

To Be a Branch Manager in a Local Educational Directorate: Occupational Problems and Solutions

Ahmet BOZAK¹

Hatay Mustafa Kemal University

Yavuz BOLAT²

Hatay Mustafa Kemal University

Bahri KARABULUT³

Ministry of National Education

Abstract

This study examines the occupational problems of educational branch managers in local educational directorates as well as their expectations and suggestions on these problems. The study aims to reveal the problems of the branch managers regarding their occupational rights, assignments and duty place changes, roles and status, and their rise in their career steps based on the participants' opinions and suggestions. In the study, a phenomenological model was used, and qualitative data was collected via standardized open-ended interviews. The working group, determined by snow ball sampling, was composed of 61 branch managers working in 30 different provinces and seven different regions across Turkey. The findings of the study revealed that the branch managers working in local directorates think that their salaries are lower than other educational managerial positions; their workload is quite heavy; they don't have enough authority, although they have too many responsibilities. The participants also made suggestions for increasing branch managers' salaries and wages by granting seniority, authority and special service compensation; raising additional indicators for retirement; and having more in-service, postgraduate and doctoral training opportunities. More than 2000 branch managers work in local educational directorates in Turkey however no scientific research about the problems of this local staff has been carried out so far. This study is likely to be the first specific research entirely carried out for local educational branch managers. By means of the study, it is also expected that the occupational problems of this managerial position will be better noticed in local educational management system.

Keywords: Branch managers, district and provincial education, professional rights, role and status.

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¹ Assist. Prof. Dr., School of Education, Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, Turkey, abozok77@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5275-0514

² Assist. Prof. Dr., School of Education, Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, Turkey, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2398-9208
Correspondence: yavuzbolat06@gmail.com

³ Branch Manager, Ministry of National Education, Turkey, kizilelma3@hotmail.com

Introduction

Educational administration, like the overall administration of the country, is highly centralized within the Educational Ministry. MoNE (The Ministry of National Education) is responsible for almost all types of education policies except for higher education such as development of school curricula, coordinating the official staff, designing schools, developing educational materials etc. Educational institutions in districts and provinces are administered by the educational directors appointed by MoNE but also they work under the direction of the district and provincial governor within the organizational scheme of local administration (Turkey, 2019).

The Structure of Educational Administration in Turkey

MoNE, within Turkey's centralized governance structure, is responsible for the education system as a whole both at central and local levels, general directorates and their units established at central ministerial level are responsible for different education programs and policy compliance, such as primary and secondary education, vocational education, special education, guidance and counselling etc. Education Directorates founded at local levels across 81 provinces and 922 districts of Turkey are considered to be responsible for the education policies implemented by MoNE. (OECD, 2019; İçişleri, 2019).

Administrative Structure of Local Education

The administrative structure of the local education of MoNE in Turkey has been formed by directorates at district and provincial levels. Provincial education directorates, founded in provincial capitals, are responsible for the fulfilment of the orders and duties coming from central governor's offices within the framework of the legislation and also primarily responsible for coordination and information flow in a hierarchical way to the district directorates. The district educational directorates are sub-management units that organize and manage the schools, teaching personnel and other ancillary personnel within their units to carry out the orders and duties demanded by the provincial educational directorates (Bağlıbel, Kaygısız & Samancıoğlu, 2010).

Branch managers in district and provincial educational directorates are thought to be the first level of career managerial position in the fulfilment of educational objectives while implementing the ministerial national educational programs. The managerial positions of branch managers in local educational directorates are seen in Figure 2 and 3 below.

