

## “Being a Teacher” at University: Perceptions, Feelings, and Efforts

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### *Abstract*

*The study aims to reveal how faculty members perceive and feel about being a teacher at university, and make efforts to enhance their teaching responsibilities. The qualitative study was designed as a transcendental phenomenological study. The views of 25 faculty members at different universities in Turkey were obtained by interviewing method, and analysed through content analysis. The study found that the perceptions of being a teacher were mainly teacher- and student-centred. The faculty members got (un)happy/(in)competent depending on whether or not their students were learning, responding to questions, attending class, and paying attention to the course. They tried to enhance their teaching responsibilities through some informal ways such as getting peer assistance, and discussing with relatives/friends. After the findings were discussed in detail, some suggestions were presented for faculty members and for the researchers.*

**Keywords:** *Professional development, quality of teaching-learning, teaching responsibility at university*

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## Introduction

Over the past two decades, what might be viewed as traditional universities have experienced considerable strengths from a variety of sources like political, economic, and social. They are globally challenged by the developments coming from these sources and feel the pressure to make efforts to improve the quality of teaching learning they presented, too. As Watters and Diezmann (2005) highlight, universities must be efficient knowledge disseminators through their service and teaching activities and must be more than merely places where knowledge is produced if they are to remain relevant in a knowledge society. Furthermore, so many wide-effect white papers address the importance of teaching-learning activities at universities (EDUCAUSE, 2019; European Commission [EC], 2013; Higher Education Academy, 2011). Moreover, the appropriateness of the quality of teaching-learning activities, and consequently the outputs of higher education, are held to a high standard by the accreditation organisations and other stakeholders, who hold institutions accountable (Enders et al., 2013; Naidoo, 2008).

The quality of teaching-learning activities has become a topic that is receiving more concern and attention because of all these advances and demands. As a result, it is seen that university managements get a tendency to transfer this accountability to faculty members (Knight & Yorke, 2003). It is widely accepted that faculty members have the leading role in determining the quality level of teaching-learning. Although it is widely accepted the importance and contributions of faculty members in the quality of teaching-learning, the majority of higher education systems lack professional qualifications for them, established procedures to train them as teachers at university, and the balance between research and teaching is frequently perceived as causing friction in their working lives (Marsh & Hattie, 2002; Leisyte et al., 2009). Greater levels of faculty development and support are needed, especially in relation to teaching ability, effective teaching techniques, and curriculum design, given the tension and rising expectations from faculty members (Ginns et al., 2010; Trautwein, 2018). While there is a consensus on the importance of formal professional developments for faculty members (Gunn & Fisk, 2013; Hénard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008;), to Eraut (1994) emphasising informal learning in the workplace, faculty members can also improve themselves through publications, practical experience, and people around them. All these formal and informal ways of faculty development mainly focus on increasing the awareness of their teaching responsibilities.

How faculty members carry out their teaching responsibility may be related to their perceptions of teaching at university. It is a widely agreed issue that faculty members' educational assumptions and ideas influence how teaching is carried out in higher education (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001), namely on perceptions of teaching. It is also emphasised that their approaches to teaching has a contextual and dynamic nature (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001), which gives much importance to determine their perceptions and maybe to change it towards a learner-centred one. How teaching is perceived and described by faculty members is also important in the process of high quality teaching-learning at universities. Cottrell and Jones (2003) listed the factors that motivate faculty members about their teaching responsibilities, as internal, external, and

institutional. They also emphasised that the internal factors including teaching perceptions, happiness or disappointment in enabling students to learn have the leading effects (Cottrell & Jones, 2003). As seen in the cited literature above, there are various terms such as educational beliefs, presumptions, and approaches to teaching, teaching perceptions to indicate faculty members' views about their teaching responsibilities. The current study prefers to use "perceptions of teaching".

Faculty members' perceptions of teaching are generally divided into two groups; teacher- or content-centred and a student-centred perception of teaching (Lindblom-Ylänne et al., 2006). The faculty members that fall under the teacher-centred category view teaching as primarily the transfer of knowledge. They focus on both the teaching process and the material they cover. They place a strong emphasis on how to arrange, structure, and deliver the course material in a way that makes it simpler for the students to comprehend. On the other hand, the faculty members whose teaching style is classified as student-centred in a given setting consider instruction as fostering conceptual growth in students or assisting their learning or knowledge-construction processes. They put a lot of attention on what students do in connection to their attempts to activate students' pre-existing conceptions and to motivate them to create their own knowledge and understandings (Lindblom Ylänne et al., 2006).

