

## **An Investigation of the Professional Values of Elementary Teachers<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

The professional values of teachers in the Turkish education system have been discussed in terms of competencies of professional standards. It is important to describe the adoption level of the professional values of elementary teachers based on the views of experts. The aim of this study was to investigate and analyze the professional values of elementary teachers in the Turkish education system. The elementary teachers' professional values were determined with a qualitative approach. For this purpose, data were collected by using semi-structured interviews with faculty members, school inspectors, school principals, and elementary teachers. According to the findings, the elementary teachers' professional values were: recognition of students and individual-centered education, planning and organization of the learning and teaching environment, evaluation and monitoring of students, professional development and responsibility, and cooperation with the school, families and community.

**Keywords:** Professional Values, Teaching Profession, Elementary Teacher, Semi-Structured Interview.

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## Introduction

From the founding years of the Republic onwards, under the effect of government policies and rapidly changing technologies, teacher training programs and paradigms related to the teaching profession have also undergone changes. Together with these changes in institutions that train teachers in the Turkish Education System, the paradigms in teacher training and in the professional values needed by teachers have also undergone changes. In the Turkish Education System, while these changes in the renewal process of education were being realized, during the transfer from an industrial society to an information society occurring synchronously with the rest of the world, the qualifications needed by a good teacher became standardized.

Turkey possesses considerably deep-rooted experience in teacher training. However, it has been revealed in the studies that prospective teachers cannot gain professional values at the teacher training institutions (Gökmenoğlu, 2012; Gültekin et al., 2010; Uştu et al., 2016). Professional values can be defined as the whole of the rules, standards and principles that guide and give direction to the behaviors of working individuals while pursuing their careers. Professional values are important in terms of setting forth and reflecting the cognitive, behavioral and affective dimensions of a profession. In this regard, establishing professional values and conforming to these professional values is a reflection of the importance given to one's profession (Van Nuland, 2009; Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016) Since professional values direct individuals in the same occupational group according to behavioral standards, they are regarded as extremely important in working life. The concept of professional values for teachers can be defined as the whole of the responsibilities, which need to be performed. In addition, the rules and principles, which need to be obeyed in relationships with students, colleagues and society while the teaching profession (Aydın, 2013). The professional values of the teaching profession can be summarized briefly as follows sense (Strike & Soltis, 2009; Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013):

1. Having a spirit of tackling difficulties while carrying out the responsibilities required by the profession under the difficult conditions created by the profession,
2. Being a role model for the individuals they educate,
3. Instilling a spirit of hard work in the students,
4. Being a teacher who is fair, honest, respectful and affectionate,
5. Being committed to the institution, school and rules,
6. Cooperating with and supporting colleagues,
7. Having the reassuring character of a person that believes in human rights and gives value to people, and

8. Being a person who develops and renews him/herself and fulfils his/her responsibilities in a professional.

Although the professional values of the teaching profession are grouped under these headings, teachers' professional values were also updated by Palmer (2015) together with the changing technology and scientific developments in the information age. These values are: (i) creating a student-centered classroom and providing individual teaching, (ii) regarding each student as an individual producer, (iii) actively using technologies for rapid access and dissemination of information, (iv) being cooperative, (v) being innovative, (vi) sustaining lifelong learning, and (vii) providing project-based learning.

The professional values of the teaching profession have also been set forth by education institutions (Association of American Educators [AAE], 2016; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS], 2016; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2016). The professional values of the teaching profession have been gathered under the headings of general knowledge and field knowledge. The general knowledge requires different competencies. These are student development and learning, differences between students, teaching strategies, learning environments, communication science and skills, planning of teaching, assessment science and skills, developing by learning from their experiences, social relationships, cooperation with the community and professional ethics, idealism, industriousness and self-sacrifice, democracy culture and human rights, critical thinking, and environmental awareness and values.

In Turkey, The Ministry of National Education has discussed the issue of teachers' professional values. For this, international literature was used to set national standards of teachers' professional values (Ministerial Council on Education, 2003; Ministry of National Education (MoNE), 2008; NBPTS, 2016; Teacher Development Agency (TDA) 2016; Türk Eğitim Derneği (TEDMEM), 2009). Since teachers' professional values have not been finalized in Turkey, personal values may hold sway over the values of the profession in institutional activities (Altınkurt & Yılmaz, 2011; Gözütok, 1999; Pelit & Güçer, 2006; Toprakçı et al., 2010; Tunca et al., 2015). On the other hand, a limited number of studies have been made on the standards and values of the teaching profession in Turkey (Karabacak et al., 2015; MoNE, 2008; Tunca, 2012).

In the field of elementary teaching, great importance is given to the professional values of elementary teachers, since teaching is a profession and one of the important differences that distinguish teaching from other professions are the values that the teaching profession should possess. In the context of specific characteristics of the teaching profession, there is the necessity to possess professional values. Elementary teachers, who occupy an interdisciplinary position, must have the values required by the profession. In one sense, elementary teachers also have the duty of socializing

the child. The elementary teacher is in a key position for fostering values in young children by formal and informal means.

The aim of this study was to investigate the professional values of elementary teachers based on the views of faculty members, school inspectors, school principals, and elementary teachers.

It is expected that the findings obtained in this study will contribute to the development of policies related to teachers' professional values in Turkey. Therefore, the contributions to be made to the field can be classified according to the subheadings below. These can be stated as:

- i. Determining the professional values that elementary teachers should possess,
- ii. Assisting in the standardization of elementary teachers' professional values in Turkey,
- iii. Assisting in policies for training elementary teachers.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This research aims to determine the professional values, which elementary teachers in Turkey should possess. In order to achieve the aim of this research, a holistic multiple case study design was adopted. The case study design, one of the qualitative research designs. A semi-structured interview technique was used to collect data. The case study makes it possible for an investigation to be made in order to describe integrated and significant characteristics of events in real life (Yin, 2014). Researchers, who use this method have an opportunity to examine and interpret a certain context closely and in depth (Brown, 2008; Creswell, 2015). In this study the professional values, which elementary teachers should possess were investigated. The rich data was ensured by using semi-structured interviews with specialists who belong to professional groups with experience in the elementary teaching profession (Chmiliar, 2010).

### **Study Group**

The study group was determined by using criterion sampling method. In criterion sampling method, participants, who meet a series of predetermined criteria are determined. The participants were: 13 academic staff with the titles of Associate Professor (Assoc. Prof.) and Professor Doctor (Prof. Dr.) employed in the primary teaching program in five different state universities in Turkey. In addition, ten education inspectors working in the National Education Directorates in the cities of Rize, Trabzon, Eskişehir and Konya affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. Moreover, ten school principals who employed in the National Education Directorates of Rize and Trabzon. On the other hand ten elementary teachers working in the National Education Directorates of Rize and Trabzon. This research was conducted based on voluntary participation.

In the process of determining the faculty members, the inclusion criteria were that they should be academic staff with the titles of Associate Professor and Professor Doctor who were employed in Education Faculties at state universities. In the process of determining the participating faculty members, the web pages of faculty members employed in the elementary teaching department were examined, and a list of participating faculty members was created by using their academic backgrounds and scientific publications as criteria. The faculty members identified in the list were contacted by the research team and asked whether they wished to be included in the study. Two of them were female and 11 of them were male, and two of them had the title of Prof. Dr. while 11 of them had the title of Assoc. Prof., and they were employed at five different state universities.

In the process of determining the school inspectors, school principals and elementary teachers, the basic criteria for inclusion were that they should have worked as elementary teachers for at least five years, have completed postgraduate studies, and have been employed as a coordinator or researcher on at least one project related to education. For the selection of the school inspectors, the National Education Directorates of Rize, Trabzon, Eskişehir, and Konya were contacted, and information was given about the aim of the research. A list of school inspectors who met the determined criteria was created. The school inspectors determined in the list were contacted by the first researcher and given information about the aim of the research. The school inspectors who agreed to take part in the study were included as participants in the research. The school inspectors were male.

For the selection of the school principals, the National Education Directorates of Rize and Trabzon were contacted, and information was given about the aim of the research. A list of school principals who met the determined criteria was created. The school principals determined in the list were contacted by the first researcher and given information about the aim of the research. The school principals who agreed to take part in the study were included as participants in the research. Two of the school principals were female and eight of them were male. Two of the elementary teachers were female and eight of them were male.

For the selection of the elementary teachers, the National Education Directorates of Rize and Trabzon were contacted, and information was given about the aim of the research. A list of elementary teachers who met the determined criteria was created. The elementary teachers determined in the list were contacted by the first researcher and given information about the aim of the research. The elementary teachers who agreed to take part in the study were included as participants in the research. Two of the elementary teachers were female, while 8 were male. Their professional seniority ranged between 9 and 30 years.

The utmost importance was given to the selection of the faculty members, school inspectors, school principals and elementary teachers who were included in the study group of the research.

While the faculty members were experts in the field of elementary teaching, the other participants served the purpose of the research in terms of enabling the research results to be revealed in the best way in the context of their professional experience in elementary teaching and their possession of professional values. In this context, it is very important for professional values to be revealed by people who work in the profession relevant to the study, since the values of the profession can best be reflected by people from this professional group.

### **Data Collection Tools and Data Collection**

The data collection processes were carried out by the first researcher under the guidance of thesis supervisor, due to the fact that the research was a thesis study. Official permission for the study was obtained from the participants' institution to be able to carry out the processes of data collection. Permission to carry out the process of data collection for the study was obtained from the Turkish Ministry of National Education. A list of participants who met the participant criteria was created, organizations affiliated to the Turkish Ministry of National Education were contacted, and the participants of the research were determined. Individuals in the participant group were contacted by the first researcher, and information about the study was given. Appointments were made for interviews on the understanding that the participants would be able to set aside a period of one hour at times that suited themselves. Written and verbal approval was obtained for sound recordings. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with sound recording and supported by note-taking. Semi-structured interview questions to be directed to the faculty members were prepared. The interview questions were given their final form by obtaining the views of three specialist lecturers employed in the primary teaching program and working in the field of values. Three questions were directed to the participants. These questions were:

1. What are the differences that distinguish elementary teachers from other teachers. Can you describe these?
2. In recent years, the concept of values in education and based on this, the professional values of teachers have been intensively discussed. In your opinion, as an expert in the field of elementary teaching, which professional values should be possessed by teachers in general?
3. Which professional values should be possessed by elementary teachers in particular? Why?

The interviews were conducted during the period of January-March 2015. The interviews were recorded on a voice recorder with the participants' permission. The participants were allowed to see and read the interview questions once. After each participant had been granted a period of one or two minutes, the interview was begun. The interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. The data collection process was supported with note-taking.

