



## PROBLEMS OF RESEARCH ASSISTANTS WHO CARRY ON THEIR POST GRADE STUDY IN UNIVERSITY THEY ARE NOT EMPLOYED

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine what the research assistants, who share this case, and administration of the faculty think about this post grade study. Qualitative research method was applied in this study. The population of this study is comprised of 7 administrators of the faculty and 17 research assistants who carry on their post grade study on these faculties by traveling long distance between the university which they take lessons and the university which they are employed. Administrators said that there are some problems with research assistants' daily leaves and the tasks which research assistants have to do. Research assistant say that they have some difficulties. These difficulties are daily leaves, health problems, tiredness, and heavy working hours.

**Keywords:** Learning Post-Graduate, Research Assistant, administrator

### INTRODUCTION

Universities are higher education institutions which take on tasks such as to provide the innovation and delivery of the culture which is one of the functions of education, to make teenagers ready for profession, to do scientific researches and to find solutions to social problems. Some of the principal specialties of the universities: to have a training period which is continuously renewed in the light of researches, to accord with training and research programs, to do planning for continuing this accordance, to train high-grade individuals, to do scientific works internationally, to train qualified member of profession. (Karakütük, 2002; Karakütük, 1989; Adem, 1977). Universities regulate different programs to carry out these functions. One of these programs is also postgraduate education curriculums. The postgraduate education has a major role in training qualified manpower which is necessary for making researchs and the country development (Karakütük, 1989).

The postgraduate education is described as an education which consists post-graduate and doctorate education, qualification works in the field of art, specialty in medicine and required training, scientific research, application activities. (Sevinç, 2001; Yükseköğretim Kanunu, m.3; Lisansüstü Öğretim Yönetmeliği, m.1). The postgraduate education is a planned and programmed education period which products science and technology by researchs and whose target is to train scientists direct the country development. (Varış, 1984) This is an education level which is regulated for those who have graduate degree to provide the specialization opportunity by having postgraduate or doctorate education and trains individuals who can make researches, are productivity and sensitive to country problems and creativity. (Sayan and Aksu, 2005; Bülbül, 2003).The postgraduate education is a programmed education which is given for training required scientists, researchers and high-qualified manpower. (Bülbül, 2003; İnce and Korkusuz, 2006). According to this, it is stated that the postgraduate education is an event which trains faculty members who research , product science and enlighten and not only pass on the available information but also research new information, analyze and pass on them and who know available works, work for obtaining new findings and spreading them (Çakar, 1997; Alhas, 2006; Karaman and Bakırcı, 2010).



The faculty members of the postgraduate education are divided into 3 groups as faculty members (assistant professor, professor), instructors and assistant instructor (research assistant). According to Higher education Law (33), research assistant are assistant who is one of the universities faculty members, helps study, research and experiment conducted in higher education institutions and carry out the tasks given by authorized body. The higher education institutions train faculty members for the need of themselves, the need of new founded and to be founded domestic and abroad according to the requirements and the principals stated by Higher education Law. The research assistant staff may be reserved to another university to make research and doctorate studies done by the Council of Higher Education temporarily. In this way, those who have doctorate degree or specialty in medicine or qualification title in the art return to their own universities with their staffs at the end of this education (33. and 35. Items).

As it is stated in Higher education Law, the research assistants can study their postgraduate education in the universities where they work or in different universities and also in the universities abroad. It is observed that the research assistants continue their education by commuting other universities because these universities haven't postgraduate education with opening new universities. While it is encountered that there are literature works on research assistants who continue postgraduate education in different universities by appointment (Özdem, 2002; Sezgin, 2002) , it is encountered that there isn't any study on continuing by commuting. In this sense, the problem of this study is what the research assistants' problems.

The aim of this study is to reveal the opinions of the research assistants about postgraduate education, those who have this education in an another university, if they have their problems, scholastic aptitude. This study is confined to the participants (administrators and research assistants) who work in Bayburt University in 2010-2011.

## METHOD

### Research Model

In this study, the research assistants' and their managers' opinions about their problems are revealed by using qualitative research method. In this study, with the aim of acquiring data, the interview form are used which is one of the qualitative data acquisition method.

### Working Group

The working group of this study consists of 7 administrators of the faculty (dean, associate dean, head of department) who works in the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and Faculty of Engineering and 17 research assistant who carry on their postgraduate education in these faculties by commuting.

