

Full Length Research Paper

Opinions of Turkish language and literature teachers on the curriculum of Turkish literature course based on the constructivist learning theory

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The main objective of this study is to collect the opinions of Turkish Language and Literature teachers at secondary schools about the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course based on the constructivist learning theory. To this end, the descriptive method was employed to collect teacher opinions. Structured interview was used as a data collection tool. Since the majority of teachers were not willing to express their opinions verbally, they answered the interview questions in written form. The study population was comprised of Turkish language and literature teachers who worked at Siirt Provincial Directorate of National Education. Although best efforts were devoted to reach all teachers, only 25 out of the 60 teachers working at the secondary schools located in central Siirt shared their opinions about the curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course in writing. Data derived from teacher opinions were examined using the descriptive analysis method and teacher opinions about the program were demonstrated to reflect a sample of Siirt province.

Key words: Secondary education, curriculum, Turkish Literature course, Turkish language, teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Curricula are the mechanisms which cover the knowledge, skills and experiences that students are expected to gain through educational levels. Designed as mechanisms of learning experiences, curricula are based on an educational philosophy and a learning theory. In the Turkish educational system for instance, the basics of curricula prior to 2005 were based on behavioral learning theories. The curricula which have been in place since 2005 have been developed on the basis of the progressive educational philosophy and constructivist learning theory. This approach which argues that knowledge is reconstructed by the individual learner by his own observations and experiences is called constructivism. As a learning approach, it is also defined as “constructivist learning”.

Constructivism deals with topics such as knowledge, nature of knowledge, how humans know, how the process of constructing the knowledge takes place and what factors affect this process, and the theories of constructivism constitute basis for educational practices (Açıkgöz, 2003, 60). Constructivism is not a theory about teaching but a theory about knowledge and learning, based on constructing the knowledge from the beginning. Originally, it was developed as a theory about how learners get the knowledge, but in time it evolved into an approach about how the learners construct the knowledge (Demirel, 2004, 223). The basic assumption of constructivism is that individuals construct knowledge by establishing a link between new ideas or events and the former knowledge. The construction of knowledge is

to retrieve the former knowledge which has been kept in the memory for a long time and to arrange and repair it with the new knowledge (Ülgen, 2001, 90).

Since 2005, all the primary and secondary education curricula have been re-developed using the contemporary learning theories and models, notably the constructivist learning theory. Yet, curricula have undergone renovations and revisions from time to time. Courses pertaining to the branches of language and literature have been re-categorized under two categories as "Language and Expression" and "Turkish Literature", with independent curricula for each of them. The curriculum of the Turkish Literature course has been designed for students who have completed the primary school and are able to express themselves verbally and in writing (MEB, 2005: 2). With the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course, it is also intended to bring up students with an aesthetic taste, capable of comprehending and evaluating all kinds of texts, thinking of the periods in which they were written, and reviewing, analyzing, and interpreting texts in terms of structure, theme, language, expression, meaning and tradition, and comparing similar and different texts and deriving results (MEB, 2005:2).

The curriculum of the Turkish literature course has been developed as a text and activity-oriented programme. Nevertheless, care has been taken to select texts that interpret and improve the individual and social reality which is experienced, contemplated and perceived, and change it, and render it more visible, comprehensible and perceivable, taking into account the circumstances of the time (MEB, 2005: 2). Literature courses are intended to develop analysis and reading comprehension skills in students, and thus making them gain an artistic and aesthetic taste and understanding. With the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course, it is also intended is to make students develop the skill and habit of analyzing all texts, notably artistic texts, in terms of structure, language, theme, expression and meaning, and to inoculate an understanding of and taste for good art (MEB, 2005: 4).

The roles designed for the teacher and student in the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course have been stated clearly in accordance with the modern learning theories. While the students are studying in groups, the teacher will act as a guide and facilitator. "*Teacher should guide the students by considering the characteristics of the student group and the capabilities they have... In order for students to achieve the objectives listed in a lesson unit, the teacher has to know that he has no other role than that of a manager, guide and facilitator...*" (MEB, 2005: 4).