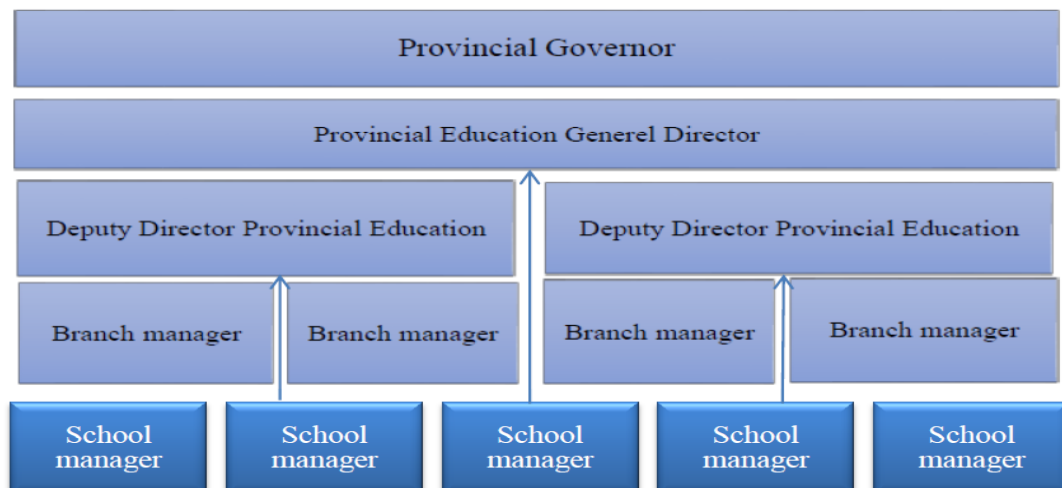


Figure 1: The managerial position of branch managers in the capital of provinces

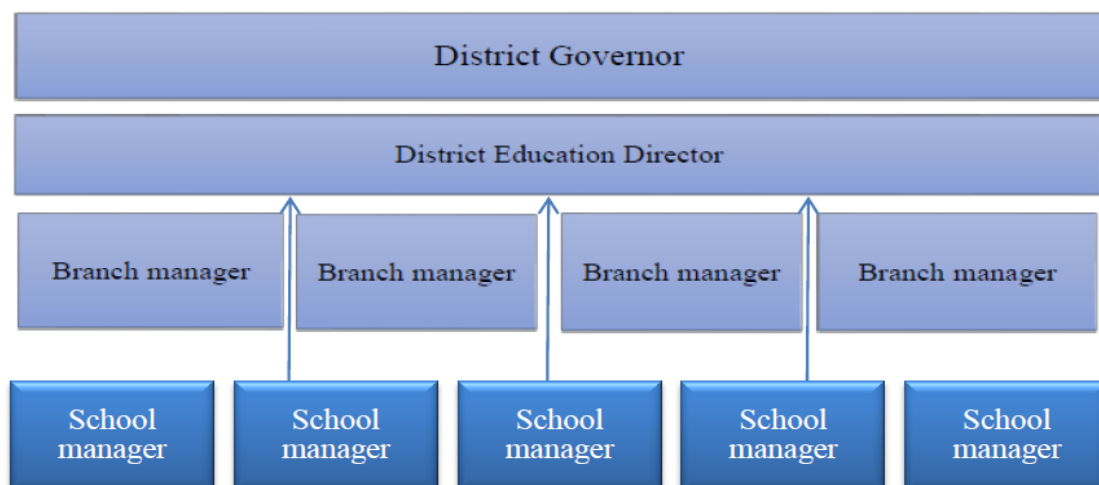


Figure 2: The branch managers in educational directorates of the districts.

Assignment of the branch managers in district and provincial education directorates are carried out within the scope of the educational management services legislation which regulates their position, title change as well as assignment. When this legislation examined, some legal requirements and qualifications are to be fulfilled, such as having, at BC or BA degree of higher education; having served in the ministry of education in the last two years as the training specialist, expert, rapporteur, civil defence expert or school director; having served in the ministry of education in the last three years as the school chief assistant director, school assistant director, architect, engineer, biologist, psychologist, statistician, analyst, programmer, researcher, technician, chief and treasurer; or having worked as a teacher at least for four years (Resmi Gazete, 2010). The candidates who fulfil the conditions explained above can be appointed to district and provincial directorates on conditioned that being successful both in test exam and also in interview exam.

Branch managers in the local educational directorates are in charge of carrying out the educational services and tasks given to their responsibilities; attending the meetings on behalf of the district and provincial directorate; signing the correspondence and documents on behalf of the district and provincial directors; delegating to the provincial national education directorate. In this context, in addition to the common duties of in the field of education and training services, the branch managers are also responsible for various managerial tasks and services such as special education and guidance; lifelong learning; private education institutions; strategy development; law; human resources; innovation and education technologies; support services; primary education; secondary education; vocational and technical education; religious education, MEBBIS (Information System of National Ministry of Education); secretariat; document and school transportation services (Sarkamış MEM, 2018).

Branch managers in local educational directorates are subject to mandatory duty place changes (also called “rotation”) and have to work for certain period in each of the five working zones across the Turkey defined by MoNO according to the general working conditions of the districts and provinces. After being appointed, branch managers are to work at least six years in zone 1; four years in zone 2 and 3; and two years in zone 4 and 5.

The branch managers’ staff numbers are determined based on the number of students of educational institutions in the working districts and provinces. It is only one branch manager up to 3000 students; 2 branch managers between 3001-10000 students; 3 branch managers between 10.001-20.000 students; 4 branch managers between 20.001-50.000 students; and 6 between 50.001 and more students. Similarly in provincial directorates, it was determined as 4 branch managers up to 50,000 students; 6 branch managers between 50.001-100.000 students; 8 branch managers between 100.001-200.000 students; 10 branch managers between 200.001-500.000 students; and 20 branch managers between 500.001 and more students (MEB, 2017).

The Importance and Implications of the Study

Although the branch managers have critical duty position in different service areas within the local educational directorates of MoNE, moreover, their being selected by a competition and proficiency exams, the academic studies conducted towards the branch managers working in the local educational organizations of MoNE appears to be limited.

When these limited number of academic studies conducted for branch managers in Turkey examined; these studies are seen to focus on topics such as the job satisfaction and social emotional loneliness levels of the branch managers (Şişman & Turan, 2004); the managerial perceptions of education managers who have been transferred from teaching to branch manager (Keser-Özmantar & Sincar, 2017); opinions of provincial organization managers on localization (Arslan & Atasayar, 2008); attitudes towards decentralization in education; the opinions about assignment and relocation

(rotation practice) (Kayıkçı, Yörük & Atasever, 2015) and organizational justice perceptions of branch and upper top managers.