Like Lindblom-Ylänne et al. (2006), Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) also determined two groups as teacher-centred or student-centred. Similarly, Trigwell and Prosser (2004) explained the information transmission/teacher-focused (ITTF) approach indicating some teachers' intention is to transfer information with little or no build-up of interaction with students. The conceptual change/student-focused approach to teaching (CCSF) indicates teaching is seen as helping students to develop their own understanding of knowledge. Moreover, Akerlind (2004) explained that faculty members' perceptions could be grouped in two, namely transmission of information to students and the development of conceptual understanding in students. In the first one, they have a focus towards the teacher and their teaching strategies, and in the second one, they have a focus on students' learning and development.

Besides the mentioned binary groupings, some researchers made multiple groupings, too. For instance; Kember (1997) divided the perceptions into following five groups; conceptual change/intellectual development, facilitating understanding, imparting information, student-teacher interaction/apprenticeship, and transmitting structured knowledge. Furthermore, in their conference paper, Tynjälä et al. (2019 as cited by Kalman et al., 2020) made four groups as follows; knowledge-focused approach, the development of thinking skills focused approach and the practice-focused approach, and learning outcomes and requirements focused approach.

On the other hand, some faculty members view teaching at university as a responsibility that comes along with their faculty members roles and an activity that doesn't require any professional training (Kreber, 2010; Nevgi & Lofstrom, 2015). They could therefore have a tendency to reject or underestimate their teaching responsibilities. However, being professional as a faculty member has been referred to as a double professionalism as a researcher and a teacher (Beaty, 1998) though their teaching roles traditionally lowered to research has started to be appreciated recently. Many scholars criticised giving more value to research by highlighting the

importance of their teaching roles (Donnelly, 2006; Hardy & Smith, 2006; Tynan & Garbett, 2007, Yang et al., 2021). It is long overdue that teaching roles of faculty members should be analysed, discussed and supported.

There is a growing body of international literature on faculty members' perceptions of teaching (Kember & Kwan 2000; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Wegner & Nückles, 2015) and on their professional development related to their teaching responsibilities (Akerlind, 2004; Gibbs & Coffey, 2000; Knight et al., 2006; Postareff et al., 2007; Stes et al., 2012; Trautwein, 2018). On the other hand, in Turkish context a relatively growing body of literature focuses on faculty members' pedagogical needs (Elçi & Yaratana, 2012; Ilhan et al., 2022; Koç et al., 2015; Unal & Dagistan, 2017; Yerin Güneri et al., 2017), pedagogical competencies (Akar & Aydın, 2016; Kazanci Tinmaz, 2018) and pedagogical development programs (Kabakci & Odabasi, 2008; Latchem et al., 2006). Yet, few studies in especially national literature examine faculty members' perceptions of their teaching roles, their feelings about their own teaching experiences, and their effort to enhance their teaching responsibilities.

As Mladenovici et al. (2021) emphasised, faculty members' perceptions are considered to represent the basis for their teaching practices (Gow & Kember, 1993), which in turn determines the quality of teaching-learning at universities. Buskist (2002) analysed the characteristics of faculty members with effective teaching awards at universities and concluded that they have characteristics like giving importance to students' learning, being eager to learn how to teach, having their own teaching philosophy, trying to improve students' intellectual development, being eager to teach students, being positive role model etc. Such characteristics also give clues about their perceptions of teaching at university. It can be induced that the characteristics prove the assumption that there is a correlation between teaching practices and teaching perceptions (Kember & Kwan, 2000). It is therefore important to determine faculty members' perceptions to get an idea about the quality of teaching-learning at universities. Furthermore, it takes importance to determine their perceptions due to the broadening tasks and more complex practices of teaching at universities as Kalman et al. (2020) emphasised. Overall, more research is needed examining the faculty members' perceptions of teaching, their feelings and their effort to become more qualified in teaching. Such an examination carries importance for both the faculty members themselves and the universities to support faculty members.

