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An Evaluation of the Transition Process from Teaching to the Academia*

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Abstract

The recent increase in the number of universities in Turkey has speeded up the transition of teachers who receive graduate education to the academia. However, this rapid transition brought a variety of problems. The present study focused on the academics' experiences regarding the transition from teaching to the academia from a holistic perspective. The qualitative research method and the phenomenological design were employed in the study. The participants were seven academics who passed to the academia from a teaching career. Convenient sampling and snowball sampling were used in the selection of the participants. The research data were gathered through an interview form. An audio-recorder was used not to lose data during the interviews. In the analysis of the data, the descriptive analysis technique was employed. As for the reliability and validity of the study, data triangulation, external revision, direct quotations and referee evaluation were put into practice. Three themes were revealed as a result of the data analysis. These themes were the teaching profession and process, graduate education process and the process of becoming an academic. The findings of the study are as follows: The teaching profession was practiced willingly and with a human-oriented approach. Teaching was seen as a way of serving the society through students. Graduate education was regarded as a difficult process, but expectations overcame the difficulties. Since the participants had to work as a teacher and learn as an undergraduate student at the same time could be challenging both financially and psychologically. Academicianship was perceived as a place for critical and scientific thinking. The transition to the academia was followed by the efforts to adapt to the new institutional and physical environment. Based on the study, it can be suggested that the teaching profession should be made more development-oriented through graduate education, and legal regulations should be made to ease the bureaucratic difficulties teachers experience while receiving graduate education.
Key words: Academia, Phenomenological design, Academicianship, Teaching

Introduction

As the number of universities in Turkey has increased and more university-level programs related to education have been opened in recent years, more teachers have started to pursue a graduate degree in their fields. They both carry out their teaching profession and receive their graduate education at the same time. Moreover, the teachers who attend these programs want to continue their career as academics at a university, and seek for ways to achieve this.

Teaching is a profession that is based on educating individuals, and in which complex educational problems and relationships are experienced. The Ministry of National Education, one of the most important departments that represent the teaching profession in Turkey, describe six dimensions related to the profession in its teacher training and development strategy. These dimensions are pre-service teacher education, the selection and employment of candidates for the teaching profession, qualifying and adaptation training, career development and rewarding, the status of the teaching profession, and constant professional development (MEB, 2017). In a study on the problems related to teaching and school administration from the perspective of the meetings of the National Education Council and the Journal of Announcements (1980-2014), Tofur, Aypay and Yücel (2016) state that the decisions made with respect to the teaching profession implemented insufficiently, or the relevant council decisions not included in policy documents is a drawback for the profession.

Academicianship is a profession that requires offering solutions to problems, producing models and participating in theoretical processes. In this respect, the educational environments where teachers and

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academics work have certain distinguishing features in terms of human relationships, culture and tasks. At this point, one may have positive or negative experiences during the transition from being a teacher to becoming an academic, and afterwards. Therefore, this study focuses on teachers' experiences of their transition from being a teacher to becoming an academic. In this sense, revealing teachers' experiences of becoming an academic can provide useful findings in terms of teacher training and how teaching and academicianship are perceived as well as educational practice and theory. On the other hand, exposing the problems teachers face during their graduate education can provide insights for improving this process.

Individuals who believe in both personal and professional development as they carry out their teaching profession consider initiating a new process as necessary to achieve this. Such a process brings about a set of difficulties for teachers. Cansoy and Parlar (2017) indicate that school-based activities can be a solution for these difficulties. The school-based approach helps administrators, teachers, students and parents make the educational environment more effective. This enables teachers to carry out their own work and also work with their colleagues. A collaborative environment leads all stakeholders to make a contribution to school by creating synergy. In a study on the teaching profession, teachers were reported to perceive the profession in terms of values that can be adopted in any organisation such as kindness, mercy and sacrifice, and technical skills such as knowledge, skills and shaping and supporting the future generations in any way they need (Karataş, Ardıç & Oral, 2017). Accordingly, the difficulties experienced materially and morally can be both personal and professional. The transition to becoming an academic following the graduate education received with an attitude of accepting what has happened and what is to happen from the beginning brings a different process with particular difficulties. With reference to what is experienced in the transition from teaching to becoming an academic, and adapting to academicianship, the primary aim of this study was to reveal teachers' experiences in this process, and offer suggestions based on the results obtained.

