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The Effect of Teacher Autonomy on Teachers' Professional Dedication

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to determine the effect of teacher autonomy on dedication to the teaching profession according to teacher perceptions. The research was designed in the causal relational survey model to determine the relationship between teacher autonomy and dedication to the teaching profession. The study population of the research consisted of 475 teachers working in primary schools in the city center of Bolu, and feedback was obtained from 318 teachers. Teacher Autonomy Scale and Teaching Profession Scale were used as data collection tools in the research. Parametric tests were used in my research because the data showed a normal distribution. According to the results of the research, although it is a positive result that teachers' autonomy is at a high level in the dimensions of scale total, teaching process, and professional communication autonomy, it is a remarkable result that it is at a medium level in the dimensions of curriculum autonomy and professional development autonomy. Teachers' perceptions of dedication to the profession are high in all dimensions, including commitment to the profession, devotion to students, and self-sacrificing work on the total scale. In general, there is a positive, moderate, and high level significant relationship between the whole and dimensions of the teacher autonomy scale and the scale of dedication to the teaching profession. Teacher autonomy is a significant predictor of commitment to the teaching profession. Teacher autonomy scale sub-dimensions: the scale of dedication to the teaching profession significantly predicts the dimensions of commitment to the profession, dedication to students, and selfless work.

Keywords:

Autonomy, teacher autonomy, professional engagement

1. Introduction

In the educational process, the process of changing behavior in the desired direction significantly depends on the quality of teaching-learning activities. The teacher plays an important role in increasing the quality of the teaching service, and the teacher's behavior determines the quality of teaching to a large extent (Senemoğlu, 1984). Dedicated teachers are needed for educational activities to be successful (Hoy & Miskel, 2010). Additionally, the willingness of teachers to fulfill the requirements of their profession, or in other words, their dedication to their profession, plays a vital role in the school and school system (Beare, 2001).

Professional dedication is the positive and highly exciting feeling that employees have developed for their work processes (Catsouphe & Matz-Costa, 2009), their feeling of belonging to the job and their enthusiasm (Roberts & Davenport, 2002), their acting in harmony with the goals and values arising from their profession, their willingness to take on the roles born in their jobs (Eroğlu, 2007) and the feeling of being connected to their profession (Shukla, 2014). Professional dedication in teaching is the desire to value and continue the profession to increase student success (Butucha, 2013). Professional dedication in teaching includes two situations: being proud of being in the profession and having an intense desire for professional development. Dedicated teachers are more interested in student development and show more effort (Turhan, Demirli, & Nazik, 2012). Teaching should not be seen as an ordinary profession in which students

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enter and leave classes within a limited time frame, where the curriculum is trained, and where routine paperwork is done. Being devoted to teaching requires working at the highest level with an inner motivation and exerting extraordinary energy and effort for the goals and objectives of the organization (Altunay, 2017). It is argued that teachers are the main determinants of students' attendance or absenteeism, success or failure, and gains they have or cannot acquire in formal and informal environments (Celep, 2000). In this sense, it can be said that teachers play an active role in students' success and in solving student problems. This can be made possible by teachers professional dedication.

Employees with high professional commitment have a high awareness of their work. These employees establish a very strong relationship with their colleagues and managers (Luthans & Peterson, 2002), actively participate in business processes, direct all their assets to the fulfillment of the job, and play and fully undertake their roles (Kahn, 1990). High commitment enables employees to internalize their work, motivate themselves while performing their jobs, and be more willing to participate in work processes (Roberts & Davenport, 2002). This situation reduces employees' intentions to leave and reduces the turnover of the workforce in the organization (Christian & Slaughter, 2007). Therefore, it will also prevent employee circulation, which is undesirable for organizations.

Teachers take an active role in achieving the intended and targeted success within the organization. Teachers must devote themselves to their work to achieve this success. If a teacher enjoys the profession, it will increase the organization's success (Armstrong, 2008). Teachers with high professional commitment recognize their role in encouraging their students to engage in active learning and feel responsible for promoting their intellectual and moral development. They work enthusiastically, dedicating themselves to what they do, and they believe in the importance of their profession (Rowe, 2003). Dedicated teachers enjoy dealing with and working with their students, and they attach importance to their knowledge and ideas within the framework of a culture of mutual respect. Apathy and reluctance will not occur due to the students' lack of knowledge by creating a classroom environment that corrects students' mistakes. Teachers with high professional commitment attach importance to student behaviors, learn from their mistakes, and take risks (Fried, 2001).

