An Analysis on the Neoliberal Transformation Created by Flexible Work in Public Schools

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Abstract
This research was carried out to reveal effects of flexible work of teachers on the relationship among educational stakeholders and teacher performance. A semi-structured interview form including 5 questions was used to collect data from Teachers working in 6 different schools at different grades. It was found out that flexible work of teachers had clear negative effects on relationship among educational stakeholders and teacher performance.

Key Word: Neoliberal policies, Flexible Work.

Introduction
Turkey tried to integrate with World markets during 1980’s. While economic aspect of this integration was economic resolutions adopted on 24th, January 1980, Constitution of 1982 was its political and social aspects. Process of neoliberal transformation, leaded by international organizations and called as “constitutional adaptation reforms”, was aiming to reconstitute third world countries. Constitutional adaptation reforms were originally a part of process of adapting those countries to capitalist economy to overcome the crisis which system went through after 1970’s (Aslan, 2014). This so called process caused transformation in every aspect of life, from economic to social life. Out of those, public services, consequently educational organizations came first.

Neoliberal economy policies, which changed philosophy behind public services, not only replaced public benefit with economic benefit but also converted the entire public management structure and its spirit. Theoretically, transformation policies of the new public management paradigm reshape legislation so that flexibility in public employment, some quality standards, customer orientation, performance evaluation can be dictated (Aslan, 2005; Erdoğan, 2005; cited in Soydan, 2012).

Literature Review
As a result of the new overmentioned concepts produced by neoliberal policies, a series of significant changes have happened since 1980’s (Soydan and Abalı, 2014). These changes have had impact both on management and employment of public organizations and perception of education and teaching profession. Accordingly, reducing staff costs which constitute a huge part of educational costs have been adopted as principal policy (Kuşaksız, 2011). Despite being products of the same paradigm, reasons for flexibilization
of employment in education and making teaching profession an insecure job, differs significantly among
developed, developing and underdeveloped countries. In Western countries, teachers’ working at insecure
and low paid positions instead of regular and secure ones dates back to early 90’s. Since then, teacher
employment policy of those countries has been hiring teacher at contractual positions rather than regular
ones (Şahin, 2008).

However, global neoliberal actors like Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),
European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) justify flexibilization in educational
employment by other reasons. OECD claims that the greatest danger ahead of education in Western
countries for the near future is aging teacher population. The cheapest and quickest way of involving young
teachers into educational system is said to be hiring contractual teachers (OECD, 2004; 2007).

In addition to being employed in flexible and insecure positions, teaching labors may be employed in some
other titles just like in England. Since early 2000’s, teaching labors have been employed at a position which
is similar to support staff called “teacher assistant” (Duithilliou, 2005). While a teacher assistant makes
12.000 Pounds per year (National Career Service, 2014), a newly hired teacher makes 20.000 Pounds per
year on average (Department for Education, 2013).

Another example of exploitation of teaching labors is case of migrant teachers in United States of America
(USA). On account of the fact that there is shortage of teachers in the country, foreign national teachers are
hired for considerably lower salaries and fewer employment rights (Books and Villiers, 2013). During the
last decade, about 90,000 teachers from Philippines, India and other countries came to USA (Bartlett, 2014,
s. 2).

Those teachers, who have to work for low salaries, live apart from their families and encounter numerous
difficulties. Moreover, teaching in USA is not a regular employment for them. Out of 3.340 migrant
teachers who worked in New York City between 2000 and 2005, only 20% could get residence permit and
stay in USA (Black Institute, 2012). By year of 2007, approximately 19.000 teachers work in USA with
temporary visas (American Foundation of Teachers, 2009).

