



# A review of teacher candidates' metaphoric perception regarding the concept of “professional knowledge courses”

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## Abstract

Professional knowledge courses are crucial in delivering teacher candidates the knowledge and skills that are required in the profession of teaching. This paper studies teacher candidates' metaphoric perceptions regarding the concept of professional knowledge courses. This study, which employed a model of qualitative research that is phenomenology patterns, identifies the teacher candidates' perception of professional knowledge courses through metaphors. The study group in this research was made up of students in the Faculty of Education of a state university in Eastern Turkey. As a means of collecting data, the participants were asked to fill in a form using a metaphor. Data analysis was conducted through content analysis. As a result of the research, 65 kinds of metaphors and 8 categories regarding the concept of professional knowledge courses were determined. The categories that were defined according to the metaphors used by the participants are as follows: guiding, completing, leading to deeper understanding, useful, improving teacher quality, preparing to become a teacher, providing experience and teaching to make use of knowledge. The results show that teacher candidates' perception of professional knowledge courses is a positive one and they deem these courses significant in relation to their profession.

**Keywords:** Professional knowledge, metaphor, perception, teacher training, qualitative research.

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## 1. Introduction

There are many factors that play a role in the teaching process. The most important of them is considered to be the teacher (Kayadibi, 2001). It was also that the academic success in schools can only be achieved with qualified teachers (Seferoğlu, 2004). Scholars also stated that there are certain knowledge and skills that teachers must have in order to enable their students to reach high standards (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Some of these can be listed as; the general ability to teach, effective communication skills, ability to transfer field knowledge and

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encouraging students to learn (Das, El-Sabban & Bener, 1996; Pozo-Munoz, Reboloso-Pacheco & Fernandez-Ramirez, 2000; Sarıtaş, 2013). Teacher Proficiency Criteria, which the Ministry of Education worked on through a variety of projects since the 2000s and concluded in 2017, specifies the overall knowledge and skill teachers are required to possess (MEB, 2017). Likewise, there are other countries which also defined and standardised the professional attributes required of their teachers (Bahadır & Tuncer, 2020a; Bahadır & Tuncer, 2020b). In England, for example, teachers who meet the requirements are certified and are thus allowed to practice their profession (Department for Education, 2013). Possessing the knowledge and skills required by their profession brings the teachers' impact to prominence (Yanpar-Yelken, Çelikkaleli & Çapri, 2007). The teacher training process is valuable in terms of providing the teacher candidates with the professional proficiency required of them. For this purpose, they are taught professional knowledge courses at Faculties of Education.

Professional knowledge courses aim to contribute to teacher candidates' field education and training by equipping them with also the behaviours required by the teaching profession (Küçükahmet, 1993). A study conducted with teacher candidates at the elementary teaching and pre-school teaching levels concluded that professional knowledge courses positively affect the professional development of the candidates (Taşkın ve Hacıömeroğlu, 2010). Professional knowledge courses play an important role in enabling the teachers to effectively transfer the knowledge in their field to their students, to create a suitable environment for learning, to conduct well-grounded assessment and evaluation and eventually, to practice and sustain their profession in an effective manner. During the restructuring of Faculties of Education in 1998, the course credit for professional knowledge courses was increased from 21 to 36 (Ekici, 2008). In 2018 yet with another restructuring in process, the course distribution of professional knowledge courses in teaching departments was increased to 30-35% from the initial 25-30% (YÖK, 2018). These adjustments testify to the emphasis being placed on professional knowledge courses in the processes of educating and training teachers. Nevertheless, increasing the load and credits of these courses do not guarantee to train well-qualified teachers. At this point, the perception the students have of these courses comes into the picture as an important element with regards to the efficiency of these courses. (Yüksel, 2009).

