the new system and ideology. To train this woman, an important mission was attributed to female teachers. These teachers would serve as the models and carriers of this typology. The role of the women as mothers was considered by the founders of the republican regime important; in addition to this role, the women were also seen as educators. The female teachers were represented as prestigious and respected women in the print media (Gürses, 2003, p. 16-38). The woman image of the republican regime was defined in a controversial boundary between conventional and contemporary (Kadıoğlu, 1998, p. 89). During this process, teaching was referred to as suitable for women like nursing.

Women who assumed jobs in public sphere in the Republican era were employed in low-status positions. However, thanks to the new policies in the republican regime, women had the right to take up any profession (Başbakanlık, 1998). But it is still possible to say that their involvement in different professions has never been adequate. Number of female students in education sector has been increasing. However, there are some researchers who argue that this is happening because women fill the void left by men in different sectors (İçli, 1997, p.237; Tan, 1995, p.110). According to these researchers, men prefer more prestigious and quality professions whereas women fill the void they left. Such arguments raise discussions on the image and prestige of the teaching profession.

Interest In Teaching Profession By Gender In Turkey

During the promulgation of the republican regime, number of primary school teachers in 1923 was 10,102. 1,081 were women and the remaining men. 378 female and 2,356 male teachers received professional training (Akyüz, 2012, p. 380). The number of teachers in official and private primary schools in 1933 was 15,123. 4,803 were women and 10,320 men. Number of primary school teachers in 1950s increased to 37,932; 10,390 were female and 27,542 male teachers. Number of teachers working in the primary schools dramatically increased in 1963; there were 76,634 teachers; 18,929 were women and 57,705 were man (DİE, 1966, p.16).

In 1983, number of teachers was 208,393; 86,232 were women and 122,161 were men. In 1993, number of teachers was 237,943; 102,391 were women and 135,552 were men (MEB Statistics). A review of these figures and developments show that number of female teachers has increased steadily over the time.

It could be said that number of female teachers has increased more visibly since 1980s. Training teachers was left to higher education institutions in 1982 (Öztürk, 2005). After this regulation, it could be said that girls picked teaching profession more eagerly. It is also possible to say that women express greater eagerness to become teachers in Turkey in 2000s. Reviews could be made by reference to some current data on this matter.

Gender breakdown in institutions offering professional education

In 1982, the institutions educating teachers were incorporated in the faculty of education. Preschool, primary and elementary school teachers were trained in faculties of education; there are also other similar options to become teachers including postgraduate certificate programs (YÖK, 1998). Table 1 provides the number of students at the faculties of education by gender (ÖSYM, 2013).

Table 1 . Number of students at faculties of education by gender (2011-2012)

Field of study	Number of male students	%	Number of female students	%
Preschool teaching	2591	6.6	14439	93.4
Primary school teaching	13879	35.5	25175	64.5
Physics (elementary school)	1052	52.2	1153	47.8

A review of the data in Table 1 shows that number of female students is greater than number of male students in the primary school teaching category (ratio 65 pct). In preschool teaching category, a small number of male students seek degree. The reason for the male students' interest in this category is job security after graduation. Currently, preschool teachers have a greater chance of getting a job (İçli, 1997). It is estimated that male student admission in this field will grow because of further unemployment. It could be said that male domination is still the case in the field of high school teaching category.

Number of teachers in elementary schools by gender

The figures on the number of teachers employed in schools are provided in Table 2 (M.E.B, 2013). These figures are important as they show the difference between the employed and the candidate teachers. This difference may also give some opinion on the tendency towards teaching profession based on gender identity.

Table 2. Number of teachers employed in official schools by gender (2011-2012)

Field of education	Male	%	Female	%
Preschool teaching	3 073	6.4	44 639	93.6
Primary school teaching	113 776	43.5	147 721	56.5
Elementary school teaching	122 352	48.7	128 481	51.3
High school teaching	131 371	50.2	101 146	49.8

A review of the figures in table 2 shows that preschool teaching is extremely popular among women (93.6 pct) while they are more eager than males to assume teaching positions in primary schools as well (56.5 pct). It could be said that ratio of female teachers declines in high level education institutions. Ratio of women in elementary school teaching is 51.3 pct whereas ratio of women in high schools is 49.8 pct. These figures show that female visibility in all different categories has increased. However, the growing interest by men in preschool teaching profession should also be taken into consideration. A review of Table 1 and Table 2 shows that the ratio of men in preschool teaching increases whereas the ratio of women in other fields is expected to grow as well. There is a significant difference between the visibility of women in official public schools and their visibility in the private schools. The intensity of women teachers in all types of private education institutions is greater than the intensity of male teachers. It was argued based on the figures and data from 1991 that the employment of women in private schools could be attributed to concerns over having presentable employees. Table 3 gives figures on the number of teachers employed in private schools by gender (M.E.B., 2013)