When contractual teacher employment in developing countries is overviewed, it is understood that this
procedure was basically for schools located in hard to reach areas (Duthilleul, 2005). However since 1990’s
in some African, Asian and Southern American countries with effect of international organizations like
WB, hiring teachers in contractual positions turned into usual way of teacher employment (Fyfe, 2007). In
developing countries, application of employing contractual teachers has been defended based upon two
main arguments, one of which is teacher absenteeism. It is argued that teacher absenteeism may be
overcome by hiring teachers in contractual position. Yet, absenteeism rates among contractual teachers is
relatively higher that regular teachers. Absenteeism among Contractual teachers in Ecuador, Indonesia and
Peru is 10% more than among regular teachers (Bennel, 2004).

The second way of justifying teacher employment in flexible and insecure contractual position is to claim
that employing teachers in regular position is an application with ever increasing cost for the governments
(Govinda and Josephine, 2004). In many countries, the highest allocation from the education budget goes to
teacher salaries. However, this is more visible in developing countries (Vegas and De Laat, 2003). In those
countries, allocation for teacher salaries from education budget seems like the greatest because allocations
for investment and equipment are so low. This overlooked situation is misused by governments which are
eager to adopt neoliberal economy policies for teacher employment and paying low salaries to teachers.

Senegal is one of the above-mentioned countries. Procedure of hiring contractual teachers started in the
country with the aim of employing adequate number of teachers less costly to increase schooling rates and
number of students per class. Excusing these, 1.200 teachers were hired at contractual position in 1995.
These teachers worked for less than half of a regular teacher salary (Fyfe, 2007).
India is another developing country which went through similar period. Constitutional amendment in mid-90’s leaded country towards indigenization in public management (Govinda and Josephine, 2004). At that time public employees were charged with irresponsibility towards society and their job, absenteeism, being unmotivated and far from accountability in some governmental reports and researches. Since then, contractual teachers who had been previously assigned only in schools located in geographically disadvantaged areas, were assigned to vacant positions all across the country (Duiithille, 2005). According to Fyfe (2007), figures clearly express the reason why employing contractual teachers instead of regular ones by Indian authorities: While a contractual teacher earns between 900 and 3500 Rupees, a newly hired regular teacher earns 5000 Rupees per month. Such examples maybe reproduced.

The period which was experienced in some African, Asian and South American countries during early 1990’s has been experienced in Turkey since early 2000’s. Process of reshaping public employment system according to principals of neoliberal economy policies was extended with bill of Public Financial Management and Accountability which was passed in 2003. This process has been justified by the growing need for extra fund caused by overgrowth public sphere and its diversifying functions, unwieldiness and incoordination (Dinçer and Yılmaz, 2003).

Like in other developing countries, international organizations took a leading part in reshaping public sphere. Stand-By Agreement between Turkey and IMF for years 2005-2008 focused on the urgency of a reform for public personnel management (Torun, 2010). The impact of the agreement on education sphere was clearly visible. Subsequent to the agreement, Ministry of National Education (MEB) recruited contractual teachers for the first time in history of the country. In 2004-2005 Academic Year, 5,000 English Language teachers and 4,000 IT teachers were appointed as “Part Time Temporal Instructor” (Turkey’s Official Gazette, 2004).

MEB continued to recruit contractual teachers in the following years (Turkey’s Official Gazette, 2005; Turkey’s Official Gazette, 2006a). Contractual teachers and regular teachers had different employment rights especially during the first years of this new procedure. Contractual teachers were hired with one year employment agreements and the agreements were prolonged or canceled related to the performance of the teacher. They got paid according to number of lesson hours they lectured. Their payroll taxes weren’t paid during semester and summer holidays. They didn’t have right to ask for appointment to other schools due to their agreements. They didn’t have right to get retirement grant (Turkey’s Official Gazette, 2005).

Even though some improvements made thanks to the claims filed by teacher unions (Şahin, 2008), contractual teachers never had equal rights with regular teachers, especially in terms of job security. On the 4th June, 2011, 8 days before the general election, about 70,000 contractual teachers working at public schools were given right to switch to regular teacher position. Thus contractual teacher employment finished virtually (Turkey’s Official Gazette, 2011). However, no legislative amendments were made to put an end to contractual teacher employment so contractual teaching position survives on legal basis (Soydan, 2012).