The most important tools for literature courses are textbooks. In the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course, textbooks are the basic tools to make students develop literary taste, understanding and skills. While the selection of texts for textbooks relied upon the writers in

the former literature curricula, it relies upon the text itself in the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course. The characteristics that are sought for the texts to be selected for the Turkish Literature Course textbooks have been listed in 19 items (MEB, 2005: 20-21). When education is concerned, curriculum assessment is, in general, defined as collecting and interpreting data about the effectiveness of the curriculum using various measurement methods, and making a decision about the curriculum (Demirel, 2010; Dogan, 1997; Erden, 1998; Oliva, 1988). Curriculum assessment basically includes assessment of the teaching. Students should achieve the targets set out in the curriculum in order for a curriculum to be deemed successful. Assessment results provide the curriculum development experts with information about whether they should proceed with, or review, the curriculum, or to move to a new phase or not (Demirel, 2010). Ertürk (1991: 107) defines curriculum assessment as "establishing the degree of usability of the curriculum in terms of achieving desired behaviour."

Curriculum assessment is needed in order to:

- (i) Find out whether there are insufficient or malfunctioning elements or not as a result of the application;
- (ii) Establish what elements of the curriculum cause problems, if any;
- (iii) Make necessary corrections.

Erden (1998:10) sees curriculum assessment as a process of gathering data about the effectiveness of curricula by means of observations and various measurement tools, comparing and interpreting the data obtained against the criteria that are indicators of the effectiveness of the curriculum, and deciding on the effectiveness of the curriculum. Assessment of teaching enables to identify the soundness of the curriculum applied and the extent to which pre-set targets have been achieved, as well as the degree of effectiveness and adequacy of the teaching service. In order to conduct a proper and scientific curriculum assessment, the curriculum which is based on a design, a rule and a draft guideline must be assessed at the application stage, and hands-on experience and opinions of teachers who apply the curriculum have to be used. Thus, it will be possible to spot and correct several deficiencies or mistakes that might have been unnoticed during the curriculum design. In order to conduct a realistic curriculum assessment, it may be argued that gathering information at the stage of application through observations or interviews is an important requirement to improve, strengthen, and apply the curriculum effectively in compliance with innovations. On the other hand, curriculum assessment efforts exerted at the application phase may help to find out to what extent teachers are familiar with the curriculum and to what extent textbooks, which are assumed to have been prepared based on the curriculum, have been prepared in accordance with the curriculum.

Objective of the study

A literature review which was carried out demonstrated that the revised Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course was not sufficiently researched. Based on this finding, it was deemed important to know the opinions of teachers who applied the curriculum which was, allegedly, reconstructed based on the constructivist approach. The objective of this study is to gather opinions of Turkish Language and literature teachers at secondary schools about the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course based on the constructivist learning theory. To this end, the problem statement of this study has been expressed as follows: *“What are the opinions of Turkish Language and literature teachers about Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course?”*

Teachers who were asked to share their opinions under this fundamental question answered the following questions in writing. No time limit was imposed.

- (i) In comparison with the former curriculum, what do you think the most significant differences are in the new curriculum?
- (ii) What are the strengths of the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course?
- (iii) What are the weaknesses of the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course?
- (iv) What problems did you encounter at the application process of the curriculum?
- (v) What do you suggest for the solution of problems and the application of the curriculum in a more effective way?

METHOD

The descriptive method was employed in the research. Descriptive methods, in other words, scanning models, are research models that aim to describe and explain “what” events, objects, beings, organizations, groups, and various fields are (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). Descriptive studies try to explain the interaction between the present situation and the events by considering their relations to previous conditions and events. In descriptive researches, generally answers to the following questions are sought; “What was it?”, “What is it about?”, “What is it?” and “What does it consist of?”

Structured interviews and document examination were used as data gathering instruments. Since most of the teachers were unwilling to express their opinions verbally, teachers shared their opinions in written form. The study was also addressed as a qualitative study since teacher opinions were examined using the descriptive analysis method. This study was designed according to the Educational Assessment Model by Eisner (1985), a curriculum assessment model. Eisner’s educational program assessment model aims to determine not only the achieved or unachieved objectives of the curriculum, but also its impacts on students and teachers through qualitative research methods, and to collect the opinions of practitioners about the effectiveness of the curriculum. Eisner regards assessment as a process with a wide range of functions in education. According to him (1985: 192) education assessment has particularly five different functions: (1) to identify and diagnose, (2) to review the programme, (3) to compare (4) to identify needs in advance and (5) to determine the achieved objectives. In Eisner’s program assessment model, the assessment

is conducted during the process, not at the end of the process. In Eisner’s educational criticism model, what happens in the classroom is expressed in a specialist approach and further facilitates the effectiveness of the programme. In this study also, the assessment of the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course was left to teachers as practitioners of the curriculum.

