

Evaluation of the Impact of Gender Factor in the Teaching and Inspection of Turkish Language and Literature

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to demonstrate the importance of teaching and teacher assessment of Turkish / Turkish language and literature courses and, if present, the impact that gender plays on the outcomes. The opinions of both teachers and students were taken into consideration. The research question was determined as “what is the impact of the gender of Turkish language and literature teachers and inspectors on education and inspection?” This study was conducted in north Cyprus as a case study which is a qualitative research model. The study group of the research consisted of 11 Turkish language and literature teachers employed in high schools which are operating under the General Secondary Education Office and 42 twelfth grade students attending these institutions. Interview forms were prepared for the purpose of this study using semi-structured interview techniques and content analysis was implemented during its analysis stage. In conclusion, this research revealed that gender was effective in teaching; in other words, students preferred female teachers to male teachers. However, there were no significant findings in the analysis of the data on whether teachers preferred male or female inspectors. The finding that students significantly preferred female teachers more over male teachers may have a positive role on the development of education in the future.

Keywords: Education; Gender; Turkish Language and Literature; High School Students; Teachers.

I ntroduction

The education provided at schools has to be adept in order for society to progress as a whole and its level of welfare to increase. The augmentation in the aptitude of education at schools increases the success of the school and students. The quality of education provided at schools can only be enhanced by qualified teachers. In short, it takes good teachers to raise good students (Özyar, 2003; Seferoğlu, 2003). In this context, the quality of teachers depends on the education they receive and self-improvement during their careers. For this reason, teachers should be supported in every aspect so that they can improve themselves both professionally and personally (Seferoğlu, 2001).

Bayrak (2001) argues that a good teacher is a person who loves success, is ambitious, able to cope with the stressful environment at school, has strong communication skills inside and outside school and is able to use them well, guides students and acts like a parent when necessary (Özabacı and Acat, 2005). In traditional thinking, a teacher is someone who is knowledgeable and is able to convey this knowledge on to other people. However, with the advancements in technology and expansion of teaching techniques, the role of teacher in the classroom has inevitably changed. Yet, although accessing information is easier

today due to technology, the teacher's role of being a counsellor and a guide has gained significant importance. The duties and responsibilities that teachers should have in order for students to use learning and learning opportunities correctly and to realize learning outside their targeted learning behaviours are changing. Teachers should be facilitators, who ensure that their students are more effective within the classroom by being able to solve problems, produce solutions, communicate effectively, and make the best and most accurate decisions, and lastly students who question and are creative. They should also be able to organize education activities at the same time, know their students well and take their social relations, physical developments and mental states into consideration. This, in turn, increases the qualifications and responsibilities that teachers should possess (Eacute and Esteve, 2000; Gürkan, 2001).

Teachers are the most important sources for realising education and teaching activities and achieving success in the field. In this context, there should be different and elite characteristics between the teaching profession and other professions according to Ryan (1960), Good and Grouws (1979), Rosenshine and Stevens (1986) and Confery (1990). Some of these qualities are having cognitive competence, creativity, the ability to sustain effective harmony with the student's emotional state, happily being in constant communication with the student, exhibiting friendly behaviour and a problem solving approach rather than being accusatory, competently using the mother tongue, being helpful and confident, actively participating in social activities, taking personal development into account, showing interest in literary issues, having a passion for reading and having a democratic approach. Several studies previously conducted in the field of education indicated that an increase in the qualifications of teachers correlated with the improvement in the qualifications and success of students (Gözütok, 1995; Gürkan, 1993; Mentiş Taş, 2004).

Teachers of Turkish language and literature were the subjects for the analysis of teacher qualification of this study. The most fundamental objective of education systems is to accurately convey cultural values of the society on to next generations and to improve the

society by ensuring that these values are embraced. This objective signals the importance of Turkish language and literature teaching as well as all other mother tongues in their respective countries.