Halbesleben (2010) emphasized that work resources consisting of social support, autonomy, self-efficacy, and optimism structures are the antecedents of work dedication. Therefore, it is thought that teachers' autonomy will be effective in their dedication to their profession. A teacher with autonomy over the teaching process, curriculum, professional development, and professional communication will commit to their profession, show a higher level of dedication to their students, and work more selflessly.

Societies need to have qualified workforces for their development. The most important task in raising a qualified workforce falls to schools and teachers. The quality of education given in schools is reflected in the students' knowledge, equipment, and creativity. The ability of teachers to fulfill the responsibilities given to them is largely dependent on the opportunities offered by the business environment offered to them. One of these opportunities is teacher autonomy (Şentürkken, 2018). Autonomy is the individual's ability to decide about initiating, continuing, and correcting the action (Hu & Leung, 2003) and being aware of the difference between the behaviors under their control and the behaviors controlled by others (Musaagaoglu, 2004). Teacher autonomy is the authority of teachers to control their work environment and themselves (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005) and make choices about what and when to teach (Aoki, 2000). Teacher autonomy, which includes the ability of teachers to make decisions about their students' development levels, success or failure (Crawford, 2001), includes the teacher's curriculum, the teaching methods and techniques to be used, the processes of measuring and evaluating student success, and behavior, student discipline, the classroom environment, and activities. It is the regulation of the time spent on teaching and the level of freedom that the teacher has over their professional development (LaCoe III, 2008). Teachers, who have the important task of raising future generations, need to be autonomous in matters related to their profession (Ingersoll, 2007) because teacher autonomy will deliver qualified and quality educational activities to students (Ertürk, 2020). Teachers' professional autonomy makes it easier to quickly adapt to changing conditions and meet their needs. Teachers need to have the necessary professional knowledge and skills to be autonomous, willing, and interested in determining teaching contents, and using different methods and techniques (Bustingorry, 2008; Steh & Pozarnik, 2005). Employees with a high level of autonomy can take new decisions or measures, plan activities, and create work stages according to the changing situation and problems that may arise

(Freidman, 1999). Teachers authority and autonomy reveal their potential and increase their commitment to the organization they work for (Koçak, 2011). Teachers have high motivation and job satisfaction when they feel autonomous in reflecting their decisions on their lessons, using authority, and taking responsibility in matters related to their profession (Pearson & Hall, 1993; Bogler, 2001; Brunetti, 2001). Autonomy enables teachers to use their decision-making skills and professionalism by taking into account different perspectives. Educators with teacher autonomy know why they do what they do and convey this understanding to others (Castle, 2004). Teacher autonomy functions are developing students' education and training, achieving success in education, teachers' contributions to the school, using various teaching methods, and professional development (Şentürken, 2018). Teachers who have students with different characteristics but adhere to a centralized structure, and organize uniform activities without considering their interests, talents, and skills will cause many students to fail and prevent their talents from emerging. In this context, teachers should be able to make individual decisions in the classroom and apply unique approaches (Ertürk, 2020). Autonomy increases teachers' commitment to schools and helps them make more constructive decisions for their students' learning (Dee, Henkin, & Singleton, 2006). Autonomy enables teachers to reveal their potential, increases their commitment to the organization, and enables teachers to use their decision-making skills and professional professionalism in line with different paradigms, know what, how, and why they do it, and transfer this understanding to other colleagues. Autonomy also affects employee motivation, job satisfaction, and the quality of the work done. The development of students education and training, their success in education, the teacher's contribution to the school, the use of various teaching methods, and the teacher's professional development are among the functions of teacher autonomy (Ertürk, 2020). Teachers who have the necessary motivation and autonomy are exposed to less stress (Pearson & Hall, 1993) because their ability to regulate their behaviors and take responsibility plays a critical role in their psychological health (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001). Teachers who are effective in decision-making and have administrative and instructional powers are respected by their environment, students, and other teachers (Ingersoll, 2007). The self-confidence and psychological well-being of a teacher respected by their environment will increase. Therefore, autonomy also psychologically affects teachers (Ertürk, 2020). On the other hand, oppressive attitudes such as the lack of an autonomous working environment and excessive supervision and control lead to the consequences of teachers leaving their profession (Pearson & Hall, 1993).

