

## Üstün Yetenekli Öğrencilerin Öğrenme, Öğretme, Öğretmenlik Mesleği ve Öğretmen Özellikleri ile İlgili Görüşleri

## Gifted Students' Perceptions about Learning, Teaching, Teacher Characteristics and Teaching as a Profession

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### Öz

Bu araştırma, üstün yetenekli öğrencilerin öğrenme ve öğretme kavramlarına yükledikleri anlamlar ile öğretmenlik mesleği ve öğretmen özellikleri konusundaki öncelik tercihleri konusundaki görüşlerini farklı değişkenler yönünden ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Karma desenle gerçekleştirilen bu araştırmanın katılımcıları, Anadolu Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Üstün Zekâlıların Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı tarafından yürütülen "Üstün Yetenekliler Eğitim Programı" tanılama sistemi ile tanılanan 46 üstün yetenekli öğrencidir. Araştırmada elde edilen başlıca bulgular ise şöyledir: Üstün yetenekli öğrencilerin önemli bir bölümü, sahip oldukları bilgileri başkalarına öğretmek yerine, yeni bilgiler öğrenmeyi öncelikle tercih etmektedirler. Öğrencilerin, öğretme ve öğrenmeye ilişkin öncelik tercihleri, cinsiyet ve sınıf düzeyi değişkenleri bağlamında istatistiksel olarak farklılaşmamaktadır. Üstün yetenekli öğrencilerin oldukça önemli bir bölümü, öğretmenliği ileride yapmak istedikleri bir meslek olarak görmemektedirler. Öğrencilerin, bir meslek olarak öğretmenliğe ilişkin görüşleri, cinsiyetlerine ve öğrenim gördükleri sınıf düzeylerine göre istatistiksel olarak farklılaşmamaktadır. Üstün yetenekli öğrencilerin, öğretmenlerde en önemli gördükleri özellik bilgili olmasıdır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Üstün yetenekli öğrenciler, öğrenme, öğretme, öğretmenlik mesleği, öğretmen özellikleri

### Abstract

The researcher aimed at investigating gifted students' attributions to learning and teaching conceptions and their beliefs about teacher characteristics and teaching as profession. The research was a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. It was conducted with 46 gifted students who were identified to be gifted by the identification system of the Education Programs for Talented Students at Anadolu University, Turkey. The results showed that in making a choice, gifted students primarily preferred to learn new information instead of teaching others. Gifted students' priority preferences about learning and teaching did not vary by gender and grade. Most gifted students did not want to have a teaching career. A few of them wished to have teaching as their career for they considered teaching as a way to help others and a way of enjoyment. Gifted students' views on teaching as a profession did not vary by gender and grade. They indicated knowledge as the most important characteristics teachers should possess, followed by understanding and fairness.

**Keywords:** Gifted students, learning, teaching, teaching profession, teacher characteristics

### Summary

**Purpose and significance:** The purpose of the study was to examine gifted students' attributions to learning and teaching and their views about teacher characteristics and teaching as a profession.

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**Method:** This research was a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. Gifted students' attributions to learning and teaching and their views about teacher characteristics and teaching as a profession were portrayed and data was interpreted using quantitative and qualitative methods based on students' own expressions. The research was conducted with 46 gifted students who were attending 7th, 8th and 9th grades in Eskisehir, Turkey. Students were identified by the identification system of the Education Programs for Talented Students at Anadolu University in Eskisehir. Students came from 15 different elementary schools; 18 of them were female and 28 were male. Seventeen of the participants were 7<sup>th</sup> graders, 14 were 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 15 were 9<sup>th</sup> graders.