Metaphors can be employed as important tools when it comes to identifying the perception and attitudes of an individual (Özdemir & Kalaycı, 2013). Morgan describes metaphors as a means of thinking and vision that helps us comprehend the world around us (1998), and they can be further defined as explaining a concept through another concept. Concepts, on the other hand, steer an individual's thinking processes as well as their daily lives to the most ordinary details. They also structure the perception of what spot one undertakes in the world and how they connect with other people. Thus, a system of concepts

occupies a central position in defining the realities of daily life (Lakoff ve Johnson, 1980). Metaphor is a means of conceptualising a mental space through the use of terminology (Lakoff, 1993). In this context, the metaphors students opt for in the case of a course would reveal their perception of that course in terms of whether it is a negative or a positive one. It was also showed that these metaphors were also correlated to the students' academic success and attitudes at a meaningful level (Yalçın & Eren, 2012).

In the body of literature, a variety of studies can be found studying the students' opinions about the professional knowledge courses (Eldemir, 2011; Kuran & Aktaş, 2010). Some of these studies focused on the students' success in these courses. Işıkgöz, Dinçer and Kılınç (2016) stated that female students were more successful than male students in professional knowledge courses. Kara and Sağlam (2014) claimed that professional knowledge courses provided teacher candidates nearly 50% of the performance indicators towards the educating and training processes. Yeşil, Korkmaz and Kaya (2009) emphasized that success in professional knowledge courses also contributed to the students' success at the KPSS (Civil Servants Election Exams). Özgüngör and Kapıkıran (2008) reached the conclusion that the low level of interest towards the professional knowledge courses by the teacher candidates at the Music and Art departments was also reflected in their overall academic success levels. Presenting the conclusions of a study conducted with music teachers, Zahal, Gürpınar and İlhan (2017) reported that their participants were ineffective at professional knowledge courses. Apart from these, another research also revealed that students who were successful at professional knowledge courses also posed an affirmative attitude towards the teaching profession whereas those who did not particularly score high in these courses neither did display positive attitudes regarding the profession (Yüksel, 2007). In the light of the previous studies on this topic, this research aims to identify the teacher candidates' perception about the professional knowledge courses through the use of metaphors.

So far, it has been shown that the possibility of there being a correlation between teacher candidates' perception of professional knowledge courses and their academic success and professional qualifications is quite likely. It is for this reason that being able to present in detail the teacher candidates' perception and experience regarding professional knowledge courses is thought to be of importance. Taking into consideration that metaphors can identify attitudes and provide us with the data into affective realm (Koç, 2014), identifying the perception and the students' view on the professional knowledge courses would enable us to gain an insight into their success and failure in terms of both theoretically and practically. In addition, by diverting these perceptions in a positive direction, it is thought that encouraging student success and to bring about better equipped teacher candidates would be possible. For these purposes this study looks for the answers of these following questions:

- What metaphors about the concept of professional knowledge courses do the teacher candidates have?
- Under what conceptual categories can these metaphors be classified according to their common traits?

## **2. Method**

In this research, phenomenology pattern from the qualitative research models was employed. Phenomenology, which focuses on a person's real life experiences (Merriam, 2013), particularly focuses on phenomenon that one is aware but an understanding with depth and detail has not yet been reached (Mayring, 2000; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). This study identified the teacher candidates' perception of professional knowledge courses through the use of metaphors. A metaphor can be described as understanding and expressing a phenomenon in reference to another phenomenon (Lakoff & Johnson, 2005). Since metaphor studies aim to find out the participants' views towards a phenomenon, one of the most suitable patterns to be employed in these kind of studies is thought to be the phenomenology pattern (Ekici & Akdeniz, 2018).

### *2.1. Participant (subject) characteristics*

The study group of this research was made up of students in the Faculty of Education of a state university in eastern Turkey. In researches of phenomenology, the data has to be collected from groups or individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and are able to express it (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2012). This study used the criterion sampling method of the purposive sampling methods. The main goal of the criterion sampling method is to study all cases that fulfil a number of pre-specified criteria (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The criterion in this study was that the students had to have taken the professional knowledge courses.

### *2.2. Data Collection Tools and Data Analysis*

This research used a metaphor form to gather its data. In this form, to identify their perception of professional knowledge courses, the teacher candidates were asked to complete the sentence "Professional knowledge courses are like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_". In order to sufficiently reveal the descriptive and the visual power of the metaphor, the question "why" has to be answered to explain what the metaphor truly means (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). For this purpose, the participants were asked to further explain their metaphors of the professional knowledge courses with a clause that starts with "because".