Turkish language and literature education puts emphasis on two important points, namely language and literature. In more general terms, a language and literature course must be used as a tool for the purpose of equipping students with intermediate level of the acquisition of language habit whilst teaching its features and literature should be gained as a tool that contains aesthetics and gives pleasure (Cemiloğlu, 2003). One of the most important elements of national culture and values belonging to societies is language; the other one is their literature. In this context, teaching and culture development is closely related to language and literature teaching. (Kantemir, 1976). In more general terms, language, which determines where they are geographically from, is the most important element for human beings. The quality which separates people from other living beings and makes humans distinguishable is language and the ability to speak. Language ensures that humans express their emotions and opinions (Aksan, 2000). Likewise, another aspect which separates people from other living things is art. The substance and the resulting product of all the arts which use the word as the tool for expression, is also the language (Aksan, 2000).

Turkish language and literature teachers must be self-sacrificing, patient and skilled, as the teachers in this field are under huge responsibility to perform. Although the teachers of all courses are essential, Marshall (1994) claims that the most important teachers are those who teach native language and thus emphasises the importance of the education of native language as it is necessary for the education of all topics as the mother tongue is necessary in the education of all courses. In this context, in-service training of Turkish Language and Literature / Turkish teachers and the training they receive before taking office is of great importance.

Teacher supervision should be of utmost importance if the qualifications and the competencies of the teachers are the areas being

assessed. The indication that proves education supervision is necessary is that it not only inspects but also helps improve and develop education. As a result, the most important point in the achievement of the intended objectives of education is the supervision and development of education (Aydın, 2016). Successful supervision covers all activities for the evaluation of teaching and learning. The inspector with such awareness and sense of responsibility is the one who is up to date with the developments in education and is knowledgeable about contemporary education and one who also has an appetite for self-improvement (Aydın, 2014).

Inspectors bear huge responsibility with the purpose of perceiving the objectives of schools and applying them accurately. In order to ensure this, inspectors have to be able to accurately understand the objectives of the school and this requires that inspectors possess certain qualifications. The method in which successful auditors determine the schools' objectives is of paramount importance. Inspectors should not impose their personal judgements and values upon the teachers but they should rather be a source for the teachers and provide them with the guidance and understanding of their educational objectives. The aim of the supervisors is not only good understanding of the objectives, but also contribution to the development of teachers. Constant self-development of teachers who follow the latest technology and their participation in decision-making processes ensures that they improve professionally (Aydın, 2014).

As in most sectors, being a woman has its problems in education, and women have secondary importance compared to men. Therefore, women have to exert more effort in order to gain a title such as deputy school head than men. (Sönmez Genç, 2016). This situation creates its own gender-related problems in the field of supervision (Erdem and Eroğul, 2012). Bell (1988) and Cryss Brunner (1998) found that the gender of the supervisors played a vital role in their appointment of assignments, stating men to be more advantageous than women. In another study, Miller (2009) observed that there are less female inspectors than male inspectors in America, which is due to the fact that it is regarded as a more authoritative position more suitable for

male. The study of Skrla, Reyes and Scheurich (2000) which examined gender-based discrimination displayed that female inspectors suffered from several misconducts by their male colleagues such as humiliation, discrimination and exclusion. In another study, Uygur (2006) stated that there are some problems between new and experienced inspectors. He claimed that experienced inspectors tried to intercept the new inspectors due to a number of reasons (gender discrimination, jealousy, position etc.).

The study titled “Supervision of Post Graduate Education Theses in Turkey” by Akyol and Yavuzkurt (2016) examined master’s and PhD theses which researched the subject of supervision between 2006 and 2014. These theses were examined according to criteria such as universities, genres, departments, academic titles of supervisors, topics of theses, their methods, data collection tools and samples. This study revealed that none of the theses which were analyzed as part of the data collection had examined the gender factor.

