

## Teaching Career Ladders: Legal Regulation and Applications from the Perspective of Educators

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### Abstract

The main purpose of the research was to determine the opinions and suggestions of educators about the teaching career ladder and various dimensions of this practice in Turkey. This study employed a mixed method sequential exploratory design. Data was collected using a survey, which included seventeen items as well as open-ended questions, developed by the researchers. The study employed a convenience sampling method. A total of one thousand one hundred seventeen educators participated in the study. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely frequency, percentage and Chi-square analysis. Qualitative data was analyzed through collaborative qualitative data analysis. The findings show that about half of the 1117 participants (N=520; 46,6%) were against the implementation of the Teaching Career Ladders, while 436 (39,0%) supported the current implementation. Qualitative analysis indicated that educators' suggestions on teaching profession law can be examined under two main themes: assessment and other issues. The research shows that teachers support the career promotion system but are against the system in current practice. Based on the findings in this study, it is suggested that teachers' opinions should be taken into consideration on regulations concerning their career ladders to provide more comprehensive laws and that consistency and continuity should be provided in terms of teachers' career ladders.

**Keywords:** career ladders, teaching profession law, teacher promotion

### Öğretmenlik Kariyer Basamakları: Eğitimcilerin Bakış Açısıyla Yasal Düzenleme ve Uygulamalar

#### Öz

Bu araştırmanın temel amacı, eğitimcilerin öğretmenlik kariyer basamakları ve bu uygulamanın çeşitli boyutları hakkındaki görüş ve önerilerini belirlemektir. Karma yöntemin kullanıldığı çalışmada veriler, araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen ve on yedi maddenin yanı sıra açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan bir anket kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Çalışmada kolay ulaşılabilir örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmaya toplam bin yüz on yedi eğitimci katılmıştır. Nicel veriler frekans, yüzde ve Ki-kare analizi gibi betimsel istatistikler kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Nitel veriler ise içerik analizi ile çözümlenmiştir. Bulgular, 1117 katılımcının yaklaşık yarısının (N=520; %46,6) Öğretmenlik Kariyer Basamakları uygulamasına karşı olduğunu, 436'sının (%39,0) ise mevcut uygulamayı desteklediğini göstermektedir. Nitel analiz, eğitimcilerin öğretmenlik meslek kanunu ile ilgili önerilerinin iki ana tema altında incelenebileceğini göstermiştir: değerlendirme ve diğer konular. Araştırma, öğretmenlerin kariyer yükselme sistemini desteklediklerini ancak mevcut uygulamaya karşı olduklarını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** öğretmenlik kariyer basamakları, öğretmenlik meslek kanunu, öğretmen yükselmesi

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## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a major role in the social, cultural, and economic development of countries (Altan & Özmusul, 2022; Üstün & Aydın, 2022). Put another way, students' personal and professional development in schools plays a key role in the development and progress of their countries. Therefore, almost every country in the world establishes a national education system, and the citizens of the county receive education in schools that are part of the established education system. Therefore, the success of education system is a very important issue.

The success of schools and education systems depends on many different factors. It has often been argued that one of the most important of these is teachers and their quality (Can, 2019). Teachers' effectiveness and efficiency in the classroom have a direct and significant effect on student achievement (Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Additionally, teacher quality is the most important factor in determining student achievement (Rice, 2003). Moreover, research indicates that teacher quality is one of the most important variables in determining the overall effectiveness of an education system (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Therefore, teacher quality is a key concept for educational research.

Teacher quality is influenced by issues such as the selection of candidates for the teaching profession (Stronge & Hindman, 2006), the education they receive (Azar, 2011), the social and financial working conditions after entering the profession (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007), and the status of the teaching profession in society (Hargreaves, 2009). Due to the importance of teacher quality, educational authorities, who are responsible for establishing and managing the education system, aim to increase and secure teacher quality through legal regulations such as laws and regulations within the framework of the mentioned dimensions. Such laws and regulations organize various dimensions of the teaching profession by addressing them within a legal basis.

### **Laws and Regulations for the Teaching Profession in Some Countries**

In terms of the status of career ladder practice in different countries, in countries such as England, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Portugal and Austria, there is no career ladder practice and there is no salary difference between teachers. However, in some other countries (France, Germany, Slovenia), the practice of teaching career ladder takes place under different names and the rise in career is reflected in the salaries of teachers (Özdemir, et al., 2022). It can be said that among the many purposes of the legal regulations for the teaching profession prepared in various countries, they are mainly related to the professional development of teachers and directing young people to the teaching profession.

Ongoing professional development of teachers in many European countries is actualized in terms of teaching individuals with special needs, approaches to individualized instruction, student behavior and classroom management, professional guidance and mentoring of students, teaching cross-curricular skills, pedagogical competencies for teaching the subject area, assessment and evaluation, teaching in multicultural and multilingual settings, approaches to develop interprofessional competencies for future professions, curriculum knowledge (curriculum literacy), new technologies, school management, information technologies in teaching activities, and subject matter competencies (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). In non-European countries, teachers' professional development programs are also implemented in different ways. For example, in Japan, professional development programs can be divided into two categories: "basic training' for all teachers and 'special training' for teachers' subject areas. "The activities within the scope of basic training are organized according to the professional experience of teachers and all education personnel are required to participate in these training activities (Bayrakçı, 2009)." (Abazaoğlu, 2014, p. 19). In Australia, it is deemed important to identify and reward teachers who continue their professional development and to follow innovations in information technologies closely. In Finland, which stands out with the success of its students in international assessment and evaluation exams, in-service courses are used intensively in the professional development of teachers (Abazaoğlu, 2014).

Programs have been organized in many European countries to encourage people to enter the teaching profession. For example, regulations such as "Mission Possible" in Latvia and "I choose to teach" in Lithuania are aimed both at people who are deciding what their undergraduate education and profession will be, and at people who want to change their career, and aim to encourage them to enter the teaching profession (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Another example is a program in Norway called GNIST (SPARK), which aims to increase interaction and coordination between education stakeholders and thus increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession. One of the dimensions of this program was to encourage individuals to enter the teaching profession between 2009 and 2014 (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). In addition, in

countries such as Spain, France, Sweden and the UK, online campaigns have been used to enhance the reputation of the profession and encourage new generations to enter the profession (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Along with the legal regulations on professional development in various countries, the developments and steps taken in Türkiye in terms of legal regulations related to teaching profession are important.