Eisner (1985) addresses three important elements in the curriculum assessment process. The first element is the suitability of the curriculum content with the skills which the students are expected to develop, the experiences with the curriculum, and the student’s empirical readiness. The second important element of assessment is to provide high-quality learning. The third important element in assessment is the learning results. Here the important thing is not what has been taught to students, but what the students have learned.

In the curriculum assessment model by Eisner (1985), specialists are expected to conduct an assessment about all activities and events that take place at the application stage of the curriculum. In this model, it is stated that questions such as the following should be asked after the application of the curriculum: “What happened throughout the school year as a result of application of a certain curriculum? What were the key events? How did these events emerge? How did the teachers and students participate in such events? What were the reactions of the participants? What else could have been done to make the events more effective? What did the students learn when trying out a new curriculum? These questions focus on the process, school experience and quality of education. This study was intended to provide an assessment about activities and events taking place during the application of the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course by Turkish Language and literature teachers as specialists in their respective fields. Questions were prepared based on criteria such as strengths - weaknesses of the Curriculum of the Turkish Language course, basic skills that are expected to be gained via the curriculum, learning outcomes, teaching - learning process, and measurement - assessment elements. The interview form so prepared was examined in terms of scope by 3 educational specialists and Turkish Philology lecturers from Siirt University Education Faculty prior to the study, with a view to validating the scope of the measurement instrument.

The study population comprised the Turkish Language and literature teachers who worked for Siirt Provincial National Education Directorate. All teachers were contacted in the province, but 25 out of the 60 teachers at the secondary schools in central Siirt shared their opinions on the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course. All the teachers whose opinions were obtained were full-time teachers working for Siirt Provincial National Education Department. The interview data collected were assessed by descriptive analysis. At the descriptive analysis phase, a framework was formed based on the questions shown on the question form. Then, the data related to each and every question were examined and, as a result of such examination, a main title was formed for each interview question, with subcategories listed under each main title. Findings of every category were substantiated by excerpts from teacher opinions. Results and recommendations were presented based on the findings.

Demographic characteristics of the teachers whose opinions were used for the study are shown in Table 1.

The number of female and male participants is 14 and 11, respectively as shown in Table 1. Ten teachers have a work experience of 1 to 5 years, 8 teachers 6 to 10 years, 5 teachers 11 to 15 years, and 2 teachers 16 to 20 years. The number of teachers working at general high schools (GHS), vocational high schools (VHS), multi-programme high schools (MPHS), open high schools (OHS) and others are 6, 6, 5, 5 and 3, respectively. Where faculties graduated are concerned, 10 teachers are graduates of the Education Faculty whereas 15 teachers are graduates of the Faculty of Science and Letters.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of teachers.

Gender		Length of service in years				School worked					Faculty graduated	
Female	Male	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	GHS	VHS	MPHS	AFL	Other	Education	Arts and Sciences
14	11	10	8	5	2	6	6	5	5	3	10	15

FINDINGS

Comparison of the curriculum of the Turkish literature course with the former curricula of the language and literature courses

As it is known, language and literature courses were used to be taught as several courses such as “literature”, “literary texts”, “composition” and “grammar” prior to 2005. In 2005, two separate curricula were prepared for the language and literature courses, that is “Language and Expression” and “Turkish Literature” within the framework of constructivist learning theory. As a result of the descriptive analysis of the written interview data collected from the teachers, it was found that a great majority of the Turkish Language and Literature teachers had a much positive opinion of the curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course, and they stated their views about those features of the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course Curriculum which they saw as strengths. Looking at the analysis of interview data, it was seen that the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course and the Curricula of the Former Language and Literature Courses were compared in three sub-categories.

Student centeredness

The descriptive analysis of the interview data suggests that Turkish Language and Literature teachers believe that former language and literature curricula gave the information in a readily available manner and rendered the student passive, while the new curriculum of the Turkish Language and Literature Course was designed to place the student in the center.