Aim

The aim of this study is to reveal the importance of teaching and supervision and to determine whether the gender factor has an effect on Turkish / Turkish language and literature. The participants of the study were both teachers and students. The research question was determined as “what is the impact of the gender of Turkish language and literature teachers and inspectors on education and inspection?” The following sub-questions related to the main research question were determined as follows:

According to student opinions,

1. What should the gender of a Turkish language and literature teacher be?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a female Turkish language and literature teacher?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a male Turkish language and literature teacher?

According to teacher opinions:

1. Does the gender of inspector have any impact on inspection process?
2. What are the preferences of teachers concerning the gender of the inspector?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a female inspector?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a male inspector?

Method

Qualitative research was conducted in this study. A qualitative study aims at conducting a research which describes events in their natural environments and exploring the opinions and emotions of participants with a flexible and holistic approach (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). This research was designed and conducted in north Cyprus as a case study which is a qualitative research model.

Study Group

This study implemented the “purposive sampling” method. Purposeful sampling allows an in-depth study of situations which are believed to be rich in information. (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). The study group of the research consisted of 11 Turkish language and literature teachers employed in high schools which are operating under the General Secondary Education Office and 42 twelfth grade students attending these institutions. Data were collected from a group of teachers and a group of students who were speculated to provide rapid and economic data containing rich information by means of implementing convenience case sampling.

Data Collection Tool

This study utilized interview forms which were prepared in the semi-structured interview technique. While collecting data, questions were added to the questionnaire form which queried the impact of

gender of Turkish language and literature teachers on teaching and inspection. Attention was paid to ensure that questions were clear and easily comprehensible by interviewees. The questions asked to students focused on measuring the impact of the gender of Turkish language and literature teachers whereas the questions directed to teachers focused on measuring the impact of the gender of the inspectors during the supervisions conducted for the Turkish language and literature course. Field experts were consulted for the approval of the quality of the questions and a pilot application was performed.

Collection of data

Permission was obtained from the Ministry of National Education in northern Cyprus before the research questions were applied. Teachers and students were asked to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. Teachers and students were asked to answer the open-ended questions on the interview form. The names of teachers and students as well their school was kept confidential.

Analysis of data

Content analysis was used in this study. Content analysis is defined as coding, separating into smaller groups and summarising of data (Büyüköztürk et al, 2017). The first step of content analysis consisted of providing a specific number to each interviewee and preparing the interview documents. Codes were determined according to the answers given by students. These codes were categorised based on their similarities and differences. Then, these categories were given frequencies which were not determined by the number of students but by the common themes. The reason for this is that some of the questions included multiple themes. As for teachers, research documents were coded to form themes which were examined and interpreted. During interpretation direct citations were frequently included in order to clearly reflect the opinions of Turkish language and literature teachers and high school students who participated in the study. The names of participants were kept confidential and coded in the research (G:(S (1)), (G:(T(1))).

Findings

1. According to the opinions of students, what should the gender of a Turkish language and literature teacher be?

Table 1

Gender of Turkish language and literature teacher

| | N |
|---|----|
| Preferring female teacher | 27 |
| Female or male teacher does not make any difference | 13 |
| Preferring male teacher | 1 |

Source: own elaboration

Among the 41 interviewed students, 27 preferred female Turkish language and literature teachers. There are three headings which provide reasons for this outcome. The first is “emphasis on personalities”, “better communication and relation abilities” and the last being “possessing better lecturing abilities”. Students who emphasised personality mentioned sincerity, beauty, being easy going – not being tough, being kind, thoughtful, friendly, and not being rude like the male teachers. One of the student interviewees stated *I would prefer to have a female teacher as their behaviours seem more pleasant and sincere to me* (G:S (12)).

Thirteen students stated that they did not see any difference between male and female teachers. These students expressed that the gender of the teacher was not important. One of the students said: *It doesn't matter whether men or women. I think gender in the teaching profession makes no difference. What matters is the discipline of the teacher and how one teaches* (G:S (27)).