According to Freidman (1999), teacher autonomy is indispensable for teachers to improve their education and training activities, follow current teaching methods, develop new educational materials, and improve their professional knowledge and skills. Based on this view, it is thought that teachers should have sufficient professional autonomy to independently plan new activities and engage in innovative practices, as in other professions. Therefore, it is thought that teacher autonomy will also affect teachers' professional dedication. It can be thought that autonomy will affect employees' motivation, job satisfaction, quality of work, and dedication to the profession. Although there are studies in the literature that reveal that teacher autonomy is associated with many variables such as job satisfaction, professionalism, empowerment, school climate, leadership, job stress, the organizational structure of schools, teacher leadership, students' academic engagement and resilience, self-efficacy, student success, and organizational silence (Ayril et al., 2014; Çolak & Altınkurt, 2017; Çolak, Altınkurt, & Yılmaz, 2017; Evans, 2011; Garvin, 2007; Kara ve Bozkurt, 2022; Karabacak, 2014; Kreis & Young Brockopp, 2001; Ma, 2021; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Skinner, 2008; Webb, 2002; Yazıcı & Akyol, 2017; Yolcu, 2021) No research has been found that reveals its relationship with their dedication to the profession. In this context, this research is important and original in terms of giving decision-makers and practitioners an idea of teacher autonomy. In this sense, this research aims to determine the effect of teacher autonomy on dedication to the teaching profession according to teacher perceptions.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Model

The research was designed as a relational survey model to determine the relationship between teacher autonomy and dedication to teaching. In the relational survey model, in which the data obtained using measurement tools is analyzed with some statistical methods and the possible relationships between the variables are expressed numerically (Creswell, 2014), it is necessary to determine the existence of the change between two or more variables, whether these variables change together, and if there is a change, how.

(Karasar, 2011). The research aims to reveal the explanatory and predictive relationships between teacher autonomy and professional commitment in this context.

2.2. Research Group

The research study population consisted of 475 teachers working in primary schools in Bolu city center in the 2021-2022 academic year. Since it was aimed at reaching the entire study universe, no sample was taken, and feedback was provided by 318 teachers. Of the 318 teachers who made up the research group, 54.4% were female (n=173), 45.6% were male (n= 145); 78% were married (n= 248), 22% were single (n= 70); 23.3% were in the age range of 21-30 (n= 74), 30.8% were in the age range of 31-40 (n= 98), 45.9% were in the age range of 41 and over (n=146). 13.8% of the teachers are 1-10 years (n= 44), 20.1% are 11-20 years (n= 64), 28% are 21-30 years (n= 89), 38.1% are 31 years and has more seniority (n= 121). The scales were delivered to the teachers online.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

The study data were collected using the teacher autonomy scale and the scale of dedication to the teaching profession.

Teacher Autonomy Scale: The scale was developed by Çolak and Altinkurt (2017). It consists of four sub-dimensions, namely teaching process autonomy (6 items), curriculum autonomy (5 items), professional development autonomy (3 items), and professional communication autonomy (3 items), for a total of 17 items. The five-point Likert scale consists of (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) moderately agree, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The Cronbach Alpha values calculated by Çolak and Altinkurt (2017) to determine the scale's reliability were .82 for teaching process autonomy, .82 for curriculum autonomy, .85 for professional development autonomy, .78 for professional communication autonomy, and .89 for the whole scale. The Cronbach Alpha values calculated for the reliability of the scale in this study were .79 for the teaching process autonomy dimension, .81 for the curriculum autonomy dimension, .84 for the professional development autonomy dimension, .79 for the professional communication autonomy dimension, and .88 for the whole scale.

The Scale of Dedication to the Teaching Profession: The scale was developed by Kozikoğlu and Senemoğlu (2018). It consists of 20 items and three sub-dimensions: commitment to the profession (8 items), dedication to students (8 items), and selfless work (4 items). The Cronbach Alpha values calculated by Kozikoğlu and Senemoğlu (2018) to determine the scales' reliability were 0.92 for the first factor, 0.86 for the second factor, 0.70 for the third factor, and 0.90 for the total scale. The Cronbach Alpha values calculated for the scale's reliability in this study were 0.90 for the commitment to the profession dimension, 0.88 for dedication to students, 0.74 for selflessness, and 0.92 for the total scale. The five-point Likert scale consists of (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