Among the managers taking place in the research, 2 females, 5 males operate; 3 in Pedagogic Faculty, 2 in Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and 2 in Engineering Faculty; 1 dean, 3 deputy deans and 3 department chairs; 3 having the experience of management, and 4 having 5-8 year of experience. Of the 17 participants of the research assistants are 8 females and 9 males. Of the research assistants 4 receive education in Pedagogic Institute, 9 in Natural and Applied Sciences, and 4 in Social Sciences. Moreover, of the research assistants 1 is in the lesson stage of master, 7 in thesis stage of master, 6 in lesson stage of doctor's degree, and 3 in thesis stage of doctor's degree.

### Data Gathering Appliance

In this research, 'view determination form of the managers about the research assistants majoring master out of their own university where they are working', and 'view determination form of the research assistants about their master education out of their own university where they are working' was used which was developed by researchers.



The interview form made for getting the views of the research assistants was prepared to show the problems they experienced on account of majoring master out of the university they work. This form consists of two sections. In the first section personal information is required, and in the second section the research assistants are supposed to answer 5 open end questions about their education and the problems they experienced.

The interview form prepared for the managers aims to show what they think about the research assistants who receive their master education out of their own university. This interview form is also consists of two sections. In the first section personal information is required, and in the second section there are 4 open end questions about the condition of the research assistants in the university they work and about their contentment of the managers. On preparing the form questions, one academic member, expert in his field, about coherence of questions to the aim, and 5 doctor's degree students were consulted and thus the form was developed.

### **Data Gathering and Analyzing**

The prepared forms were applied to the academic members and managements who formed the working group. Several categories were created in accordance with the replies the managers and the research assistants answered by gathering interview forms. The frequencies related to these formed categories were counted. Among the given answers, besides the only one category answers there were also more than one category answers. Due to this, the total frequency isn't given. Additionally, the view of managers and the research assistants were given and evaluated exactly.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings obtained from the analysis in accordance with the questions taking place in the interview form which was prepared in the research for the managers are shown below.

The frequency distribution related to confronting problems for the research assistants who go to different universities for post grade education (master / doctor's degree) are given in chart 3.

*Chart 3: the frequency distribution of the answers to no.1 question by managers*

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Frequencies</i>
Yes, we have problems	3
No, we don't have problems	4
Problems about permissions	3
Problems with consultation, supervising	3
They are reactive to the management	2

As understood from the chart 3, 4 managers talk about the research assistants whether they confront with problems in the universities they go for their post grade education. However, the managers (3) implying they have problems, mostly permissions (3), implied that they had problems with work interruption on consultation and supervising (3). Some sample expressions of the managers are shown below:

*'There are problems with permissions, lesson tasks, consultation and supervising works.'*

*'After goings and comings, adaptation problems occur, due to fatigue unproductiveness is observed, there are problems in task distribution inside faculty and department, they confront with problems from time to time about their studies and pursuing their attendances to universities where they go,*



and it is observed that they respond to the faculty management in the event of material loss (extra allowance cutback) and unproductiveness as a result of their fatigue upon the goings and comings.

Frequency distribution related to the problems of research assistants in getting permission are given in chart 4.

Chart 4: the frequency distribution of the answers to no.2 question by managers

Categories	Frequencies
Yes, we have problems	4
No, we don't have problems	3
Problems about task distribution and unproductiveness	2
Problems about asking permissions often and for long	2

While some managements (4) express that they don't have problems about the permission of research assistants in accordance with their department (economics and management), others (3) say that they have. The most frequent problems about getting permission have been in subject of task frequency distribution, unproductiveness observed in research assistants depended on fatigue and unwillingness (2), and requesting often and long term permissions (2). The expression of managers on this subject is below:

*'Yes, there are problems related to academic contribution, task distribution of the research assistants in the faculty and department basis. Their goings and comings not only decrease their productiveness but causes their fatigue too, thus causing their unhappiness and it diminishes the contribution to their faculty and self-contribution. Their personal development is affected negatively. In addition, the permission gets difficult.*

*"The research assistants prefer getting report, long term permission due to its money as well as tiredness and unproductiveness. This situation affects the task distribution and causes their works to be delayed."*

Another problem about the research assistants who come and go permanently to the universities for their education has been the situation that the managers have anxieties about whether these assistants will continue to work in their institution after finishing their education. The frequency distribution is shown in chart 5.