### **History of Legal Laws and Regulations for the Teaching Profession in Türkiye**

The first legal regulation in Türkiye that recognized teaching as a profession was the “Orta Tedrisat Muallimler Kanunu” (Law on Secondary Education Teachers), numbered 439, which was enacted in 1924 (Orta Tedrisat Muallimler Kanunu, 1924; Tokgöz & Tokgöz, 2022). According to the same law, teachers were divided into three groups according to the level of education they taught: primary, secondary, and higher education. Subsequently, in 1930, “İlk ve Orta Tedrisat Muallimlerinin Terfi ve Tecziyeleri Hakkında Kanun” (Law on the Promotion and Recruitment of Primary and Secondary Education Teachers) was enacted by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM). This law regulated the grades of secondary school teachers’ salaries and the seniority periods required for their promotion to a higher grade. In the period between 1923 and 1950, when the Turkish Republic was newly established and the legal basis for many areas was created, many laws were enacted regarding teachers and teaching profession (Gül & Güngör, 2022).

In the following years, the rights of teachers were not addressed by a separate law but were included in Devlet Memurları Kanunu (the Civil Servants Law) of 1965. Specifically, Millî Eğitim Temel Kanunu (the Basic Law on National Education), enacted in 1973, defined the basics of the teaching profession. In the aforementioned law, teaching is defined as “a specialized profession that undertakes duties of the State in terms of education, training and related administrative duties”, drawing attention to the fact that teaching is a profession that requires special expertise (Millî Eğitim Temel Kanunu, 1973).

In order to identify the problems of teachers, a research commission was established in TBMM in 1993 under the chairmanship of the Minister of National Education and along with the participation of educators. Within the framework of the commission’s work, topics such as “teacher education system, social status of teachers, personnel problems and their elimination, improvement of educational milieus, in-service training problems, employment problems” (Gül & Güngör, 2022, p. 110) were addressed and a law proposal was submitted to the TBMM. However, the commission’s legislative proposal did not make it to the parliamentary agenda and naturally did not become a law.

With the “Öğretmenlik Kariyer Basamaklarında Yükselme Yönetmeliği” (Regulation on Promotion in Teaching Career Ladders), issued in 2005, it was declared that the teaching profession was divided into three career steps after the candidacy period: teacher, specialist teacher and head teacher. With this regulation, it was also announced that teachers with seven years of teaching experience could apply for the position of specialist teacher and those with six years of teaching experience as specialist teacher could apply for the position of head teacher. It was decided to conduct a written exam for promotion in career steps, but those who completed their master’s or doctoral studies in their field or in educational sciences would be exempted from the exam (Öğretmenlik Kariyer Basamaklarında Yükselme Yönetmeliği, 2005). As a part of the regulation, the first exam was held in 2006, but due to legal and administrative problems, the exam could not be held in the following years, which led to various discussions in the educational circles (İş & Birel, 2022). Subsequently, some of the political parties in the Parliament submitted proposals for a teaching profession law in the following years, but none of these were enacted.

Yirminci Eğitim Şûrası (The Twentieth National Education Council) was held in 2021. The decisions taken at the Council were divided into three main headings: “Equal Opportunities in Basic Education,” “Improvement of Vocational Education” and “Professional Development of Teachers.” The professional development of teachers was analyzed under the sub-headings of improving teacher education, supporting the professional development of teachers and increasing the status of teaching. Some of the suggestions for increasing the status of teaching were listed as follows (20. Millî Eğitim Şûrası Kararları, 2021, s. 13): (1) Teaching Profession Law should be enacted. The law should be organized to cover teachers working in all public and private schools, (2) Salaries and personal rights should be reorganized to make the teaching profession and management more attractive, (3) The reward system for teachers should be reorganized on a data-based basis, (4) 3600 additional indicators should be given to retired and serving teachers, and (5) Teaching should be organized as a career profession. Meaningful and significant increases in the personal rights of teachers should be ensured in career progression.

### **Teaching Profession Law - Regulation on Candidate Teaching and Teaching Career Ladders**

As a result of the recommendations made at the Council, the teaching career ladder and related practices were again on the agenda of the education community. A law proposal for Öğretmenlik Meslek Kanunu (the Teaching Profession Law) was brought to the agenda of TBMM. Subsequently, this law was published in Resmi Gazete (the Official Gazette) on February 14, 2022, with the number 7354 (Öğretmenlik Meslek Kanunu, 2022). In this law, it was stated that the teaching profession was a specialty profession, and it was divided into three career steps as teacher, specialist teacher and head teacher, after the candidacy period. In the promotion from teacher to specialist teacher, at least ten years of service was required, including the time spent as a candidate teacher. Teachers who have completed ten years of service can apply for the specialist teacher exam if they complete Uzman Öğretmenlik Eğitim Programı (the Specialist Teacher Training Program) of not less than 180 hours. Those who score 70 points or more in the written exam will become specialist teachers. In terms of the transition from specialist teacher to head teacher, the law stipulates that teachers must have worked as specialist teachers for ten years and must have completed Başöğretmenlik Eğitim Programı (the Head Teacher Training Program) of not less than 240 hours. Teachers will be exempt from the written exam for specialist teachers if they earn a master's degree and from the exam for head teachers if they earn a doctorate degree. Promotion to specialist and head teacher will contribute to both the salary and the additional indicators to be applied with a professional degree. Finally, it is also stated that the principles and procedures regarding the progression in the teaching career ladder will be regulated by a regulation.

The regulation stipulated by the law was published in Resmi Gazete (the Official Gazette) on May 12, 2022, under the name of Aday Öğretmenlik ve Öğretmenlik Kariyer Basamakları Yönetmeliği (Regulation on Candidate Teaching and Teaching Career Ladders) (Aday Öğretmenlik ve Öğretmenlik Kariyer Basamakları Yönetmeliği, 2022). In this regulation, the conditions required for candidates to apply for specialist and head teacher written exams, the conditions required for exemption from the written exam and the issues related to the training programs to be organized were explained. The law and the regulation have been the focus of positive and negative criticism by the stakeholders of the education community after they were put into practice.

### **Criticisms on Teaching Profession Law - Regulation on Candidate Teaching and Teaching Career Ladders**

The teaching career ladder practice and issues it brought along with were mostly examined and criticized by education unions and non-governmental organizations. For example, TEDMEM (2022), which carries out research and analysis activities under the umbrella of Türk Eğitim Derneği (the Turkish Education Association), criticized the Law for not being holistic, not eliminating the scattered legislation on the profession, and not defining the duties and responsibilities of specialist and head teachers. TEDMEM (2022) criticized the Regulation on the grounds that the regulation adds new exams to the exam-oriented education system, and that master's and doctorate degrees that provide exam exemption may lead to a decrease in the quality of the programs that provide master's or doctoral degrees.

Eğitim Sen (2022) argued that the different titles given to teachers doing similar work in schools (teaching the same subjects) would lead to segregation in schools over time and consequently to mistrust. It was also stated that the change in salary according to title violates the principle of equal pay for equal work. In general, it was commented that the implementation of career ladders would not result in an increase in the quality of education.