The examination of faculty members' views, feelings, and efforts through self reflection is also important to support their professional development especially related to their teaching responsibilities because reflection is considered as a requirement for teacher development (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Furthermore, such a reflection, particularly on faculty members' feelings, encourages faculty members to become professionals (Fleming et al., 2004). It is clear that creating a teacher identity in the setting of higher education is not an easy process, and in order to support faculty members, it is crucial to recognize (Lankveld et al., 2017) and to be (systematically and officially) supported their teaching practices (Marentic Pozarnik & Lavric, 2015).

To conclude, various studies show the importance of faculty members' teaching responsibilities in high quality teaching-learning at universities and the general need/demand for improving faculty members' teaching skills, but there is still need to determine the faculty

members' views in different context and analyse their perceptions, feeling, and efforts holistically. Overall, the study aims to reveal how faculty members perceive and feel about being a teacher at university, and make efforts to enhance their teaching responsibilities.

## Method

### Research Design

The qualitative study was designed as a transcendental phenomenological study focusing on “the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept/phenomenon” (Creswell, 2004, p. 10). The phenomenon to be examined in the current study was “being a teacher at university”. Among several designs of phenomenology research, transcendental phenomenology was applied in the study. Transcendental phenomenology is described as a design for gathering information that elucidates the core elements of human experience concerning their perception about the experience (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). In this phenomenological study, the meaning of being a teacher at university was explained in detail based on the faculty members' own experiences.

### Study Group

The study group included 25 faculty members with at least PhD and carrying out undergraduate courses at different state universities in Turkey. The participants were chosen through criterion sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods, because in phenomenological studies, the participants are deliberately selected to share a similar contextual perspective with the phenomenon under investigation (Morris, 2015). The main criterion of the current study was not to have graduated from any educational faculty, which means not having a training on pedagogical knowledge/skills. The other criteria included to have PhD, to carry out courses at a state university, and lastly, to have teaching experiences of utmost ten years at a university. In phenomenological designs, the goal is to examine similar experiences of actual participants in a situation/place (Smith et al., 2009). For that reason, the study included participants with similarities in terms of university training, the number of years worked as faculty members, and their working situation, namely a state university. The participants all have PhD degree faculty members; the amount of their teaching experience is between three and eight years. There are twelve female and thirteen male faculty members and their age range was from 28 to 35 years. Eleven of them are members of engineering, ten of them are members of social sciences, and four are members of health sciences departments. Moreover, they all work at state universities in Turkey and have been employed within the same formal regulations. For some demographic information,

### Research Instrument and Procedures

The interview method was applied through a semi-structured interview form for the faculty members developed by the researchers. While developing the form, the related literature was analysed (Kember & Kwan 2000; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Wegner & Nückles, 2015) and a

draft version of the question list was prepared. Then, the draft form was sent to two experts in the curriculum and instruction area. After the experts who are also experienced in qualitative research examined the form, their suggestions were discussed in an online meeting. Thanks to their suggestions, one question about the faculty members' future career plans were excluded from the form and some minor adjustments were made to make the questions more understandable. Finally, the form was applied in a pilot interview with one faculty member with the similar demographic features as the study group. The pilot interviewed revealed that the form is ready to be used.

The interview form is preceded by a demographic information part to collect information about gender, age, educational background, and teaching experience (in years), expertise area, and university they work in. Following that part, there are five questions and several probe questions about their descriptions of being a teacher at university, the happiest/saddest moment as a teacher, the ways they overcome pedagogical problems, and improve themselves etc.

The interviews were made online via Zoom meetings for ten participants and on-phone for eight one by one of the researchers in two months. In addition, seven faculty members preferred to answer the questions by writing. For those participants, the questions were converted into Google documents to make it easy to express their ideas. Because all of the interviewees were volunteers to involve the study, all participants except for the ones who answered the questions by writing, permitted recording the interviews. Each interview of the faculty members lasted between 20-35 min. Then, the researcher transcribed the whole responses so that the data was ready to be analysed systematically.

## **Data Analysis and Process**

The conventional content analysis method was used to analyse the data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Firstly, the interview transcripts were carefully reviewed. The data was then analysed and reread in order to identify codes and themes (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Codes and themes were then interpreted in light of the study's objectives and reinforced by direct quotes from the participants. Finally, they were discussed in the context of relevant literature.

The data from each participant were recorded using labels like F-5-M-SS so that the reader can understand the number (F-5 means the fifth faculty members interviewed), the gender (M for male; F for female participants), their expertise areas (SS for social sciences, ENG for engineering, and HS for health sciences), and gender (M for male; F for female participants). The labels were also used in the finding section to ensure confidentiality.