Only one student stated that they preferred that Turkish language and literature teachers be male. The reason for this is that they believed that male teachers had better lecturing abilities. One of the students said: *I have not had any male literature teacher but I have had male history and geography teachers and they lecture well. I think that having a male literature teacher would be useful* (G:S (40)).

2. According to the opinions of students, what are the advantages and disadvantages of having a female Turkish language and literature teacher?

Table 2

Advantages of having a female Turkish language and literature teacher

| | N |
|---|----|
| There are advantages of having a female teacher | 24 |
| There is no difference between a female and a male teacher. | 17 |

Source: own elaboration

Twenty-four of the 41 interviewed students claimed that having female Turkish language and literature teachers had its advantages. The advantages of having female teachers were grouped under the same three headings stated above. The students who emphasised personality qualities of female teachers said that they preferred them because female teachers were calm, sincere, kind, motherly, patient, understanding, and merciful and did not mentally or physically abuse them. One of the students stated their opinion as follows: *Female teachers provide better education. Compared to male teachers, they treat us more kindly during the lessons and they do not physically or mentally abuse us. Female teachers approach us more sincerely, as if we were their children. They understand us better* (G:S (8)).

Some of the student interviewees claimed that female teachers had more control over their tone of voice and better use of their gestures and facial expressions in addition to having better communication with students. One of the interviewees stated their opinion as follows: *She lectures better. A woman uses her gestures better compared to a man. I am attentive to body language and gestures. For this reason I can adapt to the lecture more easily* (G:S (14)).

The students who expressed their opinions about the ability to manage their lessons and their competency in transferring their knowledge stated that the female Turkish language and literature teachers taught better and that they were more disciplined and more

meticulous and systematic. One of the students said in this respect: *I think that women display more meticulous and systematic working performances than men* (G:S (1)).

Seventeen of the interviewed students stated that having a female Turkish language and literature teacher had no particular advantages and that gender did not matter.

Table 3

Disadvantages of having a female Turkish language and literature teacher

| | N |
|---|----|
| There are disadvantages of having a female teacher | 8 |
| There are no disadvantages of having a female teacher | 33 |

Source: own elaboration

Two themes were formed in accordance with the opinions of 8 students about the disadvantages of having female teachers. The first was about problems in personality and the second was about the class management styles of female teachers. Eight of the student interviewees claimed that female teachers got angry more easily and that they had more weaknesses depending on their personalities. As regards to class management, these students stated that female teachers had more difficulty in maintaining discipline during class, had problems with managing noise in the classroom, and that it was easier for them to disrupt the class with a female teacher, which were sighted as disadvantages. One of the student interviewees provided their opinion as follows: *There is no discipline during class, the students never stop talking and this reduces the quality of the lesson. It is not easy to understand; all we do is writing* (G:S (40)). Thirty-three of the student interviewees stated that having a female Turkish language and literature teacher had no disadvantages.

3. According to the opinions of students what are the advantages and disadvantages of having a male Turkish language and literature teacher?

Table 4

Advantages of having a male Turkish language and literature teacher

| | N |
|--|----|
| There are advantages of having a female teacher | 11 |
| There are no advantages of having a male teacher | 30 |

Source: own elaboration

Eleven of the 41 student interviewees stated that having a male Turkish language and literature teacher could result in better class discipline. Students who emphasised class discipline mentioned that maintaining class discipline, exerting better authority, having better command of the class, and ensuring silence during lecturing were the advantages of having a male Turkish language and literature teacher. One of the students provided their opinion as follows: *A male teacher would be more disciplined. He could exert his authority more easily* (G:S (14)). Some students emphasised that male teachers could have some advantages in terms of the teachers' personalities. One of the students provided his/her opinion as follows: *I think that I would be more serious during class as male teachers are mostly hard-tempered* (G:S(41)). Thirty of the interviewed students stated that having a male Turkish language and literature teacher had no advantages.