The gathered data in this research was analysed through content analysis. In content analysis, which aims to obtain concepts and relations with which the

gathered data can be explained, similar data are logically brought together and interpreted transparently (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). During the analysis of the data for this study which aimed to find out the metaphors related to the professional knowledge courses, firstly, through codification the metaphors were classified and each similar group of metaphors were assigned a category. Thereafter, the phases of ensuring validity and reliability, and determining the frequency values related to the metaphors were carried out. In this context firstly, the first clause of the research question (Professional knowledge courses are like ..... ) were examined to obtain the metaphors. The answers that were not a metaphor, were unrelated to the topic, were not contributing to the understanding of the objective or were not considered to provide with a logical reason to the metaphor were eliminated and not involved in the analysis process. Then, by examining the second clause (because ..... ), the afore obtained metaphors were grouped under categories. Apart from the researcher, the data was also encoded by another field specialist. The codifications of the researcher and the field specialist were then calculated by the formula of “Consensus/Consensus+Disagreement” put forward by Miles and Huberman (1994). Upon this calculation, the reliability of the study was revealed to be 0,90. Hence the study was accepted to be reliable. In order to provide the validity of the study, the data analysis process was explained in full details (Hruschka vd., 2004), the obtained results were re-examined over and over, and quotations from the participants were given regarding the categories that were formed.

### **3. Results**

This section contains the findings that were obtained by analysing the acquired data. In more detailed context; metaphors produced regarding the concept of professional knowledge courses within the views of the participants, the categories these metaphors were placed under and the explanations the participants made for their metaphors can be found here. Table 1 shows the metaphors generated by the participants’ views.

Table 1. Metaphors Used by the Participants Regarding the Professional Knowledge Courses

Rank	Metaphor	f	Rank	Metaphor	f
1	Compass	13	34	Beacons	1
2	Guide	12	35	Experience	1
3	Foundation of a building	5	36	The sun	1
4	Water	3	37	The moon	1
5	The polar star	3	38	Lightbulb	1
6	Operating manual	2	39	Light	1
7	Life	2	40	Firefly	1
8	Book	2	41	Brick	1
9	Discovery	1	42	Stars	1
10	Movie trailer	1	43	Root	1
11	Profession	1	44	Foots of a table	1
12	Bridge	1	45	Rainbow	1
13	A link in the chain	1	46	Sea	1
14	First step	1	47	A germinating seed	1
15	Guest room	1	48	Journey	1
16	Family	1	49	Rose with thorns	1
17	Rooftop	1	50	Swiss knife	1
18	ID Card	1	51	Encyclopaedia	1
19	A foot of a tripod	1	52	Tourist guide	1
20	Life line	1	53	Ship	1
21	Salt	1	54	Portrait drawing	1
22	Road	1	55	Realities of life	1
23	Heater	1	56	Legacy	1
24	The Seasons	1	57	Control	1
25	Fruit of a tree	1	58	First button of a shirt	1
26	Glasses	1	59	Teacher	1
27	Companion	1	60	Our parents	1
28	Root of a tree	1	61	Traffic signs	1
29	First step to profession	1	62	Road map	1
30	Human brain	1	63	Navigator	1
31	Touchstone	1	64	Recipe	1
32	Operating system	1	65	The north star	1
33	Prospectus	1			
		<b>65 kinds of metaphors</b>	<b>Total</b>	99	

In Table 1. it can be seen that the participants used a total of 65 metaphors regarding the concept of professional knowledge courses and they gave explanations for their metaphors with a total of 99 opinions. The most frequently

used metaphors about the professional knowledge courses are ranked in this order: compass, guide, foundation of a building, water, polar star, operating manual, life and book. It was found that all the opinions the participants stated about the professional knowledge classes are positive ones. Also, it was observed that all the metaphors used by the participants were inanimate metaphors apart from tourist guide, firefly, family, our parents and teacher. It was noted that the frequency values for the top 8 metaphors ranged between 13 and 2. The whole of the remaining 57 metaphors showed a frequency rate of 1 each. At this point it can be said that viewpoints about the professional knowledge courses differ on an individual level.

