

# PROFILE OF THE NEW UNIVERSITY TEACHER: THE VIEWS OF TURKISH POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

The new responsibilities of higher education institutions and teachers are being discussed in different contexts and platforms. At the heart of the issue are questions such as: “What should higher education be in the third millennium?” and “What is the profile of the new university faculty member?” The answers to these questions vary in different contexts, presenting different dimensions to the topic. This study analyses the views of Turkish postgraduate students concerning the profile of the new university teacher.

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## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, the role and general professional qualities of the university teacher are defined and discussed; three significant variables that influence these qualities are also explained.

### *The Job and Roles of University Teachers*

*The university teacher is a professional with an amateur spirit. The literature on university teachers indicate that the role of teachers in the traditional university education is not homogeneous but depends upon cultural patterns, institutional characteristics, perceived learning and teaching definitions, individual experiences and personal qualities of each teacher (Ljoså, 1998). Consequently, different classifications of university teachers have been developed, emphasising that the complexity of their jobs and that the difficulty of defining their roles (Rhodes, 1990; Rice, 1991). Out of these classifications, Braskamp & Ory’s four dimensional classification (1994) best suits the parameters of the current study: (1) teaching, (2) research & creativity, (3) practice & professional service, and (4) citizenship. However it should be noted that the*

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*job of university teachers can be classified in different ways and that the meaning of various dimensions covered in each classification can vary.*

### ***Personal Qualities of University Teachers***

To play the role of a university teacher successfully, certain personal qualities are deemed to be important (as people tend to associate their personal qualities with their professional domains and reference letters often list personal attributes that are suitable for certain jobs). Personal qualities that are necessary for university teachers include creativity, fairness, honesty, high self-esteem, adaptability and tolerance (**Fisher, Taylor & Fraser, 1996**).

### ***The Profile of the University Teacher***

When a university develops a profile to define its teachers, it should list skills and roles that can be upgraded and modified, thereby forming a picture that can be continuously revised and enriched. In addition, this profile should consider that each institution of higher education is a distinct ecosystem, and should be sensitive to the expectations of all concerned parties (e.g. students, parents, administrators, private business sector, non-governmental organizations). Since the 1980s, three interdependent variables have affected institutions of higher education and changed the profile of university teachers:

*(1) Advances in Cognitive and Communication Technologies:* The advent of multimedia has led to the integration of four basic areas of communication: (a) written documents, (b) audio-visual materials, (c) telecommunication tools, and (d) systems of cognition. The Internet is a key example of this multimedia integration and has become a major communication tool in promoting the circulation of information. Multimedia has changed and is changing the nature of interpersonal communication (**Rosnay, 1998**), functioning as a dominant factor in the formation, development and use of individual, organizational, social and universal intelligence. Education can now be defined as an activity, with no spatial or temporal boundaries, that is used by individuals of all ages to develop themselves and their own cognitive abilities for the advancement of society. In this process, institutions of higher education are expected to offer essential services to all people in all contexts and to be open, flexible organizations in their aims, structures and processes. At the same time, university teachers are expected to be competent facilitators of these services (**Pickerden & Boyne, 2000; Boyle & Kneale, 2000**).

(2) *Globalisation and the Need to Solve Global Problems*: Globalisation is very different from internationalisation. Because of the advances made in cognitive and communication technologies, Scott (1999) states that globalisation is a radical reorganization of the world that goes beyond the boundaries of nation states, forcefully leading to the creation of new regional blocks. In this new world order, both global competition and extensive cooperation occur.

Given that higher education institutions perform mostly at national levels, globalisation has had a tremendous impact on these institutions because: (a) cultural identities have become more homogeneous; (b) the link between the autonomy of the nation state and higher education institutions has been weakened; (c) the pace at which global research culture and networks develop and spread have quickened enormously; and (d) how global markets perform can have a deep impact on the finances of higher education institutions (Callan, 2000). As part of this process of globalisation, nation states have had to work to solve problems of a global nature, such as how to improve the way human resources are deployed, end the misuse of non-human resources, clean up social and environmental messes, engage with new security threats, build a global rule of law, develop global rights, deal with failure and anarchy, optimise global knowledge, promote disarmament, etc. Such modifications involve continuous, fast and extensive change, requiring both higher education institutions and teachers to respond quickly to new conditions, needs and changes. Consequently, if higher education institutions are to survive in this new global arena, they should be autonomous organizations in terms of financial, administrative and academic matters and be part of global research cultures and networks.

(3) *The Growing Need for Lifelong Education*: The worldwide spread of the information society has increased the need for lifelong learning more than ever before (Beeson 1996). This phenomenon has added new responsibilities for higher education institutions to meet such needs and requirements as well as use human resources and information more efficiently. Consequently, new learning capacities have to be produced so that learners are provided with extensive, individualized, learner-centred support, using communication and cognitive technologies that are flexible, multi-level and independent of space/place/time. Such capacities can only be realized through extensive interaction, sharing and cooperation among the individuals, institutions and nations. Both higher education institutions and teaching staff should realize the change and transformation that respond to these responsibilities.

The theoretical framework outlined above provides a basis to define what the new university teacher is and a means to analyse the views of Turkish postgraduate students concerning the role of higher education institutions in the third millennium and the essential qualities of university students. In Turkey, this survey to gain the views of postgraduate students on the new university teacher is a unique one as little has been done to study this area thus far.

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### METHOD

In the study, field analysis was used, covering 50 volunteer postgraduate students from the Education Management, Supervision, Planning and Economy Branch of Hacettepe University's Education Faculty. These students work as educators, trainers and inspectors at several public and private institutions such as the Ministry of National Education, the Turkish Army, etc. The students were asked to answer the question "What should the profile of the new university teacher be?" The job and personal qualities that are repeated by 25% of the students are grouped under the headings mentioned above.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 indicates the profile of the new university teacher as defined by the students who participated in the survey. In this profile, the aspects most commonly commented upon were teaching, research/creative activities and certain personal qualities. Students' expectations showed that they defined their teachers in the same way that the Turkish higher education legislation defines the university teacher. However, the participants could also express their desire for change in the section on creative activities.

In the profile, those qualities related to practice and professional service and citizenship appeared to be limited. An interesting finding was the view that Turkish universities mostly concentrated on teaching and did not actively seek to facilitate the transition towards the information society (Kozlu, 1994), suggesting that the study participants were sensitive to the topics of technological advances, globalisation, global problems and lifelong learning. However, it has to be clarified that this sensitivity was not completely reflected in the profile.

This profile also revealed that the conditions of the university teacher required changes. In a separate study the vision of university rectors and deans on their visions for the next century, it was concluded that they wanted to change the traditional concept of the university teacher and that they regarded such a change as the driving force for multidimensional structural change (Erçetin, 2000; Erçetin & Baskan, 2000).

In conclusion, the changing roles of higher education institutions have resulted in a new profile of the university teacher with fresh dimensions and meanings that require the following qualities: extensive use of communication technologies; lifelong learning for all people; continuous upgrading of qualities and skills; being open to the global, regional, local, institutional cooperation, solidarity, and interaction. Given these new expectations, the next question that must be asked is: "In what way do we as university teachers meet the requirements with our current competencies and qualities mentioned in this profile?"



Figure 1. Profile of the new university teacher: The views of Turkish postgraduate students

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