As a result of the analysis of the data from the interviews made with the faculty members, the professional values that elementary teachers should possess were grouped under four thematic

headings. At the third stage of data collection, the participants were asked for their opinions about professional values that an elementary teacher in particular should possess. In order to find the answer to this question, semi-structured interview questions were specified. The interview questions were given their final form by obtaining the views of three specialist lecturers employed in the primary teaching program and working in the field of values. Following the pilot application, the necessary revisions were made to the interview questions, which were then given their final form. Following these procedures, six questions were addressed to the school inspectors, school principals and elementary teachers who made up the education stakeholder group. These questions were:

1. What can be the professional values of elementary teachers toward “the student and learning”?
2. What can be the professional values of elementary teachers toward “the learning and teaching environment”?
3. What can be the professional values of elementary teachers toward “evaluation and monitoring of students”?
4. What can be the professional values of elementary teachers toward “professional development and responsibility”?
5. What can be the professional values of elementary teachers toward cooperation with the school, families and community”?
6. What can be the professional values of elementary teachers toward “school development, and the school system and its development”?

The participants were allowed to see and read the interview questions once. After each participant had been granted a period of one or two minutes, the interview was begun. At the fourth stage of data collection, the list of professional values of elementary teachers was created (see Table 1) to ensure the content validity of the professional values of elementary teachers, the theoretical framework of which was determined as part of these studies, comparison was made by examining the current literature and by obtaining the views of three specialist professors. Information related to the operations carried out in the research process and the result of the research products are given as a summary in Table 1. Based on the data collection processes, the list of “professional values of elementary teachers” (see Table 2) was created by synthesizing the results of the analysis of the data obtained within the scope of the theoretical basis of the research.

**Table 1.** Information Related to Operations Carried out in Research Process and Result of Research Products

Item No.	Operation	Product
1st Operation	Review of literature in order to create theoretical bases related to elementary teachers' professional values	1) The theoretical framework related to professional values of teachers in the field of education, 2) The theoretical framework related to professional values of teachers in the field of education in Turkey, 3) Learning outcomes regarding values in the primary school curriculum, 4) The National Education Councils, and 5) Teacher competencies specified by the National Education Ministry were examined in depth and synthesized.
2nd Operation	Study conducted with faculty members: Content analysis of semi-structured interviews	"The professional values that elementary teachers should possess" were grouped into four themes. The semi-structured interview questions to be addressed to the other groups participating in the research were determined according to these themes.
3rd Operation	Content analysis of semi-structured interviews made with school inspectors, school principals and elementary teachers	The professional values that elementary teachers should possess were thematically revealed in six dimensions.
Result	Synthesis of professional values that elementary teachers should possess according to process steps	By means of synthesization of all content analyses obtained with theoretical knowledge in studies in the literature, the professional values of elementary teachers were determined in five dimensions.

**Table 2.** List of Professional Values of Elementary Teachers

	Professional Value
Recognition of Student and Individual-Centered Education	1. Believing that each student can learn up to the limit of his/her potential
	2. Focusing on recognizing all developmental areas of students
	3. Developing students' spirit of learning
	4. Placing value on the individual
	5. Being able to develop a love of people and nature students
Learning and Teaching Environment	6. Creating a learning climate based on trust in the classroom
	7. Creating a democratic learning environment in class
	8. Making the learning environment enjoyable
	9. Bringing real life into the learning environment
	10. Using new ideas and developments in the learning environment
	11. Giving priority to students' happiness in the classroom environment
	12. Making the learning-teaching process student-centered
	13. Using technology in the learning environment
	14. Creating a diverse learning environment
	15. Using time efficiently and productively
	16. Organizing and using strategies for making students' learning environment cooperative
	17. Being able to use different methods and techniques according to students' level
	18. Planning every stage of teaching
	19. Giving constant guidance to students
Evaluation and Monitoring of Students	20. Being able to make assessments that will enable students to acquire basic skills
	21. Creating a suitable environment for reflecting students' potential
	22. Supporting development of students' abilities
	23. Assessing student's development by observation
	24. Making evaluation aimed at the individual as a whole
	25. Monitoring development and changes in students over a long period and making the necessary arrangements
	26. Carrying out the process of assessing students based on scientific data

Professional Development and Responsibility	27. Setting professional goals for oneself
	28. Working harmoniously in cooperation with colleagues
	29. Being open to sharing professional experience and to cooperation
	30. Being a role model for students professionally and humanistic
	31. Having a love of people and making this warmth felt in students
	32. Having a love of the profession and possessing the competencies required by the profession
	33. Attempting to increase the social status of the teaching profession
	34. Keeping up with innovations in the field of education
	35. Keeping up with technology and being able to use it actively
	36. Making learning a life philosophy throughout life
	37. Being an investigative teacher
	38. Conducting activities based on scientific knowledge
	39. Having the ability to establish communication with stakeholders
	40. Keeping up with and participating in educational activities for professional development
Cooperation with School, Family and Community	41. Cooperating with families, colleagues and people working in the community
	42. Developing relationships based on mutual respect in communication with the school, families and the community
	43. Grounding relationships with students, families and colleagues in mutual trust
	44. Sharing the learning environment with families
	45. Increasing the value of the school as a learning environment
	46. Being able to evaluate students' development together with families
	47. Enabling families' participation in social and educational activities

### Data Analysis

The computer-assisted NVivo 12 software in the first researcher's possession for qualitative data preparation was utilized to analysis of the data. For the data analysis, the raw interview data obtained from the sound recording files were transcribed into a 450-page written format by the first researcher. For the accuracy and validity of the written transcripts, the texts were checked by listening to the sound recordings three times. The written texts were also read several times by the thesis supervisor to avoid misunderstanding of the responses of the participants, who would be the main data source, in the analysis and interpretation of the written texts. Following this procedure, the researcher and supervisor came together and shared information. After this procedure, the codes and themes were entered into the NVivo program by the researcher.

For the accuracy and validity of the files created, the researcher listened to the sound recordings again twice and checked them.

Analysis of the qualitative data was carried out by following the four-step analytical procedure of Moustakas (1994). These steps are 1) coding the data, 2) finding the themes, 3) organizing the codes and themes, and 4) identifying and interpreting the findings.

Coding was made by the researcher and advisers according to the concepts extracted from the data obtained with the content analysis. In order to extract the concepts underlying the data and relationships between these concepts, inductive content analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was used. The codes of the study were generated directly from the data. The themes/categories were created by

bringing together related codes having common characteristics. The framework of the themes was defined based on the related literature, the aim of the research, the interview questions and the statements appearing in the interviews. In the creation of the themes, inductive content analysis was taken as the basis. The coding for the data was made separately by the coders of the research (the researcher and thesis supervisor). Following this coding procedure, the researcher and supervisor convened and the fit between the codes of the data analysis was tested. Accordingly, the codes were created in line with the common views of the researcher and supervisor. The data obtained were classified according to these themes and analyses were performed in the “Nodes” section of the NVivo 12 software program. In the creation of the themes, subthemes were created based on the main themes. The themes and the subthemes based on these themes that emerged as a result of the analyses were visualized by association with the “Maps” section of the program. In the figures, codes were used in order to reveal by which participant groups the themes were generated. In these codes, abbreviations have been made by using the letters SI for School Inspector, SP for School Principal and ET for Elementary Teacher.

*To ensure internal validity of the study*, a comprehensive review of the related literature was carried out and the theoretical framework of the study was created. The way in which the qualitative design and data collection tool used in the study were developed, and the selection of the participants, the number of participants and information related to the participants making up the sample of the study are explained in detail. In this research, care was taken in the selection of the participant group. This application can be described as an effort aimed at increasing the internal validity of the research. The methods of making comparison and correlation among the findings resulting from the data analysis were applied. In this regard, the findings were revealed to be internally consistent and to be consistent with the theoretical framework. In this case, it can be said that the internal validity of the research was achieved.

*To ensure external validity of the study*, the process for creating the semi-structured interview form and for selecting the study group, the data collection tool and process, the interviews conducted and the steps of the analysis are all explained in detail. The analysis and interpretation of the data are simply and clearly explained in a way that the reader can understand. By presenting the findings directly, an attempt has been made to increase the external validity of the study. Detailed description for ensuring transmissibility in a qualitative study entails transfer of the raw data to the reader by reorganizing it according to the concepts and themes that emerge and staying faithful to the nature of the data without adding an interpretation. In the themes, data are supported by direct quotations where necessary. To ensure the confirmability of this study, the procedures carried out during the research process are explained in depth. The data and codes obtained in the study were stored in an electronic environment so that they could be examined later. In a case study, it is very important that the

research results are readable (Yin, 2014). In this study, efforts were made to enrich the case study and make reading the presentation and research attractive for the readers.

Validity and reliability are the two most important criteria used for ensuring credibility of research results in qualitative studies. Detailed reporting of the data collected and explanation of how the researcher obtained the findings are among the important criteria for validity in qualitative research (Neuman, 2013).

One of the most effective ways of increasing reliability in qualitative studies is *consensus among the coders* based on the use of multiple coders for analysis of data that is recorded in writing. Consensus is the confirmation of the results accessed in the data analysis by obtaining the assistance of experts (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2005). In an effort to achieve *consensus among the coders*, the views of three faculty members (specialists in the primary teaching program, and in the fields of qualitative research and values education) (Prof. Dr.) were sought with the aim of confirming whether or not the themes obtained represented the theme in which they were located. The coding list consisting of the themes was given to the faculty members from three different state universities. This list is made up of three sections. The first section includes the themes, the second section is the part for indicating a theme as suitable (√) and the third section is for explanation. The experts were asked to approve a theme in the coding list with a (√) if it was suitable, and if it was not suitable, to write the theme that was most suitable in the explanation section. This is a list that contains the names and characteristics of nine conceptual themes and subthemes belonging to these themes. The specialists whose views were sought were asked to use this list and to match the nine conceptual themes in the list together (in such a way that no theme or code was excluded). After the views of the experts had been obtained, the experts, the researcher and the thesis supervisor convened. The matchings made by the specialists were compared with those made by the research team.

Since the aim of the research team was to reveal a new product via the research process of the study and to make a contribution to teacher training, the data collection and data analysis were challenging. Since teacher training and professional values studies had been carried out by the research team, the data were focused on throughout the study in order to preserve the neutrality of the research team. As a result of our efforts, the results obtained from the research data met the expectations that we specified at the beginning of the study.