During the study, the following precautions were taken for the confirmability, credibility and transferability. For instance, the semi-structured interview form used as a data collection tool was developed taking into consideration the experts' views in the field of curriculum and instruction, which increased the credibility and transferability. Detailing the method of data collecting and analysis added to the study's credibility, too. Processes for gathering data and analysing it were described in depth for this study. Furthermore, the participant confirmation was realised (Creswell, 2004). The gathered views of the faculty members were sent to the two of the interviewees determined randomly to be confirmed after transcribed to word format. During the interviews, the participants were informed that their personal information would be kept

confidential and would not be explained in any way in order to enable them to respond to the questions sincerely, which also increased the trustworthiness of the study. In addition, all data were archived to retain confirmability. Another criterion for trustworthiness was that the faculty members' views were shown through direct quotation (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016). In order to ensure confirmability, two researchers who both have PhDs in curriculum and instruction first coded 20% of the data separately. Then, in a meeting, they focused on the inter-coder reliability and they compared and contrasted the codes and themes, they examined the variations and then, reached a consensus making some adjustments on particularly the themes. After the first coding process was over, one of the researchers coded the rest of the data. At the last step, the researchers came together and made multiple checks for the analysis.

## Findings

The views of faculty members about being a teacher at the university were presented in three headings below.

### The Faculty Members' Perceptions of Being a Teacher at University

The faculty members explain being a teacher with teacher, student, and teaching profession centred perceptions. They also made some metaphors and a few ones rejected the idea of being a teacher.

**Table 1.** Faculty members' perceptions of being a teacher at the university

Themes	Codes	Participants
Teacher centred perception	Conveying true, advanced knowledge, and theories	F-6-M-SS F-12-F-SS F-13-F-SS F-9-M-ENG
	Conveying experiences to students	F-5-M-SS
Student centred perception	Providing students learn	F-11-M-ENG F-22-F-HS
	Helping students ready for profession	F-15-M-ENG F-1-F-SS
Teaching profession centred perceptions	Improving themselves	F-2-F-SS F-7-F-ENG
	A life style	F-3-F-SS
	A life-long learning activity	F-16-M-SS
	A social role model	F-24-F-HS
Metaphors	Digging a well with a needle	F-4-F-SS
	Knitting a pullover step by step	F-1-F-SS
	A visual art	F-11-M-ENG

Constructing a house whose foundation has been laid	F-17-F-SS
Master-apprentice relationship	F-5-M-SS
Rejecting being a teacher	F-6-M-SS F-23-M-ENG F-25-M-HS

For the faculty members, being a teacher was explained with a teacher-centred perception as conveying knowledge and experiences to students. They thought being a teacher is conveying knowledge by explaining theories (F-6-M-SS), conveying true knowledge (F-13-F-SS, F-12-F-SS), sharing experiences (F-5-M-SS), and teaching advanced knowledge (F-9-M-ENG, F-6-M-SS). One of the faculty members explained his idea in detail;

*“I think of it as providing a high-level education by associating the **advanced knowledge** of the basic courses acquired in primary school and high school with the relevant field.” (F-9-M-ENG)*

The faculty members with student-centred perception explained being a teacher focusing on providing students learning and helping them ready for their profession in future. One of the faculty members mentioned as follows:

*“Being a teacher at the university is to make students **learn** on their own.” (F-22-F-HS)*

Being a teacher was also explained with a teaching profession-centred perception as improving themselves, a lifestyle, a life-long learning activity, and a social role model. The faculty members made some further explanations as follows:

*“Being a teacher at the university is a **style of life**. The fact that people from different occupational groups do not feel this difference makes it difficult to define your work.” (F-3-F-SS)*

Some of the faculty members explained their ideas by making metaphors as follows:

*“Being a teacher is like **visual art** - a theatre play / stand up show. You are on a public stage. Depends on a specific text like in the theatre; you are teaching methods/theories. Like in the theatre, your voice tone, body language, and eye contact is important.” (F-11-M-ENG)*

*“It is similar to **digging a well with a needle**. With patience, small and slow steps, you improve yourself, teach and do non-academic work.” (F-4-F-SS.)*

Lastly, a few faculty members rejected the idea of being a teacher at first and explained their views as follows:

*“First of all, I have to criticise the question from my own point of view, we are **not teachers** because we come across individuals beyond the adult and teaching level. We only transfer the information.” (F-6-M-SS)*

*“I **don't see myself as a teacher**. I convey what I learned during my university education by imitating my professors.” (F-23-M-ENG)*

## The Faculty Members’ Feelings about Being a Teacher at University

The faculty members were asked about their feelings as a teacher in classes. Upon that, they explained both their feelings and the sources of their feelings focusing mainly on students’ and their own behaviours.