More than 2000 branch managers' work in local educational directorates in Turkey, however no scientific researches about the problems of this local staff have been carried out so far. This study is thought to be the first specific research entirely focuses on the local educational branch managers' occupational problems in Turkey. By means of the study, it is expected that the occupational problems of this managerial position will be better noticed in local educational management system.

The study also aims to reveal the occupational problems of branch managers in the district and provincial directorates of MoNE and to present their expectations and suggestions on these issues. For this purpose, the study focused on the important problems regarding to occupational rights; assignments and workplace changes; authority and responsibilities; progress in career steps and professional development of the branch managers in local educational administration levels.

Methodology

Data Sources and Method

In the study, a phenomenological qualitative research design was used. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2006), the phenomenological research focuses on the individuals and groups who have experienced the phenomenon and able to reflect this phenomenon based on their own experiences. For this purpose, the working group is composed of the participants, who are still working in the district and provincial organizations of MoNE as well as who will able to present the occupational problems of the branch managers.

The opinions and suggestions of the participants were gathered by using standardized open-ended interview. In a standardized open-ended interview, the same questions are asked to all participants in a systematic sequence in order to reduce the subjectivity that may arise from the interviewers. This method is thought to be a method that is relatively easier to compare and analyse the gathered qualitative data (Karasar, 2005; Punch, 2005, Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006).

Working group

The working group consists of the branch managers' still working in the district and provincial educational directorates of MoNE. A total of 61 branch managers participated the study from 30 different provinces located in seven regions of Turkey. These provinces are seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the participants regarding working mandatory service zones and cities

Mandatory service zones and cities									
Zone 1 Cities		Zone 2 Cities		Zone 3 Cities		Zone 4 Cities		Zone 5 Cities	
Antalya	1	Burdur	1	Çorum	1	Artvin	1	Ağrı	1
Aydın	1	Hatay	20	Kırıkkale	2	Çankırı	1	Ardahan	1
Bursa	2	Isparta	1	Kütahya	2	Gümüşhane	1	Batman	1
İstanbul	1	Samsun	1	Ordu	1	Elazığ	1	Diyarbakır	1
Kayseri	1					Tokat	2	Erzurum	1
Konya	1					Şanlıurfa	8	Hakkari	1
Sakarya	1							Mardin	1
								Muş	1
								Van	2
Total	8		23		6		14		10
Cities	Total								30
Participants	Total								61

The research sample was determined by snowball sampling method. The purpose of preferring such a sampling method is that the subject of the study is directly related to the participants rather than the ability of the working group to represent the universe (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006; Neuman, 2014). Since one of the researchers was a provincial branch manager, 20 branch managers, who were also close colleagues of the researcher, were interviewed as a pioneer group mainly in Hatay province, and then they were asked to direct the branch managers who could express their opinions in different districts and provinces of Turkey to the researchers, and in the end, a working group sample consisting of 61 branch managers was formed.

Branch managers are subject to mandatory assignment and work with certain period in each of the five working zones defined by MoNE according to the general working conditions of the districts and provinces. Not foreseen at the beginning of the research though, it was seen that the participants were composed of branch managers working in all of those working zones, and thus the working group determined by the snowball sampling at the beginning also fulfilled the conditions of maximum diversity sampling. This can also be considered as a factor that strengthens the sampling.

When the demographic data of the participants given in Table 2 were analysed, the majority of the participants were male (96.7%), seniority was mostly between 1-10 years (% 90,16), age ranged between 30 and 50 years old (80.32%), the majority of them (75,40%) used to work as school administrators (school principal or deputy school principal).

Table 2. Demographics of the participants about Gender, Seniority, Previous Duties and Age

Demographic Characteristics	Participants	Percent (%)	
Gender	Woman	1	1,6
	Male	59	96,7
	Unspecified	1	1,6
	Total	61	100
Seniority	1-10 years	55	90,1
	11-20 years	1	1,6
	21 years and over	4	6,5
	Unspecified	1	1,6
	Total	61	100
Age	30-40	22	36
	41-50	27	44,2
	51-60	5	8,1
	61 and over	1	1,6
	Unspecified	6	9,8
	Total	61	100
Previous Task	Teacher	11	18
	Deputy School Director	21	34,4
	School Director	25	40,9
	Other	3	4,9
	Unspecified	1	1,6
	Total	61	100

Gathering Data

Data Collection Tools and Analysis of Data

In the process of developing standardized open-ended interview form, firstly, three researchers, one of who is a branch manager at a local educational directorate and other two are academicians at the department of educational sciences, examined the literature and prepared an interview form. Then, the process of piloting was completed with individual interviews conducted with two branch managers. Finally, after having been evaluated by two academicians from the field of education management and researchers together, a questionnaire consisting of five questions was formed.

Due to the difficult accessibility of the participant branch managers and overtime intensities, the form prepared based on the demographic data and qualitative standardized open-ended interview questions were uploaded to “google forms” system and sent to the participants via e-mails attached by the research permission documents and necessary explanations.