The following research questions were addressed in this context:

1. What does the teaching experience bring to teachers who pass from teaching to academicianship?
2. What do teachers who pass from teaching to academicianship experience during their graduate education?
3. What do teachers who pass from teaching to academicianship experience during the transition process?

Method

In this section, the issues regarding the methodology of the study are presented. These include the following: The research design, participants, data gathering, analysis of the data, reliability-validity strategies employed, research ethics, and researcher's role.

Research Design

The study was designed in accordance with the qualitative research method, and more specifically with the phenomenological design. According to Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2015), phenomenology is *"a qualitative research method by which the researchers try to explain how one or more participants experience a phenomenon (event, case, concept, etc.) (p. 408)."* For the purposes of the present study, phenomenological design was decided to be suitable because the aim was to understand how the participants perceived the phenomenon based on their experience, and an interview form.

Participants

Convenient sampling and snowball sampling were used in the selection of participants. According to Miles and Huberman (2015), convenient sampling "saves time and money and enables flexibility at the expense of knowledge and reliability", while snowball sampling is used to "define the state of individuals who are acquainted to people who they know are rich in terms of knowledge" (p.28). The participants of the study were seven individuals who were thought to contribute to the study, and who passed from teaching to academicianship within the last three years at the time. One of the participants was female, and the rest were male. When the literature is reviewed for sample size, there seems to be no rule in qualitative research. Sample size may range based on questions, data and resources (Merriam, 2013; Patton, 2014). Moreover, the fact that there was similarity between the participants' views, seven participants were thought to be sufficient for the study. The data, on the other hand, were gathered through a semi-structured interview form. In the form, the participants were asked 12 questions regarding their experience in teaching, graduate education and transition to

becoming an academic. Two academics who were experts in their field, two possible participants and two language experts were asked for their opinions while developing the interview form. The participants' real names were not included in the study. Instead, they were referred to as P1, P2, P3, etc. while providing quotations.

Data Gathering

The data in this study were gathered using a semi-structured interview form. Considering the possible changes in the form throughout the research process, the data were reviewed regularly, and the study could be conducted through these reviews -the addition or exclusion of questions-. In this regard, there was no need to add or remove any questions in the form. In addition to the 12 main questions, two probing questions were used to help the participants provide more detailed data related to the study. For Merriam (2015), *"probing and follow-up questions are asked to obtain more explanation and information about what participants have said (p. 98)."* After the participants were informed about the interviews, the necessary permissions were obtained and appointments were made, the interview process started.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded with an audio-recorder, and the data were analysed by using this device. After the interviews were transcribed, the transcriptions were sent to the participants, and only after their consent was obtained, the coding process started. In the coding process, open coding was preferred. According to Neuman (2006, p.664), open coding is "the initial coding of qualitative data in which the researcher examine the data and summarise them in analytical categories or codes as a preparation". In the analysis of the data, the content analysis technique was employed. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011) note that in content analysis, it is aimed to help the reader better understand the study through direct quotations. In this way, the causal links between the views are better established. In the present study, the findings and interpretations are presented together with direct quotations to reach the results.

Reliability-Validity Strategies Used in the Study

For reliability and validity, the three strategies stated by Christensen et al. (2015) were employed. These strategies included the following: (i) External revision: Individuals who were field experts and had research experience in this area were contacted, and their views on the research process were taken into consideration. Their views were reviewed to address any mistakes and weaknesses. (ii) Direct quotations: The transcriptions of the participants' views were done by using an audio-recorder, and thus data loss was prevented. Themes and categories were formed according to the data. The process for forming the themes, categories and codes was conducted based on the direct quotations. (iii) Referee evaluation: Discussions on the research results were held with individuals who had research studies in the area.

Research Ethics

After the participants were informed about the interviews, and the necessary permissions and appointments were obtained, the interview process started.

Role of the Researcher

The fact that the researchers of the present study have experienced the process of graduate education and currently work as academics is thought to enable them to understand and show empathy towards the participants' experiences and views, and accordingly, to interpret the data in a relevant way to draw implications.

Findings and Interpretation

The themes, categories and codes obtained from the data are presented in this section. Based on the data, three themes, 10 categories and 18 sub-categories were revealed. The themes were the teaching profession and process, graduate education process and the process of becoming an academic.

1. Theme: The Teaching Profession and Process

This theme consisted of two categories: the meaning of the teaching profession itself, and the process of practising the profession.