Chart 5: frequency distribution of the answers to no.3 question by managers

Categories	Frequency
No, I don't worry	4
Yes, we worry	3
To be the new established university	1
The willing to be near the university they majored	1

Whereas the faculty managers (4) who attended to the study explained that they don't worry about whether the assistants that have finished their education will continue to work at their place or not, the others (3) explained that they worry. They related the reasons of their anxieties to reasons like having disadvantages of being a new founded and developing university (1) and to the willing of the assistants to be near the university where they realized their post grade education. The expressions of the managers who had anxieties are given below:



*“We agree that the new founded and developing universities have vital disadvantages on this matter.”*

*“Especially, I think that the assistants who major in far cities want to be in closer universities due to the problems they have during this period. We have worries that they may tend more to universities where they are graduated even to another universities than the university they have finished their post grade education.”*

Proposals for solution related to the problems the managers confront have been questioned. Frequency distribution is given in chart 6 regarding to the analysis of these problems.

*Chart 6: frequency distribution of the answers to no.4 question by managers*

Categories	Frequency
Having no proposal	2
Having proposal	5
Mutual comprehension	2
Facilitating the opening of new post grade programs	3
Charging with a duty according to 35.question	2
Absence of pay cutback	1

We can see that when the managers are asked whether they have proposals for the solution of problems, they (5) have some proposals by saying there are no problems, and only two managers haven't replied. The proposals of the managers are to make the assistants major in the universities where they work with the opening of post grade programs (3), charging according to 35. article (2), mutual comprehension (2), and during the periods they come and go, not to cut back their pay which is cut per day when they are absent where they work (1). Examples of managers' expressions are given below:

*“The conditions for opening post grade programs should be lightened for the new universities.”*

*“First of all, master programs in new universities should be opened and the research assistants should be continued to these programs. Especially, returns should be supplied for students in doctorate stage that have to go too far universities should be assigned legally by 35. Article. I agree that the 35. Article is not essential for round trips to near universities, but I think that it is a punishment for the assistants to cut back their extra allocation for the days spent on goings.”*

The findings related to the questions in the interview forms prepared for the research assistants are presented below as a result of the analysis. The frequency distribution concerning the problems the assistants confronted during their post grade education is shown in chart 7.

*Chart 7: frequency distribution of the answers to no.1 question by research assistants*

Categories	Frequency
I don't have problems	5
I have problems	12
Permission time is short	9
Fatigue and health problems	9
Charging is much and unsatisfactory on managers	7
We have material loss	6
We have unproductiveness	5

As we understand from chart 7, most of the research assistants (12) have said that they confronted with problems, and some others say that they didn't. They listed their problems as; the permission time is short and it is not enough (9), excessive fatigue and health problems (9), they are not satisfied because





the managers evaluate them as insufficient and due to much charging (7), they have material loss because of the cutbacks, the fares, accommodation and food (6), they can't be productive neither at work nor in education (5). Examples of assistants' answers are shown below:

*"Yes, I have problems. First of all, taking round trips every week is too difficult. Even when it is a short distance, it is not good to stay 4 days in place and 3 days in another, so it affects me negatively. When we go to another place, it is clear that to find accommodation is a big problem. This causes us a high cost. We pay our rents and spend for fares with the money we gain."*

Moreover, we cannot as effectively as we want because we can talk with our counselor only two days. When we have a lot of lessons, the work is more difficult. The frequency distributions related to the approaches aimed at the university, the education of the administrators and faculty members are stated in chart 8.

Chart8: Frequency distributions for second question according to answers of the research assistants

Categories	Frequency
They are good and supportive	8
They are not reduce working load and not support	5
They are uninterested in educations	5
They are not supportive	4

Some of the research assistants who answer this question, it is observed that while some research says they support the education of administrators and faculty members in a positive manner, other (4 research assistant) say they do not support them. While some of them are insensible to the education of the administrators and faculty members (5), others state that they do not distribute works equally or ease the work load.

Some of the statements of the research assistants:

*"Administrator or faculty members working at the university provide in continues my education on condition that i do not neglect my duties."*

*"Some of administrator or faculty members working at the university do not heed the quality of education. In my opinion they heed the duties how to do."*

The frequency distribution is shown in chart 9 related to the approach of the administrator and faculty members towards the research assistants and their education at the university where they major.