Table 5

Disadvantages of having a male Turkish language and literature teacher

| | N |
|---|----|
| There are disadvantages of having a male teacher | 22 |
| There are no disadvantages of having a male teacher | 19 |

Source: own elaboration

Twenty-two of the 41 interviewed students claimed that in the case of having a male Turkish language and literature teacher, the teacher could have some communication problems and lack the ability to transfer their knowledge due to their personal characteristics. Furthermore, depending on their personal characteristics, male teachers could be harsh, rigid and uncompassionate and thus could be inclined to

lash out at students. Moreover, they stated that male teachers had problems such as being angry and short tempered so they felt uncomfortable during the lessons and had trouble understanding what was being taught. In terms of communication, they claimed that male teachers were not able to communicate, enter into dialogues and chat, and that the students could not express themselves easily. One of the students provided their opinion as follows: *Female teachers, because they are more sincere, more fluent in lecturing and lenient on us; they always understands and supports us. Most of the male teachers do not want to deal with students (G:S (13)).*

Below are the findings that are revealed by the questions asked to the teachers in the second dimension of the research:

4. According to teacher opinions, does the gender of an inspector have any impact on inspection process?

Nine of the teacher interviewees stated that the gender of the inspector did not have any impact on the inspection process. They claimed that personality features, competences, self-development and academic success of the inspectors were effective during the inspection process.

Gender is not an important factor in inspection as gender is no match for knowledge. Regardless of the gender, the knowledge level of a person is what matters. Knowledge has no gender (G:T (1)).

I think that gender is not important. I think that what matters is doing your job fairly (G:T (8)).

Gender is not important, what matters is personality. Being female or male does not affect the job, what affects the job is personal competencies and characteristics (G:T (9)).

What matters is the competencies of a person. Their self-development does not depend on the gender (G:T (10)).

However, there are teachers who answered “yes” to the question “does the gender of an inspector have any impact on inspection process”.

It is an important factor. But I think that there should be equality in working environment (G:T (3)).

Some participants said *it is important (G:T (7))* but did not give any reasons.

5. What are the preferences of teachers concerning the gender of inspectors?

None of the teacher interviewees stated any particular preference for the gender of inspectors. They claimed that gender was not important and that the gender of the inspector did not make any difference.

For me, it does not matter whether male or female. I have no prejudices (G:T (9)).

It does not matter. They should be an expert and able to point out my weaknesses; that is enough (G:T (2)).

It does not matter. Being a good inspector will be enough (G:T (6)).

Being male or female is not important as what matters is performing a proper inspection (G:T (3)).

They did not give any reasons why gender is not effective in inspection and only said *it does not matter (G:Ö (11))*.

6. According to teacher opinions, what are the advantages and disadvantages of having a female inspector?

Nine of the teacher interviewees stated that having a female inspector did not have any advantages. One teacher said *gender is not important. Being academically sound is enough* (G:T (4)) and expressed that gender was not an important topic and it did not have any advantages.

As regards the question on the disadvantages of having a female inspector, the teacher interviewees answered that having a female inspector did not have any disadvantages.

As gender is not important in inspection, there are no disadvantages of having a female inspector (G:T (4)).

In addition, there were teachers who thought that having a female inspector has disadvantages.

Women are mostly jealous of women. They nit-pick in order to find mistakes (G:T (7)).

7. According to teacher opinions, what are the advantages and disadvantages of having a male inspector?

Majority of teachers stated that having a male inspector had no advantages. One teacher provided their opinion as follows: *I do not think that it would have any advantages* (G:T (5)). Some teachers, on the other hand, claimed that male inspectors would be more objective and behave more courteously. *Males look somewhat tough. However, they behave more kindly compared to female inspectors* (G:T (1)).

Teachers evaluated the disadvantages of having a male inspector and claimed that having a male inspector would have no disadvantages as gender was mostly unimportant.

It would not have any disadvantages. I think that gender is not important in this case (G:T (10)).

Gender does not matter (G:T (4)) .

Some teachers who participated in the study stated that having a male inspector would create a situation far from being sincere and that male inspectors could not understand female teachers.