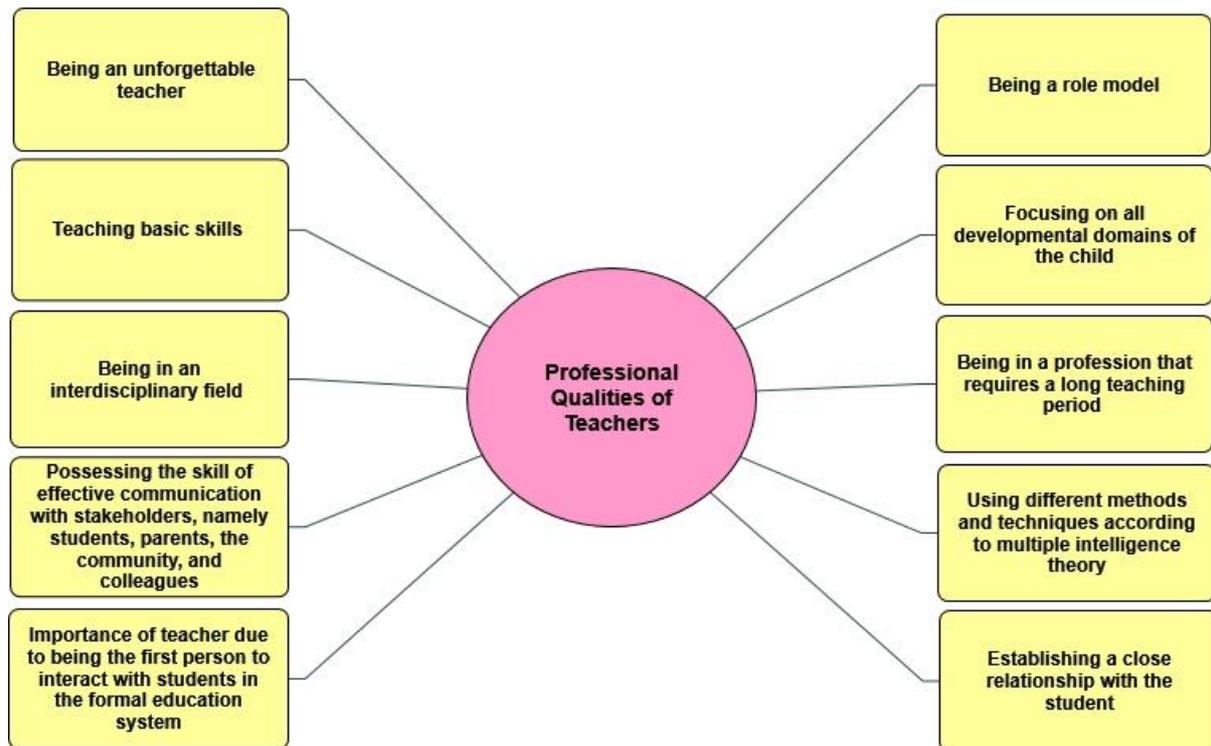
## **Results**

In this section, the results obtained from the data of the study are grouped under the headings of faculty members. The findings are grouped under nine themes and presented in depth below thematically, according to the stages of the process.

### Conducted with Faculty Members of the Study

#### *Professional Qualities Distinguishing Classroom Teaching from Other Types of Teaching*

In this section, the findings obtained at the first stage of the study, conducted with the faculty members, are included. Responses given by the faculty members to the question, “Could you describe the role of teacher in teaching process in the classroom? How do you explain the professional qualities of teachers?”



**Figure 1.** Professional Qualities of Teachers

As can be seen in Figure 1, ten themes emerged for professional qualities of teachers. With regard to the study findings, in the case of consensus by the faculty members, the most important professional quality of teachers was that of being an unforgettable teacher. With the view that “...A memory of the elementary teacher definitely stays in the mind. Everyone has a lot to relate about their primary school teacher. Yet they may even have forgotten the name of a subject teacher...” (P<sub>1</sub>), the elementary teacher’s quality of being an unforgettable teacher is reflected.

For the quality related to the elementary teacher being important because he/she is the first person to interact with the student in the formal education system, with the view that “*The elementary teacher is the person that the child first meets, is shaped by, and, after the family, spends the most time with...*” (P<sub>10</sub>), the idea that the elementary teacher is the person who, after the family, the child has his/her first experience with and spends the most time with in the education process is emphasized.

With regard to the view that the elementary teacher must establish a close relationship with the student: “He/she must touch children’s hearts, and the profession is very important in this sense. If the child loves his/her primary school teacher, he/she will love school and love studying, and if the teacher makes him/herself loved, the child will also love school and love studying...” (P<sub>3</sub>). This view, that in the classroom teaching profession, the teacher makes him/herself loved by the student and the student loves the teacher in return, is a striking finding.

For the quality of fostering basic skills, with the opinion that “The elementary teacher is a person who, after the family, gives knowledge and fosters skills related to specific aspects of life by making the student feel the warmth and sincerity he/she seeks...” (P<sub>1</sub>), the idea that basic skills are fostered by the elementary teacher, as well as the view that he/she is as close as the family, is emphasized.

Regarding the quality of classroom teaching being a profession requiring continuity in the primary school process, with the view that “*The most important aspect that distinguishes classroom teaching from other types of teaching is that the elementary teacher is a teacher who remains with his/her students over a long period...*” (P<sub>6</sub>) the fact that elementary teachers stay with the same students from 1st grade to 4th grade of primary school is emphasized.

As for the quality of classroom teaching being an interdisciplinary field, the view that “*Classroom teaching covers a very wide area from deep knowledge of psychology to subject teaching...*” (P<sub>2</sub>) stresses the idea that classroom teaching is an interdisciplinary technical field.

With regard to the quality of elementary teachers’ acquisition of the skill of effective communication with stakeholders, while the view that “*Gestures, facial expressions, and eyebrow and eye signals are sometimes more effective than words. The elementary teacher should use the tone of his/her voice well. If we are to sum this up with one sentence, he/she needs to possess good communication skills*” (P<sub>3</sub>) emphasizes the importance for elementary teachers to acquire the skill of communication with children, the importance for elementary teachers to acquire the skill of communication with those around them for the development of the child is stressed in the quotation, “*The elementary teacher is a person who will seek every kind of help from family and people around regarding the child’s personal characteristics and in cases of special need*” (P<sub>10</sub>), whereas in the quotation “*A positive atmosphere of communication among colleagues will bring success in the school and development of the school with it. The development of the school improves the teacher, while the improvement of the teacher is also accompanied by the success of the student*” (P<sub>4</sub>), the contribution made by acquisition of the skill of communication with colleagues to the education institution is highlighted.

Regarding the quality of elementary teachers' ability to use different methods and techniques according to multiple intelligence theory, the view that "*The teacher can utilize music or painting while doing mathematics. Elementary teachers should be able to use different methods, techniques and strategies for a lesson...*" (P<sub>5</sub>) reflects the importance of the elementary teacher's ability to use different methods and techniques according to multiple intelligence theory.

In the quality of the elementary teacher's being a role model, with the view that "Since classroom teaching is a period when basic learning outcomes are fostered, the elementary teacher remains an idol for students throughout their lives. He/she is an idol for educational life..." (P<sub>6</sub>), the idea that the elementary teacher is a lifelong model, together with whom basic skills are acquired, is stressed.

For the quality of elementary teachers focusing on all developmental domains of the child, the view that "The elementary teacher must know how to contribute to the development of the child's language, personality, morals and conscience..." (P<sub>12</sub>) emphasizes the elementary teacher's responsibility in the child's linguistic, academic and values development.

Regarding the quality of placing the student at the center, the elementary teacher's feeling of adopting the student, which is different from other teachers, is conspicuously stressed in the view that "*The elementary teacher adopts his/her student, and regards him/her as his/her own child. Subject teachers are not like that; they enter the class and teach their subjects...*" (P<sub>1</sub>)

#### Values that Teachers Should Possess

In this section, responses given by the faculty members to the question, "The concept of values in education, and, based on this, the professional values of teachers have been intensively discussed in recent years. As an assistant/associate professor in the classroom teaching program, in your opinion, which values should teachers in general possess?" are included.

The *professional values that teachers should possess*, defined according to the views of the faculty members, are presented in Figure 2.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the values that teachers should possess are basic human values, democratic values, social values, aesthetic values and professional values, comprising five main themes. In this section, the method of defining the values that teachers need to have is applied based on these themes. Examples of some quotations concerning these definitions were given below.

Basic human values: the teacher's basic human values are emphasized as respect for all differences from success to intelligence in the view that "*Perhaps the most important value of a teacher is the ability to espouse respect, love, tolerance and differences. These differences are not*

only ethnic or religious ones. He/she must show respect for the individual, which is one of the most important characteristics...” (P<sub>2</sub>).

Democratic values: with the view that “Teachers should possess all values in the context of democratic values, such as loyalty and justice without discrimination for people’s beliefs and lifestyles, religion, language and gender...” (P<sub>6</sub>), the need for a teacher to possess all democratic values is stressed.

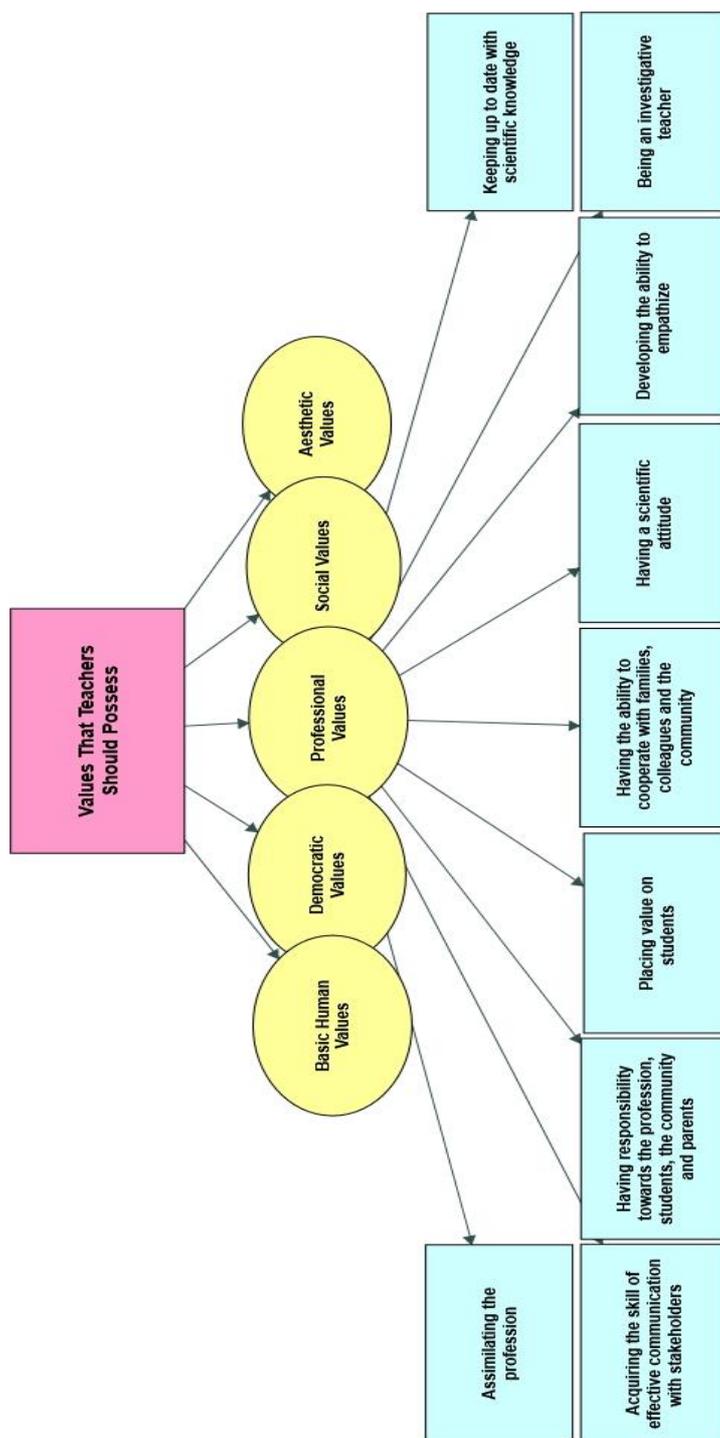


Figure 2. Values that Teachers Should Possess

Social values: with the opinion that "...Within the framework of the provisions and social rules stipulated in the constitution, which we call a country's basic values, [they are] charged with a mission that respects the basic values of the republic in the constitution with beliefs and traditions that meet the expectations of society..." (P<sub>13</sub>), the beliefs, social rules, and basic values of the nation and republic are included in the framework of social values.