Eğitim ve Bilim İş Görenleri (Eğitimiş - The Education and Science Workers' Union), on the other hand, emphasized that although the teaching profession should be regulated and secured by a law, the proposal does not meet their expectations in any way. They argued that the implementation of the career ladder for teachers would damage the working peace of teachers and cause conflicts between teachers and parents as well as teachers and administrators.

Eğitim-Bir-Sen (2022) stated that the Law was valuable in terms of having a separate law regulating the teaching profession, but that it did not satisfy teachers' expectations in many aspects. Eğitim-Bir-Sen (2022) stated that the implementation of career ladders, salary and grade increases for specialist and head teachers, and additional indicators were positive developments brought by the law. However, they claimed that it did not have enough content to deserve to be called a professional law in general terms. According to Eğitim-Bir-Sen (2022), the transition to specialist and head teacher should be based only on years of service, training programs and professional work. Accordingly, teachers with eight years of service should be able to directly receive the title of specialist and those with 12 years of service should be able to directly receive the title of head teacher. Teachers

with a master's degree should be exempt from the specialist teacher training program, while those with a doctorate should be exempt from the head teacher training program.

In addition to the opinions and criticisms of non-governmental organizations and education unions, some issues brought along by the Law and the Regulation have caused public debate. First of all, in terms of exemption from exams, the law and the regulation only stipulate the requirement of master's or doctorate rather than specifying clearly that such a degree must be either in the branch of the teacher (Turkish, Mathematics, Physics, etc.) or in educational sciences (Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Administration, etc.). In the Law's current form, a master's or doctoral degree from an unrelated field would exempt teachers from exams. In addition, there is no emphasis on whether the master's degree program should be non-thesis or with thesis. As a result of this uncertainty, non-thesis master's degree would provide exemption from exam just as a master's degree with thesis does (Uzman öğretmenlik sınavından tezsiz yüksek lisans yapanlar muaf olur mu? 2022, January 26). In addition, the fact that the questions in the written exam of 2022, were found to be quite easy by teachers led to comments such as why teachers were directed to master's programs or why an exam was held if everyone was going to be a specialist teacher ("Adaylardan uzman öğretmenlik sınav yorumları!," 2022, November 19). When the opinions and criticisms on the Law and the regulation were examined, it was seen that these criticisms were related to topics such as the application of career ladders system, the application of exams in the promotion, the level of questions in the written exam, the consideration of professional seniority (10 or 20 years) in the progression between the ladders and the length or shortness of this period, the increase in salary as a result of promotion, the exemption from the exam because of graduate education outside the field and the obligation to participate in electronic training programs organized to take the written exam.

The number of studies in the literature on teaching career ladders, which is a relatively new practice, is naturally limited. New research on this subject can contribute to strengthening the related literature. When the existing research on teaching career steps was examined, it was found that some of the studies were non-empirical and in the form of opinion articles (Altan & Özmuşul, 2022; Can, 2019). In another study, the teaching profession law was analyzed by comparing it with the laws of Germany, China, Canada and Singapore (Dönmez Yapucuoğlu & Eryılmaz Ballı, 2022). It was also determined that some of the research articles took into account only the views of administrators (Üstün & Aydın, 2022), while others focused only on teachers from a specific discipline (Tokgöz & Tokgöz, 2022). Research articles on teachers' views were generally qualitative in design and conducted with small samples (Aksan, Gökmen, & Demir, 2023; Elagöz & Elagöz, 2023; Gül & Güngör, 2022; İş & Birel, 2022; Özdemir, et al., 2022). Although qualitative studies conducted with small samples are useful in examining the subject in depth, they are not effective in determining the tendency and distribution of teachers in general. Within the scope of the literature review, only one study was found that examined teachers' views on the teaching profession law and the implications of this legal regulation with relatively larger samples (Gürbüz, et al., 2022). In this regard, it can be said that there is a need to determine the opinions and suggestions of teachers from different disciplines and school administrators with a representative sample to bring new perspectives to the study of the subject.

### **Purpose of Research and Research Questions**

In this context, the main purpose of the research was to determine the opinions and suggestions of teachers and school administrators, who are also teachers with management responsibilities working in various educational levels and branches about the teaching career ladder and various dimensions of this practice. In order to achieve this aim, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. How do teachers and school administrators evaluate the teaching career ladder practice? Specifically in terms of:

- a. whether it should be implemented or not,
- b. exams for the promotion,
- c. the level of the questions in the written exam conducted in 2022,
- d. 10 years of service as a basis for promotion from teacher to specialist teacher and from specialist teacher to head teacher,
- e. salary difference after promotion,
- f. graduate study outside the field providing exam exemption,
- g. non-thesis master's degree providing exam exemption.



2. What are teachers' suggestions about some aspects of the teaching career ladder practice? Specifically in terms of:

- a. 10 years of service as a basis for promotion from teacher to specialist teacher and from specialist teacher to head teacher,
- b. Distance training programs,
- c. Suggestions regarding teaching career ladder system in general.

### Significance of the Study

Education will undoubtedly play a fundamental role in achieving the political, economic and cultural goals of Türkiye with the qualified people it will raise. The success of education in this process depends on teachers. Considering the aforementioned importance of education in the progress of a society and its economic and cultural prominence and the dominant role of teachers in this process, it is important to examine the legal practices and regulations regarding teachers' professions from their perspective. Examining the opinions and suggestions of teachers working in Türkiye regarding the teaching career ladder can contribute to future legal regulations. This research can bring new perspectives to the examination of the research topic by determining the opinions and suggestions of teachers and school administrators from different branches regarding the teaching career ladder implementation.

## METHOD

### Research Design

Aiming to reach a general perspective on teachers' and administrators' opinions and suggestions on career ladders application in Turkey in 2022-2023 academic year, this study employed a mixed method sequential exploratory design that includes first quantitative data to provide an overview of the issue in question and then qualitative data to improve and clarify those statistical findings (Ivankova et al., 2006).

### Population and Sample

The target population of the research included all teachers in Turkey whose number is one million two hundred one thousand one hundred thirty-eight including state and private schools (Kasap, 2022). It is pointed out that the sample should include minimum three hundred eighty-four participants for such a big population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). However, the researchers aimed to reach a much bigger sample and employed a convenience sampling method involving respondents who were "convenient" and there was no pattern whatsoever in acquiring these respondents (Galloway, 2005). A total of one thousand one hundred seventeen participants whose demographics were explained below provided data for the survey, and the number of participants providing data for semi-structured interview questions is four hundred nine.