Karasar (2005) states that although the interview is usually done face to face, it can be done with voice and picture transmitters such as telephones and telephones. Similarly, according to Punch

(2005), the interview may be face-to-face, and can also be done by post or via questionnaires that are answered on their own.

In the research, descriptive analysis was used and the data obtained from individual standardized open-ended interviews were analysed, the participants' opinions and suggestions were also classified. The overlapping and common statements of the participant are covered under an inclusive title and presented in tables with frequency or percentage values. In addition, the themes and classifications based on common views and suggestions were extensively described by supporting direct quotations. The main criterion in making the quotations is to reveal the opinions and suggestions that are thought to be important or original for the research. The participants were coded as "BM" between 1-61 and they were cited as the source of the texts and citations.

Validity and reliability

In the qualitative research, a common approach "Trustworthiness", considered as an approach based on the credibility and reliability of the researcher, can be used instead of traditional quantitative validity and reliability in quantitative studies (Yıldırım, 2010). Unlike the traditional validity and reliability criteria in quantitative approach, the participants' giving sincere and more detailed answers to the questions in the qualitative approach in order to ensure the credibility and reliability of qualitative data. To ensure internal validity in the study, participant's opinions were classified under common and integrative expressions and supported by direct quotations. In the scope of external validity, the whole process of the research is explained in detail.

All of the researchers who carried out this study were those who worked in the district and provincial organizations of MoNE in Turkey. One of the researchers is still working as branch manager. The other researchers used to work as teachers and educational inspector in different districts and provinces of Turkey and they have experiences in organizational structure of the local educational directorates and have close relationship with a significant part of the participants. Such experience and relationship can be considered as a motivating factor for the participation of the branch managers and for their giving more sincere and qualified answers to the research.

To ensure the reliability of the research, the themes and classifications created by the researchers based on the views of the participants were reviewed by two faculty members in educational sciences as well as by the researchers via a group meeting. At this stage, no statistical study was conducted and a general scope assessment was made, and to increase the comprehensiveness of the expressions and the necessary finalized changes have been made on the themes and classifications.

Findings

In this study, the following questions were asked to the participants.

- 1) What are the most important problems related to professional rights of branch managers in MoNE?
- 2) What are the most important problems related to assignment and workplace change of branch managers working in MoNE?
- 3) What are the most important problems related to the authority and responsibilities of the branch managers working in MoNE?
- 4) What are the most important problems of the branch managers working in the district and provincial organization in terms of their career development and professional development?
- 5) If you have problems other than these, please give a brief description of them with the solutions.

The findings obtained via the questions in standardized open-ended interviews are covered under five headings below. According to this:

1. Findings on the Problems of Occupational Rights

The problems mentioned by the participants regarding their occupational rights are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings related to the problems experienced in relation to occupational personal rights

Opinions	f (n=61)	%
Low salaries and wages	41	67
Low retirement-based indicators	25	40,9
Excessive workloads and responsibilities	14	22,9
Lack of severance, authority and other duty compensation	3	4,9
Lack of additional funds for teaching, representation and hospitality etc.	3	4,9

When Table 3 evaluated, one of the most emphasized issues regarding occupational rights is that the salaries of the branch managers are lower than the other educational managerial positions. 40 of the 61 branch managers in the study (67%) stated that their salaries and wages were rather low. When analysed, such views as branch managers have more workloads however, the wages were even lower than the school principals who are at sub-level management positions; they have overtime extra works but they are not paid for it; extra wage duties were not evenly distributed; although they are mandatory members of the local committees, they are not paid any fee for these duties (BM-2) have been expressed by the participants.

Some remarkable participant opinions on the subject are given below:

“Responsibility is great, business risk is high but the money you get is insufficient.” (BM - 20);

“Although the branch management is a higher duty position and more risky task, the wage of branch managers (including the additional course payment) is lower than the teachers, assistant managers and the school principals. Salaries should be increased...” (BM-25);

“... Even though we are a part of education system, we cannot benefit from educational tuitions.” (BM -60)

“...our indicator is 2200. The retirement indicator should be increased to 3600 due to the high workload and the high administrative responsibilities. Not only depending on the additional indicator, but also in different ways the salary needs to be improved.” (BM-6);

1. Findings Related to the Problems on Assignment and Duty Place Changes

The majority of the participants (93.4%) stated various problems on mandatory work place change implementation which is also called as duty rotation. Some of the participants stated that it should be abolished or be on a voluntary basis, on the other hand, some other participants reported counter views that is favour of the continuation of mandatory duty place change.

“...mandatory duty change service is not required. This obligation should be abolished; and all branch managers should be reappointed within a new regulation.” (BM-19);

“...removal of the rotation system, if this is not possible; branch managers with 20 years or more seniority must be exempt from rotation (BM-60);

“Rotation is very important, especially for those branch managers working in the countryside. Rural workers work with the hope of duty place change. If the rotation is removed, there will be lots of dismissals.” (BM -3);

“Rotation must be continued” (BM -53);

The problems on this issue are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Findings on the problems experienced in mandatory duty place changes

Opinions	f (n=61)	%
Mandatory service districts and mission periods in these zones are not regulated in the light of objective and current data.	22	36
The assignment criteria and professional merit are disregarded in some cases as some branch managers are appointed without having any proficiency exam.	10	16,3
The excuses of spouses and children are not considered while changing duty places.	6	9,8
The official health reports received for exemption from mandatory	3	4,9

duty place change are not examined in detail.