Chart 9: Frequency distributions for third question according to answers of the research assistants

Categories	Frequency
They are tolerant	8
They are not tolerant	6
They want me to be at the university which i am educated constantly	4
I lump with other students (master- doctorate)	2

According to the findings, it is seen that there is a difference in terms of behavior of administrators and faculty members towards research assistants who continue their educations in the same university.8 research assistants say that faculty members help them, they are tolerant,6 research assistants also say that faculty members do not spare the time them, they are not tolerant for homework and continuation. Some of the answers for this question:

*"They are very good but very busy. We cannot talk with our counselor adequately. Within day, we can talk with him only 10-15 minutes. This is a disadvantage to improve."*

*"They assist in no way about the long distance, however i declare the difficulty I have about it."*



Chart 10: Frequency distributions for fourth question according to answers of the research assistants

Categories	Frequency
It is difficult to success in a short time	9
Working load is very much, have no time to education	3
Quality of university is high	3
I am trying to become very successful	3

Some of the answers:

“If the institution in which I do my master education and I also work were the same, I suppose I would have more successful academic career. The university that I do master is very rooted and has a lot of successful teachers. But I cannot make the most of this opportunity.”

“I suppose, my education is not actually pretty good. The reason that, I have spent my much time in attending the undergraduate lessons and working on the jobs about institution instead of doing something about improving myself. Although I have been doing my doctorate for six years, I don't think I am qualified enough. In my opinion, this problem is about that I cannot feel comfortable in my place, my time is always being wasted for I have to come and go while working. I try hard to stay on my doctorate in these circumstances though.”

Because of the fact that the institutions in which the research assistants work and continue their educations are different, some problems occur and the suggestions of solution about these problems are put forward in the last question. Related with these solutions the frequency distribution is given in chart 11.

Chart 11: Frequency distributions for fifth question according to answers of the research assistants

Categories	Frequency
Have to be posted at the university that educated	9
The duty charging should be reduced at the university we work	5
Material support should be provided	2
Relations with the managers of the university should be strengthened	1
We should make an agreement with the university we majored	1

What the assistants who talk about solution proposals repeat mostly is that to supply assignments to the universities where they major (9). There are 5 persons that thought the number of faculty members should be raised, the task charging and their attendances to give lessons should be decreased. Among the proposals we can see, material supply should be done (2), relations with the managers should be strengthened (1), agreement should be done with the university (room, guest-house etc.) (1). some examples of assistants are shown below:

“The solution of this problem is surely that the institutions should allow us to finish our post grade education by assigning us. A program called ÖYP was formed for this aim but some of our friends still have problems during this period.”

“A department shouldn't be opened before preparing the substructure possibilities. Firstly, the lack of academic members should be solved and then the university or the department should be opened.”

## DISCUSSION, RESULT AND PROPOSALS

The managers and the assistants have been questioned whether they have experienced problems during their post grade education away from their university they work. Some of the managers replied that they didn't have problems but some others said that they had problems with permissions and task charging. Most of the assistants said they had problems. They had the same problems as the managers,



the permission and the task charging. While the assistants complained that the permissions weren't satisfying and the task charging was too much, the managers complained the delayed works due to their permission and the task distribution which caused problems. Except for that, the assistants experience health and economic problems due to their round trips.

The assistants explained that they had problems about getting long term permission due to their health and economic problems and that they couldn't get. They also said that the managers and faculty members were generally supporting but indifferent to their education and they didn't lightened their responsibilities. This shows that the important thing for the faculty managers is to make the works in good order. The research assistants generally find the managers and the faculty members of the university where they major tolerant towards themselves but not helping much. The assistants have been broken between the two universities, to be belonging to the institution has been worn out, and have been in dilemma to realize the two responsibilities.

The anxieties of the managers about the assistants to continue working in the same institution after finishing their education are because of being a new university and that the assistants would want to be near to the university where they majored. Despite all the problems that the assistants experienced, they also support these anxieties by thinking if the university where they major is of high quality, it would be useful for them.

When we look at the solution proposals of the managers and the assistants, the managers proposed to open post grade programs to put an end to round trips without providing the convenient situations. But the assistants proposed towards putting an end to their problems and more realistic proposals.

When we look at the problems of the managers and the assistants, that the assistants take education and work at different universities, causes them to be unproductive both at work and in their studies. The assistants should stay at the university where they major during the period of master and doctorate which is an important step of this process to benefit as far as they can. For the same reason especially the new founded universities should have the academic members completely before opening the program. Therefore, both the charging of the assistants will be lightened and the willing of opening post grade programs will be reasonable.

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