Metaphors used by the participants about the professional knowledge courses were then collected under categories according to their common traits. The classification of the specified metaphors is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Categories Created Based on the Metaphors Developed by the Participants Regarding the Concept of Professional Knowledge Courses

Categories	Kind of Metaphors (f)
<b>1. Guiding</b> <i>Metaphors:</i> Control, First button of a shirt, Teacher, Our parents, Traffic Sings, Road map, Navigator, Recipe, Compass, Guide, the Polar star, the North star, Stars, Beacons, Experience, The sun, The moon, Lightbulb, Light, Firefly	20
<b>2. Completing</b> <i>Metaphors:</i> A link in the chain, First step, Guest room, Foundation of a building, Family, Rooftop, ID card, A foot of a tripod, Life line, Water, Salt, Road, Brick, Root, Foots of a table	15
<b>3. Leading to Deeper Understanding</b> <i>Metaphors:</i> Rainbow, Sea, A germinating seed, Journey, Book, Rose with thorns, Swiss knife, Encyclopaedia, Tourist guide, Ship	10
<b>4. Useful</b> <i>Metaphors:</i> Heater, The seasons, Fruit of a tree, Glasses, Companion	5
<b>5. Improving Teacher Quality</b> <i>Metaphors:</i> Root of a tree, First step to profession, Human brain, Touchstone	4
<b>6. Preparing to Become a Teacher</b> <i>Metaphors:</i> Discovery, Movie trailer, Profession, Bridge	4
<b>7. Providing Experience</b> <i>Metaphors:</i> Portrait drawing, Life, Realities of life, Legacy	4
<b>8. Teaching to Make Use of Knowledge</b> <i>Metaphors:</i> Operating system, Prospectus, Operating manual	3

In Table 2, it is shown that the identified metaphors about the professional knowledge courses were collected under 8 categories. These categories are ranked by the most number of metaphors to the least as: guiding, completing, leading to deeper understanding, useful, improving teacher quality, preparing to become a teacher, providing experience and teaching to make use of knowledge. Below are some of the participant opinions about the metaphors classified under these categories.

**Participant remarks about the metaphors in the “Guiding” category**

A total of 20 metaphors were classified under this category. Below are some of the explanations the participants made about these metaphors.

**Road map:** Professional knowledge courses are like a “road map”. Because they show the way to teachers and like a road map, keep us on the right path. (K19)

**Guide:** Professional knowledge courses are like a “guide”. Because they show the way to us teachers and at the same time they set light to our way. (K53)

**Participant remarks about the metaphors in the “Completing” category**

A total of 15 metaphors were classified under this category. Below are some of the explanations the participants made about these metaphors.

**Foundation of a building:** Professional knowledge courses are like the “foundation of a building”. Because just like we cannot think of a house without a foundation, we cannot think of education without professional knowledge courses. (K65)

**Roof top:** Professional knowledge courses are like a “roof top”. Because no matter how successful a teacher is in their field, how they transfer the field knowledge to their students is shaped by the training courses. (K22)

**Participant remarks about the metaphors in the “Leading to Deeper Understanding” category**

A total of 10 metaphors were classified under this category. Below are some of the explanations the participants made about these metaphors.

**Rose with thorns:** Professional knowledge courses are like a “rose with thorns”. Because if we handle the hardships with hard work and patience we achieve knowledge and wisdom. (K43)

**Swiss Knife:** Professional knowledge courses are like a “Swiss knife”. Because they provide teachers with a lot of knowledge they are in need of. (K49)

**Participant remarks about the metaphors in the “Useful” category**

A total of 5 metaphors were classified under this category. Below are some of the explanations the participants made about these metaphors.

**The Seasons:** Professional knowledge courses are like “the seasons”. Because each of its courses is useful in a different aspect. (K56)

**Companion:** Professional knowledge courses are like a “companion”. Because when I’m teaching the next generation of students, they will always be there to help me whenever I need help and they will always stand by my side like a true friend. (K16)

**Participant remarks about the metaphors in the “Improving Teacher Quality” category**



A total of 4 metaphors were classified under this category. Below are some of the explanations the participants made about these metaphors.