Aesthetic values: the need for teachers to possess artistic and sporting skills is emphasized in the view that "*A teacher should definitely have artistic and sporting values...*" (P<sub>10</sub>)

According to the research findings, the structured values that teachers should possess are defined as basic human values, democratic values, social values, aesthetic values and professional values. Elementary teachers' professional values are defined as assimilating the profession, carrying out their responsibilities towards stakeholders, cooperating with stakeholders, keeping up to date with scientific knowledge and applying it in a scientific way with an inquiring personality, placing value on the student, and establishing communication and empathy with stakeholders. Basic characteristics of views that make up this theme are given below.

Assimilating the profession: "Teachers should be conscious of their duty, wherever in Turkey they are employed, without inquiring about the location of the flag, in all conditions, in the most distant corner of Turkey and under the most difficult conditions..." (P<sub>12</sub>).

Acquiring the skill of effective communication with stakeholders: "For an elementary teacher to be successful, knowing the child's family, mother or father very well, being informed and being able to communicate are professional values" (P<sub>13</sub>).

Placing value on the student: "Regarding the child before you not as a child but as a whole person, and approaching him/her accordingly. This may in fact be a value of an elementary teacher" (P<sub>5</sub>).

Having a scientific attitude: "The ability to transfer information correctly and to use scientific methods is an important value" (P<sub>8</sub>).

Developing the ability to empathize: "Teaching is not an occupation of information, it is an occupation of emotion. Emotion is acquired with emotion, by sustaining emotion. A teacher should definitely be able to establish empathy with his/her student..." (P<sub>11</sub>).

Keeping up to date: "Students enjoy up-to-date examples more. Therefore, the elementary teacher should read, investigate, and travel around..." (P<sub>3</sub>).

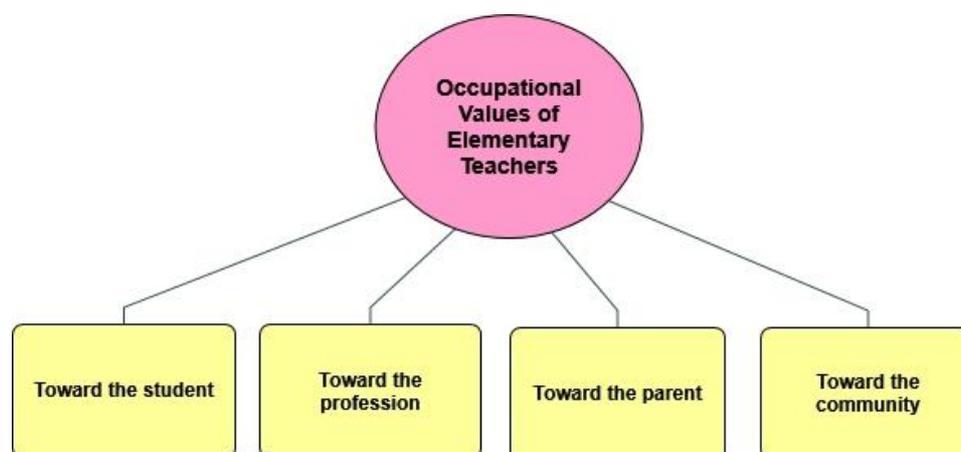
Being an investigative teacher: "We need to train investigative teachers in our country now. Teachers should be chosen to take master's degrees..." (P<sub>10</sub>).

Possessing the ability to cooperate with families, the community and colleagues: “A *teacher should act in association with school, families and the community...*” (P<sub>6</sub>).

Having responsibility towards the profession, students, the community and parents: “Teaching requires responsibility in its own right. Responsibilities such as taking an interest in students, being on duty, and making plans...are required” (P<sub>10</sub>). “Elementary teachers’ having roles that will affect, direct and shape students’ futures and in this sense, their need to be role models in all respects, are values that they should possess...” (P<sub>1</sub>). “They should be sensitive towards fostering social values. It is very important for students at that age to be taught all the values that they need to be a good person, a happy person and a wise person by their elementary teachers both as a role model and by associating these values with specific learning outcomes included in lessons...” (P<sub>11</sub>).

### Values that an Elementary Teacher in Particular Should Possess

In this section, responses given by the faculty members to the question, “*Which values should an elementary teacher in particular possess? Please explain why*” are included. The professional values that an elementary teacher in particular should possess, defined according to the views of the faculty members, are presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Professional Values That an Elementary Teacher in Particular Should Possess

Based on the views shared by the participants, the professional values that elementary teachers should possess were obtained via four main themes, namely values toward the profession, toward the student, toward the parent, and toward the community. In their values toward the profession, elementary teachers must be able to carry out interdisciplinary teaching, use different methods and techniques according to multiple intelligence theory, and relate knowledge to everyday life, as well as possessing aesthetic values. In terms of having a scientific attitude, the aspect of being an investigative teacher in keeping up to date and using the latest technology was emphasized. With regard to pedagogy, the aspects of having a love of children and being a role model by giving

consideration to students' individual differences were expressed. Below are the views of one participant on this issue:

“First and foremost, a love of the profession. Based on love of the profession, there must also be a love of children. He/she should also possess a work ethic. He/she should act as a mentor in affection for people, placing value on them and accepting them as they are. [The teacher] should not criticize any student because of his/her religion, mother tongue, race, denomination or ethnic roots. He/she should not display an attitude that will alienate [the student] even by the way he/she looks at him/her. The teacher should be able to generate choices by providing an environment and resources whereby the student will be given the opportunity to recognize and realize him/herself socially, emotionally and physically and to reveal and develop his/her hidden strengths.” (P<sub>7</sub>)

Also based on the views shared by the participants, the professional values possessed by elementary teachers toward the student are placing value on the student, the ability to communicate and empathize with the student, fostering basic skills in the student, focusing on all the child's developmental domains, and supporting the student's skills. Professional values toward the parent are ability to communicate with the parent, supporting the parent and guiding the parent. Professional values toward the community are ability to foster social values in students and having the ability to cooperate with education stakeholders. Below are the views of one participant on this issue:

“An elementary teacher must be able to make every student feel special and valuable. He/she must be able to bring about the student's development in all cognitive and affective aspects. In a professional sense, an elementary teacher should be able to instill a love of nature, a love of people and a love of animals. While working to assimilate students into society via education, he/she must be able to obtain support from parents and society as well...”.

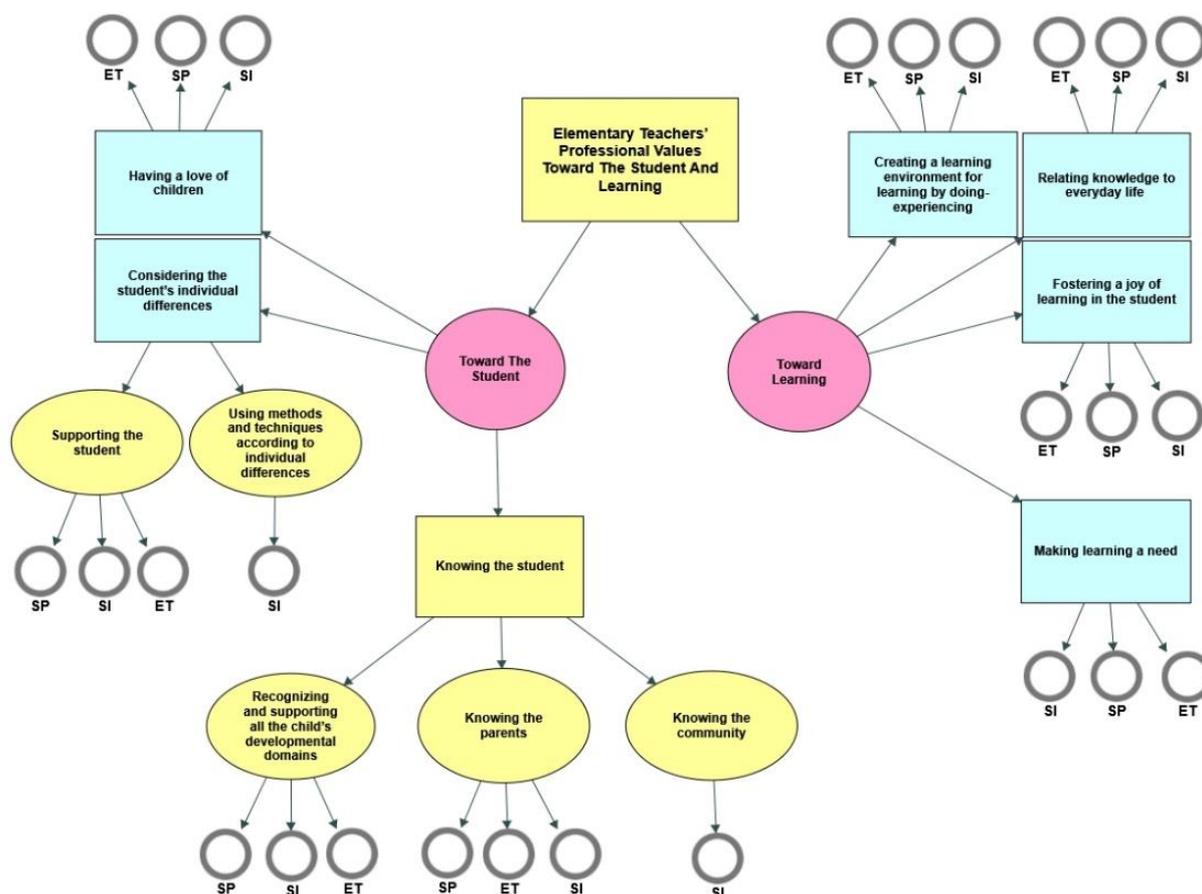
Following analysis of the data from the interviews made with faculty members, the professional values that elementary teachers should possess were grouped under four thematic headings.

### **Interviews Conducted with Education Stakeholders of the Study**

In this section of the study, based on the *list of professional values that elementary teachers should possess* produced from the analysis of the data, the *professional values that an elementary teacher in particular should possess* are presented in the context of the findings obtained from the education stakeholders working in the field, namely the school inspectors, school principals and elementary teachers. These are presented respectively under six thematic headings.