The data obtained during the research were analyzed in Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22. The skewness-Kurtosis coefficients results for the normality of the data in the study are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Skewness-kurtosis coefficients for the normality of the data

Scale and Dimensions	Skewness	Kurtosis
Teaching Process Autonomy	-.228	.361
Curriculum Autonomy	-.454	.852
Professional Development Autonomy	.025	.581
Professional Communication Autonomy	-.266	.420
Teacher Autonomy Scale Total Score	-.122	.667
Devotion to the Profession	-.413	.417
Devotion to the Students	-.118	.566
Selfless Work	-.392	.288
The Dedication to the Teaching Profession Scale Total score	-1.073	.236

When Table 1 is examined, it has been determined that the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the scales and their dimensions are +1.5 and -1.5, and it is determined that the data showed a normal distribution. Therefore, parametric tests were used in the analyze of the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

In the study, the Durbin-Watson coefficient was between 1.5-2.5 ($d=2.03$); r coefficients are lower than .80 (between .79-.24); It has been determined that the Variance Amplification Factor value varies between 4.14 and 6.12 (below VIF:10) and the tolerance values are between .39 and .71 (greater than 0.2). These values obtained show that there is no autocorrelation, multiple co-linearity, or correlation problem in the research (Field, 2009; Kalaycı, 2009; Stevens, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

2.5. Ethical

This research was ethically approved after being evaluated at the meeting of the Human Research Ethics Committee of Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, dated July 30, 2021, and numbered 2021/08.

3. Findings

This section presents the findings on teachers’ perceptions of teacher autonomy and commitment to the teaching profession, the relationships between teacher autonomy and commitment to the teaching profession, and the effect of teacher autonomy on the commitment to the teaching profession.

The results of Pearson correlation analysis regarding the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and their commitment to the teaching profession are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Pearson correlation analysis results regarding the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of autonomy and their commitment to the teaching profession

Scale and Dimensions	\bar{x}	ss	Devotion to the Profession	Devotion to the Students	Selfless Work	Dedication to the Teaching Profession
Teaching Process Autonomy	4.11	.643	0.56**	0.68**	0.76**	0.67**
Curriculum Autonomy	3.01	.420	0.44**	0.61**	0.64**	0.40**
Professional Development autonomy	3.14	.511	0.73**	0.76**	0.79**	0.71**
Professional Communication autonomy	3.97	.802	0.38**	0.24**	0.56**	0.43**
Teacher Autonomy	3.88	.417	0.58**	0.72**	0.71**	0.76**
Devotion to the Profession	3.82	.712	-	-	-	-
Devotion to the Students	3.92	.811	-	-	-	-
Selfless Work	4.11	.143	-	-	-	-
Dedication to the Teaching Profession	4.03	.776	-	-	-	-

** $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.05$: Correlation coefficient as an absolute value indicates a strong correlation between 0.71-1.00, a moderate correlation between 0.70-0.31, a weak correlation between 0.30-0.00 (Büyüköztürk, 2011).

When Table 2 is examined, teachers’ perceptions of teacher autonomy are high in the scale total ($\bar{x}=3.88$), teaching process autonomy ($\bar{x}=4.11$) and professional communication autonomy ($\bar{x}=3.97$). In contrast, it was moderate in the curriculum autonomy ($\bar{x}=3.01$) and professional development autonomy ($\bar{x}=3.14$) dimensions. According to the total scale, these findings are high regarding teachers’ teaching processes and the professional communication dimensions. However, they show a medium level of autonomy in the curriculum and professional development dimensions.

It has been determined that teachers’ perceptions of dedication to the profession are high in the scale total ($\bar{x}=4.03$), professional commitment ($\bar{x}=3.82$), dedication to students ($\bar{x}=3.92$), and selfless work ($\bar{x}=4.11$). These findings show that teachers’ professional commitment levels are high in the scale total score and all sub-dimensions.

A positive and highly significant relationship was found between the overall teacher autonomy scale and the overall commitment to the teaching profession scale ($r=.76$; $p < 0.05$). Teacher autonomy and dedication to the teaching profession were found to have a high level of positive devotion to students ($r=.72$; $p < 0.05$) and selfless work ($r=.71$; $p < 0.05$). In contrast, a moderately significant positive correlation was found between the dimension of commitment to the profession ($r=.58$; $p < 0.05$).