**Table 1.** Demographics of Sample

Gender	N	%	School Type	N	%
Female	547	49,00	Preschool	38	3,40
Male	570	51,00	Primary School	369	33,00
Total	1117	100,00	Secondary School	330	29,50
Age	N	%	High School	N	%
22-32 years old	120	10,70	Others	243	21,80
33-43 years old	471	42,20	Total	1117	100,00
44 and over	526	47,10	Field	N	%
Total	1117	100,00	Social Sciences	778	69,70
Experience	N	%	Sciences	186	16,70
btwn 1-9 years	179	16,00	Vocational Training	96	8,60
btwn 10-19 years	372	33,30	PE & Arts	57	5,10
20 years and more	566	50,70	Total	1117	100,00
Total	1117	100,00	Status	N	%
Role	N	%	Teacher	249	22,30
Teacher	960	85,90	Expert	724	64,80
Vice Manager/Manager	157	14,10	Head	144	12,90
Total	1117	100,00	Total	1117	100,00

As Table 1 represents, the sample included 1117 teachers 570 (51,00%) of whom are males and 547 (49,00%) are females. The age group with the highest number (N=526; 47,10%) is 44 and over while it is followed by those between 33 and 43 (N=471; 42,20%) and the remaining 120 (10,70%) participants are between 22 and 32 years old. The sample included mostly teachers with an experience over 20 years (N=566; 50,70%); the number of teachers with an experience of 10 to 19 years is 372 (33,30%) and remaining 179 (16,00%) teachers have an experience between 1 to 9 years. A big majority of the participants (N=960; 85,90%) do not have a vice manager or manager title while the number of those with one of those titles is 157 (14,10%). The number of participant teachers depending on the type of school they work at is as follows: 38 (3,40%) from preschools, 369 (33,00%) from primary schools, 330 (29,50%) from secondary schools, 137 (12,30%) from high schools and remaining 243 (21,80%) from other types of schools/institutions. Teachers teaching in field of social sciences such as Turkish, Geography, Philosophy, etc. equal to 69,70% (N=778) of the total sample while the number of those teaching in a field of sciences like Math, Biology, etc. is 186 (16,70%). The number of teachers working in the vocational training field is 96 (8,60%) and remaining 57 (5,10%) are working at Physical Education or Arts fields. A total of 249 (22,30%) teachers report that they do not have a status in terms of career ladders while the number of experts is 724 (64,80%) and heads is 144 (12,90%).

### **Data Collection**

Quantitative data was collected using a survey developed by the researchers. The survey included seventeen items all of which were replied as “Agree”, “Unsure” or “Disagree”; thus, it provides categorical data to the researchers. Out of all items, eleven were about career ladders application in general (if teachers support or are against it, how they have perceived the written exam, etc.) and remaining six items were about what teachers thought about graduate education that brought exemption from the written exam. Two experts having a PhD degree in the field of educational sciences provided expert opinions on items and proposed revisions by them were done before distributing the survey. Qualitative data, on the other hand, was collected through a semi-structured interview form that was also reviewed by experts’ opinions and contained four questions first two of which asked teachers’ and administrators’ opinions on how many years they should wait between the career ladders, from teacher to expert teacher and from expert to head teacher. The third question collects ideas about alternatives to online training provided by Ministry of Education as a prerequisite for taking the written exam. The last question opens place for suggestions on any issue to develop the career ladders application. The data collection process was carried out online through Google Forms. Survey and interview form were transferred to the online platform and the link for it was shared with the prospective participants, requesting them to take part in the research as data provider.

### **Data Analysis and Reliability**

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely frequency and percentage. Chi-square, the cross-tabulation statistic, was used to examine if there was a statistically significant relation between demographics and survey items. Then, qualitative data was analyzed through collaborative qualitative data analysis that tries to capitalize on the benefits of coordinating qualitative data analysis in groups, while compensating for some of the challenges introduced by working with two or more analysts (Richards & Hemphill, 2018) which is often viewed as one way to enhance trustworthiness together with benefits related to integrating the perspectives provided by multiple researchers (Patton, 2015). Besides, systematicity, clarity, and transparency are claimed to be enforced by working together on the coding process (Hall et al., 2005) and having other researchers acting as an “auditor” is a way to ensure accountability (Cornish et al., 2014). As a result, the issue of coder agreement, and the broader notions of trustworthiness and credibility was provided in this research by establishing a clear protocol and codebook and then dialogue through and reach consensus on coded data (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). The collaborative qualitative data analysis allows researchers to identify themes in a deductive or inductive or both ways (Richards & Hemphill, 2018), and in this research an inductive approach was preferred as no prior themes were named before the research.

### **Research Ethics**

The whole research procedure including data collection tool and method was subjected to the approval of Research Ethics Committee of Aksaray University and was found appropriate.

## FINDINGS

The findings of the research are provided in two parts. The descriptive statistics of survey items and cross-tabulation results of significant relations between demographics and survey items are given in the first part and it is followed by answers to open ended questions in the second.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Results for Items concerning Career Ladders in General

Item	Disagree		Unsure		Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I am against the implementation of Teaching Career Ladders.	436	39,0	161	14,4	520	46,6
I find the classification of career ladders (teacher, expert teacher, head teacher) appropriate.	614	55,0	81	7,3	422	37,8
I find it appropriate to have an exam in the career ladders application.	851	76,2	59	5,3	207	18,5
I think the questions in the Teaching Career Ladders Written Examination are easy.	133	11,9	134	12,0	850	76,1
I think that promotion in career ladders should be based only on professional seniority without exams.	202	18,1	107	9,6	808	72,3
I think that all teachers should receive the same salary regardless of career level.	618	55,3	107	9,6	392	35,1
I think that all teachers should receive the same salary regardless of professional seniority (years worked).	777	69,6	94	8,4	246	22,0
I find the practice of salary increase according to career ladders correct.	366	32,8	75	6,7	676	60,5
I think that the 10-year working period taken as a basis for transition from teacher to expert teacher is too long.	261	23,4	112	10,0	744	66,6
I think that the 10-year working period taken as a basis for transition from expert teacher to head teacher is too long.	187	16,7	97	8,7	833	74,6
I find the requirement to take online education (180-240 hours of distance education) in order to take the Teaching Career Ladders Written Examination appropriate.	734	65,7	147	13,2	236	21,1