**Table 2.** Faculty members’ feelings about being a teacher at university

Feelings	Sources of Their Feelings	Participants	
Happy and competent	Ensuring student learning	F-1-F-SS	F-16-M-SS
		F-6-M-SS	F-17-F-SS
		F-5-M-SS	F-9-M-ENG
		F-11-M-ENG	F-20-M-ENG
		F-10-F-HS	F-21-M-ENG
		F-11-M-ENG	F-22-F-HS
		F-15-M-ENG	F-25-M-HS
	Students answering questions	F-1-F-SS	F-13-F-SS
		F-6-M-SS	F-13-F-SS
		F-5-M-SS	F-15-M-ENG
		F-8-M-ENG	F-16-M-SS
	Students engaging in the lesson	F-2-F-SS	F-12-F-SS
		F-4-F-SS	F-13-F-SS
	Students focusing on the lesson	F-3-F-SS	F-12-F-SS
		F-8-M-ENG	F-13-F-SS
	Communicating the students	F-17-F-SS	F-16-M-SS
		F-11-M-ENG	
	Responding to students’ hard/complex questions	F-4-F-SS	F-6-M-SS

Sad and incompetent	Not ensuring student learning	F-1-F-SS	F-16-M-SS
		F-13-F-SS	F-22-F-HS
		F-10-F-HS	F-23-M-ENG
Students not engaging in the lesson		F-12-F-SS	F-16-M-SS
		F-13-F-SS	F-17-F-SS
		F-11-M-ENG	F-20-M-ENG
		F-10-F-HS	
Not responding to students' hard/complex questions		F-2-F-SS	F-5-M-SS
		F-3-F-SS	F-24-F-HS
Students not interested in the lesson		F-20-M-ENG	F-16-M-SS
Problems (about tools) in learning environment		F-25-M-HS	F-15-M-ENG
Problems about students' background knowledge		F-1-F-SS	F-17-F-SS
		F-16-M-SS	F-19-M-ENG

Faculty members explained they felt happy/competent when they ensured students' learning; their students answered the questions, engaged in the lesson, and focused on the lesson. They also indicated when they, as teachers, could respond to students' questions and communicate with the students, they felt happy and competent. Some faculty members explained that situation in detail.

*"The most enjoyable moments are when your effort is paid off. Apart from the correct answers to the exam questions, I would be happy to have creative answers to the questions I asked or to have questions that challenge me during the lesson." (F-6-M-SS)*

*"I would be happy when students can reinforce what is told and understand and exemplify them. At the same time, when I am evaluating, sometimes the answers of the students also make me happy. Because the answers show that what is being explained is understood." (F-16-M-SS)*

Faculty members explained they felt unhappy/incompetent when they did not ensure students' learning or could not respond to their students' questions; their students did not answer the questions, did not engage in the lesson, and were not interested in the lesson. They also indicated the problems about tools in the learning environment and about students' background let them down in the classes. Some faculty members explained that situation in detail.

*“If I do not remember the answer of a question asked by the student or if I do not have knowledge about it, I get unhappy and I will immediately make amends.” (F-24-F-HS)*

*“When I quizzed the week before the midterm exam for a program I had been telling for weeks, all students failed. That lesson made me unhappy, but I did not care much about the next lesson. Because I am sure that, I can convey it in the best way possible. Students’ failure is their problem.” (F-23-M-ENG)*

When the sources of feelings of the faculty members are analysed, another important finding takes attention. While one of the faculty members emphasised that she gets happy when the students answer the question/solve the problem in *the identical way* as she has recently explained (F-1-F-SS), another one explained he gets very happy when his students make creative responses (F-6-M-SS). These ideas also gave valuable insights about their perceptions of being teachers.