1.1. The Meaning of the Teaching Profession

Under this category, there were three codes: people-orientedness, development and future-orientedness. The participants did not describe the teaching profession as merely related to education and instruction, but associated it with having an influence on people. They saw the profession as a way to mobilise the nature of humans, bring their nature to the forefront and make them feel valuable, and accordingly made a point of equipping students with target outcomes. The views of the participants regarding this perspective are as follows:

> **P1:** First of all, I see teaching as being a master of arts. I mean it's the art of appealing to the human spirit. Like touching a student's heart, and taking him/her up to the next stage.
> **P3:** Teaching is a profession that enables to reach people and make them discover their potentials.
> **P6:** Teaching is about the spirit, the heart of human beings.

Another aspect of the profession that the participants featured was its contribution to students' development. Considering that the word 'development' is regarded in the literature as a change in the desired direction, it can be stated that the teachers focused on the changes that are in favour of students. Engaging in activities to ensure students' development and enable them to become aware of their capacity was a dimension that the participants considered in association to the teaching profession. The views of the participants regarding this dimension are as in the following:

> **P2:** It's about monitoring students' development, contribute to and support their development.
> **P3:** Teaching is a profession that enables to reach people and make them discover their potentials.

The participants described the teaching profession as a process of building the future of the society through students. In order for this process to be fulfilled successfully, raising students in terms of both education and learning were seen as having great importance. The participants emphasised that having an influence on students and consequently on the society was a vital task for teachers. Their views on this issue are as follows:

> **P4:** Teaching means constant responsibility for me.
> **P5:** Teaching is about touching the mind and spirit of students, and thus preparing them for life.
> **P7:** Teaching is the name of a profession that aims to build our nation by educating our children, and serve the nation by means of this task.

1.2. The Process of Practising the Teaching Profession

The participants highlighted two points in their views on the process of practising the teaching profession. These points included practising the teaching profession willingly, and the profession bringing difficulties in itself. The participants believed that they did not have any difficulty in adopting a positive attitude in their job as required by the profession, and did their full share of work. By work, they meant students' both academic and social needs. It can be inferred from their views that they focused on students' needs to reveal their potential and in this respect they made sacrifices from time to time. Their views on this issue are as in the following:

> **P1:** ... Throughout my professional life, I have done my best to make students become aware of their tasks and responsibilities, be well-behaved and perform their potential.
> **P4:** …I always experienced the unique pleasures of teaching. Chatting with students, talking to them, listening to their troubles, helping to them and informing them about anything, it was nice.
> **P5:** Teaching is a profession that requires a lot of responsibilities.
>
> **P7:** I believe that I practise this profession, which I think is suitable for my personality, willingly and with love. I still have former students and parents calling me. I think that someone who practise this profession for money can't be successful in it.

In addition to the sacrifices made and the student-centred approach adopted, the problems experienced in the profession also seems to have affected the participants. It can be stated that difficulties due to both the institution and the profession were challenging for the participants. Yet, the existence of problems did not constitute an impediment for the job. Their views on this issue are as follows:

> **P3:** …In recent years, I have seen the teaching profession become harder.
>
> **P6:** In fact, it has been a difficult process, being involved in both academic studies and teaching, a little insomnia and constant tiredness. The only downside of my teaching experience is perhaps my subject matter, it doesn't attract students' attention.

The views stated under this theme show that the participants attached value on the teaching profession both individually and in the professional sense, and they prepared themselves both physically and psychologically for all sorts of experiences required by the profession.

2. Theme: The Graduate Education Process

This theme further contained five categories including the perception of graduate education, the desire to pursue graduate education, the process of graduate education, the experience of graduate education, and the graduate education and teaching experience.

2.1. The Perception of Graduate Education

In this category, there seems to be an agreement in the participants' views. They associated academicianship with development. By the concept of development, they referred to both their own development and the development in their perspectives to students based on what they learned, or in other words professional development. The development in the individual sense apparently led to the progression to further steps (i.e. becoming an academic and obtaining a title), which can be inferred from the participants' views. Therefore, it can be argued that development is initially experienced at the individual level, and is reflected upon students and the school afterwards, consequently turning into professional development. At this point, there seems to be a case that can be summarized as the benefit from the near to the far. The participants' views on this issue are as follows:

> **P1:** It doesn't have a special meaning. Human is an entity that constantly learns. I see it as a step to get a job as an academic.
> **P2:** Graduate education changed my perspective to the society, the school and the classroom.
>
> **P3:** It means self-development and respectability to me.
>
> **P4:** I started graduate education to learn things that I may not know with regard to teaching. In other words, I was trying to figure out what I exactly was doing. The first semester of my Master's education opened up my horizon, and I was not the old me then. I learned interested and also useful things. I started to do my job more consciously. I learned to observe the class, and put my observations into certain perspectives. It was quite exciting for me.
>
> **P5:** It is individuals' continuing their personal development in a setting where they enjoy to work.
>
> **P6:** It is the first step to expertise, gaining a perspective. It is about learning the primary concepts and principles related to the field.
> **P7:** It is a means for individual and professional development, and reflect this development to the institution.

2.2. The Desire to Pursue Graduate Education

The participants described their desire to pursue graduate education in terms of a means for development, and career expectations. The same practices being kept repeated after a point in teaching do not seem to coincide with the participants' needs of learning and change, and at the same time, with their career understanding. It can also be inferred from their views that lifelong learning is reflected on their understanding, needs and expectations are not abandoned no matter what year of the profession, and effort is shown accordingly. In this regard, the participants stated the following:

> **P2:** I started graduate education to specialise in a professional field, and meet my career expectations.
> **P3:** The routines of this profession started to bother me. As the years passed by repeating the same pieces of knowledge over and over again, I had a feeling of dissatisfaction and a need for change.
> **P4:** … I started it to better understand what exactly I was doing.
> **P5:** …I wanted to evaluate the time in the most effective way possible. I would do it again.
> **P7:** A monotonous life is not for me. … Besides, I had a dream of becoming an academic. I'm happy to have achieved it.

The participants stated that their efforts brought development as well as a transformation in their lives, and regarding their expectation, they had the expectation of becoming an academic. They thought that their endeavours were to be a means for both financial and spiritual satisfaction. The participants' views on this issue are as follows:

> **P1:** I became an academic to realise my dream, and to train quality teachers.

> **P2:** I started graduate education to specialise in a professional field, and meet my career expectations.
>
> **P6:** I wanted it to become and academic.

2.3. The Process of Graduate Education

The participants featured the concepts of sacrifice and desire in the process of their graduate education. This process included experienced with characteristics and content similar to what they had in their profession The participants' sacrifices and efforts came through in the process in both financial and psychological sense. Yet, they thought that the sacrifices were worth for the yield of the education, and thanks to this motivation, they endured the negative effects of the process. Therefore, the participants were able to have a balance between their sacrifices and desires. The views of the participants regarding this aspect are as in the following:

> **P3:** I started my graduate study after I completed my undergraduate education. Then I had an eight-year break, and I started my PhD. You know about the working conditions. Living on one salary is not enough when you want to do a PhD. I had to give a break.
>
> **P4:** I always had it in my mind after my undergraduate education. But, it wasn't just possible, I was able to start the Master's after four years. Yet, I didn't give up because I wanted to do it so much, I mean an environment where I can develop myself and have good time.
>
> **P7:** I started this process with my undergraduate supervisor's and my father's inspiration. I carried on with the support of my wife and children. It is a very difficult process.

The participants stated that they tolerated the sacrifices they made due to different reasons, by virtue of their desire to receive graduate education. They emphasised that such a desire required sacrifices. Quotations from the participants' views are as follows:

> **P1:** Since I worked in a private school, the working hours were too long. Although I had a strong desire, I did my Master's by attending evening classes at a private university because I couldn't take time off from work.
> **P2:** Even though I liked the teaching profession, the bureaucratic workload drove me to Master's programs.
>
> **P5:** … It was important for me to continue my education, and I wanted to continue.

2.4. Graduate Education Experience

The participants underlined two issues regarding their graduate education experience: graduate education requiring an intensive workpace and not being able to meet expectations as expected. The participants' both practising teaching and pursuing graduate education, both of these tasks having heavy workload in themselves, and in some cases having to travel long distances for graduate classes brought a considerably intensive tempo to their life. The views of the participants regarding this aspect are as in the following:

> **P1:** The Master's class mostly included presentations and assignments. It was the same with PhD classes. In this process, you need to do research and question what you read a lot. Besides, you need to spend long periods of time to produce quality assignments. The coursework is completed somewhat easily in spite of the difficulties.
> **P5:** I was teaching while I was taking the Master's classes. Doing both tasks at the same time, and sparing my time after working hours to graduate work were difficult.
>
> **P7:** It is a troublesome process, you need to be strong and determined. While your colleagues only do their jobs, you are involved in an additional task that has both a financial and a psychological task.