As can be seen in Table 2, there are 11 items asking for participants' opinions in terms of Career Ladders application. The results show that nearly half (N=520; 46,6%) of the 1117 participants report being against the implementation of Teaching Career Ladders while 436 (39,0%) of them are in favor of current application. The number of participants reporting being unsure about this item is 161 (14,4%). More than half of the participants (N=614; 55,0%) indicate not finding the current classification of career ladders (teacher, expert teacher, head teacher) appropriate whereas the number of participants finding it appropriate is 422 (37,8%) and 81 (7,3%) are unsure. The highest number of disagree (N=851; 76,2%) is in the third item that questions if participants find it appropriate to have an exam in the career ladders application. Only 207 (18,5%) participants agree with that and 59 (5,3%) report being unsure. Then comes the item which states that written exam questions are easy with the highest number of agree (N=850; 76,1%). Of the total, 133 (11,9%) disagrees and 134 (12,0%) are unsure about that item. The following item states that promotion in career ladders should be based only on professional seniority without exams and the number of agrees is high (N=808; 72,3%) while 202 (18,1%) disagree and 107 (9,6%) are not sure of it. More than half of the participants (N=618; 55,3%) disagree that all teachers should receive the same salary regardless of career level. Moreover, 392 (35,1%) participants agree with that and 107 (9,6%) are not sure of it. A majority of teachers (N=777; 69,6%) disagree that all teachers should receive the same salary regardless of professional seniority (years worked) and only 246 (22,0%) agree with the item while remaining 94 (8,4%) are unsure. 676 (60,5%) participants find the practice of salary increase according to career ladders correct. The number of participants that disagree with that item is 366 (32,8%) and 75 (6,7%) are unsure. Of 1117 participants, 744 (66,6%) agree that the 10-year working period taken as a basis for transition from teacher to expert teacher is too long; 261 (23,4%) disagree and 112 (10,0%) are unsure. A big number of teachers (N=833; 74,6%) agree that the 10-year working period taken as a basis for transition from expert teacher to head teacher is too long. The number of participants disagreeing is 187 (16,7%) and 97 teachers (8,7%) are unsure.



**Table 3.** Descriptive Results for Items concerning relation between Career Ladders and Graduate Education

Item	Disagree		Unsure		Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I find it appropriate that a non-thesis master's degree in a field that is NOT related to the teaching profession should provide exam exemption for promotion in the career ladders.	808	72,3	81	7,3	228	20,4
I find it appropriate that a master's degree with thesis in a field that is NOT related to the teaching profession should provide exam exemption for promotion in the career ladders.	745	66,7	97	8,7	275	24,6
I find it appropriate that a master's degree without thesis in a field that is related to the teaching profession (branch or educational sciences) should provide exam exemption for promotion in career ladders.	441	39,5	107	9,6	569	50,9
I find it appropriate that a master's degree with thesis in a field that is related to the teaching profession (branch or educational sciences) should provide exam exemption for promotion in career ladders.	256	22,9	72	6,4	789	70,6
I find it appropriate that doctoral education in a field that is NOT related to the teaching profession provides exemption from the exam for promotion in the career ladders.	723	64,7	105	9,4	289	25,9
I find it appropriate that doctoral education in a field that is related to the teaching profession (branch or educational sciences) should provide exam exemption for promotion in the career ladders.	271	24,3	76	6,8	770	68,9

As Table 3 shows, a big majority of participants (N=808; 72,3%) disagree that it is appropriate that a non-thesis master's degree in a field that is NOT related to the teaching profession should provide exam exemption for promotion in the career ladders while 228 (20,4%) agree with the item and 81 (7,3%) are unsure. Similarly, more than half of the participants (N=745; 66,7%) disagree with the item indicating it is appropriate that a master's degree with thesis in a field that is NOT related to the teaching profession should provide exam exemption for promotion in the career ladders. Nearly one-fourth of participants (N=275; 24,6%) agree with that item and 97 (8,7%) are unsure of it. Slightly more than half of participants (N=569; 50,9%) agree that a master's degree without thesis in a field that is related to the teaching profession (field or educational sciences) should provide exam exemption for promotion in career ladders while 441 (39,5%) disagree with it and 107 (9,6%) are unsure. The number of participants who agrees that a master's degree with thesis in a field that is related to the teaching profession (branch or educational sciences) should provide exam exemption for promotion in career ladders is 789 (70,6%). Less than one-fourth (N=256; 22,9%) of participants disagree with that item and 72 (6,4%) of them are unsure of it. Most of the participants (N=723; 64,7%) disagree that doctoral education in a field that is NOT related to the teaching profession provides exemption from the exam for promotion in the career ladders and nearly one-fourth (N=289; 25,9%) of them agree with it and remaining 105 (9,4%) participants are unsure of it. The number of participants with agreeing that doctoral education in a field that is related to the teaching profession (branch or educational sciences) should provide exam exemption for promotion in the career ladders is 770 (68,9%). Of the total 1117 participants, 271 (24,3%) disagree with that item while 76 (6,8%) are unsure.

**Table 4.** Results of Chi-Square Analysis of Gender and Master's Degree in a Non-teaching Field

		I find it appropriate that a master's degree with thesis in a field that is NOT related to the teaching profession should provide exam exemption for promotion in the career ladders.			Total	X <sup>2</sup>	p	
			Disagree	Unsure	Agree			
Gender	Female	Count	354	63	130	547	10,857	,004
		Expected Count	364,8	47,5	134,7	547,0		
	Male	Count	391	34	145	570		
		Expected Count	380,2	49,5	140,3	570,0		
Total	Count	745	97	275	1117			
	Expected Count	745,0	97,0	275,0	1117,0			

As Table 4 shows, there are 547 female and 570 male participants and the cross tabulation indicates a significant relationship ( $X^2_{(2)}=10,857$ ;  $p<,05$ ) between the gender and participants' opinions if it is appropriate that a master's degree with thesis in a field that is NOT related to the teaching profession should provide exam exemption for promotion in the career ladders. Male participants are more likely to disagree with this item.

**Table 5.** Results of Chi-Square Analysis of Gender and PhD Degree in Teaching Field

		I find it appropriate that doctoral education in a field that is related to the teaching profession (specific field or educational sciences) should provide exam exemption for promotion in the career ladders.				Total	$X^2$	p
			Disagree	Unsure	Agree			
Gender	Female	Count	133	48	366	547	6,760	,034
		Expected Count	132,7	37,2	377,1	547,0		
	Male	Count	138	28	404	570		
		Expected Count	138,3	38,8	392,9	570,0		
Total		Count	745	271	76	1117		
		Expected Count	745,0	271,0	76,0	1117,0		

As can be seen in Table 5, the cross tabulation indicates a significant relationship ( $X^2_{(2)}=6,760$ ;  $p<,05$ ) between the gender and participants' opinions if it is appropriate that doctoral education in a field that is related to the teaching profession (branch or educational sciences) should provide exam exemption for promotion in the career ladders. Male participants are more likely to agree with this item.