As the appointments are made in June and July, branch managers are to work a year longer in their new duty district. 2 3,2

When the opinions examined, the participants think that the service districts is not based on objective and current criteria, consequently, the staff number of the branch managers needs to be updated in those working districts; it is necessary to restructure the service periods and also there are imbalances between task service scores:

“...mandatory working zones and districts are not well identified and organized... Solution is that the re-determination of working zones by objective criteria.” (BM-52);

“...service zones and districts, the service periods must be redefined in the light of more objective and up-to-date data (BM-2);

“... branch managers in the 4th zone have the right to extend their duty period for another two years while those in zone 1 and 2 have no such rights. ...” (BM-5)

“It's not right to be appointed in such a short period, it should be more flexible” (BM-17);

Some participants (%16,3) argue that the assignment criteria and professional merit are disregarded in some cases as some branch managers were appointed without having any proficiency exam. Participants stated that the appointments should be made in accordance with the assignment criteria and written exam results.

“...interview exam is the most important problem. Branch managers must be just assigned according to written exams.” (BM -15);

“Nobody should be appointed without having any proficiency exam because the branch office is a task assigned by entrance exam ... such assignments damage the sense of equity.” (BM -25).

Some participants (9.8%) stated that they experienced difficulties due to works of their spouses and children's educational needs, they demand that such excuses should be taken into consideration in the appointment of branch managers.

“We do not have a family order because of rotation.” (BM -21);

“Rotation must be optional. The excuses of spouses and children should be considered while changing duty places....” (BM-45);

In addition, the participants also stated views such as the official medical reports taken for exemption from rotation were not examined in detail; since the appointments are made in June and July; branch managers are to work a year longer in their new duty district.

3. Findings Related to the Problems on Branch Managers' Authority and Responsibilities

The problems expressed for this issue are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Problems of branch managers regarding their authority and responsibilities

Opinions	f (n=61)	%
They have more responsibilities than their authority.	22	36
Their role and status are not clearly defined and not properly understood.	14	22,9
Hierarchical conflicts with district education directors and other educational managers in the capital of provinces.	12	19,6
Their work requires financial responsibility and is risky.	11	18
Having various work tasks and heavy workloads.	9	14,7
Inadequate number qualified personnel in the directorates.	9	14,7
Exposure to external interventions.	6	9,8
Difficulties in the hierarchical relationship with school principals.	6	9,8
Inadequate staff number of the branch managers.	4	6,5
Lack of specialization in task areas.	3	4,9

A significant number of the participants (f=22; 36%) think to had too many responsibilities, but they don't have the same authority in educational management system. Participants clearly stated that there was an imbalance between the authorities and responsibilities of the branch managers. In addition, branch managers considered their position as a risky task especially in terms of financial liability (18%). Participants also stated that they should be given a guarantee in the form of financial liability insurance as they are at risk by signing financial document such as tender etc.

“There is a lot of responsibility at work; authorization must also be given when giving those responsibilities.” (BM -7);

“Authority and responsibility should be balanced. Necessary authorizations should be made in areas where responsibility is given.” (BM -16);

“There's too much responsibility. Compensation, duty loss and so on. But you don't get neither financial nor morally value of it at work” (BM -45);

“The branch manager's work is very risky, so the branch managers should be protected and an insurance system should be introduced with small cuts from the salaries of the branch managers.” (BM -25);

Another issue is that the task areas are dispersed and workload is heavy. Some participants (14,7%) stated to have more workloads as branch manager and had to work in different fields.

One participant (BM-58) stated that he couldn't follow the renewed legislation due to his workload and that he couldn't find the opportunity to see the problems on the spot in following quotation:

“I'm responsible alone for 7 sections in my district. I can't hold my head up because of official correspondence; I work as if I were a chief or a civil servant. I can't find the time to follow renewed or updated regulations etc. Unfortunately, I don't have the opportunity to get into the field of

education and see the problems on the spot. Our colleagues are forced to take very risky responsibilities. We have neither professional rights nor economic power compared to our duty.”

Another participant stated in following quotation below that the heavy workload couldn't be completed within a daily working time and therefore, they also had to work at home and didn't have enough time for their own families.

“...the works demanded by the ministry units exceeds the level that can be done during the working hours. Outside of working hours at home, even night-time and weekend work is required, thus this lessens our resting times and we don't have enough time for our own families.” (BM -14)

Another participant (BM-20) attributed the high workload to unqualified staff in quotation below.

“The workload is high, due to the shortage of qualified personnel, all the work remains to us. Everything is asked of us, and we are to be accountable...” (BM -20).

Participants also stated issues such as that the number of branch staff is low; that there are insufficient number of qualified staff and that there is the lack of specialization in the field of branch managers.