### *Elementary Teachers' Professional Values toward the Student and Learning*

In this section, the participants' responses to the question, "What can be the professional values of elementary teachers toward the student and learning?" are included. The professional values of elementary teachers toward the student and learning according to the views of the education stakeholders are presented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Elementary Teachers' Professional Values Toward the Student and Learning

In this section, the method of defining the professional values of elementary teachers towards the student according to the views of the participants is included. The professional values of elementary teachers towards the student are 1) having a love of children; 2) knowing the student: a) reassuring the student, b) knowing the parents, c) knowing the community, and d) recognizing and supporting all the child's developmental domains; and 3) considering the student's individual differences: a) supporting the student, and b) using methods and techniques according to individual differences. Examples of quotations that best describe these definitions are given below.

Having a love of children: "The task begins by having a love of children. Affection for the child is essential in classroom teaching. That is what I believe..." (P<sub>2</sub>-SI).

Knowing the student: “In order to know the student, the teacher needs to be in constant contact with his/her family, and to know what kind of family structure there is...” (P<sub>7</sub>-SI).

Reassuring the student: “The teacher should also give reassurance to the child. Through his/her behaviors he/she should show that he/she has confidence in the student...” (P<sub>2</sub>-SI).

Knowing the parents: “The elementary teacher must include the family in the process very well. The family is the teacher’s common stakeholder. The child and his/her family are located in the education environment. You have to be able to manage this education environment. If you cannot manage this, problems may occur...” (P<sub>9</sub>-ET).

Knowing the community: “The teacher will know the community. He/she will know the values of the community and of the society where he/she lives. He should definitely be in a relationship with the community. The values, cultural life, and beliefs of the community...” (P<sub>6</sub>-SI).

Recognizing and supporting all the child’s developmental domains: “The teacher must address children’s cognitive and affective domains in particular. I would evaluate it thus: What can the student do inside or outside class, where did I bring the child from and where can I take him/her to?...” (P<sub>7</sub>-ET).

Supporting the student: “The capabilities of each child need to be examined. The student needs to support his/her own development by comparing him/herself with him/herself, in my opinion...” (P<sub>10</sub>-ET).

Using methods and techniques according to individual differences: “Individual differences should definitely be taken into consideration by the elementary teacher. He/she should carry out activities according to children’s individual differences...” (P<sub>1</sub>-SP).

The method of defining the professional values of elementary teachers towards learning according to the views of the participants. In this context, the professional values of elementary teachers towards learning are 1) creating a learning environment for learning by doing-experiencing, 2) relating knowledge to everyday life, 3) fostering a joy of learning in the student, 4) making learning a need, and 5) nurturing values in the learning environment. Examples of quotations that best describe these definitions are given below.

Creating a learning environment for learning by doing-experiencing: “The child should learn by touching and playing with pulleys and spinning wheels. When teaching mathematics I always have them make models. The child will learn by touching, doing and experiencing. Especially at primary school, the child should be able to touch more and be involved in life. Therefore, the child must learn

science by experiencing it. The child must experience learning. In classroom teaching the learning environment is all around..." (P<sub>2</sub>-ET).

Relating knowledge to everyday life: "Water turns to steam and freezes. In flexible materials there is powder, flour. How is dough made? Materials take the form of materials that it will not be difficult for students to find in their daily lives, ones that they can bring from home or ones that I can bring..." (P<sub>8</sub>-ET).

Fostering a joy of learning in the student: "Nowadays it is very easy for a student to access information. What is important is that if the teacher can teach the student what he/she needs and how he/she can learn, the student will maintain his/her excitement for learning..." (P<sub>6</sub>-SI).

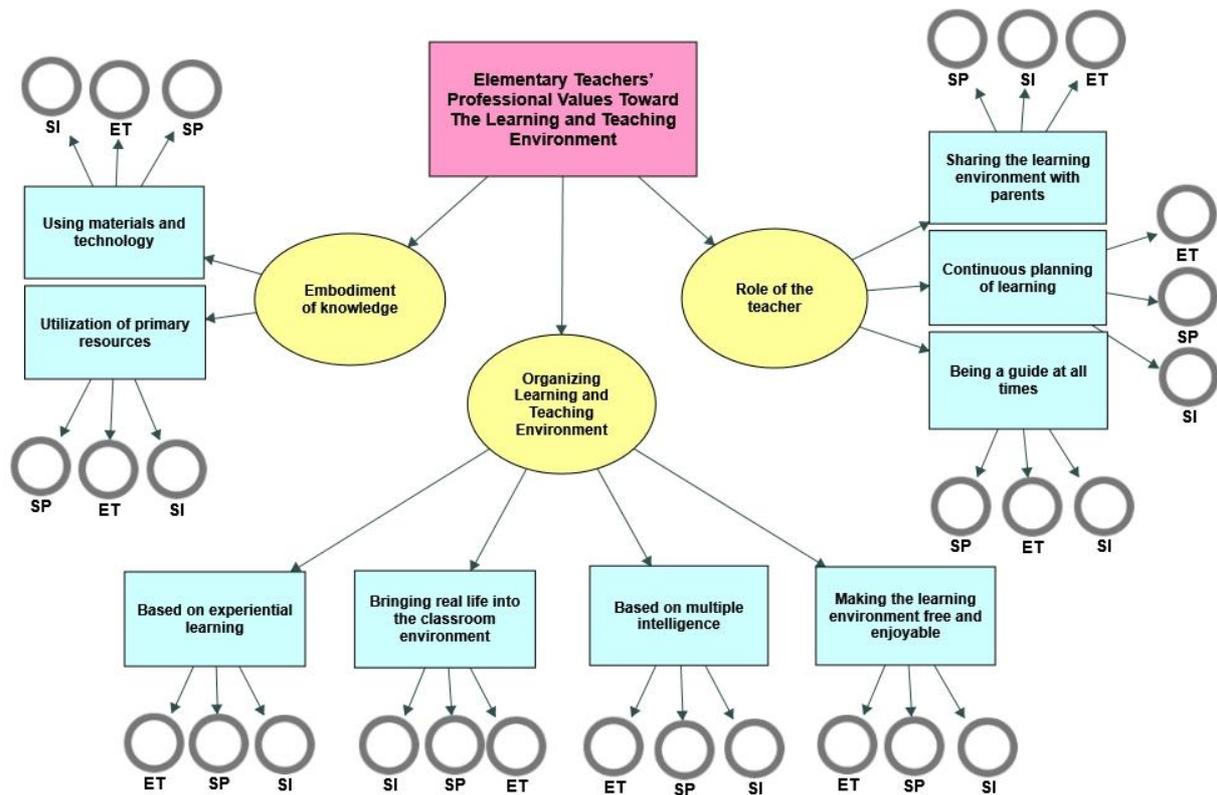
Making learning a need: "The child must know this: I will use this subject in my daily life. Learning results from need. Students need to be brought to such a point that the student should feel hungry for learning that subject..." (P<sub>2</sub>-SP).

Nurturing values in the learning environment: "Keeping the environment clean, respect, affection... Our behaviors towards each other while socializing, our behaviors towards stray animals, apologizing to someone while walking, values such as these that life brings must be learnt first. Children should be directed towards these subjects. In terms of school, this value culture should be created first of all..." (P<sub>6</sub>-ET).

In the context of the findings in this section, the method of defining the professional values of elementary teachers towards the student and learning has been implemented. *Elementary teachers' professional values toward the student* involve accepting each student as a member of the class, based on the value of having a love of children and on the need for the student also to love the teacher, by setting out to know the parents and the community around in order to know the child, by considering the child's individual differences, and by supporting all the child's developmental domains according to multiple intelligence theory. *Elementary teachers' professional values toward learning* involve keeping the student's joy of learning alive in a doing-experiencing learning environment by making learning a need for students and relating knowledge to everyday life.

### ***Elementary Teachers' Professional Values Toward the Learning and Teaching Environment***

In this section, the education stakeholders' views on "*elementary teachers' professional values toward the learning and teaching environment*" are included. In this context, the professional values of elementary teachers toward the learning and teaching environment are presented in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** Elementary Teachers’ Professional Values Toward the Learning and Teaching Environment

According to the views of the participants, elementary teachers’ professional values toward the learning and teaching environment are 1) embodiment of knowledge: a) using materials and technology, and b) utilization of primary resources; 2) organizing the learning and teaching environment: a) bringing real life into the classroom environment, b) based on multiple intelligences, c) based on experiential learning, and d) making the learning environment free and enjoyable; and 3) role of the teacher: a) sharing the learning environment with parents, b) continuous planning of learning, and c) being a guide at all times. Examples of some quotations concerning these definitions were given below.

Utilization of primary resources: with the view that “The teacher [can take the students] on a visit to the ruins of a historic castle from the old days in a place like a village in the area around them. He/she can bring an elderly person into the class. He/she can bring a traffic policeman to class during traffic week... (P<sub>2</sub>-SI), the situation of utilizing primary resources by the teacher according to facilities in the environment is reflected.

Bringing real life into the classroom environment: in the view that “It can be a piece of rock or a piece of wood found in nature. What is important is for this to be used effectively and appropriately. Everything we use in everyday life can be taken to the classroom as a tool by the teacher... (P<sub>9</sub>-SP), the continuity of the classroom as a part of life is emphasized.

Based on multiple intelligences: the view that “In my experience, I have learnt that if a teacher addresses a student who is a visual learner aurally, it will be useless. When conducting the lesson in class, I try to address students tactilely, aurally and visually...” (P<sub>10</sub>-ET), reflects the fact that the teacher includes all students in class by using multiple intelligences.

Based on experiential learning: “You will not explain the seasons, the child will do it. Explain the world and the sun, make them play games. Let the child find out about the forming of the seasons by the rotation of the earth round the sun him/herself...” (P<sub>8</sub>-ET). With this view, the need for the students to make discoveries by organizing the learning environment according to experiential learning is stressed.

Making the learning environment free and enjoyable: “One teacher that I went to inspect made a costume corner in a corner of the classroom; the children read a paragraph, and after reading the paragraph they go to the corner and grab the costume in order to complete the paragraph...The students in class are happy, and the teacher is also happy...” (P<sub>4</sub>-SI). This view reflects the idea that making the learning environment free and enjoyable makes both the students and teachers happy.

Sharing the learning environment with parents: “This task cannot be done only with the teacher. The parents and other colleagues must also assist the teacher. Let the parents enter the classroom as well. Especially in the first years, children come to school with their mothers. The mother sits next to the child, and makes a different assessment of the teacher and environment in her own way. Sometimes it is useful for parents to observe the teacher in class...” (P<sub>10</sub>-SI). With this view, the benefit of sharing the learning environment with families is emphasized.

Continuous planning of learning: “The teacher should plan and prepare material in order to enable the student to learn. To be able to teach a concept, the lessons will be planned, programmed and include plenty of material...” (P<sub>10</sub>-PS). This view reflects the need for instruction and activities to be well planned by the teacher.