**Table 6.** Results of Chi-Square Analysis of Field and Seniority as a source of Salary Increase

Field		I think that all teachers should receive the same salary regardless of professional seniority (years worked).				$X^2$	p
			Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Total	
Social Sciences	Count	527	72	179	778	17,559	,007
	Expected Count	541,2	65,5	171,3	778,0		
Sciences	Count	139	13	34	186		
	Expected Count	129,4	15,7	41,0	186,0		
PE & Arts	Count	33	3	21	57		
	Expected Count	39,6	4,8	12,6	57,0		
Vocational Training	Count	78	6	12	96		
	Expected Count	66,8	8,1	21,1	96,0		
Total	Count	777	94	246	1117		
	Expected Count	777,0	94,0	246,0	1117,0		

As can be seen in Table 6, the cross tabulation indicates a significant relationship ( $X^2_{(6)}=17,559$ ;  $p<,05$ ) between the field and participants' opinions on if all teachers should receive the same salary regardless of professional seniority (years worked). Teachers of social sciences and PE & Arts are more likely to agree while teachers of science courses and vocational training are more likely to disagree with this item.

**Table 7.** Results of Chi-Square Analysis of Field and Master's Degree without Thesis for Exam Exemption

Field		I find it appropriate that a master's degree without thesis in a field that is related to the teaching profession (own field or educational sciences) should provide exam exemption for promotion in career ladders.				X <sup>2</sup>	p
		Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Total	14,720	,023
Social Sciences	Count	316	68	394	778		
	Expected Count	307,2	74,5	396,3	778,0		
Sciences	Count	65	25	96	186		
	Expected Count	73,4	17,8	94,7	186,0		
PE & Arts	Count	30	7	20	57		
	Expected Count	22,5	5,5	29,0	57,0		
Vocational Training	Count	30	7	59	96		
	Expected Count	37,9	9,2	48,9	96,0		
Total	Count	441	107	569	1117		
	Expected Count	441,0	107,0	569,0	1117,0		

As Table 7 represents, the cross tabulation indicates a significant relationship ( $X^2_{(6)} = 14,720$ ;  $p < ,05$ ) between the field and participants' opinions on if it is appropriate that a master's degree without thesis in a field that is related to the teaching profession (branch or educational sciences) should provide exam exemption for promotion in career ladders. Teachers of social sciences and PE & Arts are more likely to disagree while teachers of vocational training and science courses are more likely to agree with this item.

### Findings of Open-ended Questions

The first open-ended question asks about the how many years the period taken as a basis for transition from teacher to expert teacher should be and a total of 903 teachers indicated their opinions. While the highest number of years is 35 and lowest is 1, the mean of all is 6,92. The second question asks about how many years should be taken as a basis for the transition from expert teacher to head teacher and the number of participants replying it is 900. The lowest number is one year and the highest is 25 years while the mean of all is 7,40. The third open-ended question asks for the alternatives that teachers can suggest instead of distance in-service training required to take the written exam for career ladders and following codes, categories and theme were derived from the data.

**Table 8.** Alternatives to Distance Education applied in Career Ladders Application

Theme	Category	Code	F	%
Alternatives	Conventional	Face to face	104	38,24
		Practice-based applications	54	19,86
		In-service training	46	16,91
		Seminar	44	16,17
		University-led training	17	6,25
		Short-term	7	2,57
	Total:		272	100,00
	Online Supported	Other Resources (books, study guides, presentations)	34	49,28
		Self-study	31	44,93
		Hybrid	4	5,79
		Total:		69

Table 8 shows that the qualitative data for the third question was labeled under one theme that is "Alternatives" and two categories below it, namely "Conventional" under which there are 6 codes and "Online Supported" with 3 codes linked to. Within the "Conventional" category that represents more traditional methods as alternatives to online in-service training, the code with the highest frequency ( $F=104$ ; 38,24%) is named as "face to face" that clearly explains itself. A deputy principal (VM60) explains it as follows: "*Trainings should be distributed over a year and be face-to-face. It should contribute to the development of the teacher. Distance education is of no use.*" The code with the second highest frequency ( $F=54$ ; 19,86%) is called practice-based applications that refer to a demand by teachers to include more hands-on activities to get prepared to career ladders.

The code third in terms of frequency (F=46; 16,91%) is in-service training. Then comes the fourth code (F=44; 16,17%) that is seminar indicating a more academic meeting with the experts that will lead to exchange of both theoretical information and applications for professional development. The code that is fifth in terms of groundedness (F=17; 6,25%) is named as university-led training that includes the suggestions of teachers to receive a training at universities and a teacher (T228) indicates it as: “*I think it would be more appropriate to cooperate with universities in the province and provide necessary trainings in the field of teaching.*” The last code in this category is called as short-term (F=7; 2,57%) and indicates that teachers are complaining the duration of online training courses too. A teacher (T251) explains it as follows: “*I want the duration of the trainings to be monitored to be shortened and spread throughout the year or until the year in which the exam will be held, I do not think that teachers follow the trainings because they are long as they are currently in practice.*” while T471 complains as “*Distance education is the best. But the trainings are very long...*”

The fourth open-ended question asks participants “Do you have any other suggestions regarding the implementation of the teaching career ladders?” and answers for this question were categorized within two themes as “Assessment” and “Other Issues”. The “Assessment” theme includes four categories, namely additional activities with 6 codes, multi-dimensional with 5 codes, further training with 3 codes and exam with 2 codes in it. The “Other Issues” theme includes only one category called work-life, and there are 6 codes in it.

**Table 9.** Suggestions by Teachers to Improve Career Ladders Application

Theme	Category	Code	F	%
Assessment	Additional Activities	Seniority	146	69,52
		Projects	30	14,29
		Seminar/course	12	5,71
		Scientific Products	9	4,29
		In-service training	8	3,81
		Writing books	5	2,38
		Total:	210	100,00
	Multi-dimensional	Manager	14	48,28
		Parents	5	17,25
		Student performance	4	13,79
		Students	3	10,34
		Inspector Report	3	10,34
	Total:	29	100,00	
	Further Training	Graduate Degrees	35	53,85
		Graduate Degrees with special quota	21	32,31
		Field Specific In-service training	9	13,84
		Total:	65	100,00
	Exam	Quality	24	57,14
		Field-specific	18	42,86
		Total:	42	100,00
Other Issues	Work-life	Peace at workplace	30	48,39
		Continuity	13	20,97
		Retirement plans	9	14,52
		Punishment	5	8,06
		Appointment of managers	3	4,84
		Private schools	2	3,23
		Total:	62	100,00