Participants also verbalized that they have to work in different areas of expertise, therefore, they had to specialize in those different fields; the chief, civil servant and other personnel in their office were not qualified and their number was insufficient, and therefore, the staff were incapable of helping them enough to carry out the intensive workload.

“...in districts' offices, the qualified staff should to be assigned to accounting and tender etc.” (BM-39);

“There should be some branching and specialized areas such as support branch directorate, human resources branch directorate, it is impossible to be an expert in every field” (BM-17);

“... we have to keep a close eye on every task we give to the officer in our office as there are less qualified personnel...” (BM-1).

Another issue stated by the participants was that the roles and status of the branch managers were not clearly defined and not properly understood (22.9%) by other staff in local education system.

The participants stated that their hierarchical position was not fully understood, and often considered as “great chiefs”, in a position above the office chiefs in the district directorates, therefore, there are hierarchical conflicts with district educational directors, provincial deputy educational

directors and other branch managers in the province capitals; and those directors in province capitals regard themselves in the position which is over the branch managers.

Some participants stated that they had conflicts with their district education directors since they work in the position of responsible supervisor above the branch managers in districts, although they are not appointed by proficiency exam unlike branch managers; Similarly, there are difficulties in hierarchical relationship with school principals, and branch managers were not considered as supervisor above school principals even though they were in higher managerial position in the local administrative system.

“Being seen as “the great chef” in office, but still not a director” (BM-4);

“Branch managers have to be successful in proficiency exam before being appointed but those who are not successful in such an exam might be district education director as those positions are assigned without exams. It means they are your supervisor. This also causes so many conflicts within the organisation” (BM-5);

“Branch managers have authority and responsibility, but they are still not the head of school directors” (BM-48);

Another issue was that branch managers could be exposed to interventions from outside the organization.

“Endless demands of districts governors, municipalities and NGOs” (BM-52)

“...of course, there should be accountability for management but external intervention should also be minimized” (BM -56);

“The Branch Managers are considered to be ordinary civil servants, despite the fact that they are key to the policies of the ministry. ... it is necessary to increase the authority of the branch managers and to reduce the interventions of other elements.” (BM -35)

4. Findings Related to the Problems on Career and Professional Development

When the opinions examined, a significant number of the participants (45.9%) stated that there were no clear criteria for the branch managers to increase in career steps.

To solve the problems in this field, participants recommended that district educational directors, provincial educational deputy directors and provincial educational head directors should be appointed on the basis of examinations the appointing to these top directorate positions should only be done among branch managers; the opportunities for progress in the career steps from district to

province and to central governmental educational organizations the branch managers should be encouraged to have postgraduate and doctoral degrees.

The branch managers think that only the staff working as branch managers should be able to be selected for such top directorate positions as the district education directors, provincial deputy education directors and the provincial educational head directors, but on the basis of examinations and professional merit. Besides, the participants demand a system based on certain evaluation criteria which will let them progress upwards in the career steps from district to province and to central governmental educational organizations.

“...staff can generally be appointed to upper directors positions without having an exam (Provincial Deputy Director, District Education Directors, etc.) but these upper positions can be appointed by an exam among those branch managers” (BM-6);

“....there should be more opportunities for career progression....” (BM-11);

“...Branch managers should be able to become general educational inspector at ministry level through exam, and also to become district educational director through exam....” (BM-23);

“Master's degree must be compulsory for branch managers and appropriate conditions must be provided for them to have doctorate degree” (BM-27);

“... Postgraduate and doctoral studies of the branch managers should be encouraged, and at least once a year, they should be taken to the vocational and administrative seminars” (BM-44);

“...The most important problem on the career steps is the lack of objective criteria” (BM-34).

5) Findings on Other Problems of Branch Managers

Apart from the problems outlined in the four heading above, participants stated also that since local inspectorates were abolished, the remaining duties and responsibilities of the educational inspectorate in the provinces increased their workloads (BM-14;58); the supervisory duties given in motor driving courses haven't been evenly distributed (BM-25).

In addition, some participants recommended that the income tax limit bases should be increased (BM-39); branch managers should not be unionized because of their critical duties (BM-50); the workload should be lessened by creating statistics and R & D units in districts (BM-58); there should be more staff for technical and engineering in district education directorates (BM-61); the number of immigrant students should also be taken into account while determining the number of

branch managers (BM-9) and some certain number of duty positions should be granted for female branch managers in the provinces (BM-40);

“The abolition of the education inspectorate was a problem and the inspectorial works were left to the branch managers” (BM-14);

“... the workload on correspondence can be lessened by increasing the number of service staff; also by establishing an R & D unit, statistics etc. in the districts, branch managers’ workload should be reduced. In this way, we can produce new projects in order to increase the quality in education. due to the decrease in the number of education inspectors, the duties which were being done by inspectors such as staff discipline investigation, opening of new institutions etc. are to be done by us now.” (BM-58)

“Central system exams and motor vehicles driving school exams are mostly held in bigger districts and provinces, so branch managers working in small districts don’t benefit from additional income. a central revenue payment pool should be created and the test revenues in all provinces and districts should be paid via this system” (BM-25);

“Current 15% income tax base limit should be increased from 14,800 TL to 30,000 TL... “ (BM-39);

“Certain number of duty positions should be granted for females in the provinces” (BM-40);

“Branch managers should not be unionized...” (BM-50);

“...the staff number of branch management needs to be readjusted and updated. Especially the participation of Syrian students and temporary education centres students in refugee camps” (BM-9);

“Directorates in districts and province should be given at least two cadres of technical teachers or engineers. It is important for some units.” (BM-61).