The participants also asserted that in such an intensive tempo, they could not fully meet their expectations, and had a disappointment in this respect. At this point, there were problems regarding the theory-practice gap, which is also mentioned in the literature, and also emotional setbacks. Apparently, they had question marks regarding whether the education they received was effective and useful. Quotations from the participants' views are as follows:

> **P2:** The theoretical frameworks that are far from the school and classroom environment surprised me.
> **P4:** I started my PhD in a somewhat cold environment compared to my Master's. I had disappointments and boredom at the beginning.
>
> **P6:** The PhD process is a total disappointment. Some of the professors aren't just competent, you don't learn much, but you have big expectations that are not met, they can sometimes be moody and mixed-up

2.5. The Graduate Education and the Teaching Experience

As for the graduate education and the teaching experience, the participants stated that carrying out two tasks at the same time caused them to deal with difficulties that stem from different sources. These difficulties were related to family and the institution. They shared their sorrow due to not being able to spare enough time to their families during this difficult process. However, they were aware that the process requires such sacrifices. They believed that they had to give up on certain aspects of their lives for some time, although they did not want to, in return for what they would achieve at the end. In this regard, the participants stated the following:

> **P1:** ... Besides, working on assignments, presentations and a thesis requires you to concentrate on these tasks, and this makes you an antisocial person. You have to spend less time with friends, your wife, friends, relatives, and so on.
> **P2: ...**carrying out both tasks together caused me to neglect my family….
>
> **P5:** Those who are teachers would know. If you are a teacher, you think of school and your students even if it is not the working hours. But you need to spare the limited time remaining from work for yourself, your friends and family. After all, everybody has his/her own life. And if you pursue graduate education, you sacrifice that limited time for it.
>
> **P7:** It is a very difficult and painful process that I went through for 8.5 years. I think that I couldn't spare enough time for my family during this process.

The fact that the participants had problems due to their institutions apart from their families was also reflected in their views. In particular, school administrators' permission for and attitudes towards attendance to graduate classes could be a problem for the teachers. Apart from the graduate studies, teachers' doing certain tasks together at school caused difficulties for the participants, as can be inferred from their views.

> **P1:** As a teacher in a private school, getting permission to attend graduate classes really wore me out.
> **P3:** It was difficult to do both jobs. Particularly, permissions were a problem. Administrators don't like just endeavours. They usually say 'What's the use of it?'. They just don't get it...
>
> **P4:** It is very difficult to make work with school.

Although the participants had difficulties related to their families and institutions, they preferred to continue their graduate education with the awareness of the outcomes they would achieve at the end. They emphasised outcomes for both developing their knowledge and skills and guiding their professional activities. They highlighted thinking events from different perspectives, and reflecting this to their students and instruction. The views of the participants regarding this aspect are as in the following:

> **P1:** The most important gain we had in this process was our stimulating professors who guided us, and our colleagues with whom we carried out research.
> **P2:** I gained a different perspective, analytical and critical thinking skills, and understood that skills were more important than knowledge.
>
> **P3:** By means of my graduate classes, I was able to give my students different points of view. … I was able to look critically at many things.
>
> **P5:** A broad view of the world, and working in an area that I enjoy.
>
> **P7:** Personally, my biggest gain from this process was that my profession (school administration) overlapped with my graduate education, and they supported each other. Since I wrote my thesis with this understanding, I had the chance to apply what I learned in my PhD.

In this theme, the participants described graduate education as a means for the development of the society starting with themselves. At the end of their education, they aimed to achieve general and specific goals accordingly. It seems that a process similar to the teaching profession was experienced at this point. In other words, difficulties stemming from different sources were encountered during the graduate education process.

3. Theme: The Process of Becoming an Academic

The participants described the process of becoming an academic with regard to three categories: the transition process, the perception of academicianship, and the post-transition process.

3.1. The Transition Process

Regarding their experiences in the process of passing to the academia, the participants highlighted the informal relationships and uncertainty They emphasised the discomfort they felt due to the lack of certain rules and procedures in this transition. They thought that the transition process could be completed in a shorter period of time. The uncertainty and length of the process as well as the bureaucratic procedures seem to have put psychological pressure on the participants. In this regard, the participants stated the following:

> **P3:** You know, you need to see a few university deans. That's what we did. We tried to choose the one with better conditions. It was a troublesome process. You just need to wait for long.

