

Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions About Their Work Alienation Levels (The Case Of Malatya)

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Abstract

This research aims to determine whether the alienation perceptions of elementary school teachers changes according to some variables. The population of the research comprised 3326 teachers working in 76 state elementary schools in the central district of Malatya province. The sample of the research comprised a total number of 719 teachers working in 31 primary schools. "The Work Alienation Scale" for elementary school teachers developed by Elma (2003) was used to gather the research data. The work alienation level of elementary schools' teachers was found on the "never" level with a mean score of $\bar{X} = 1.74$. Results also showed that levels of work alienation were found higher in subject teachers, teachers working in big size schools, young teachers and teachers having a graduate education.

Keywords: Alienation, Work Alienation, Elementary Schools' Teachers.

SUMMARY

In a world where globalization shapes our life styles and the individuals are the objects of their lives, it's inevitable to mention about the phenomenon of alienation. According to Seeman (1959), alienation is a situation produced by the feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self estrangement and their consequences as a result of social, institutional and relational problems. Alienation to work, one type of alienation, is a syndrome which evolves as a result of the relationship between the worker and the work's socio-technic conditions and it emerges when the workers can't control their own work process, they can't develop a feeling of an aim towards work and they don't feel themselves as a part of society they live in (Blauer, 1964). Teachers have the main responsibilities to maintain the social, political and economical functions of schools as they have a vast amount of effect on schools both qualitatively and quantitatively. However well the education curriculums are set and learning environments are organized, all efforts and investments will be a waste if the teachers who gives importance to teaching, learning and make these her own life styles

aren't trained. Any type of education model can't produce service above the qualities of the staff who will use it. So, a school is as qualified as teachers in it (Aybek, 2007: 9). Alienation to work prevents teachers from being creative, being a model for the society, improving their vocational qualifications, contributing to the community development, being effective in the process of learning and teaching and collaborating with the school management and the other teachers. (Bayındır, 2002: 11).

Purpose of the Study

This research aims to determine whether the alienation perceptions of elementary school teachers changes according to the variables such as sex, work experience, school size, -big, medium and small school-, teachers' subject, marital status and education status in the three dimensions of work alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. As there are limited studies about the alienation of teachers in our country, the findings of the study can contribute to the enrichment of the field. Finding can make a contribution to preventing the negative effects of alienation and so the quality of education can improve thanks to the teachers who aren't alienated and commit themselves to their works. Also, the findings can motivate new researchers who are interested in this subject and provide data for them

METHOD

This research is a survey model descriptive study aiming at determining the perceptions of teachers about the levels of alienation to their work. Survey model aims to determine a situation which is either in the past or now as it exists (Karasar, 2007: 77). The data of the research was gathered through the "Work Alienation Scale" developed by Elma(2003). In order to determine whether or not there has been any difference among the teachers' perceptions in the dimensions of work alienation according to sex, marital status, subject area variables, the t-test was used. On the other hand, variance analysis (One-Way ANOVA) was used to determine whether there was any difference among the teachers' perceptions in the dimensions of work alienation according to school size, work experience and education status variables or not.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The work alienation levels of elementary schools' teachers were found on the "never" level with a mean score of \bar{X} : 1.74. However, it was found that teachers got the highest scores from "Powerlessness" sub-scale. "Isolation" and "Meaningfulness" sub-scales followed the "Powerlessness" sub-scale. However, in the studies carried out by Elma (2003) and Çalışır (2006), the work alienation levels of elementary school's teacher were found on "rare" level. This may stem from the nature of the sample.

As a result of the Pearson Correlation Analysis, a positive meaningful intermediate powered relationship between the powerlessness and meaningless and isolation subscales; however, a positive, strong powered relationship with work alienation scale were found. A positive, meaningful intermediate powered relationship was found between the meaninglessness and isolation sub-scales. Also, a positive meaningful

strong powered relationship was found between the meaningfulness sub-scale and work alienation scale. A positive meaningful strong powered relationship was found between the isolation sub-scale, and the work alienation scale.

As for the variables of the study, results of the research showed that male teachers felt more isolated compared to their female fellows. This can be a situation stemming from the less sociable natures of males compared to the females. Also, in the dimensions of powerlessness and meaningfulness, subject teachers felt more alienated than class teachers. As subject teachers have more classes to teach and more work load, this can be a situation related to it. Another finding of the research is that young teachers feel more powerless and find the job more meaningless, so more alienated compared to their old colleagues. It may stem from their high expectations from work. As for the education level, teachers who have a higher education level found their work more meaningless and felt more powerless to change the situation around them. As in the young teachers' feelings, it may again be a situation related to the expectations. Lastly, teachers who work in big schools were found to feel more powerless and isolated and found their works more meaningless. As there are lots of teachers in those schools, it becomes difficult for these teachers to feel to have some value. This may be a source of their alienation.

According to the findings of the research following suggestions can be given:

1. Although the alienation level of teachers were found on the "never" level, a special importance should be given to the items teachers mostly agreed.
2. Authorities who want to eliminate the alienation problem should start with taking all the dimensions of alienation are interrelated into consideration.
3. As subject teachers were found more alienated, an transdisciplinary approach should be taken and subject teachers should be given more opportunity to interact with class teachers.
4. Young teachers should be encouraged to coordinate with the experienced teachers to prevent them from feeling powerless and isolated, so they can find their work more meaningful.
5. Teachers who have a higher level of education can be given more opportunities to use their knowledge in the fields they are proficient and so to prove themselves. It can be a way of meeting their expectations from work.
6. Acan take measures to have medium sized schools as teachers will feel more relaxed in an environment they feel their existence.