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

As the results of the research are qualitative, they are not generalized to all branch managers working in the district and provincial organization of the MoNE in Turkey. Findings, conclusions and suggestions obtained according to the opinions of these 61 participants can be listed as:

1) The most important issue regarding professional rights is that of branch managers salaries are lower than other managerial positions. 67% of the participants stated that their salaries and wages

were low. The branch managers working in local educational directorates consider that their workloads is high, however the wages are rather low.

The staffs of the branch office in MoNE are considered to be the first level management team and they work within the general administrative services class in local education organizations. School management is not regarded to management position; it is a temporary administration task since all the managerial staffs at schools are considered to be teachers within education class but they are paid extra course fee for this managerial duty at school. The additional course fee given to the school principals working in the teaching staff is not given to the branch managers as they work within the general administrative services class. Considering these additional fees, when the participants calculated their monthly total wage incomes, they thought that they were even paid less than the school principals, although they work in a superior management position.

According to data of 2018, the salaries of the branch managers in local administration of MoNE vary between 4042 TL and 5103 TL. On the other hand, school principals receive teacher salaries because they are selected just among teachers with background of education as they are not in the general administration class. According to data of 2018, teacher salaries vary between 3321 TL and 3831 TL. However, according to the type of school they work, school principals receive additional tuition payments ranging from 24 to 26 hours per week. With this payment, they receive a total payment around 5000 TL per month. It is understood that the branch managers aren't paid for additional tuition as school directors have because the branch managers work in the general administration services class.

When the participants evaluate their total monthly payment, they are convinced that they receive less salaries and wages than school heads because the participants evaluated their monthly payment not only on salary payments, but also on the basis of other extra payments together. When considered from this point, it can be said that the branch managers who have lower seniority are paid relatively less salary and wages than the school principals who have higher seniority.

The result mentioned above has also shown consistency with a study conducted on the job satisfaction and social emotional loneliness levels of the branch managers. In the study by Şişman and Turan (2004), it was found that the branch manager candidates had primary financial problems.

2) A significant number of participants (40.9%) demand that the indicators of retirement ought to be raised to 3600. The additional indication of branch managers within the current system is 3000 for those who used to work in the teaching class and 2200 for those who used to work in other civil service areas. The additional indicator is a situation that affects the compensation and retirement pensions, rather than a situation that affects the salaries of employees. A civil servant who retired with

2200 indicators and the one retired with 3600 additional indicators had significant differences between their compensation and retirement pensions.

Requests for additional indicators in the local organization of MoNE have been a subject not only by branch managers but also by teachers and school administrators. For this reason, it is seen that political parties in different times have also taken into consideration the issue of correction of the additional indicators of the employees of the MoNE (Erkılıç & Dilbaz, 2017). From this point of view, this issue, also expressed by participants, is a popular problem known for long time in the local educational organizations of Turkey, still not resolved.

3) The branch managers think that their workload is too much. They stated that they are obliged to stay overtime due to their heavy workloads, but they are not paid overtime; the central exam supervision task, which is one of the few extra payment for them, is not equally distributed between the branch managers and the districts; although they are to join many committees and meeting as a demand of their position, they are also not paid any fees for such duties.

Such a result might have been raised from branch managers' comparing their salaries and wages they receive with the roles, status and responsibilities they undertake within the local educational organisations. Many branch managers have clearly stated that they have not received a proper remuneration despite the high level of responsibility of the task. In addition, the participants stated that the branch managers are obliged to fulfil their duties in the commissions formed in the provinces and districts but they did not receive any fees for these duties. The duties that are subject to the charge are limited to driving licence exams commission duties, but these tasks are more intensive in the central and large districts, whereas in smaller districts these tasks are rarely given. In this respect, the participants demand that such tasks should be given in the province-wide and be based on a common sharing system.

When their duty areas in the districts and provinces examined, besides the common duties in the field of education and training services, the branch managers have also various duties and responsibilities in different service areas such as special education and guidance; lifelong learning; private education institutions; strategy development; law; human resources; innovation and education technologies; support services; primary education; secondary education; vocational and technical education; religious education, MEBBIS (Information System of National Ministry of Education); secretariat; document and school transportation services (Sarıkamış MEM, 2018).

4) A significant number (36%) of the branch managers think that they do not have enough authority, although they have too many responsibilities. The participants clearly stated that there was an imbalance between the authority and responsibilities of the branch managers. Branch managers also consider their managerial position very risky task, especially in terms of financial liability. In addition,

the participants stated to have intensive and heavy workloads, and had to work in different areas most of which need to be expertise.