The other insecure and flexible teacher employment position in Turkish public schools is substitute teacher position. Substitute teachers are education labors who are assigned when there is a shortage of regular teachers or when regular teachers are temporarily absent due to various reasons (Turkey’s Official Gazette, 2012). History of substitute teacher position dates back to republic’s first years. During the first decades of the republic, teachers usually used to be recruited at substitute position. At that time there was confusion over payment policies and employment rights of teachers (Güven, 2003).

By 2013-2014 academic year, 8% of teachers in Turkey (59,691 teachers) are substitute teachers (Türk Eğitim Sen, 2014). While regular teachers and contractual teachers (when contractual positions were still in practice) recruited centrally by MEB (Turkey’s Official Gazette, 2006b), substitute teachers are hired by local education authorities which are National Education Directorate located in provinces and districts (Turkey’s Official Gazette, 2012). Employment rights and payment policies of substitute teachers differ
greatly among other positions, too. They don’t get a fixed salary but get paid according to number of
lessons they teach and they can teach up to 30 lesson hours per week (Turkey’s Official Gazette, 2005).
Their payroll taxes are paid and calculated in the same way (Maliye Bakanlığı, 2010). Substitute teachers
do not have right to get compassionate leave for military service, illness etc. They get paid maximum 1.362
TRY while a newly recruited regular teacher makes 2.148 TRY, extra hours excluded (Turkey’s Official
Gazette, 2013). Regular teachers, substitute teachers and contractual teachers (when it was in practice) do
the same job in different positions and employment rights. Specifically substitute teachers whose
employment rights are very limited compared to regular teachers may not be considered as “teachers” by
school administrators, regular teachers, parents and even students (Demir, 2010).

Effects of neoliberal policies can be observed over teachers’ increasing responsibilities. In Turkey, a
regular teacher is supposed to teach minimum 15 hours to earn his/her salary. Teachers who cannot do this
due to lack of students in his/her school are assigned to other schools by local education authorities to
complete minimum hours teaching (Turkey’s Official Gazette, 2012).

Teachers, who are assigned to teach at those schools in opposition to their desire and can spend limited time
in there, cannot feel sense of belonging, establish healthy relationship with students (Ateş, 2008; Şahin,
2008). Some studies reveal such practices are inconvenient in educational terms. Duithilleu (2005) found
out that students whose teacher are permanent and work at regular position, do better than those who attend
schools with often changing teaching staff. In addition to increasing work load, teachers suffer from being
regarded as multi-function workers. Teachers, whose fundamental role is to set up learning environment for
students, are forced to spend time for duties irrelevant to teaching. Project Works at local and national
level, workshops, contact meetings and workshops for EU projects, Total Quality Management duties are
some of those (tokat.meb.gov.tr).

Undoubtedly, this situation is widespread all across the world. Such cases are common in developed
Western countries, too. In those countries, teachers are asked to work more and fulfill various duties other
than teaching (Whiteley and Richard, 2012). This erodes spirit of teaching profession by ignoring its social
aspect and downgrade it to a technical job (Yıldız, Ünlü, Alica ve Şarpkaya, 2013). Education, which can
be introduced as a creative process to develop, free and socialize individuals, let them be physically and
theoretically productive and share their attainments with community, has been downgraded to be tool of
making economic profit (Özsoy, 2004). The big Picture is a much wider transformation process, which is
justified with increasing effectiveness in public services: Increasing privatization, recruitment in public
sphere through flexible work, replacement of permanent positions with contractual ones in public personnel
employment, adopting private sector practices and philosophies like human resources management
approach and pay according to performance and subcontracting (Eren, 2006).

Impacts of the above-mentioned transformation in public services on functioning of educational
organizations, which have specific process, the relationship between education stakeholders and process on
education itself are important.

Objective of the Study

Objective of the Study is to offer an in-depth analysis of impact of flexible work, one of the basic
arguments of neoliberal policies, on public schools based on the opinions of teachers.