Data was collected using "Questionnaire for Gifted Students' Perceptions of Learning, Teaching and Teacher (QGST)" developed by the researcher. It was reviewed by 5 experts in order to examine its content validity. They were professionals in curriculum and instruction, gifted education, and guidance and counseling. After expert revisions, a pilot study was carried out with 21 students before this study. The final form of the instrument included four groups of items. In one item, students ranked 14 teacher characteristics from 1 to 14 in importance with 1 being the most important and 14 the least important. In the other items, of which 4 were open-ended and 7 were forced-choice, students indicated their opinions and choices about learning and teaching. The instrument was administered to the participants during their summer courses they attended at Anadolu University. Data analysis included quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive non-parametric statistical techniques. Chi-square test and Mann-Whitney-U test were used in testing differences. Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis approach. In order to ensure the reliability of the analysis, themes and sub-themes created based on data were submitted to experts and they were asked to examine the suitability of the structure created through content analysis. After revisions were made based on expert opinions, the analysis was submitted to another 2 experts. The results showed that the agreement rate between the 2 experts was 96%. Validity of the study was investigated using the internal validity method. Two experts reviewed the data collection procedures and data interpretation. The reports were edited and finalized based on the experts' reviews.

**Results and Conclusions:** Majority of gifted students (60, 9%) showed a preference for learning new information instead of teaching others. The rate of students who preferred to teach others rather than learning new information was 39,1%. Gifted students' preferences about learning and teaching did not vary by gender ( $\chi^2(1) = .001$ ;  $p=.979$ ) and grade ( $\chi^2(2) = 1.043$ ;  $p=.594$ ). Why gifted students prefer learning new information instead of teaching others

might be of several reasons. These reasons could be classified in three categories based on the findings. First, the prominent theme is that learning is an exciting, engaging, happy and curious process for them. Second, learning is a way for acquiring new perspectives, for providing self- maturation and self-development, and a way to be successful. The third group of view is that learning new information differentiates them from others. Why some gifted students preferred teaching others instead of learning new information also has several reasons. These were classified in two categories. The first reason is related to the satisfaction they get while they share their knowledge with others and while they make positive changes in others' life. The second is related to teaching process during which students improve their own development and feel enjoyment.

19.6 % of the participants considered teaching as a profession they wished to make. In contrast, 80.4 % of the students did not want to. Gifted students' views about teaching as a profession did not vary by gender ( $\chi^2(1)= 0.133$ ;  $p=.716$ ) and grade ( $\chi^2(2)= 3.946$ ;  $p=.139$ ). The reasons why gifted students wished teaching as a profession were classified in several categories. The highest rated of these was concerned with the idea that by teaching, they contribute to the lives of others and this process provides students with positive feelings. The second highest rated reason was that they wanted to be a teacher in order to save other students from boredom in the classroom they encountered during their school years. The other reason was the belief that teaching as a profession is a holy job. The reasons why the gifted students did not want to have teaching as a career was related to the characteristics of this profession. Students perceived this profession to be difficult, boring, monotonous, tedious and requiring patience. They also did not consider teaching as a profession because it did not fit their interests and abilities. Another important reason that gifted students did not want to have a teaching career was the low income teachers have.

Gifted students' ranking of 14 teacher characteristics in importance revealed interesting findings. Gifted students considered "knowledge" to be the most important characteristics of a teacher ( $M= 2.826$ ) followed by understanding ( $M= 3.913$ ), and fairness ( $M = 4.391$ ). Proficiency in Turkish ( $M= 5.152$ ) and inquiry ( $M= 5.196$ ) were also found to be important. Experience ( $6.065$ ), emotionality ( $7.087$ ), impressive tone of voice ( $7.5$ ) and discipline ( $7.674$ ) were of secondary importance for gifted students they looked for from teachers. They ranked charisma ( $9.283$ ) as the tenth most important characteristics. Finally, gifted students considered teachers' physical appearing not very important and ranked them as follows: handsome or beautiful ( $11.848$ ), beautiful or stylish dressing ( $12.022$ ) and male or female teacher ( $12.239$ ). Gifted students' rankings of physical characteristics did not vary statistically by gender ( $p>.05$ ) and grade ( $p>.05$ ). In sum, gifted students' ranking of teacher characteristics in importance was as follows: 1) knowledge, 2) understanding, 3) fairness, 4) proficiency in Turkish, 5) inquiry, 6) experience, 7) emotionality, 8) impressive tone of voice, 9) discipline, 10) charisma, 11) strict in rules, 12) handsome or beautiful, 13) beautiful or stylish, and 14) man or woman.