> **P6:** You don't know whether you will find an academic position or not. The transition process is very difficult, and includes extensive procedures. Taking the language exam and having its results is one month only. And two institutions send official papers to each other. Even obtaining the official consent from your current institution takes time.

> **P7:** The transition is an uncertain process. You start thinking about it before defending your thesis. I had the chance and applied for it, but you never know because it is a long process. It has various steps, you first apply for a position, then take the foreign language exam, go through the security investigation, and your publications are reviewed. It requires a long process along with bureaucracy.

The participants stated that informal relationships were important for the transition, and they acted accordingly. However, they thought that having to establish informal contacts and relationships made them feel bothered since they did not know what would happen next. Quotations from the participants' views are as follows:

> **P1:** Shortly after I completed my PhD, I had the chance to meet an administrator of the university where I work now, through a friend of mine. I had 3-4 more visits, and then they said they could open a position for me. The announcement of the position, the application, the language exam, and finally I was appointed to the position.
> **P4:** What I experienced after my PhD. I had a feeling of emptiness. Then I talked to a few universities.

3.2. The Perception of Academicianship

The participants described academicianship as a profession that allows for different and critical thinking and in which scientific thinking can be implemented. They saw it as a means for moving their individual and professional development even further. Other prominent aspects in their views are as follows:
*Academicianship instilled more confidence in the participants individually.
* It gave them the opportunity to work based on their own schedule.
* It allowed for more freedom.
* It brought them respectability in the society.
* It enabled them to think in a different perspective and reflect this difference on their work. The views of the participants regarding this aspect are as in the following:

> **P1:** ... Here at the university, I share with my students the specifics of the teacher training art. In the academia, I like to think, question and criticise, and teach these skills to my students.

P2: The inner peace that I have from free and critical thinking.

P3: Academicianship means more respectability.

P4: Now, I feel like I'm the boss of my own business. It's like that when you are in the academia. Reading and writing, gaining new pieces of knowledge and forming new environments.

P5: I think being an academic is about bringing light to science and to one's environment with his/her work.

P6: Academicianship is a pleasant job for me. Reading, writing, producing and sharing all this with students...
P7: I see academicianship as a profession associated with different thinking, development and concrete steps towards development.

3.3. The Post-Transition Process

The participants mentioned profession-related factors that arose after the transition. They thought that academicianship had differences compared with teaching, but they were able to get used to these differences in the course of time. Although the adaptation process had its difficulties, the participants could cope with it because they were aware of the process. Starting to work in an academic position in a city different from the one they worked as a teacher required the participants to leave their physical and social environment, which affected both them and their families. Therefore, the adaptation was both in and out of the institution. However, as is stated earlier, the participants and their families thought they would adapt to the new conditions over time since they knew about the new situation. Quotations from the participants' views are as follows:

P1: ... It takes time to get used to the bureaucratic procedures at the university.
P2: …the lack of an orientation process made it difficult for me to adapt to the university environment.

P3: … the new job was completely different from teaching. You are anti-social again. You are closeted in your office and work. Sometimes you don't see anybody for days.

P4: … There aren't really big differences between academicianship and teaching. So, you feel more responsible in your new job.

P5: We need to get used to what the new job brings.

P7: Since this process brings new tasks and a new environment, you try to get used to it for a long time. The department where you work had a significant effect in your adaptation.

In this theme, the participants pointed out their experiences related to the process that they described in the previous themes. They highlighted development and self-improvement with regard to the education they received and academicianship. The uncertainty in the transition process was described as an unpleasant period, but after the transition, the problems they had considerably decreased.

Result, Discussion and Suggestions

In the present study, the transition from the teaching profession to academicianship was examined based on individual experiences. Three themes, which include the teaching profession and process, graduate education process and the process of becoming an academic, were revealed. The common findings showed that the process of transition from teaching to becoming an academic at a university was quite difficult and brought additional responsibilities to individuals, but yielded certain outcomes at the end. On the other hand, the participants' quest for meaning in their profession encouraged them to undertake academic studies.