Method and Procedure

Method

This study, which aims to find out the opinions of teachers about the transformation created by flexible
work in public schools, was designed in phenomenological method, a qualitative research method.
Phenomenological studies focus on phenomenon which are slightly known but not deeply analyzed (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011 s. 72). Accordingly, the phenomenon of this study is flexible work.

Study Group

In this qualitative research, maximum diversity sampling was used. In Maximum diversity sampling it is aimed to generating a relatively smaller sample and represent opinions of different sights as much as possible. By doing so, it is tried to figure out if common or shared opinions between diversifying issues exist and different aspects of the problem are presented (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011, s. 108-109). Teachers in the study group were chosen according to variables like gender, union membership, past experience of teaching at different positions (regular/contractual/substitute), seniority in teaching and being surplus. The study group includes 15 teachers who was working at different schools at different stages in 2013-2014 academic year in province of Tokat. Personal qualities of the teachers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Personal Qualities of the Teachers in the Study Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Seniority (Years)</th>
<th>Current Position</th>
<th>Past Position</th>
<th>Union Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>School Counselor</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Eğitim Bir Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Substitute</td>
<td>Türk Eğitim Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Eğitim Bir Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Eğitimsen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Technology and Design</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Eğitim Bir Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>German Language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Substitute</td>
<td>Substitute</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>German Language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Substitute</td>
<td>Substitute</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Eğitim Bir Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Substitute, Contractual</td>
<td>Eğitim Bir Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Türk Eğitim Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>English Language</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Türk Eğitim Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Aktif Eğitim Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>Class Teacher</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Substitute</td>
<td>Eğitim Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>Turkish Language</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Aktif Eğitim Sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>Technology and Design</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Contractual</td>
<td>Türk Eğitim Sen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instrument

The data of the research was collected using semi-structured questions and interview method. The collection tool also includes some questions related to demographical features of the participants. The tool was created according to literature review and recommendations of teachers in the field. Afterwards, the draft form of the tool was sent for expert opinion. By doing so, content validity was tried to be provided. In the end of this process, a semi-structured interview form including 5 questions came out. In order to check clarity and gain experience, two teachers were pre-interviewed. After the interview, the questions proved clearly understandable. All the interviews were recorded by permission of the participants. Each participant was given a number from 1 to 15 as a code to keep their identity confidential. The participant appear as P1, P2 etc. in the study. The data collected in the research was analyzed using content analysis method. This method requires analyzing the data deeply and bringing out themes and concepts which are hard to realize (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011, s. 227). The first step of data analysis was computerizing interview records and converting them into texts. Then the texts were reviewed and categorized according to titles, related questions and answers to them.

Each question was considered as a theme and subthemes were found out of answers of the participants. Frequencies related to subthemes were given in tables. The final step of data analysis process was sending
themes and subthemes to opinion of an expert in educational sciences and qualitative research methods to check intercoder reliability. Miles and Huberman’s (1994) reliability formula was used for this. Intercoder reliability (level) was calculated as 90%.

Results

In this part of the study, teacher opinions from different schools about impact of flexible work on public schools are presented.

Opinions about Impact of Teacher Employment in Different Positions on Relationship among Educational Stakeholders

Participants were asked if they thought that education services’ being given by teachers who were employed in different positions (regular, contractual, substitute) damages the relationship among educational stakeholders. Answers to this questions were categorized under 4 themes.

Table 2: Opinions about Impact of Teacher Employment in Different Positions on Relationship among Educational Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Participant Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Administrator Relationship</td>
<td>Disregarding</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P1, P2, P5, P12, P14, P15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More workload</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>P4, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P3, P7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Teacher Relationship</td>
<td>Underrating and exclusion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>P2, P10, P7, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-alienation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>P1, P8, P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P3, P5, P6, P9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Parents Relationship</td>
<td>Considering the teacher as casual</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P3, P5, P12, P14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Considering the teacher incompetent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13, P15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Student Relationship</td>
<td>Not considering as a teacher</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>P2, P3, P4, P6, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>K1, K5, K7, K8, K9, K10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three subthemes about impact of teacher employment at different positions on the relationship among educational stakeholders were found out of teacher opinions. 13 teachers stated that behaviors of administrators changed according to employment positions of the teachers. 2 teachers stated there is no difference. Those who mentioned difference, said that substitute and contractual teachers were disregarded, repressed and overloaded by administrators.