In the assessment theme, the category with the highest number of coding is named as additional activities in which there are suggestions of teachers regarding alternatives to written exam for career ladders. The most frequently linked code in this category is seniority (F=146; 69,52%) that offers years of experience as a strong alternative to the written exam. A teacher (T15) explains it as “*I believe in professional experience; working in the field, in the field should be essential, I think the exam is an unnecessary practice.*” while a similar opinion is expressed as “*I think that all teachers who have completed 5 years should be expert teachers and all teachers who have completed 15 years should be head teachers.*” (T595). The code that is second in terms of groundedness is named as projects referring to the extra duties by teachers as project coordinators and/or workers. For example, T330 points out “*Teachers who carry out voluntary projects such as e-twinning, Erasmus, Tübitak should be*

exempted from the career ladders exam.” and T184 highlights as “*Instead of exams, teachers should be asked to work for the benefit of society. Project should be requested...*” The next code whose frequency is 12 (5,71%) is called as seminar/course projecting opinions for attaining scientific meetings. The following code, on the other hand, is named as scientific products referring to articles, conference proceedings etc. and has a frequency of 9 (4,29%). In-service training is the code with the next highest frequency (F=8; 3,81%) and as its name refers participants offer professional development courses provided by Ministry of Education. The last code in this category is writing books (F=5; 2,38%) in which teachers offer asking for writing coursebooks for their lessons as an additional qualification. A principal (M47) explains it as “*Those with books, articles, etc. should be made experts or head teachers without taking the exam.*”

The second category in the assessment theme is names as multi-dimensional referring to various sources of assessments to be included in the evaluation of teachers through their career ladders rather than a written exam. The first code below it is called manager (f=14; 48,28%) indicating school managers to have a say in the assessment of teachers in the transitions between career ladders. A school principal (M10) explains it as “*The opinions of school principals about the teacher can also be included in the scoring.*” and similarly a teacher (T599) offers that “*The school principal should be consulted about the lectures and organization of the expert teachers.*” The code second in terms of frequency is parents (F=5; 17,25%) and asks for the integration of parent evaluations of teachers. A teacher (T852) explains it as “*Students and parents can be considered to evaluate the performance of the teacher.*” Then comes student performance (F=4; 13,79%) explaining that students’ performance in standardized tests might supply an overview of teachers and can be used to move one step forward in career ladders. The two other codes remaining in this category are students (F=3; 10,34%) which includes assessment of teacher performance by learners and inspector reports (F=3; 10,34%) examining teachers’ performance within a period.

The next category, named as further training, includes teachers’ suggestions on higher educational degrees (MA and PhD) as requirements of higher career ladders together with in-service training that is field-specific. The code with highest frequency is graduate degree (F=35; 53,85%) and rooted in two different ways; a group of teachers offer a compulsory graduate degree for further career ladders while some others suggest it as an option. A teacher who is also the vice principal of a school (VM19) explains it as “*There must be a requirement to have a master's degree with a thesis in their field. Depending on the outcome of this, a career ladder should be gradually built up every 5 years.*” and a teacher (T150) state that “*Teachers with a master's degree in their field should immediately become expert teachers without an exam and without a time limit. Teachers with a PhD in their field should become head teachers immediately, without an exam and without a time limit.*” The next code with the highest frequency is called as graduate degrees with a special quota (F=21; 32,31%) and includes the idea of offering teachers a special quota in graduate degree programs to encourage them. A school principal (M36) states it as “*Special quotas should be provided for teachers to do master's and doctorate degrees. Master's degree holders should become experts and doctorate holders should become head teachers without any year requirement.*” The last code here is field specific in-service training (F=9; 13,84%) that points out teachers demand the in-service training in their specific field of study rather than pedagogical knowledge. A teacher (T249) explains it as “*If there is to be such a system, I would like to be an expert in my field. And I suggest that the trainings should be adjusted accordingly and that there should be an exam related to my field.*”

The following category is named as exam (the one that was conducted in 2022) in which teachers either complain the way it took place or offer an alternative. The most frequent code in this category is called as quality (F=24; 57,14%) indicating a discomfort about the written exam that is perceived as too easy and not selective. A teacher with the title of vice principal (VM30) defines the situation as “*This process should be done with a more professional approach. The selectivity of exam questions should be increased.*” and a teacher (T284) complains that “*The topics should be related to current education and training. The career ladders exam did not add anything to me, in fact it made me feel very nervous.*” The second and last code in this category is called as field-specific (F=18; 42,86%) indicating that teachers require the written exam to include items from their specific field of study rather than general topics in education. A teacher (T219) clarifies it by saying “*Each teacher should take the career ladders exam related to his/her field. Questions should be prepared for each field in its own just like in the KPSS (Centralized Civil Servant Selection Exam) field exam.*”

The last category is named as work-life which includes teacher opinions about the effect of career ladders application on teaching profession. The code with the highest frequency is called peace at workplace (F=30; 48,39%) and includes both positive and negative teacher thoughts and experiences triggered by teacher career ladders. For example, a teacher (T5) states that “*I am completely against this practice, a teacher is a teacher. There can be no discrimination between teachers in the same school; if there is, working peace can be disrupted.*” and T274 puts forward a similar thought as “*The career ladders focus only on salary differentials and do not*



*measure whether a teacher is an expert or a head teacher. It is a practice that disrupts labor peace and alienates really good teachers.”* The code with the second highest frequency is named as continuity (F=13; 20,97%) that consists of teacher opinions and mostly complaints on the life of career ladders application. A vice principal (VM43) indicates it by saying *“If this practice is to be done, it should be done every year. It was done 15 years ago. This should be done fairly.”* And a teacher points out the same issue by saying that *“As a teacher who has been working for 27 years, I would like to express that the teachers who could not take this exam 17 years ago for various reasons (due to my health problems) have just become experts. Although our retirement period has come, we will retire before we can be the head teacher. I kindly request that this important loss of my colleagues who are deprived of rights like me be eliminated urgently.”* The next code is retirement plans with a frequency of 9 (14,52%) and draws attention on the complaints of participant teachers that the salary increase brought by moving forward in the career ladders is not preserved when they are retired. A teacher (T38) explains it as *“In case of retirement, there should be at least a partial positive contribution.”* Another code is called punishment (F=5; 8,06%) referring to the inequality perceptions of teachers who have not been allowed to take career ladders exam due to official punishments they have had. A vice principal (VM65) clarifies it as *“Teachers who do their job very well but cannot take the exam because of a punishment should also be given the right to take the exam.”* The next code is called as appointment of managers (F=3; 4,84%) including a suggestion that career ladders should be used when appointing school managers and vice managers by giving priorities to head and expert teachers. A teacher (T75), for example, states that *“It would be appropriate to select managers from head teachers and vice managers from expert teachers...”* The last code in this category is called as private schools (F=2; 3,23%) and is seen as important since it highlights the inequality increase between teachers working for the state and private schools. A vice manager clearly explains it as *“As a teacher working in the private sector, being outside of this issue at the maximum level wears me out. Because as private sector teachers, we are at the mercy of the employer, we are working under unfair conditions.”*

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In this research, teachers’ and administrators’ opinions as well as suggestions about career ladders system were analyzed. According to the findings, majority of the teachers were against the new system. This result is consistent with the other research (Tosun et al., 2014; Özdemir et al., 2022; Gürbüz et al., 2022; İlkin & Çobanoğlu, 2023). Moreover, teachers support carrier promotion system, but they are against the implemented system. Gürbüz, Aydın & Gürbüz (2022) indicated teachers do not reject the idea of carrier development system, yet they are against the current practice.