Firstly, in the theme "the teaching profession and process", the participants focused on the meaning of teaching and the professional processes. According to their statements, they practised teaching consciously and willingly. At the same time, they emphasised the human-oriented nature of the teaching profession, and the importance of practising it based on individual and professional development. Moreover, they stated that there

could be certain obstacles while practising the procession, but these obstacles should be overcome within the professional process. As can be inferred, their faith and commitment in the teaching profession seem to be quite strong. Furthermore, it can be stated that the participants regarded the obstacles as an opportunity for development. When they were teachers, they cared about the profession and tried to develop themselves in this respect. Having a positive attitude towards the teaching profession can be seen as important for the quality of education and instruction. Attitudes towards the profession strengthens the learning climate in school, and positively affects the relationship between students and the teacher (Küçükahmet, 1986; Morgan, 1984 cited in Semerci & Semerci, 2004). Teachers' commitment to the profession and their feeling that they are important are closely related to their attitudes (Temizkan, 2008).

Secondly, the graduate education process was examined in terms of several aspects including the participants' perception, desire and experiences. The participants indicated that graduate education enables the development of their own as well as their students, and allowed for career opportunities. On the other hand, they also stated that one of the reasons why they desired to receive graduate education was the routine work of the teaching profession. In this regard, academic studies can be regarded as a way for teachers to rebuild themselves through learning. The participants emphasised that making individual and social sacrifices due to long working hours in the graduate education process was vital in sustaining the whole process. This was because various problems were always encountered. They also pointed out that they had financial problems since many activities during academic endeavours cost money, while the high working tempo involving both teaching and academic studies caused physical and psychological breakdowns. It can thus be stated that academic studies along with teaching had a price and brought certain individual sacrifices. Consistent with this finding, Özmen and Güç (2013) reported that teachers made a great amount of sacrifices to overcome the difficulties experiences during doctoral education. This is because academic studies, especially at doctoral level, require individuals to make an original contribution to science and thus work hard. Then, they need to make individual and social sacrifices to make time for their studies. On the other hand, the graduate education process provided the participants new opportunities of development. Through academic studies, they gained different experiences and perspectives and were content with the process. In this respect, the process they went through can be said to have led to a mental transformation in the participants. Besides, it can be inferred that being a teacher and carrying out academic studies at the same time requires a high level of performance and hard work. Furthermore, this process also has a bureaucratic aspect. This finding is in line with Balıkçı (2016) who reported that bureaucracy can be a factor that hinders all activities at school.

Finally, the participants' experiences after they passed to the academia were examined. These experiences were further specified in terms of the transition process, the perception of academicianship, and the post-transition process. The participants stated that the transition from teaching to academicianship took a long time due to bureaucratic correspondence, and included uncertainty. Moreover, they emphasised that the existence of an informal structure in employing staff for academic positions increased the uncertainty. During this process, the participants can be said to have been under a lot of stress. After the transition to academicianship, their working environment and culture changes, and they went through an adaptation process. This was also valid for the participants' families. The fact that the types of institutions where teaching and academicianship are practised can be an important reason for stress in this adaptation process. In addition, the system and procedures being different can bring certain compulsory changes in individuals' lives. On the other hand, the participants asserted that they could act more freely as academics than they did as teachers, and had more respectability in the academia. These views can be regarded as normal due to the nature of both professions because academicianship provides individuals more opportunities in terms of time, experience, working conditions and status. As can be inferred from these statements, the transition to the academia was seen as a troublesome process, and also required an adaptation process. Those who succeed in becoming an academic were content with their profession in terms of the opportunities.

Based on the results of the study, the following suggestions can be offered for practitioners: Teachers' passing to the academia and working in teacher training programs can be seen as important because the academics who come from practical side can be expected to train student teachers with a different perspective. In this respect, this process can be supported and encouraged. In this way, teacher candidates can observe the balance between practice and theory. Another issue is that during the graduate education process, teachers can encounter certain difficulties and obstacles related to their job or financial situation. In this regard, more opportunities can be provided to teachers who actively work in schools. Therefore, policy-makers can make decisions that would facilitate the process. Administrators and practitioners can help teachers who receive education at this level in different areas related to their job. Furthermore, the teaching profession can be made more development-oriented by means of graduate education. Legal regulations can be made to solve the bureaucratic difficulties that teachers experience when they want to pursue graduate education. The regulations regarding the transition

to academicianship can be improved. As for further research, this process can be examined with more participants and by using different research methods.

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