According to participants, these teachers are considered as casual and they are respected as much as regular teachers. Furthermore it was stated the way of response of substitute and contractual teachers to administrators’ attitude was effected by their employment positions. Substitute and contractual teachers fear that their contracts may not be renewed and they are laid off, which makes them feel they have to be careful with their reactions. Administrators have more authority over substitute and contractual teachers. A Participant 15, a former contractual teacher explained,

*We couldn’t speak up! Even when we were hard done by, we said “so be it!” But now I am regular (teacher) and I have proper employment rights. Thanks to this, I don’t have to shut my eyes to injustice and inequality (Participant 15).*

Most of the participants stated that wages inequality and flexible positions damaged relationship among teachers. Some former and current contractual/substitute teachers told that they were underrated and trivialized even though they did the same job with regular teachers.
But sometimes we feel broken! Lately a regular teacher asked me if we lectured in during lessons (Participant 7).

It was found out that teachers working at flexible positions cannot be at ease and behave naturally among regular teachers even if they are not mistreated. As conveyed by participant 4, who is a regular teacher,

I speak from personal experience. Those teachers (contractual) couldn’t be themselves. They lost their confidence. They were constantly anxious with fear of losing their job. Because they worked without job security due to wild capitalism. The fear that some important people might not like their opinions, which might cost them their job, made them self-alienated. These teachers were given the right to switch to regular teacher positions with no reason prior to a general election in 2011. I observed how this changed their mood and behaviors. Formerly, unconfident, silent and timid people suddenly started be confident, they could be themselves (Participant 4).

Four of the participants stated that employment at different positions didn’t affect the relationship among teacher.

Well, I think this doesn’t affect our relations. We don’t mind it (Participant 3).

Parents are among the most important educational stakeholders. The contact between education labors and parents is vital to achieve educational goals. The way parents perceive teachers may have positive or negative effect on this relationship. Likewise, participants stated that a teacher’s employment position sharply determined attitude of parents to that teacher. Two subthemes about parents’ attitude come to fore; considering the teacher as casual and considering the teacher incompetent (Table 1). Participants stated that parents treated teachers according to their employment positions but not their competence. As conveyed by the following participant,

If parents are aware of the situation, they think that this (substitute) teacher works here only for a while so they couldn’t care less those teachers! (Participant 10).

Another participant echoed,

When parents are doing wrong by discriminating against substitute teachers, just like administrators, they won’t want substitute teachers to teach their children (Participant 11).

Participants highlighted that such an attitude was spontaneous. Teachers working at insecure and flexible positions are often assigned to work at other schools. So it is hard to know how long substitute and contractual teachers can work at a certain school. As conveyed by the following statement,

Those (Substitute) teachers can’t work on an ongoing basis. A close friend of mine, a substitute teacher, have worked 7 villages (village schools) in two years. If you don’t have a supporter, influential contact, then you are a roamer! No durability disrupts anything in school! (Participant 14).

Another important element of educational process is the relationship among teacher and students. It was found out that the relationship between teacher and student was shaped by the parents depending on teacher’s employment positions. As inferred from participant answers, parents determined attitude of their children on this matter. The older the students get, the more negative attitudes they have to teachers working at insecure and flexible positions. Participant ideas on this theme were categorized under two subthemes. 9 participants stated that students did not consider teachers working at those positions, as a teacher, in proper terms. 6 of the participants stated no difference. Out of those who stated no difference, participant 9 who is a preschool teacher told that her students were too young to realize this difference even if they heard their parents talking about this.
You (substitute/contractual teacher) are treated inferior by students! A child cares what a regular teacher says but ignores you! Can you imagine? Even students make you feel this! Pity! (Participant 2).