There was a moderately positive relationship between the teaching process autonomy dimension of the teacher autonomy scale and the total score of the dedication to the teaching profession scale ($r=.67$; $p<0.05$), commitment to the profession ($r=.56$; $p<0.05$), and dedication to students ($r=.68$; $p<0.05$). In contrast, there was a positive and highly significant relationship between the selfless work ($r=.76$; $p<0.05$) dimension.

Positive and moderately significant relationships were determined between the curriculum autonomy dimension of the teacher autonomy scale and the total score of the dedication to the teaching profession scale ($r=.40$; $p<0.05$), commitment to the profession ($r=.44$; $p<0.05$), dedication to students ($r=.61$; $p<0.05$), and selfless work ($r=.64$; $p<0.05$).

There was a positive and highly significant relationship between the professional development autonomy dimension of the teacher autonomy scale and the total score of the dedication to the teaching profession scale ($r=.71$; $p<0.05$), commitment to the profession ($r=.73$; $p<0.05$), dedication to students ($r=.76$; $p<0.05$), and selfless work ($r=.79$; $p<0.05$).

There was a moderately positive relationship between the teaching process autonomy dimension of the teacher autonomy scale and the total score of the dedication to the teaching profession scale ($r=.43$; $p<0.05$), commitment to the profession ($r=.38$; $p<0.05$), and selfless work ($r=.56$; $p<0.05$). In contrast, there was a positive low-level significant relationship between the dedication to students dimension ($r=.24$; $p<0.05$).

The regression results for the effect of the teacher autonomy sub-dimensions on the commitment to the teaching profession scale sub-dimensions are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. The multiple regression results for the effect of the teacher autonomy sub-dimensions on the commitment to the teaching profession scale sub-dimensions

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable														
	Devotion to the Profession					Devotion to Students					Selfless Work				
	β	Std. Error	β	t	p	β	Std. Error	β	t	p	β	Std. Error	β	t	p
Constant	1.29	.32		4.03	0.00*	1.37	.42		3.26	0.00*	1.18	.22		5.36	0.00*
Teaching Process Autonomy	0.68	.29	.55	2.34	0.00*	0.71	.36	.29	1.97	0.00*	0.25	.09	.07	2.77	0.00*
Curriculum Autonomy	0.56	.32	.46	1.75	0.00*	0.84	.24	.33	3.50	0.00*	0.67	.29	.08	2.31	0.00*
Professional Development	0.45	.40	.69	1.13	0.00*	0.52	.30	.18	1.73	0.00*	0.62	.15	.25	4.13	0.00*
Professional Communication	0.34	.22	.38	1.55	0.00*	0.63	.30	.27	2.10	0.00*	0.51	.43	.11	1.19	0.00*
	$F=59.37, p=.00, R^2=.24$					$F=61.26, p=.00, R^2=.43$					$F=71.53, p=.00, R^2=.49$				

The regression analysis findings for the sub-dimensions of teacher autonomy to predict the sub-dimensions of commitment to the teaching profession scale are as follows: When Table 3 is examined, it is determined that the sub-dimensions of the teacher autonomy scale were significant predictors of the commitment to the teaching profession scale ($F=59.37$; $p<0.01$). The teacher autonomy scale sub-dimensions explain 24% ($R^2 = 0.24$) of the total variance in the commitment to the profession dimension of the teachers' dedication to the profession scale. When the p values were examined, it was determined that each of the dimensions of the teacher autonomy scale significantly predicted the commitment to the profession dimension of the teachers' dedication to the profession scale ($p<0.01$). As a result of the analysis made on the predictive power of the sub-dimensions of the teacher autonomy scale, it was determined that the effect size level was medium ($f^2 = .32$; Cohen, 1988).

It was determined that the sub-dimensions of the teacher autonomy scale were significant predictors of the dedication to the teaching profession scale ($F=61.26$; $p<0.01$). The teacher autonomy scale sub-dimensions explain 43% ($R^2 = 0.43$) of the total variance in the dedication to students dimension of the teachers' dedication to the profession scale. When the p values were examined, it was determined that each of the teacher autonomy scale dimensions significantly predicted the teachers' dedication to the profession in the dimension of dedication to students ($p<0.01$). As a result of the analysis made on the predictive power of the sub-dimensions of the teacher autonomy scale, the devotion to the teaching profession scale among the students, it was determined that the effect size was large/high ($f^2 = .75$; Cohen, 1988).