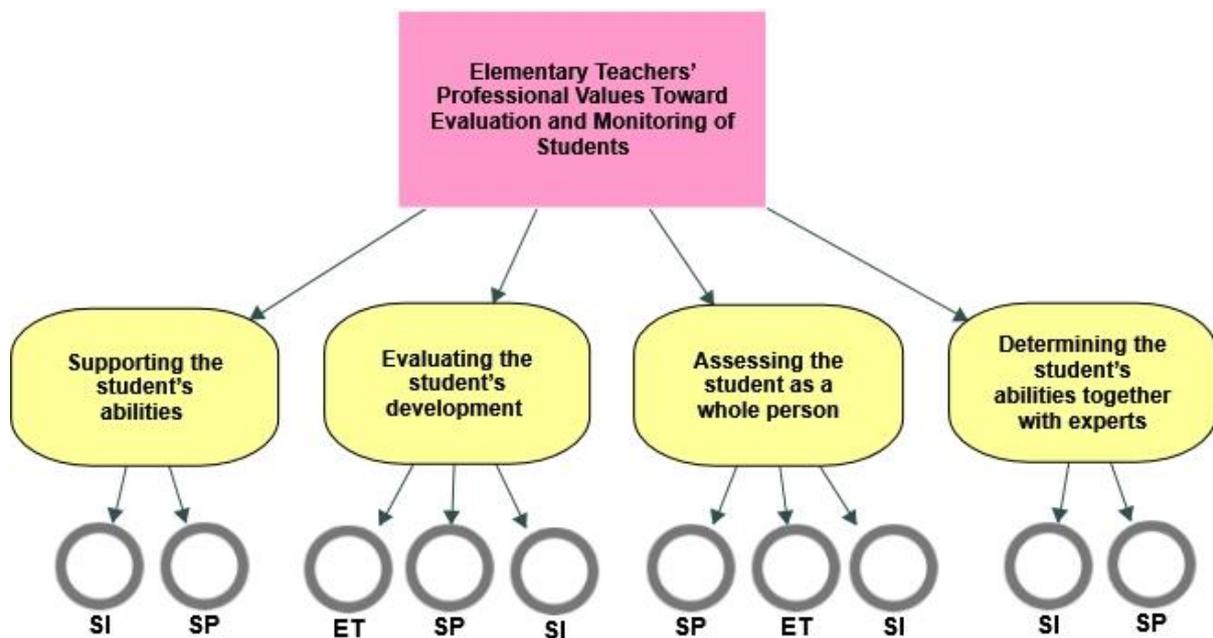
Being a guide at all times: with the view that “I am a guide for the students at every stage. What do we need, what do we have to do, which materials will I bring, which questions will we answer, when they do their homework will they do it alone or will they be aided by their parents?... (P<sub>7</sub>-ET), the fact of planning guidance for the student, from the material to be used to the type of study done at home, is reflected.

In the context of the findings in this section, the professional values of elementary teachers toward the learning and teaching environment have been defined. These involve basing the learning and teaching environment on experiential learning supported by materials and technology, according to multiple intelligence theory, by utilizing primary resources in learning, making the learning

environment free and enjoyable and bringing real life into the classroom. With regard to the teacher's role in this, the professional values of elementary teachers toward the learning and teaching environment involve continuous planning of learning, being a constant guide to students, and sharing the learning environment with parents.

***Elementary Teachers' Professional Values Toward Evaluation and Monitoring of Students***

This section includes the participants' views about "elementary teachers' professional values toward evaluation and monitoring of students". In this context, the professional values of elementary teachers toward evaluation and monitoring of students are presented in Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** Elementary Teachers' Professional Values Toward Evaluation and Monitoring of Students

According to the views of the participants, elementary teachers' professional values toward evaluation and monitoring of students are 1) guiding the student, 2) the teacher's guidance to parents, 3) supporting the student's abilities, 4) evaluating the student's development, 5) assessing the student as a whole person, and 6) determining the student's abilities together with experts. Examples of some quotations concerning these definitions were given below.

Supporting the student's abilities: with the view that "The teacher will reveal the student's abilities. One of them will be successful in mathematics, the other in art. For teachers in primary school to conduct this instruction, they should have been trained in this field. They will understand art, music, literature, aesthetics and sport..." (P<sub>3</sub>-SI), the need for the elementary teacher to support the student's abilities as well as to be competent in this field is emphasized.

Evaluating the student's development: "A elementary teacher should monitor the student everywhere, from his/her attitude in the family to his/her attitude in the street. You cannot understand

the psychology, emotions or thoughts of a child sitting at the desk. You can understand these from his/her relationship with a flower, a creature or a friend. If a child behaves badly towards a creature he/she sees in the street, you have to educate him/her accordingly...” (P<sub>9</sub>-ET).

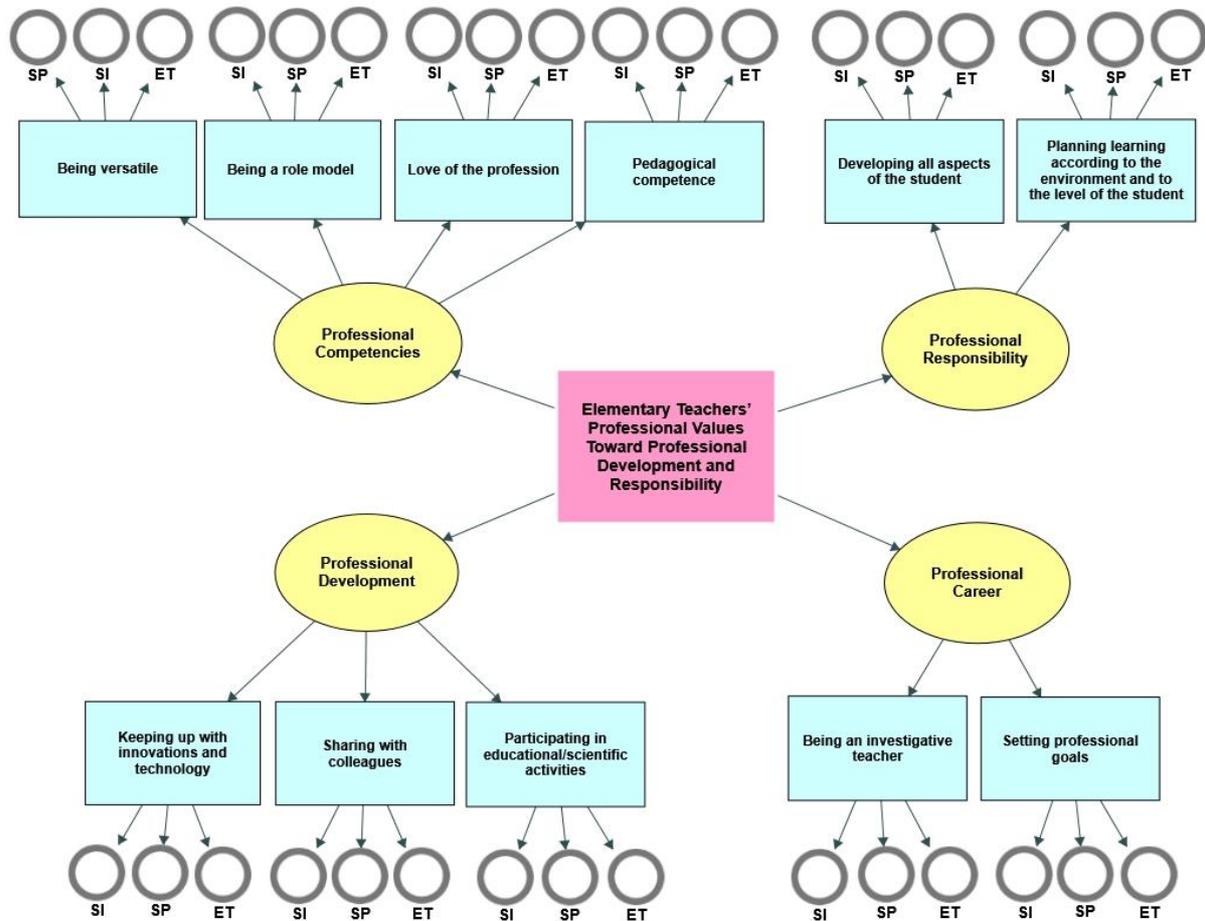
Assessing the student as a whole person: “I am against evaluation in the form of giving the child a test paper and saying ‘He/she got 70, 80, 90 marks’. [Children] are all made differently. I generally look at the student’s behaviors and his/her performance during the year. His/her participation in the lessons, behaviors towards friends in class and in school...” (P<sub>7</sub>-ET).

Determining the student’s abilities together with experts: “There needs to be a very good observer in the teacher’s classroom. He/she must evaluate the students’ exercises and activities. Guiding the student is an area of expertise. The child’s ability must be detected by experts and determined together with the teacher...” (P<sub>2</sub>-SP).

In the context of the findings in this section, the professional values of elementary teachers toward evaluation and monitoring of students have been defined. The teacher’s responsibilities in evaluating and monitoring the student involve determination of the student’s ability/abilities by the teacher together with experts, enabling the student’s development by supporting his/her abilities, and assessing the student as a whole person.

### ***Elementary Teachers’ Professional Values Toward Professional Development and Responsibility***

This section includes the participants’ views about “*elementary teachers’ professional values toward professional development and responsibility*”. In this context, the professional values of elementary teachers toward professional development and responsibility are presented in Figure 7.



**Figure 7.** Elementary Teachers' Professional Values Toward Professional Development and Responsibility

According to the views of the participants, elementary teachers' professional values toward professional development and responsibility are (1) professional competencies: a) pedagogical competence, b) love of the profession, c) being a role model, and d) being versatile; (2) professional development: a) keeping up with innovations and technology, b) sharing with colleagues, and c) participating in educational/scientific activities; (3) professional career: a) being an investigative teacher, and b) setting professional goals; and (4) professional responsibility: a) planning learning according to the environment and to the level of the student, and b) developing all aspects of the student. Examples of some quotations concerning these definitions were given below.

Love of the profession: "Firstly, there must be a love of the profession. Based on this love of the profession, there must be love of children... I regard children as our own future..." (P<sub>10</sub>-ET). With this view, a love of children based on a love of the profession for professionalism in the occupation is emphasized.

Being a role model: with the view that "The elementary teacher occupies an essential place, as I regard it as the center of life. I believe that it is necessary for the teacher to be a good role model for

students by paying attention to both his/her lifestyle and to his/her value perceptions” (P<sub>4</sub>-SI), the view that the elementary teacher should be a role model is reflected as a value.

Being versatile: “The teacher needs to display his niceties to be able to retain the students in the class mentally. The elementary teacher should be a good actor, a good performer. He/she should know the child’s psychological state and try every kind of argument for attracting the child to the lesson...” (P<sub>6</sub>-SI). “The elementary teacher must be in a position to be able to read articles, know English, and be a researcher. At the same time, I believe he/she should be able to play a musical instrument and perform activities requiring social and theatrical skills in a social sense... (P<sub>2</sub>-SI). With these opinions, the need for an elementary teacher to be versatile is stressed as a value.