Opinions about Impact of Teacher Employment in Different Positions on Teacher Performance

Participants were asked if they thought working at different positions had an impact on teacher performance. Teacher opinions on this theme were gathered under 5 subthemes. Except 4 participants, all of them stated that insecure employment had negative effect on teacher performance. 3 subthemes were found out of the opinions of those who think working at different positions had negative impact on teacher performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Participant Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working at Different</td>
<td>Position and Wage Inequality</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>P1, P4, P5, P7, P10, P12, P15, P2, P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anxiety of Future</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P1, P2, P10, P12, P13, P14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>P1, P10, P11,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Impact</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P3, P8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P6, P9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants specified impact of working at flexible positions on teacher performance as follows: Position and wage inequality is at first rank. Anxiety of future comes after it. The third one is sense of belonging. As one of the participants stated,

They (teachers working at flexible positions) think like this: “I do what they (regular teachers) do but I get paid far less! Made up social security, inferior treatment! It sucks, unfair!” So they inevitably sink into despair (Participant 4).

Another negative effect stated by the participants was psychological disorders in teachers caused by high level of future anxiety and uncertainty. This was said to decrease performance of teachers by the participants. Neoliberal policies, which demolish social state, probably effect the people with no social security the most. Likewise as conveyed by a participant,

But teachers working like that (at flexible positions) burn out pretty fast! Imagine! After three years, anything is uncertain. He/she wishes to get married and have a family, but no way! He/she suffers from psychological exhaustion. I think it is impossible for them not to reflect this to students (Participant 13).

Teachers’ not having sense of belonging because they cannot work in a school for a long time is another problem caused by flexible work. Considering the fact that continuity and presence of sense of belonging are fundamental in education, it is obvious that this is a huge problem both for teachers and students.

First of all, a contractual teacher cannot feel that he/she belongs in a place. When an individual doesn’t adopt somewhere, he/she evades responsibility and behaves just like a vacationer in holiday resort in Antalya! For a regular teachers, they make anybody feel their presence in school. They wish to be active (Participant 10).

P9 and P6 stated no impact of flexible work on teacher performance. P3 and P8 stated that flexible work would increase teacher performance. P3 stated fear of losing their jobs made those teachers work more effectively. As he conveyed,

They fear of losing their jobs due to lack of job security. But good thing is they fling themselves into their jobs because of this. Regular teachers are sometimes slackers but others are always on the alert. So they treat their job seriously but they suffer from stress (Participant 3).
Opinions on Assignment of Surplus Teachers to Multiple Schools at a Time

Neoliberal policies abuse working conditions in addition to destroying job security. In Turkey, regular teachers are assigned to teach at multiple schools at a time by local education authorities, when there is shortage of classes due to lack of students and the teacher is declared surplus. Teachers stay at those schools only during lessons. As it was thought that this would affect teacher performance and change their perception of teaching profession, participants are asked to share their opinions on this practice.

Opinions of the participants point out continuity and emotional aspect of education. Two subthemes came out: lack of sense of belonging and spending insufficient time with teachers, administrators and students. Participant 9 was not involved as preschool teachers are not assigned in this way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Participant Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment of Surplus Teachers to Multiple Schools at a Time</td>
<td>lack of sense of belonging</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>spending insufficient time with teachers, administrators and students</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants defined teaching profession, as a job requiring more sense of responsibility than other jobs and schools, as more than a workplace to them. They pointed out that such practices which considered teachers as mobile conveyors of information prevented teacher from growing sense of belonging. Participants added these practices decreased teacher performance and growing sense of belonging was possible only when a teacher focused on a single school. As stated by a participant,

A teacher grows sense of belonging to his/her school and does the planning according to qualities of that school and its students. But you tell him/her “Pack up! You have to commute between two, three, whatever schools! Not enough lessons for you here!” The teacher has 6 lessons here, in another school 4, 2 in the next one! Is it possible to expect high performance from this teacher? (Participant 13).