It was determined that the sub-dimensions of the teacher autonomy scale were significant predictors of the selfless work dimension of the dedication to the teaching profession scale ($F=71.53$; $p<0.01$). The teacher autonomy scale sub-dimensions explain 49% ($R^2=0.49$) of the total variance in the selfless work dimension of the teachers' dedication to the profession scale. When the p values were examined, it was determined that each of the teacher autonomy scale dimensions significantly predicted the selfless work dimension in the teachers' dedication to the profession scale ($p<0.01$). As a result of the analysis of the predictive power of the teacher autonomy scale sub-dimensions of the self-sacrificing work dimension of the dedication to the teaching profession, it was determined that the effect size was large/high ($f^2 = .96$; Cohen, 1988).

The regression results on the effect of teacher autonomy on dedication to the profession are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. *The Regression results on the effect of teacher autonomy on dedication to the profession*

Independent Variable	Dedication to the Profession				
	β	Std. Error	β	t	p
Constant	1.34	.24		5.58	0.00*
Teacher Autonomy	0.96	.39	.76	2.46	0.00*

$F=64.14, p=.00, R^2=.35$

When Table 4 was examined (above), it was determined that teachers' perceptions of autonomy significantly predicted their commitment to the profession ($F=64.14$; $p<0.01$). School administrators' reinforcing leadership behaviors explain 35% ($R^2=0.35$) of the total variance in teachers' perceptions of organizational citizenship. This finding shows that as the professional autonomy of teachers increases, their professional dedication will also increase. As a result of the analysis of the power of teachers' perceptions of autonomy to predict their dedication to the profession, it was determined that the effect size was large/high ($f^2 = .54$; Cohen, 1988).

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Teachers' perceptions of teacher autonomy are high in the teaching process autonomy and professional communication autonomy dimensions and moderate in the curriculum autonomy and professional development autonomy dimensions. Kürkçü (2019) concluded that teachers have the most autonomy in the professional communication autonomy dimension, followed by the teaching process autonomy and curriculum autonomy dimensions. On the other hand, Çolak (2016), Çolak et al. (2017), and Yazıcı and Akyol (2017) concluded that teachers mostly exhibit autonomous behaviors in teaching process autonomy, followed by the professional communication autonomy and curriculum autonomy dimensions. Çolak and Altınkurt (2017), Çolak et al. (2017), and Buyruk and Akbaş (2021) concluded that teachers have the least autonomy in terms of professional development.

A positive result is that teachers' autonomy is high in the scale total, teaching process, and professional communication autonomy dimensions because the teacher's duty in classroom activities should be to make flexible applications that differ according to the students' characteristics and readiness levels (Bakioğlu & Baltacı, 2013; Sehrawat, 2014). It can be said that teachers need more space in making decisions about teaching, applying the most appropriate activities for their class, and evaluating their students from different perspectives (Kılınç, Bozkurt, & İlhan, 2018). This will be possible with teachers autonomy in the teaching process. Additionally, it can be said that teachers with high autonomy will be more willing and will voluntarily fulfill the roles and behaviors required by their profession.

Teachers have to communicate with their colleagues and students' parents during education. Therefore, teachers must have high levels of professional communication autonomy; otherwise, it will be difficult to communicate with their colleagues and students' parents, hindering their learning from each other and reducing students' success. Çelik (2009) sees communication with parents as a competence area of the teacher and emphasizes that the teacher should get to know the student's family and environment and cooperate. Ertürk and Aydın (2018), on the other hand, emphasized that organizational communication has an important place in the realisation of common goals and that organisational communication is important for managers and teachers to work in cooperation, love their school and job, and do their work with pleasure. In addition, in schools where organizational communication is good, teachers do their jobs more

selflessly and take ownership of their work (Ertürk & Aydın, 2018). In this context, professional communication autonomy is very important.