Keeping up with innovations and technology: “...He/she should be able to examine articles in a professional sense. He/she must keep up with new technological developments in the field, since if he/she does not follow the developments, he/she will get out of touch with the system... (P<sub>8</sub>-SI)

Sharing with colleagues: with the view that “A good discovery made by one of our colleagues can serve as an example to another of our colleagues. Teachers should be open to this. Communication among colleagues is very important in this respect. If individual communication supports communication among colleagues, teachers’ communication with each other can be accelerated...” (P<sub>3</sub>-ET), the importance of sharing among colleagues through communication is stressed.

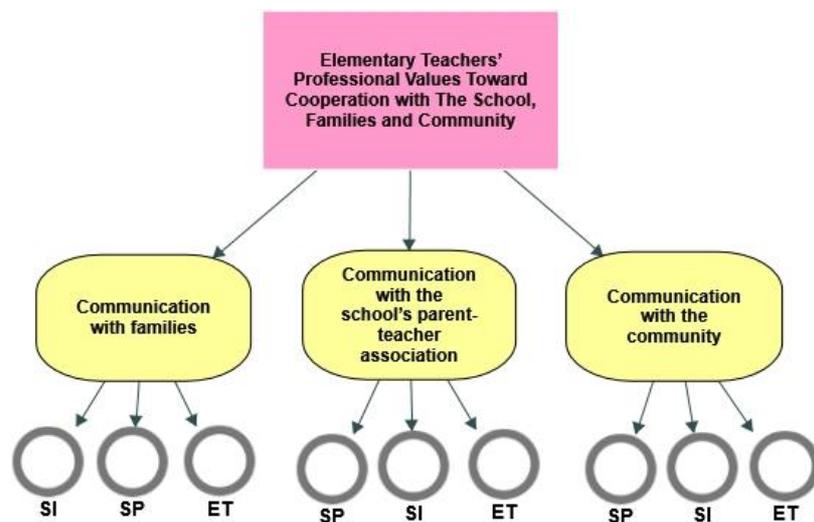
Being an investigative teacher: with the view that “In order for teachers to train a generation who know about the project-based approach and encourage project work, the teacher needs to be a researcher... Nowadays, the source of knowledge has ceased to be the monopoly of the teacher. The source of knowledge has become multi-axial. Informatics on the one hand, the newspaper on another, and visuals on the other. There are many challengers to the school and the teacher. For the teacher to be able to struggle against these challengers, he/she must be a researcher...” (P<sub>10</sub>-SI), the necessity for teachers to be researchers and create projects, due to the fact that technology and the media are challengers to the teacher, is emphasized.

Planning learning according to the environment and to the level of the student: the view that “I teach with games. I deal with the subject with concept maps, but first of all with games. When there is a game, the children begin to listen. In this way, there is no problem with ensuring discipline in the classroom. I choose the materials from the child’s environment. I used the foam cups I prepared when teaching numbers...” (P<sub>7</sub>-ET), stresses the importance of the effect level when planning of learning is carried out according to the environment and to the level of the student.

In the context of the findings in this section, the professional values of elementary teachers toward professional development and responsibility have been defined. The professional values of the elementary teacher involve possessing the pedagogical competence required by the teaching profession and, by transferring his/her love of the profession, being a multidimensional model for the students with his/her knowledge, experience and behaviors. Their professional development values involve sharing their knowledge and experience with colleagues and participating in education activities in order to keep up with innovations and technology. The teacher's professional career values involve the ability to show performance in his/her role as an investigative teacher by setting professional goals. The elementary teacher's professional responsibility goals involve the application of learning methods and techniques by planning learning according to the environment and to the level of the student so as to develop all aspects of the student.

### ***Elementary Teachers' Professional Values Toward Cooperation with The School, Families and Community***

This section includes the participants' views about "*elementary teachers' professional values toward cooperation with the school, families and community*". The professional values of elementary teachers toward cooperation with the school, families and community, defined according to the views of the participants, are presented in Figure 8.



**Figure 8.** Elementary Teachers' Professional Values Toward Cooperation with The School, Families and Community

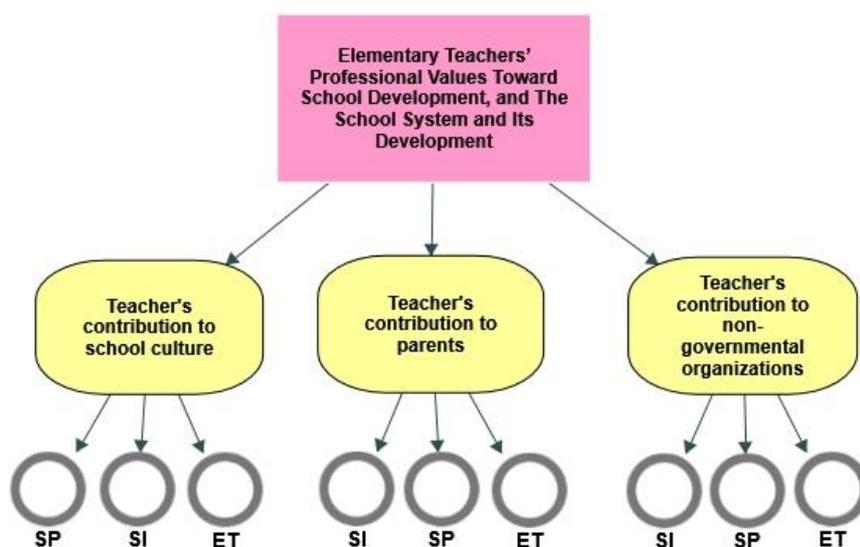
According to the views of the participants, elementary teachers' professional values toward cooperation with the school, families and community are defined under three main headings, namely communication with families, communication with the school's parent-teacher association, and communication with the community. Examples of some quotations concerning these definitions were given below.

Communication with families: “I always communicate with the families and can discuss the students’ problems by meeting them one-to-one. I use technology; I use telephone messaging, the internet and WhatsApp. The families come to school when we call them, while I visit the ones with problems in their homes. If the child has a problem I make this known personally in his/her home. Of course, success is not possible without communication” (P<sub>1</sub>-ET).

Communication with the community: “The school should be made into a center that people know. This is achieved with various courses. The teacher can cooperate through adult education and sport management. Non-governmental organizations can also participate in training. Theatres can put on shows at school. In other words, it is important to keep the school functioning...” (P<sub>3</sub>-SP).

***Elementary Teachers’ Professional Values Toward School Development, and The School System and Its Development***

This section includes the participants’ views about “*elementary teachers’ professional values toward school development, and the school system and its development*”. The professional values of elementary teachers toward school development, and the school system and its development, defined according to the views of the participants, are presented in Figure 9.



**Figure 9.** Elementary Teachers’ Professional Values Toward School Development, and The School System and Its Development

According to the views of the participants, elementary teachers’ professional values toward school development, and the school system and its development are defined under three main headings, namely teacher’s contribution to school culture, teacher’s contribution to parents, and teacher’s contribution to non-governmental organizations. Examples of some quotations concerning these definitions were given below.

Teacher's contribution to parents: "School should not be limited to educating only the children who come to school. At the same time, families in the community around the school should also be directly or indirectly trained. The child is very important for the teacher, school and family. For the child to be successful, families should certainly be involved in the task as well..." (P<sub>6</sub>-ET)

Teacher's contribution to non-governmental organizations: "This year we were the recycling team. As a class, every Friday in the fifth lesson we collected wastepaper and books from every class. I cooperate with NGOs. When [the depot] is full, I call them and they come and collect [it]. In this way we contribute to the environment..." (P<sub>7</sub>-ET).

In the context of the findings obtained in this study, *Elementary teachers' Professional Values* have been thematized under six headings, namely, the values: toward the student and learning, toward the learning and teaching environment, toward evaluation and monitoring of students, toward professional development and responsibility, toward cooperation with the school, families and community, and toward school development, and the school system and its development.

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this study, it was aimed to reveal the professional values of elementary teachers employed in the Turkish education system.

#### **Elementary teachers' professional values toward the students and learning**

The value related to having a love of children is a striking finding in the sense that it was considered more important by the teachers in comparison to other professional values. The teacher's warmth and affection play an important role in the respect that the student feels towards the teacher. It has been revealed in studies that in the case where the teacher possesses affection for the child, the emotional intimacy between the student and the teacher has a positive effect on the student's learning and the student learns more easily and effectively from a teacher he/she loves (Veenman, 1984). This finding in the literature is supported by studies in which love of children is the main condition of the teaching profession, love of children as a professional value is a requirement for becoming an educator (Downing et al., 2000); and love of children is a requirement of the teaching profession for teachers employed in primary schools (Gelbal & Duyan, 2010).

The need for students' individual differences to be taken into consideration is supported by studies of Gordon (2001). The value of recognizing and supporting all the child's developmental domains can be explained by the concept of "integration", which is the most important feature of the globalization process (Friedman, 2000). It can be said that there is a need for studies to be included aimed at not only the student's cognitive domain, but also at his/her affective domain in school. Regarding the value of accepting every student as a member of the class, it is stated that when an individual ceases to judge the person before him/her in relation to that person's physical

characteristic, the group he/she belongs to or his/her beliefs, and believes that all people possess equal rights (Batelaan, 2001), then the teacher will regard his/her student as an individual. Each student must be considered worthy of respect from the teacher (Lehr, 2003; Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013).

The values of creating a learning environment for learning by doing-experiencing and relating knowledge to everyday life have been linked with each other in the literature (Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013). Preparing individuals for life and assisting them to solve problems encountered in daily life have been expressed as professional values of elementary teachers. The teacher must be able to prepare the learning environments for students to participate in the learning process (Lehr, 2003) and ensure that the joy of learning is kept alive (Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013).

### **Elementary teachers' professional values toward the learning and teaching environment**

Students who can learn experientially can be educated by organizing the learning and teaching environment according to their basic skills, provided that it is managed effectively by the teacher (Gordon, 2001), a fact which is supported in studies. Teachers' values in the learning and teaching environment are expressed as creating attractive learning environments, supporting a happy atmosphere in the classroom, making the learning-teaching environment student-centered, keeping up with the latest education technology and using it to create a learning environment for student development, and regarding each student as a producer (Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013; Palmer, 2015). The values of utilizing primary resources and using materials and technology have been linked with each other in studies in the literature (Tunca, 2012). Rather few studies can be found in the literature related to the value of sharing the learning environment with families. Members of the teaching profession should carry out the socially acceptable duty of sharing each student's aims and behaviors with his/her family. The teacher is defined as a person who provides the guidance needed by students at all times by continuous planning of learning (Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013; Sezer, 2016). As a value, guidance teaches students how to access the most reliable knowledge in the quickest way and how they can interpret it correctly.