Participants stated that such practices also transformed the meaning attributed to education. Concordantly, teachers defined themselves as professionals who knew about personal qualities of their students well and acted to develop skills of the students using this familiarity. They thought that a surplus teacher who was assigned to work in multiple schools would not be able to fulfill his/her educational duties properly. As conveyed by the following participant,

My daughter would say “Dad, my teacher comes from I knew not what school! He quickly leaves our school just after classes!” That teacher would spend just couple of hours with my child, only during classes! This is downgrading teaching to a technical job! A teacher needs time and space to create a qualitative teaching and learning environment. A teacher is the person who prepares students to life and bring them skills! (Participant 4).

It can be inferred from answers of participants that such bounden duties have negative effect on colleague relationships. As P6, a teacher teaching in two different schools explained,

I am at ease here, in this school. Atmosphere is more positive. I can’t feel this in the other school. I cannot start conversation there. Just hello! What is more lesson breaks are too short, 5 minutes. It makes things even worse! I simply don’t want to go there! (Participant 6).

Duties Assigned to Teachers Other Than Their Legal Responsibilities

Flexible work practices not only increase working hours but also the workload. As it was an important aspect of flexible work, participants were asked what duties they were assigned other than their legal

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responsibilities and if they thought that there was increase in number of those assignments. Opinions of participants on this theme were gathered under 3 subthemes. P9 stated that preschool teachers usually could not be assigned extra work as they did not have off days and hours on weekdays. All the participants agreed on there was a dramatic increase in number of such assignments through the years. 3 subthemes came to fore under this theme.

Table 5: Duties Assigned to Teachers Other Than Their Legal Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments Other Than Their Legal</td>
<td>Being assigned in projects</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P1, P2, P3, P4, P12, P15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>Assignments related to teacher on duty</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P5, P6, P7, P8, P11, P14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collecting Money from students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P10, P13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Projects at local and national level were in the first row among such assignments. As conveyed by the following statements,

Projects come first, indeed! (Participant 15)

...they keep forcing teachers to do things irrelevant to teaching! They say “make Project!” Then they won’t be able to attend classes. Is it fair? (Participant 4).

Another situation that should be mentioned about the duties assigned to teachers other than their legal responsibilities are teacher on duty responsibility and other assignments related to this. Teachers on duty are expected to act like police force which brings heavy responsibility. As explained by the following participant,

We are given responsibilities of a security guard or police officer. We are asked to protect students from dangers which may come from outside. We are not police force! We can provide students with a safe environment to play and take a rest a by protecting them from each other and themselves. That’s all! (Participant 8).

One of the greatest impacts of neoliberal policies have on schools has been decreasing public funding. Having received limited funding from national budget, schools have become dependent to money collected from students. The consequence of this is that teachers are forced to collect money from students. As stated by Participant 10,

We collect Money from students. This makes us kind of clerk! (Participant 10)

It can be concluded from participant opinions that responsibilities other than teaching effect teachers negatively and drift them away from their real responsibilities. As participant 1, a school counselor expressed,

...at that point being a school counselor makes no sense! What we do may turn into replacing absent teachers or managing a classroom! We are assigned to do this. When a counselor tries to manage a class, it ruins anything! Students do not consider us as a teacher, but as a friend, a confidant! Acting like a teacher or all other ways are unfavorable to counselor understanding (Participant 1).

Discussion

In this study flexible work practices were tried to analyzed in terms educational organizations through opinions of teachers. The results of the study revealed that employment of teachers in flexible and insecure positions damages the relationships among education workers, students and parents. It was highlighted by
the participants that teachers working at flexible positions are disregarded, overloaded, excluded or underrated by some colleagues, considered as incompetent by parents even not considered as a teacher by students. This result confirms arguments of scholars in the literature review (Demir, 2010; Karadeniz and Demir, 2010; Kuşaksız, 2011; Öğülmüş, Yıldırım ve Aslan; 2013; Şahin, 2008; Tuncer, 2012).