A remarkable result is that teachers' perceptions of curriculum autonomy are moderate. Since each student's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills are different, teachers must participate and act autonomously in creating and implementing the curriculum because they know their students' characteristics. In this sense, making professional decisions and being flexible with the curriculum will make teachers more beneficial to students than an outside intervention. It is claimed that an outside authority's curriculum and course materials are not very valuable in practice (Hong & Youngs, 2016). When teachers have curriculum autonomy and reveal their products, they are more committed and dedicated (Tokgöz Can, 2019). It is emphasized that a curriculum that can be defined as "one dress for everybody", especially in societies where cultural and social diversity is high, is insufficient to meet the needs of this diversity (Leite, Fernandes, & Figueiredo, 2019). When teacher autonomy over the curriculum in education decreases, curricula focus on output, external control of learning products becomes important (Hopmann, 2003), and teachers are expected to implement the programs to the letter (Westbury, 2000). In this sense, teachers do not have the opportunity to intervene with the curriculum. When teachers have autonomy, such as choosing teaching methods suitable for the needs and characteristics of their students, adding or removing topics from the curriculum, and choosing appropriate course materials, it will increase the quality of educational activities, the professional dedication of teachers, and the students success.

It is an important and remarkable result that teachers' professional development autonomy is moderate. The teaching profession requires working autonomously and having the necessary knowledge, skills, and expertise. In the age of information and technology, where change and development are rapid, teachers' awareness of current information, innovations, and developments and integrating them into their classrooms necessitate professional development. It can be said that teachers who can provide continuity in their professional development will be more qualified, work more devotedly, and be more beneficial to their students. A good educator is a person who tends to improve themselves constantly in terms of their profession and personality and who searches for and evaluates the opportunities that will provide this development (Seferoğlu, 2004). This is possible with the professional development of teachers. However, teachers' professional development autonomy perceptions emerging at a moderate level can be considered an obstacle to this situation. Teachers should be supported to organize vocational courses, seminars, congresses, etc., for their professional and personal development. They should also be supported to participate in teacher-based studies autonomously and voluntarily participate in in-service training because if they are forced, the positive effects of these studies on teachers will decrease. Since some in-service training is included during the semester, it is difficult for teachers to participate in it. This situation can be considered a hindering factor in the professional development of teachers because using different methods, techniques, and materials in the classroom according to their students' interests and abilities depends on their professional development. Therefore, teachers' autonomous participation in courses, seminars, congresses, workshops, etc., is important for their professional development (Ertürk, 2020).

Teachers' perceptions of dedication to the profession are high in all dimensions, including commitment to the profession, devotion to students, and selfless work. Ekinçi (2012), Aytekin (2016), Alim (2019), and Ertürk (2021) also concluded that teachers have high devotion to the profession. In this context, the results of this study are similar to the results of the studies in the literature. As a result of the employee's knowledge, skills, and expertise, their dedication to the profession reveals the centrality of the profession in their life (Karagöz, 2007). Dedicated teachers can communicate effectively with their students in the classroom, taking into account their professional values, and tend to fulfill the roles and responsibilities required by their profession effectively and efficiently (Steel, 2007). Teachers dedicated to their profession tend to cooperate with students' families, spend extra time with students (Butucha, 2013), and take on an important responsibility in raising future generations by using modern methods and techniques to learn effectively (Shukla, 2014). In this respect, it is a positive result that teachers' professional commitment levels are high on the whole scale in all dimensions. Teachers devoted to their profession and students will work more diligently and spend more time with their students besides their official duties. Furthermore, it can be thought that teachers with high professional commitment and devotion to their students will be more beneficial by giving importance to their professional development. Being one of the most important elements

of education, it is very important for teachers to be happy to spend time with students, love their profession, want to continue their teaching profession, give importance to their professional development, deal with students' problems, and make efforts to direct their future.

In general, there is a positive, moderate, and highly significant relationship between the whole and the teacher autonomy and the dedication to the teaching profession on scaled dimensions. The autonomy to be given to teachers contributes to their empowerment and increases student success by enabling them to be more effective in education and training practices. In addition, teachers should be provided with the opportunity to use new methods and techniques, consider their students' needs, make their own decisions in teaching, and implement these decisions since teachers' autonomous behaviors contribute positively to education (Ertürk, 2020). The free work areas offered to teachers are very important in fulfilling their professional duties and responsibilities. The delegation of authority to teachers within their responsibilities requires them to be autonomous (Ertürk, 2020). Since teachers can act freely in the teaching process and take care of their students, it is compulsory for them to be autonomous.