5) Participants believe that the staff number of branch managers is inadequate in local directorates, the number of chiefs and other qualified personnel is also insufficient, and that there is no specialization in the fields of duty of branch manager's work.

In the local directorates of MoNE, the branch manager staff numbers are determined based on the number of students at schools and other educational institution as cited in introduction section. According to this, the number of students per branch manager in the districts with a high number of students increases in direct proportion thus increasing the workload of branch managers.

Another noteworthy suggestion regarding this problem was the fact that, in the regions where the population of Syrian migrant students are concentrated, norm staff calculations should include temporary education centres and immigrant students in schools. From this point of view, Syrian migrant students especially in bordering districts and provinces of Turkey can be said another issue that is likely to increase the workload of branch managers.

6) The participants made suggestions for increasing branch manager salaries; raising additional indicators for retirement to 3600 additional indicators; improvement of wages by granting seniority, authority and special service compensation; increasing in-service training opportunities; and facilitating their postgraduate and doctoral studies.

7) It was concluded that the majority of the branch managers (93.4%) had problems related to mandatory duty place changes (rotation). Branch managers working in the districts and provinces are subject to mandatory assignment, and they are to work with certain period in five working zones which were formed according to the general working conditions of provinces and districts. After being appointed, branch managers are to work at least six years in zone 1; four years in zone 2 and 3; and two years in zone 4 and 5.

While some of the participants thought that this practice should be completely abolished, the majority of the participants expressed their distress and suggestions about the implementation process rather than the abolition of the practice. Participants think that service zones and service scores in these regions are not determined in the light of objective and current data, so service zones, service scores, service duration and the number of working staff in these regions should be regulated again.

This result is also consistent with the results of a previous study conducted on mandatory duty place change. Kayıkçı et al. (2014) found that the determination of service zones was not

appropriate, working duration in the service zones was incorrectly determined and the difference between the service scores obtained from service zones was rather high.

8) Participants are completely against the branch managers' being appointed without having exam according to Article 76 of Law No. 657 on Civil Servants. The participants stated that Article 76 should not be operated and the appointments should be entirely made in accordance with the official examination criteria.

9) The participants consider that branch managers' role and status are not clearly defined and not understood correctly (22.9%) in local educational directorates. Participants views indicated that the hierarchical positions of the branch managers were not fully understood, most of the time, they were considered as "great chef" in a position above the chiefs in the local educational directorates, therefore, there were hierarchical conflicts with the district education directors, provincial deputy directors and other branch managers in the province, moreover the branch managers working in the provincial centres and the deputy educational directors see themselves as chief of the branch managers and in a superior managerial position; the district educational directors, even though they were not appointed by a selection exam, were in the position of supervisor over the branch managers; similarly, they stated the difficulties in the hierarchical relationship with the school principals and that they were not considered as the heads of the school principals even though they were in a higher managerial position.

10) A significant number of the branch managers (45.9%) think that there are no clear criteria for their rise in the career steps. To solve the problems, the branch managers suggested that the district education directors, deputy educational provincial directors and provincial educational head directors should only be appointed among the branch managers based on the examination and professional merit. The opportunities for progress in the career steps should be operated according to certain criteria increasing from districts to provincial organizations and to the central ministerial organizations. Besides, the participants demand a system of rise in the career ladder that moves from local districts towards the managerial positions in the provincial centres and central ministerial organization as well as based on certain evaluation criteria.

11) Participants also stated that they had other problems since the local inspectorates were abolished and this increased their workloads; the supervisory duties given in motor driving courses haven't been evenly distributed; the income tax limit bases were not increased. Since the duties and authorities of the educational inspectors in the country have been changed, it is understood that the workload of branch managers increased especially in staff discipline investigation areas and opening new educational institutions which had been done previously by educational inspectors.

The duties in the driving license exams are concentrated mainly in the central districts or larger districts, accordingly, the branch managers working in these districts have more chance to get duties than their counterparts in smaller districts. The fact that income tax limit bases are low is another problem area that causes branch managers to be subject to an earlier upper tax rate.

12) The branch managers also need expert support on technical issues within their fields of duty. The participants have made suggestions and demanded that the statistics and R & D units should be formed as well as more technical staff or engineers should be hired in the districts and workloads should be reduced in this way.

Recommendations

1) The occupational rights of the branch managers working in Turkish local educational directorates should be improved especially their salaries, wages and indicators for retirement.

2) The staff number of the branch managers working in districts and provinces should be increased.

3) Branch managers should be specialized in different fields of duty. In addition, more number of staff in the fields which require different expertise and in the technical fields (such as accounting, construction, statistics, technicians, engineer etc.) should be hired in the districts and provinces.

4) The service zones, duration and scores within the scope of mandatory duty place change for branch managers should be updated and rearranged according to the socioeconomic development levels, population and the number of students of the districts and the provinces.

5) Arrangements should be made to enable branch managers to rise in career steps from district levels towards the provincial and central governmental levels based on a written examination and an objective performance evaluation system.

6) The role and status of branch managers in the hierarchical structure of MoNE at district and provincial organizations should be more clearly defined.

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