Table 3. Number of teachers in private schools by gender (2011-2012)

Field of education	Male	%	Female	%
Preschool teaching	547	3.6	14 674	96.4
Primary school teaching	5 161	25.1	15 385	74.9
Elementary school teaching	7 004	37.1	11 922	62.9
High school teaching	10 528	47.1	11 850	52.9

A review of Tables 2 and 3 reveals that number of female teachers in private education institutions is greater than number of male teachers in all levels. Number of private education institutions started growing in Turkey after 1980 (İTO, 1999; Uygun, 2013). It is interesting to see that number of female teachers in private education sector is higher.

In terms of income level, there is no difference between male and female teachers in public schools. However, the case is different in private schools (Ateş, 2009). Even though there is no gender-related difference in these schools, it is evident that there are problems related to the amount of salaries the male and female teachers are entitled to (Eğitim Sen, 2005). Looked at this way, the intensification of female teachers receiving low amount of salaries in private school may be meaningful. This raises the argument that teaching was made a women ghetto given the attempts to turn the profession into a job which entails low amount of salaries (Gürses, 2003,p. 48). Given the economic and cultural as well as other factors over the time, it could be said that teaching has become more popular as a female-specific profession.

In addition to the teachers employed in primary and secondary schools, the number of faculty members in universities by gender may be important as well because faculty membership may be seen as a more prestigious profession. Table 4 provides figures and numbers of the faculty members working at the universities (TUIK, 2013).

Table 4. Number and figures of faculty members working at the universities by gender (2011-2012)

Academic title	Gender		Female ratio %
	Male	Female	
Professor Dr.	12054	4729	%28,17
Assoc. Prof. Dr.	6303	2954	% 31,91
Assist. Prof. Dr.	15777	8982	% 36,27
Lecturer	11643	7370	% 38,76
Tutor	3352	5197	% 60,79
Research Assistant	19137	18112	% 48,62

A review of Table 4 shows that ratio of women declines in the universities as the academic ranking increases. Ratio of female tutors is 60.79 pct whereas they constitute only 28.17 of the full professors. These figures show that women do not sufficiently represent

themselves in the education sector that requires higher academic ranking. According to Acar (1998: 318), the academic pyramid shows that women are intensified in certain fields. Statuses like lecturer and tutor are marginal posts in academic field. Those who are employed in these positions are supplemental staff; as a result, the presence of women in this area refers to a superficial participation of women in education sector.

What really matters in universities is professorship. The academic rankings in Turkey include assistant, associate and full professorships. Research assistantship is the initial step towards professorship. The ratio of women as research assistants (48.62 pct) is not a poor performance. Number of women in universities is growing every year. For instance, the ratio of female research assistants at the universities was 44.5 pct in 2004-2005 academic year whereas ratio of female assistant and associate professors was 30 pct and ratio of female full professors was 26.5 pct (YÖK, 2005,p. 4).

The status of women in the same profession in other countries was also analyzed to better understand the tendency towards teaching profession in Turkey. Table 5 provides figures on the number of female teachers in some countries. Teachers are not the only employees in education field. Civil servants and secretaries as well as other similar figures can be included in this category. Most of these figures are also women (OECD, 2013).

Table 5. Number of female teachers in some countries (2011-2012)

Countries	Female ratio
Germany	%64.4
France	%65.8
England	%67
Portugal	%70.4
New Zealand	%69.6
US	%69
Russia	%75
Brazil	%74.6
Turkey	%50.3
OECD average	%66.6

A review of Table 5 reveals that the ratio of female teachers in OECD and other countries is higher than the ratio of female teachers in Turkey. However, it is also seen that Turkey exceeds the 50.3 pct of the threshold. A review of the figures on the institutions training teachers in Table 1 reveals that Turkey may catch the world average shortly.

A review of the figures in the first four tables suggests that women's participation and involvement in the teaching profession is on the rise. This rise is visible not only in primary and secondary school education but also in higher education. If this is the case with the teaching profession, what is the case with other professions? The answer to this question provides some hints on the prestige and status of the teaching profession. Table 6 provides ratio of women in some professions in the public field(TUIK,2013).