Teacher autonomy is a significant predictor of commitment to the teaching profession. Teacher autonomy and the sub-dimensions of the dedication to the teaching profession scale significantly predict the commitment to the profession, dedication to students, and selfless work dimensions. Autonomous teachers can guide their students with their supportive behaviors in the realization of instructional goals, have sufficient power to teach students the behaviors aimed to be achieved, prevent undesirable behaviors, and create environments in which students can direct themselves during learning (Reeve & Jang, 2006). Therefore, the autonomy provided to teachers will ensure that their education and training activities will be more qualified and their students will be more successful. Some studies in the literature (Au, 2007; Buyruk, 2018; Ertürk, 2020; Evans, 2011; Stevenson & Wood, 2013) emphasize the importance of teacher autonomy, the narrowing of professional autonomy, and the importance of teachers' autonomy. In this context, autonomy, an important predictive power in teachers' professional dedication, will facilitate teachers' areas of action at the point of decision-making and implementation of these decisions. Choosing a curriculum suitable for students' characteristics, making changes and additions to the curriculum, facilitating their professional development to offer more qualified teaching activities to students, and creating environments where they can act independently in their professional development will ensure teachers' commitment to their profession. Therefore, they will work more diligently and devotedly. Ertürk (2020) also emphasized the importance of teacher autonomy in the development of education and training of students, success in education, the teacher's contribution to the school, the use of various teaching methods, and the teacher's professional development.

As a result, it is a positive result that teachers' autonomy is high in the dimensions of scale total, teaching process, and professional communication autonomy. The medium level of curriculum autonomy and professional development autonomy, however, makes it necessary to increase teachers' autonomy in these dimensions. The fact that teachers who have students with different levels of readiness and learning speed in their class realize the teaching process by taking these situations into account and making changes or additions to the curriculum according to the situation will enable them to work more diligently and increase student learning and, thus, success. Asking teachers to implement the curriculum one-to-one may prevent the learning of students with different cognitive, affective, psychological, psycho-motor, and social characteristics in the classroom. In this respect, teachers' curriculum autonomy should be high.

Considering that the teaching provided by teachers who can provide continuity in their professional development will be more qualified, work more devotedly, and be more beneficial to their students, in the 21st century information and technology age where change and development are quite rapid, teachers' being aware of current information, innovations, and developments and integrating them into their classrooms will improve their professional development, making it mandatory. Because the professional development of teachers at the desired level is possible if they receive training in line with their own professional needs, it is difficult for ex officio trainings to contribute to the professional development of teachers without determining the vocational training needs of teachers. This situation may reduce the quality and quantity of educational activities in the classroom. In this context, teachers should have a high level of autonomy in terms of professional development, in-service training, congresses, workshop panels, etc. related to their fields. must be able to participate in the events in accordance with the legal rules. The professional

development of teachers, which is the main point of my education, will ensure the quality of education services and therefore the development of countries in the long run.

It is very important for teachers to have a high level of professional dedication, to work more diligently and selflessly, to love their profession and want to continue it, to attach importance to their professional development, to deal with students' problems, and to make efforts to shape their future. The fact that teacher autonomy is a meaningful predictor of teachers' professional dedication requires decision makers, policymakers and practitioners to attach importance to teacher autonomy and to take the necessary precautions and practices for this.

5. Recommendations

To increase teachers' curriculum autonomy, ensure the participation of teachers in the selection and creation of the teaching content. The teaching content can be defined in a more flexible and general way, allowing teachers to rearrange them according to the needs of the students, making subject selections considering the students' needs, choosing appropriate materials and resources during teaching, and making the necessary additions and subtractions in the program. Since students have different interests, abilities, and characteristics, it can be ensured that teachers take an active role in preparing curricula.

To increase the professional development autonomy of teachers to a higher level, teachers should be supported in organising vocational courses, seminars, congresses, etc. for their professional and personal development. They should also be supported to participate in teacher-based studies autonomously and voluntarily participate in in-service training. Teachers can be provided with an autonomous working environment by enabling them to participate in school management, participate in decision-making and implementation processes in the planning and implementation of educational activities, and provide an environment where they can move freely.

An administrator who wants fewer student problems and high cooperation between administrators and teachers should give due importance to teacher autonomy. Research can be conducted with different participants and methods regarding teachers' autonomy and professional dedication.

This research, which involved a total of 318 teachers working in primary schools in the city center of Bolu, is limited to their views on the scales of autonomy from teachers and commitment to the teaching profession. The findings and results reached in the research reflect the views of the teachers in the study universe, and it would not be scientifically correct to make a sharp generalization. Teacher autonomy and dedication to the teaching profession are limited to the items on the scale.

6. References

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