## **The Faculty Members’ Efforts to Enhance Their Teaching Responsibilities**

After the faculty members mentioned about the time when they felt unhappy/incompetent, they were asked about whether they did something to solve these problems, especially for their teaching responsibilities. Some of the faculty members (n=6) indicated they did not make any systematic effort to enhance their teaching responsibilities. One of them explained that situation by saying *“My husband, as a teacher, criticizes us. I have to focus on improving myself. I felt its necessity, but I haven’t taken a step yet.” (F-13-F-SS)*. There is only one faculty member explained that she had attended a formal training like a faculty development programme focusing on pedagogical development (F-12-F-SS). On the other hand, most of them explained they tried to solve the specific problems on their own and to improve themselves in general in terms of teaching capabilities. The faculty member indicated to solve problems they faced in courses they made self-assessment and thought on possible solutions (F-12-F-SS, F-21-M-ENG, F-24-F-HS), and they got peer assistance (F-2-F-SS, F-3-F-SS, F-15-M-ENG). F-3-F-SS explained that situation as follows: *“In such cases, I mostly refer to the experiences of my colleagues.”* They also indicated they talked about pedagogical issues to their relatives/friends (F-11-M-ENG, F-13-F-SS) as follows: *“My wife is a teacher. We talk about teaching. I learned teaching techniques from her.” (F-11-M-ENG)*. Lastly, they pointed out they had observed their teachers / advisors at the faculty and just imitated their teaching behaviours (F-5-M-SS, F-7-F-ENG, F-11-M-ENG). One of the faculty members explained that situation as follow:

*“I was lucky I received the necessary and sufficient help/background information from my master and doctoral thesis advisors. They put a lot of effort into my teaching skills and information.” (F-5-M-SS)*

## **Discussion**

In this study, “being a teacher at university” accepted as a phenomenon was explored in terms of faculty members’ perceptions, feelings and their efforts to enhance their teaching responsibilities. The main findings were discussed below.

The descriptions about being a teacher made by the faculty members can be grouped mainly into teacher- and student-centred ones. The findings are in line with the suggestion by Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) which show that all perceptions are primarily teacher-centred or student-centred. The analysis of the teacher-centred explanations uttered in our study showed the faculty members mainly perceived being a teacher in terms of conveying information to students. Likewise, Vilppu et al. (2019) found out faculty members regard teaching as knowledge transmission. In a similar study, Trigwell and Prosser (2004) suggested that some teachers’ intentions are to communicate information with little to no engagement with students. The information transmission approach, mentioned by Trigwell and Prosser (2004) is similar to the teacher-centered perception in our study. Furthermore, Kember’s (1997) imparting information and transmitting structured knowledge categories and Akerlind’ (2004) focus on transmission of information to students or the development of conceptual understanding in students are similar to our finding indicating that being a teacher is conveying true, advanced knowledge, theories, and experiences to students. Akerlind (2004) also determined such a consensus emphasising teaching roles of faculty members. In his comprehensive study, he emphasised this consensus is particularly remarkable given the independence of the studies and the wide variety of higher education systems, universities, and faculty members (Akerlind, 2004). After nearly ten years, Nevgi and Lofstrom (2015) showed that the consensus remains constant despite the changing time. On the one hand, the student-centred perceptions were found out in our study can be relate to Kember’s (1997) conceptual change/intellectual development category, Trigwell and Prosser’s (2004) conceptual change/student-focused approach to teaching (CCSF), and Akerlind’s (2004) focus on the development of conceptual understanding in students. As seen, the student-centred perceptions were also indicated besides the teacher-centred ones in the related literature. It is clear being a teacher at a university should involve not just teaching (Beaty, 1998), so faculty members are expected to have student-centred perceptions.

Being a teacher at university is also described through a teaching profession-centred perception. The faculty members described being a teacher as improving themselves, a lifestyle, a life-long learning activity, and a social role model. These definitions revealed that the faculty members regarded being a teacher as a self-improvement tool. Similarly, in the study by Sever et al. (2021), the faculty members use metaphors like continuously producing and evolver focusing their own development. As Prosser and Trigwell (1999) report, some faculty members focus on themselves and what they are doing while some focus on their students and their students’ learning.