Table 6. Number of staff in different professions in public offices by gender (2011-2012)

Professions	Male	Female	Ratio of women
Minister	24	1	%4
Member in Central Bank General Assembly	7	-	-
Judge	5332	2794	%34
Member of Parliament	469	79	%14.4
High level civil servant	4489	494	%10.5
Police officer	225082	13165	%5.6
Rektor (University President)	153	9	%5.6

If we look at the figures on Table 6, we could say that independently of the status of the profession, women tend to participate in some professions more eagerly. As noted in Table 6, 5.6 pct of the police officers are women whereas 34 pct of the judges are female.

Figures in Table 6 also show that ratio of women participation in some professions is low. The fact that this ratio is low in some prestigious positions could be seen meaningful because women tend to assume roles in public offices where they could play their traditional roles more easily. It should be noted that this is also the role the society attributes to women (İçli, 1997).

Based on these findings, it could be said that rather than the prestige and status of the profession, the characteristics of the profession, the working conditions as well as economic, social and cultural factors play role in the selection of teaching profession by women. If all these are considered properly, it could be concluded that teaching profession, seen as close to the motherhood role of the women and a part-time job, is also regarded as an ideal profession for women in the society (Tan, 1995; İçli, 1997; Gürses, 2003; Eğitim Sen, 2005).

The tendencies over the past and the most recent statistical information show that the traditional roles regarding profession are still influential in Turkey. But women consider the main characteristics of the profession when they choose their career path; in their choice, they want to make sure that their work will not undermine their role as wife and mother.

Even though women's role and participation in some prestigious professions has increased in the republican era; however, they have always lagged behind men. It could be said that the women's tendency towards business life and professional choices is independent from the professional status. If these figures are considered, it is hard to argue that they have any positive or negative impact on the prestige and status of the profession. However, it should also be noted that women are intensified in the low-status professions. The primary reason for this is the traditional role the society attributes to the women. Teaching is seen as one of the best professions suitable for this role. This tendency in Turkey holds similarities to the process modern countries are going through (Matthews, 2002, p. 51; Weiler, 1994; Harrigan, 1998). Teachers are seen as cheap labor; as a result, roles of motherhood and

spouse appear to be the main factors for growing tendency towards teaching profession among women.

The relationship between teaching profession and gender is also verified by research findings as well (Ottekin Demirbolat, 2006,s.1076). It is observed that gender is important in picking teaching as profession. İçli (1997,p. 262) also found that women pick teaching as their profession because they see it suitable for their lifestyle. 88.2 pct of female teachers are happy with their work and profession; and %75.7 stated that they would prefer this job again if an option is offered to them. Based on these findings, it could be said that the suitability of teaching profession for the traditional social role is the main factor for its popularity among women.

More girls now attend schools; this is a lead factor for the growing number of female teachers. Interestingly, greater number of female students attracted more girls into the schools. Since 19th century, teaching profession has become more popular for women (Gelişli, 2004). However, the perception and belief that teaching becomes a profession where the women fills the void left by men who pick other professions undermines the prestige and status of the profession. In the education management, seen a more prestigious field, it is observed that women are underrepresented and that they remain cool to assuming executive positions (Tan, 1996; Günbayı, 2005). Considering the social role attributed to women and the status and prestige of the current teachers, it could be said that the tendency of women towards teaching causes a negative perception. This perception is based on the assumption that teaching is a part-time and simple job that is extremely suitable for women. The poor involvement of women in union activities also shows that they actually internalize this perception (Türkoğlu, 1999).

Conclusion

Women have effectively joined the teaching profession as a result of cultural, social, economic and political factors since the opening of the first female teachers' school in Turkey. The education of the girls led to discussion on training female teachers as well in the society. With the modernization process, women started working in not only girls-specific schools but also mixed and male-specific schools as well. The role the society has been attributing to the women over the last 150 years has become influential in this tendency.

Because they are associated with motherhood and spouse roles in the society, women tend to become teachers. These roles are inherently traditional. However, these roles have been redefined during the process of modernization. The role of motherhood of women was underlined in the republican era as well; but they were also seen as model and educators. Because of this, women visibility in teaching profession has increased over the time. The growing number of female teachers leads to the perception that teaching is a female profession. And this perception and belief raises discussion and debates on the status and prestige of teaching profession.

Today, teaching is seen as a profession with low status and prestige. The tendency of women towards this profession is mostly viewed as them filling the void left the men. Therefore, this means that eventually, teaching is considered a low-status job. It is hard to estimate the impact of greater women involvement in the profession on its prestige and status by relying on the findings of this research. To do this, there is need for separate studies that would focus on the role of female teachers in the overall outlook and standing of the profession.

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