**Human brain:** Professional knowledge courses are like the “human brain”. Because the more sophisticated the human brain is, the higher they perform at work and in life. The more an Education Faculty graduate internalizes their training course education, the higher they will perform. (K20)

**Root of a tree:** Professional knowledge courses are like the “root of a tree”. Because the deeper the root of a tree goes and the more branches it shoots out, the more that tree grows, blossoms and bears more beautiful flowers and fruits. (K26)

### **Participant remarks about the metaphors in the “Preparing to Become a Teacher” category**

A total of 4 metaphors were classified under this category. Below are some of the explanations the participants made about these metaphors.

**Bridge:** Professional knowledge courses are like a “bridge”. Because they ease our transition from a student life into the profession. (K41)

**Movie trailer:** Professional knowledge courses are like a “movie trailer”. Because they give us a chance to practice about what we will be doing in the future. (K100)

### **Participant remarks about the metaphors in the “Providing Experience” category**

A total of 4 metaphors were classified under this category. Below are some of the explanations the participants made about these metaphors.

**Life:** Professional knowledge courses are like “life”. Because life turn us into experienced people through life experiences. (K97)

**Legacy:** Professional knowledge courses are like a “legacy”. Because the educator transfers their experience to their future colleagues. (K1)

### **Participant remarks about the metaphors in the “Teaching to Make Use of Knowledge” category**

A total of 3 metaphors were classified under this category. Below are some of the explanations the participants made about these metaphors.

**Prospectus:** Professional knowledge courses are like a “prospectus”. Because they tell us about the student structure, content, how they learn and what we must do while we teach them. (K12)

**Operating manual:** Professional knowledge courses are like an “operating manual”. Because in addition to carrying new information in it, they also guide us in transferring knowledge in the right way by answering many important questions such as how and when to use the information we have at hand. (K64)



when they are appointed to the teaching profession. Indeed, the Council of Higher Education emphasizes that professional knowledge courses informs teacher candidates on how to transfer their field knowledge to students, how to practice education and how to organise learning environments (YÖK, 2007). Likewise, Işık, Çiltaş and Baş (2010) also state that professional knowledge courses guide the students and light the way for them to make use of their knowledge on their field and how to transfer that knowledge to the students.

In the completing category, there are a total of 15 metaphors. Using metaphors like; a link in the chain, first step, guest room, foundation of a building and family the participants emphasized that the professional knowledge courses display completing qualities towards the other courses at the Faculties of Education. This can be interpreted to mean that the absence of professional knowledge courses would cause problems in the conduct of education operations. Küçükahmet (1993), emphasized that professional knowledge courses contribute to the process by equipping the teacher candidates with special behaviours. Also, Yıldırım (2011) stated that professional knowledge provides help to teacher candidates to learn the basic knowledge and skills they would need in the process of teaching their field knowledge.

In the category of leading to deeper understanding, there are a total of 10 metaphors. With metaphors like; rainbow, sea, a germinating seed, journey and book the participants expressed that professional knowledge courses provide teacher candidates with endless knowledge about the teaching profession. This can be interpreted to mean that professional knowledge courses contain all the required knowledge to practice the teaching profession. Koehler and Mishra (2009) state that the knowledge of teaching profession enables the teachers to possess a deep and effective accumulation of knowledge on the process and application of teaching-learning or on the methods of teaching-learning. It can be said that teaching is a profession that requires top level knowledge professionally. This can be interpreted to mean that professional knowledge courses lead teachers to have a deeper understanding in terms of professional knowledge.

5 metaphors were placed under the useful category. These metaphors are listed as; heater, season, fruit of a tree, glass and companion. The participants thought that each professional knowledge course offer useful knowledge to teacher candidates. Each professional knowledge course aims to improve different aspects of teacher candidates. In this context, whereas Sönmez (2008) expressed that Philosophy of Education courses brought about a point of viewpoint into the teacher candidates' lives, Tezcan (2017) stated that Sociology of Education courses were found important in terms of teaching teacher candidates about social phenomenon and the structure of their society. Yıldırım (2011), on the other hand, pointed out that teacher candidates could interrelate their professional knowledge with their observations after making observations in their School Experience courses. This shows that teacher candidates are aware that

professional knowledge courses can improve different aspects of them in terms of their profession. Under the improving teaching quality category, 4 metaphors were placed. These metaphors are; root of a tree, first step to profession, human brain and touchstone. The participants thought that professional knowledge courses taught in Faculties of Education improve the qualities of teacher candidates. This can be interpreted as it would only be possible through professional knowledge courses that teacher candidates would be trained as qualified teachers. In fact, Erden (1995) expressed that professional knowledge courses lay the foundations of the teaching profession and play an important role in determining the competence of a teacher.