Being a teacher at university is also described via metaphors in our study. Such metaphors as digging a well with a needle and knitting a pullover step by step demonstrate its hardness and being a process. Another metaphor refers to a simile between being a teacher at university and a visual art because it includes stage, audiences, text, voice, body language, and eye contact so on. In their cross-national study, Sever et al. (2021) examined being an academic and they found out that in Turkey and the UK, the faculty members saw themselves as inquirers, versatile and in a guiding role. The metaphors in the study by Sever et al. (2021) are not restricted to only teaching

roles of the faculty members and they have mainly positive connotations. However, the metaphors in our study restricted to only their teaching roles mainly imply its hardness.

Our study also found out that few faculty members rejected the idea of being a teacher. That finding shows an important and widespread view of faculty members. For instance, Clegg (2008) found that only one of 13 faculty members emphasised teaching as a priority while others prioritised “being an academic, an intellectual, or practitioner”. After examining studies on being a faculty member, Rosewell and Ashwin (2018) emphasised that faculty members in the years of their early career had priority on research and perceived themselves as only being a researcher. Such a view may be the underlying reason for the rejection concluded in our study and other similar studies.

Moreover, our study revealed that the faculty members' feelings, such as happiness/competent or vice versa, rely primarily on assuring student learning and students' engagement in the courses when it came to how they felt about their teaching practices. In addition, they indicated that the main sources of their feeling happy/competent were ensuring students' learning, enabling them to answer the questions, attend the lesson, and focus on the courses. The sources may indicate their eagerness to provide teaching more effectively because as Buskist (2002) concluded the faculty members with awards of effective teaching practices have similar qualities like giving importance to students' learning and trying to improve students' intellectual development. Moreover, Cottrell and Jones (2003) indicated the importance of such internal factors for motivating faculty members as happiness or disappointment about enabling students to learn.

Lastly, about the faculty members' efforts on enhancing their teaching responsibilities, our study reached out that there was not common systematic efforts made by the faculty members. It was found out they did not attend any formal professional development programs apart from one faculty member and a few of them only talked about their teaching practices and how to improve them. We can conclude that the faculty members mainly preferred such informal ways of “learning a profession” as “practical experience and people” in line with the theory of Eraut (1994). The faculty members in our study had practical experience and discussed with people like their colleagues and relatives/friends, and made research. Our findings are parallel with a study that determined the main sources for professional development as learning on-the-job and making discussions with colleagues in subject departments (Knight et al., 2006). Critical discussion and debate as well as interactions with other people in the community can also inspire faculty members (Kreber, 2010) while they are making effort to improve themselves. As Buskist (2002) emphasised effective teachers at university do not have any prior structured trainings on pedagogy but they have tendency to learn from others. On the other hand, Knight et al. (2006) determined one more source as attending workshops and conferences. However, in our study, the faculty members did not indicate about attending workshops and conferences, which may be the most common and easy means of professional development. Overall, our study concludes the faculty members mainly made efforts to improve their teaching skills through informal ways. Such informal ways should not be underestimated because Becher (1989) estimated that professionals learn six times as much through informal methods as they do through formal ones.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

This study has explored the comprehensive meaning of being a teacher at university and highlighted a wider and detailed picture of the faculty members' perceptions and feelings about being a teacher, and their efforts to enhance their teaching responsibilities. Our study concludes that the faculty members' perceptions were mainly student- and teacher-centred. They explained they felt (un)happy/ (in)competent depending upon ensuring students' learning, their students' answering the questions, attending the lesson, and focusing on the lesson. They also indicated there was no common systematic efforts made by the faculty members. They tried to enhance their teaching responsibilities through some informal ways such as getting peer assistance, and discussing with relatives/friends. Overall, our study suggests that the faculty members should have opportunity to think about being a teacher at university, as well as their own feelings and efforts to become a more qualified teacher. Such an opportunity may help them to discover their own feelings, practices, and the necessity to improve themselves as teachers at university. Moreover, we may also suggest that to change the faculty members' perceptions towards a more student-centred one, there should be some kind of faculty development programmes to increase their awareness about their roles in assisting students to construct meaning in their own learning process. As our study findings show the faculty members' tendencies in favour of informal development ways, the suggested faculty development programmes might not be structured as a strict training. Finally, we can also present suggestions for the researchers based on the limitations of our study in terms of its method. Due to the small number of faculty members, it was not possible to compare differences depending on gender, working/expertise area, academic title, and years of experience. For the future research, quantitative studies with larger sample sizes for comparison and other quantitative studies with various data collection techniques, most notably observation, may be done in the future to analyse the phenomena examined in our study.

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