I think that male inspectors would not take female teachers into consideration and would be unable to understand certain situations in which some students might be in (G:T (2)).

Conclusion and Discussion

Students who participated in the study were asked about their opinions on the gender of Turkish language and literature teacher and the analysis yielded that female teachers were more preferable. Students claimed that having a female Turkish language and literature teacher had more advantages and emphasised that female teachers had better communication skills with students. The conclusions of other studies are parallel to the findings of this research indicating that communicative skills of female teachers are more effective compared to their male colleagues (Şeker, 2000; Saracaloğlu, Öztürk and Silkü, 2001; Ceylan, 2007; Özerbaş, Bulut and Usta, 2007; Toy, 2007). In addition, the studies conducted by Öztaş (2001) and Günay (2003) concluded that female teachers could establish better communication with students compared to male teachers, that they had higher empathy skills, that female teachers were more planned and organised, and more competent in terms of professional and field-related knowledge. Çetinkaya's (2009) study revealed that female pre-service teachers displayed superior professional attitudes compared to male pre-service teachers. Yılmaz's research (2009) displayed that female teachers had advanced levels of harmony, benevolence, and universality values compared to male teachers. This study supports the existing literature in

that students indicated several advantages of having a female Turkish language and literature teacher.

Nevertheless, teachers did not provide any clear preference in terms of the gender of inspectors. Teachers did not state any clear preference as to the gender of inspectors. In this sense, it is evident that gender was not seen as important in terms of inspection and that personality and professional expertise was more important. An overview of the historical process by Dilek and Işık (2014) displayed that women in education industry in Turkey have not been given sufficient opportunity to occupy the administrative positions of inspectors. It is stated that ninety five percent of the inspectors have been males. However, in this study, it is seen that gender is not an important factor in inspection. It can be said that this difference may have disappeared, given the fact that women have recently occupied more positions as inspectors than in the past. Gül (2010) conducted a study on the characteristics of Turkish course inspectors and did not include any findings regarding gender as a factor. In Gül's study (2010) such characteristics of Turkish inspectors as being experienced, charismatic and empathic, having good command of language and being innovative were valued whereas gender was not evaluated as one of these characteristics. Therefore, in respect to this, Gül's research (2010) is parallel to this study.

Ergül Düz (2015) investigated whether or not women inspectors encountered any problems depending on the gender factor; sixty percent revealed that they had experienced problems related to it. In this study, although teachers did not state any preference as to the gender of inspectors, it is observed that inspectors had problems depending on the gender inequality in their working conditions and that male inspectors were given more prominent positions. On the contrary, the study of Sönmez Genç (2016) displayed that the problems experienced by female inspectors in Turkey are not mostly related to gender (working hard, prejudices of teachers etc.). However, it was observed that there were minor gender-oriented problems (gender discrimination, male prejudice, vulgarism). Babaoğlu's study (2016) showed that inspecting abilities and competencies of female and male inspectors were not

different. On the contrary, they were similar. However, Babaođlan's (2016) research revealed that "seeing inspection as an improvement process" and "empathy" was two of the items which were more emphasised by male than female inspectors. On the other hand, such competencies as "being attentive" and "being a researcher" were emphasised more by female than male inspectors.

In conclusion, this research found that gender was effective in teaching; in other words, students preferred female teachers to male teachers. However, when it comes to inspection, it found out that teachers did not prefer male or female inspectors. The finding that students significantly preferred female teachers more over male teachers may have a positive role on the development of education in the future. The relation between female teachers and students could be examined and positive examples could be generalised and it could be made certain that male teachers also benefit from these experiences. The apparent lack of any gender preferences in terms of inspection could be evaluated as a positive result which indicates that gender is not a means of discrimination and that inspection is performed objectively.

Recommendations

1. The impact of gender in the teaching and inspection of Turkish language and literature, which was examined in this study, could be examined for other courses.
2. Further studies could examine the reasons why and how female teachers use their communicative skills and language skills better than male teachers.

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