The study revealed that most of the teachers are against the written exam; they are of the opinion that promotion to higher carrier ladder should be based on the seniority rather than written exam. The qualitative research findings revealed that professional seniority, managed projects at school, attending to courses and seminars, scientific products, writing books or articles together with principal and inspector reports, parents’ and students’ opinions and their students’ performance should be taken into consideration while evaluating teachers’ proficiency for higher positions. In other words, teachers demanded a multi-dimensional assessment system rather than a single written exam. From this respect, quantitative and qualitative findings are consistent. Similarly, results indicated that the carrier ladder exam that took place in 2022 was not found to be selective enough and qualitative data also revealed that the exam was not selective, and it should include field-specific questions. Teacher profession is based on three dimensions, namely content knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, and liberal knowledge and both teacher training and selection systems are based upon them. The fact that the exam in 2022 only included questions on pedagogical knowledge brings into the agenda the problem of validity. Baş et al. (2023) found similar result in their qualitative study.

In terms of the questions about the salary increase according to the carrier system, teachers pointed out that teachers’ salaries should increase with their professional seniority, but this increase should not be dependent on any written exam. In this study, although nearly half of the participants’ professional seniority is less than 20 years, they support the salary increase depending on seniority. When qualitative data were analyzed, participants indicated that salary increase should be based on seniority again. Besides, it is advised by the participants that the salary increase should affect not only while they work but also when they retire. Gülden & Kaplan (2023) expressed that teachers’ income should differentiate according to the professional seniority. Teachers participating the study indicated that needed professional seniority, 10 years, to take written exam is too long. According to the qualitative results, teachers proposed approximately 7 years from teacher to expert teacher step and from expert

teacher to head teacher step. From this respect, teachers share the idea of professional seniority to move between carrier ladders. In qualitative data, it is indicated that teachers currently having more than 20 years teaching experience have little chance to be head teacher.

In this study, teachers were asked about the online education process that they had to take before the exam. According to the results, most of the teachers were against online education. The reasons for their rejections revealed in qualitative dimension of the study, as participants indicate that they are open to in-service training, but they demand practice based or workshop for their professional development. Online in-service training courses cannot meet their demands and needs. Similar results were found in different studies (Azar, 2011; Can, 2019; Gültekin & Çubukçu 2008; Gürbüz et al., 2022).

Teachers are against the idea of being exempt from the written exam because of higher education not related to teaching profession (graduate degrees). Conversely, they support the idea of graduation from graduate programs related to teaching profession for being exempt from written exam, also demanding a special quota for the teachers currently in-service. Dikbaş and Gül (2023) also indicated that teachers supported the idea of being exempt from any written exam for those taking MBA or Doctorate degree.

Although there is not a significant relation between participants' answers to items with their age, seniority, role, type of school they work at, and status, gender is found to have significant relation with two items, and field is found to have a significant relation with three items. According to findings, male teachers are more likely to support the idea of being exempt from written exam because of master's degree. This result may be caused from social roles of the female ones as master's degree programs last at least two years and require doing many homework and also self-study because they have more responsibility than male teachers such as being mother or doing house works. Gür & Bozgöz (2022) found that female master students are more prone to drop out their education as a result of having more responsibility at home.

Teachers teaching in the social sciences fields, art and physical training were more likely in favor of salary shifts but it is not the case for science and math teachers. This result may be because of having extra income such as private tuitions. Science and math teachers have more opportunity to give private tuitions than social sciences and art. Some study (Dinç et al., 2014; Akdemir & Kılıç, 2020) indicated that students needed extra lessons for science and math courses. Furthermore, central examination system, such as university and high school exams, nurtures these demands. According to Ministry of National Education central exam report (MEB, 2022), these courses are one of the two courses that students get lowest marks.

Except for vocational teachers, all other field teachers are less prone to idea that master's degree programs not related to teaching profession should not give the right of having a degree without written exam. This result may be because of changing vocational teacher training system. In the new system vocational teacher training programs in education, faculties were closed. In order to be vocational teacher, candidates should graduate from engineering faculties and get pedagogical training certificate. In this new system, vocational training teachers have very limited options for master education. Bayrak (2021) indicated that vocational training teachers had problems to be accepted master programs because of the changing system.

As a conclusion, teachers are not against career ladder system and salary increase together with seniority, but they oppose to have a written exam for it. They propose a multi-dimensional evaluation system and approximately 7 years seniority between titles. However, they indicate that there should be a difference between teachers with BA and MA degrees. Teachers do not reject having in-service training or any other further training options, yet they demand practice-based type of training.

### **Implications**

Based on the findings in this study, the following suggestions are put forward.

For researchers:

1. There should be longitudinal studies to examine how perceptions of teachers about career ladders change in time.
2. There should be comparative research to investigate how teachers' perceptions are different for two applications in 2006 and 2022.

For policy makers:

1. Teachers' opinions should be taken into consideration on regulations concerning their career ladders to provide more comprehensive laws as done in the past.
2. As results of this research show, teachers may have difficulty in projecting their career plans due to constant changes in laws related to teachers' professional life. Therefore, consistency and continuity should be provided in terms of teachers' career ladders.
3. The results show that periods between career ladders should be reconsidered.

### Limitations

There are a few limitations of the research. First of all, convenience sampling limits applying inferential statistics. This research is cross-sectional in design; for this reason, the data were collected from a single point in time. What is more, this research only investigated opinions and suggestions about career ladder application in 2022; so, the main focus of the study does not include opinions about the application in 2006.

### Statements of Publication Ethics

The ethical evaluation of this research was carried out by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Aksaray University, dated 23.06.2023 and numbered 2023/04-11.

### Researchers' Contribution Rate

Please specify the contribution rate of each author in the manuscript. Please do not change Author information; you may change or add titles according to the manuscript. No Table title is needed for this table.

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M. Emir RÜZGAR	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
Serkan BOYRAZ	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
Yalçın DİLEKLİ	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒

### Conflict of Interest

This study does not have any conflict of interest and no financial or commercial support was granted by a third party, namely a person or organization.

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