In the category of preparing to become a teacher, there are a total of 4 metaphors. These were identified as discovery, movie trailer, profession and bridge. The participants considered the professional knowledge courses as a science that prepares teacher candidates to become a teacher. Their overall approach was that professional knowledge courses were an abstract of the teaching profession. Yildirim (2011) emphasizes that teacher candidates must be trained in professional knowledge and skills alongside in their field knowledge. He thus stated that through professional knowledge courses, teacher candidates should be provided to develop new viewpoints towards the solution of the problems they might face in practising their profession. In the providing experience category, on the other hand, a total of 4 metaphors were stated by the participants. These are; portrait drawing, life, realities of life and legacy. From this category it can be interpreted that the experiences in past and present education processes bring about an accumulation of knowledge and this accumulation of knowledge is transferred to teacher candidates as experience through professional knowledge courses. In the final category of teaching to make use of knowledge, there are a total of 3 metaphors. These were listed as; operating system, prospectus and operating manual. Participants held the opinion that professional knowledge courses taught teacher candidates how to make use of the knowledge they possess. It is thought that the participants were stressing the application part of the professional knowledge courses. In this context, in order for the knowledge and skills of teacher candidates to form into a whole, professional knowledge courses are deemed to be important. Yapucuoğlu and Ekiz (2008) signified that in order to improve the professional knowledge and skills of teacher candidates, they have to be provided with the environment to practice these knowledge and skills.

It is remarkable that the metaphors identified in the study were all positive ones. By this, it can be commented that teacher candidates are aware of the importance of professional knowledge courses and they have positive attitudes towards these courses. There are some studies that analysed student attitudes towards professional knowledge courses. Among these, Çetin (2009) in a paper that researched teacher candidates' attitudes towards professional knowledge

courses, concluded that teacher candidates' attitudes towards professional knowledge courses were partially positive. Similarly, Gilik Güleç (2012) stated that teacher candidates' attitudes towards professional knowledge courses were generally positive. Ekici (2008) found that teacher candidates' attitudes towards professional knowledge courses were at a high level. On the contrary, some research determined that teacher candidates' attitudes towards professional knowledge courses were negative (Kara & Sağlam 2014; Yüksel, 2009). Different viewpoints could have been the cause of the change in attitudes. Else, different variables could be affecting students' attitudes towards professional knowledge courses. Çetin (2009) stated that students who consider professional knowledge courses to be important and who have a teacher in their family display a more positive attitude when compared to others. It is also thought that factors such as student, teacher, environment and the like could also affect students' viewpoints about professional knowledge courses. In conclusion of this study, it can be said that teacher candidates have a positive attitude towards professional knowledge courses and they consider these courses to be significant professionally. On the basis of the findings of this study, some suggestions for practitioners and researchers are as listed below. On the basis of the findings of this study, some suggestions for practitioners and researchers are as listed below.

- The concepts about professional knowledge courses identified in this research present the positive aspects of these courses. The concepts, that also match with other works in the body of literature, provide different viewpoints about professional knowledge courses. In the context of the positive attitudes displayed towards professional knowledge courses, all teacher candidates can be equipped with these viewpoints.
- Even though this study found that teacher candidates' perceptions of professional knowledge courses are positive, it can be seen in different researches in the body of literature that teacher candidates' attitudes towards professional knowledge courses vary. Other studies can be carried out aiming to find the reason why such variability occurred.
- As student perceptions regarding professional knowledge courses may vary depending on the departments, this research can also be carried out again on the basis of Faculty departments.
- Further research looking into the views about professional knowledge courses of teachers who are currently practising the profession can be carried out.
- Studies can be carried out which examines the views about professional knowledge courses of academicians who instruct these courses.

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