It can be concluded from interview with teachers that working at flexible positions decrease teacher performance. Teachers stated that working at flexible positions cause anxiety of future, which decreases their performance. A review of the literature supports this result (Bayram, 2009; Bennel, 2004; Eroğlu, 2007; Soydan, 2012). Other factors decreasing teacher performance can be sorted as position difference, wage inequality and lack of sense of belonging. The study proved doing the same job at different positions and with different employment rights, problematic in schools. As Govinda and Josephine (2004) explained, creating classes of teachers with different positions, wages and employment rights will always cause polarization, unrest and ineffectiveness. Besides, there are studies claiming that the more equally teacher get paid, the more successful the students become (Vegas, 2007).

There are some other factors effecting teacher performance alongside with employment position. Out of those, attitude of administrators to teachers has the greatest impact. In this study, the participants stated that administrators don not rate teachers working at flexible positions enough. Yet, teachers whose works are not appreciated or opinions are not valued pull back. According to Korkmaz (2005), teachers often go through this in their schools and sense of inhibition destroys their energy. In this study, the effect of employment rights on teacher performance was analyzed only through types of employment. So, it is thought that more researches should be done on variables effecting teacher performance. Also it was seen that studies on variables effecting teacher performance discussed the case more through teacher burnout (Cemaloğlu and Şahin, 2007; Çağlayan, 2012; Dolunay, 2002; Girişin, 1995; Kayabaşı, 2008). Neoliberal policies overload teachers in addition to effecting their types of employment. Surplus teachers are assigned to teach at multiple schools at a time and given responsibilities which are irrelevant to teaching and their duty of care. Teachers also added that there is a dramatic increase in such assignments and workload in general.

To give an example from Turkey, during 2013-2014 academic year 7 local projects was run in schools from various grades in Tokat (tokat.meb.gov.tr). Teachers and administrators may have to waste their precious time, which should be spent on student and school matters, on events and activities of those projects. The results of the study, which show similarity with Yıldırım, Ünal and Çelik’s research (2011), reveals that this workload has negative effect on teaching learning environment. According to survey of England Department for Education, more than half of teachers and administrators think that they have to spend some of their work time for needless things and drudgery (Department for Education, 2014). The same study shows that almost half of the participants think that such amount of such work has increased over a year.

**Conclusion**

Conclusions are drawn on the basis of results: The worst affected educational stakeholders by problems caused from flexible work are students. So remedying the current situation will contribute to providing better education service to students. So, all practices making teaching profession an insecure and flexible job should be abolished immediately. All teachers working in public schools should be recruited as public employees and any other employment types and their legal basis should be abolished. Surplus teachers should not be assigned to teach in multiple schools but should be engaged with curricular and extracurricular assignments in their own school, with their own students according to their personal skills and qualifications.

Teachers should not be forced to fulfill duties which are irrelevant to their fields and restrain them from teaching. Duties like holding, organizing or joining projects activities, workshops, seminars, and coordinatorship etc., should be offered to teachers as in return for additional course fee. Responsibility of
teacher-on-duty should be consist of providing educational support to students but not protecting students from outside dangers. This service should be given by school guards who are employed.

Teachers doubtlessly have a key position in all kinds of education. Any measures aiming to improve education fail if the teachers are not considered. Educational reforms and improvement strategies have to deal with what is going on in the classroom, which means the everyday work of the teachers (Fredriksson, 2004). However in Turkey, most legislative changes made by governments which are claimed to be amendments or improvement in educational employment practices, end up with decreasing of employment rights and downgrading teaching profession.

This study reveals that the hereby mentioned point of view damages nature of teaching learning environment. The destruction which has been and will be caused by insecure and flexible employment types in educational organizations was analyzed based on teachers. Yet this case should be searched based on student and student achievement in broader samples.

References