### **Elementary teachers' professional values toward evaluation and monitoring of students**

The value of supporting the student's abilities is expressed in the literature as determining the student's potential and guiding him/her accordingly, setting high targets suited to the student's potential, and assisting the student in defining new learning goals. The value of evaluating the student's development is expressed in the literature as developing and monitoring the student's potential, and the ability to organize a student's development by observing the student's physical, mental and emotional development (MoNE, 2008; Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013).

The teacher's guidance to parents is reflected as a value by students' parents. The teacher's ability to provide guidance to the student and families in a positive way and to work in cooperation

with them is supported by studies in the literature (Gordon, 2001). The teacher's evaluation of the learning process by self-assessment of the data obtained together with the student and parents is included in the literature as guidance of parents in evaluation of education. According to these findings, the teacher's guidance of parents is accepted as a value by students' parents.

Since findings related to the value of determining the student's abilities together with experts could not be accessed in the literature, the views of the school inspectors and school principals, who are experts in the field, in the participant group will be taken as the basis, as classroom teaching is an interdisciplinary field. To be able to discover and direct a student's ability and guide him/her accordingly, it is necessary to be professional.

The value in which assessment must be made with regard to the child as a whole can be reflected with Covey's (2013) "whole person paradigm". A human is a psychological and sociological creature made up of an indivisible four dimensions, namely body, mind, emotions and spirit. An educational understanding that concentrates only on mental development, hinders an individual's holistic development. The need to recognize and support all the child's developmental domains and to carry out assessment according to the child as a whole can be reflected as a professional value of elementary teachers. The heart and mind must be trained together.

### **Elementary teachers' professional values toward professional development and responsibility**

Possession of pedagogical competence is a professional value of elementary teachers. As a common denominator of studies in the literature related to the subject area, the need for teachers to possess pedagogical competence is reflected in many studies (Tunca, 2012; Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013).

Pedagogical content is a specialized type of knowledge at the basis of the teaching profession that supports the teacher's learning of the subject that he/she will teach (Shulman, 1986). In this context, pedagogical content knowledge is one of the most important items that enables a teacher to be productive and effective (Carlsen, 1999). Based on the literature related to the subject, it can be said that the teaching profession is a professional occupation and that one difference from other professions is that it requires pedagogical content knowledge for this professionalization.

The value related to love of the profession is represented in the literature in studies on the teaching profession (Çubukçu et al., 2012; Sezer, 2016; Turhan et al., 2012). Love of the profession is reflected rather strikingly with the metaphorical explanation, "...If a love of work and a love of life are present in the atmosphere of school life, then, just as the spring sun helps seeds to germinate, they will spark the development of pleasant human emotions".

The value of being a role model is very important in that it is the value given the most importance in the literature as a value that needs to be found in teachers. There are a great number of studies that emphasize the need for teachers to be a role model. With the statement that “The teaching profession represents not only the teacher’s individual behaviors in society but also the way that he/she behaves with the school and society”, the need for the teacher to be a role model for society is emphasized (Eryaman, 2007; NEA, 2016). The teacher should be a role model for education stakeholders in the development of national and universal values (MoNE, 2008). Lehr (2003), asserted that teachers should be an ethical and moral leader in the classroom.

The results revealed that classroom teachers should be versatile. Actually, classroom teaching is an interdisciplinary area related to pedagogical content knowledge, general knowledge and field knowledge. Since classroom teaching is carried out during a period when young children acquire basic skills, it requires initiative skills and skills for organizing and conducting social, cultural, artistic and sporting activities. In the literature, there are a limited number of studies aimed at this value in teachers. With regard to this value in elementary teachers, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2008) lists skills required in this field as development of artistic, aesthetic and linguistic skills, scientific and technological development, and skills in socialization, physical education and safety as performance indicators. That elementary teachers need to be artistic and versatile as a professional value is included in studies in the literature (NCES, 2006; Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013).

The value of sharing with colleagues is included as a professional value of teachers (NEA, 2016). With regard to finding solutions to environmental problems with the participation of students, parents or colleagues, conducting joint activities with institutions and organizations (MoNE, 2008); supporting professional development of colleagues and cooperating with and sharing developments in the field with colleagues in order to contribute to this (Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013), these studies support each other.

Participation in educational/scientific activities is a value that is required in a professional sense and obligatory by law. Educational activities for professional development comprise in-service training enabling development of teachers’ professional and personal skills, seminars, symposiums, workshops, projects and all activities aimed at professional development. To be able to continually develop themselves in their careers, teachers follow the road of participation in educational activities. Professional development is a process that supports teachers in increasing students’ achievement by increasing teachers’ productivity (Maurer, 2000), and in creating learning and teaching environments that support teachers’ professional knowledge, skills, values and attitudes both inside and outside school. There are studies revealing that in cases where teachers’ professional development is supported, development of the education system and increase in student achievement are contributed to (Knudsen et al., 2013).

Regarding the value of keeping up with innovations and technology, it is revealed in the related literature that teachers can develop themselves in their profession by means of following publications related to innovations and changes in their field, benefiting from the experience of senior colleagues, doing postgraduate studies, and participating in in-service training, seminars, symposiums and workshops (Boydak-Özan et al., 2014; Uştu et al., 2016).

With regard to the value of being an investigative teacher, in the information society, it is expected that individuals use and generate the knowledge they have acquired (Ergün, 2015; Palmer, 2015). In this context, in the investigative teacher identity, via postgraduate education, the aim is to provide society with a source of qualified people by raising creative individuals who can access information and generate original ideas. The teacher's qualities of being "a continually inquiring person" (Çubukçu et al., 2012; Baş & Kılıncım, 2017), of giving importance to innovations and developments in research in the field of education and being able to put these developments into practice (Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013), and of continuing to learn throughout life (Palmer, 2015), support this value.

The value of setting professional goals is expressed as one of the values that the teacher needs to possess as follows: the teacher's planning of goals for the future (Harris, 2005; Urbanski & Nickolaou, 1997); having a vision "having goals in a professional sense" (Çubukçu et al., 2012); and setting goals throughout one's career as a teacher in order to support one's personal development as well as to attain high professional standards (Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013).

The value of planning learning according to the environment and to the level of the student is supported by studies on planning learning in the teaching-learning process according to the student's level and by considering individual differences. When students' individual differences are taken into consideration by the teacher in teaching activities, this is reflected in the training of active and successful students (Gordon, 2001). It is stated that if the planning of learning is carried out by taking the student as the center, students can be made to acquire investigative and inquiring behaviors (Palmer, 2015).

Regarding the value of developing all aspects of the student, it is emphasized that knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors that will enable students to learn can be realized with individual teaching strategies suited to the level of the student (Ursano et al., 2007). For the development of students' social and affective domains, encouraging learning through cooperation, providing opportunities for discussion, being sensitive to students' feelings, being a guide for students to determine their goals by considering their views, and developing the child's personality as an individual are defined as professional values of elementary teachers.

### **Elementary teachers' professional values toward cooperation with the school, families and community**

The value of cooperation with the school, families and community involves the teacher's making active and positive contributions to relations with families both in and out of school and to relationships with the school and community as a professional educator (AAE, 2016). In cooperation with the school, families and community, it is very important for a teacher to be open and ready to cooperate with his/her colleagues, experts in different organizations, families and the community, and in his/her communication with the school, families and community, to develop relationships based on different ideas, tolerance and mutual respect. In this cooperation, the teacher preserves mutual trust and personal information in his/her relationships with students, colleagues and families (MoNE, 2008; Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013), and the members of the teaching profession share their duty of reaching an acceptable conclusion regarding the aims and behaviors of each student with families. The effectiveness of many teaching methods depends on cooperation established with families. With the statement that the teacher encourages families to participate more in the education process, the value of cooperation with the school, families and community is reflected as a professional value of teaching in the literature.

With regard to placing value on the family, which is one of the values that elementary teachers give the most importance to (Aktepe & Yel, 2009), the ability of the teacher to establish mutual cooperation with stakeholders by using his/her communication skills and guiding the family in a positive way is reflected in studies in the literature (AAE, 2016). Regarding the value of communication skills, being humane in thoughts and behaviors, giving importance to the student in a sincere and modest way, ability to understand students' feelings and ideas by getting to know them better, and ability to be more sensitive towards the students are reflected as teachers' professional values. In Sezer's (2016) study, communication skills are the most important of a teacher's qualities.

### **Elementary teachers' professional values toward school development, and the school system and its development**

A teacher should know that schools are institutions that belong to society. He/she should share the aims of the school. He/she should attempt to inform the community about the education programs carried out (NEA, 2016). Being in constant collaboration with the school, families and community in the development of school policies; supporting the increase in value of the school as a learning environment; being open to cooperation for development of new ideas, professional sharing, and sharing of improvements and good practices; and pioneering the creation of a democratic and participatory culture of communication in the school (MoNE, 2008; Vidovic & Velkovski, 2013) are revealed as values toward school development, and the school system and its development in the literature.

Elementary teachers' professional values toward cooperation with the school, families and community and elementary teachers' professional values toward school development, and the school system and its development were put on a par with teachers' communication values by the school inspectors, school principals, elementary teachers and parents of students. In this context, the professional values gathered under these two headings were combined under one single heading in the "professional values of elementary teachers".

### **Implications of the Study**

In this study, based on the conceptual framework, in the synthesis of the analyses made in the findings, conclusion and discussion, the "Professional Values of Elementary Teachers" was obtained. In this regard, elementary teachers' professional values were revealed in 47 items and 5 dimensions (Table 2). These dimensions are: recognition of student and individual-centred education, learning and teaching environment, evaluation and monitoring of students, professional development and responsibility, and cooperation with the school, families and community.

In conclusion, classroom teaching occupies a special place among all other areas of teaching. Therefore, emphasis must be placed on who the elementary teacher is and which professional values he/she should possess. In this context, elementary teachers must possess the values required by the profession. Elementary teachers in particular have the duty of socializing the child. Elementary teachers are also the fundamental key to attaining success in education. This study can be regarded as a tool to assist in restructuring elementary teachers' professional values in the context of being the first study carried out in Turkey towards determining "the professional values of elementary teachers". In this regard, the following suggestions can be made:

1. With regard to identification, the extent to which current elementary teachers or preservice teachers studying in education faculties possess these values can be measured; a scale for measuring elementary teachers' professional values can be developed; by examining each dimension found in the list of professional values of elementary teachers in detail, the details of these dimensions can be revealed; and studies can be conducted that will contribute to enabling simultaneous developments with the rest of the world by clarifying elementary teachers' professional values.

2. By way of clarifying elementary teachers' professional values, studies can be carried out that will help to increase the value placed on the profession.

3. Professional values of teaching should be presented as a culture to preservice teachers in undergraduate classroom teaching programs and in faculty culture.

4. With regard to developing professional values, opportunity should be given for discussion of “sample cases” reflecting real life situations. In this regard, the necessary arrangements should be made for observing real life situations in the school environment as far as possible.

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