“With the new curriculum, students have been moved to the center and the aim is to teach students how to access information. Looking at the former curriculum, we see a passive student model who receives the information in a readily available manner.” TEACHER 1F

“The inclusion of activities in the new curriculum renders the curriculum student oriented .”TEACHER 2M

“...A student centered structure is adopted...” TEACHER.3F

“In the former curriculum, students were passive recipients. The fact that students were predominantly listeners brought together several problems ...”TEACHER 4F

“With the new curriculum, students have a higher involvement in the activities, and are assigned duties and responsibilities... The former curriculum lacked the student-centered understanding...” TEACHER 8F

“The former curriculum was teacher-centered where students were extremely passive. However, the new curriculum is student-centered and the student is active. That’s the greatest difference.” TEACHER 9F

“The curriculum has been designed to increase the involvement of students. A modern curriculum with students in the center.” TEACHER 16M

“The new curriculum is totally student-centered while the teacher functions as a guide. Therefore, the teacher has been pacified ...” TEACHER .17F

“...It is student centered, not teacher centered...” TEACHER .19F

“The student has an active role; teacher’s role has been reduced to the role of a coach.” TEACHER 21F

Measurement and assessment

As a result of descriptive analysis, it was concluded that Turkish Language and Literature teachers viewed the measurement and assessment dimension of the new curriculum much differently than that of the former literature curricula:

“...The curriculum offers room for different activities at measurement and assessment sections ...” TEACHER 3F

“...In the former curriculum, the grades of each course were calculated separately and the overall grade for the Turkish Language and Literature Course was calculated as the sum of percentages of each course. The new curriculum eliminates this problem...” TEACHER 15F

Promoting research

It was found that Turkish Language and Literature teachers believe that the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course encourages the students to research, question and think, unlike the former literary curricula.

“...In the new curriculum, matters that require to be researched are not offered in the textbooks, rather, students are encouraged to research them...” TEACHER 2M

“...With the shift to the constructivist education system in

the new curriculum, students have transformed into individuals who are more active, who research, question and cooperate... TEACHER 4M

"While the former curriculum focused on the teacher and the course, the new curriculum has brought a difference in that it is student oriented and encourages the students to research and question." TEACHER 5M

"Encourages students to think, leads students to research, and questions are more thought provoking." TEACHER 6M

"The former curriculum just gave the knowledge. The new curriculum, however, ensures that students access knowledge via orbits, rather than presenting knowledge in a readily available manner. There are various studies available. In that case, knowledge gained by way of research – examination is substantiated by various studies ..." TEACHER .11F

"The most remarkable feature of new study is its research-based character." TEACHER 12F

"...With the former curriculum, teachers would explain those course subjects they deemed necessary, while with the new curriculum, subjects are determined from the book and students are required to conduct a research..." TEACHER 17M

"...Inspires research..." TEACHER 19F

"...A curriculum which is based on interpretation and research,, quite good..." TEACHER 20F

"Instead of accessing readily available knowledge, this curriculum provokes teachers and students to review the knowledge and to think intellectually." TEACHER 22M

"... We see that it is a curriculum that promotes research outside the course..." TEACHER .24M

Strengths of the curriculum the Turkish literature course

The descriptive analysis was employed to examine the data derived from the opinions of Turkish Language and Literature teachers concerning the strengths of Curriculum of the Turkish Language and Literature Course. Findings derived from teachers opinions concerning strengths of the curriculum were categorized under two main titles, with sub-categories under each title. Quotations of teacher views that supported each category were also presented.

Gains for the students

As a result of the descriptive analyses conducted, findings were put into five sub-categories under the title of student gains.

Developing a taste for art and aesthetics: The descriptive analyses suggest that teachers of Turkish Language and Literature believe that the curriculum of

the Turkish literature course contributes to the development a taste for art and aesthetics in the students, by providing them with information about art, literature and culture and examples of arts with different emotions and views.

"... By informing the students about literature and culture, it tries to instill a taste for art and aesthetic beauty in them..." TEACHER 1F

+ "...Examples from artists with different emotions and views have been included ..." TEACHER .24M

Development of creativity and imagination: The descriptive analyses suggest that Turkish Language and Literature teachers believe that the curriculum the Turkish literature course contributes to the development of creativity and imagination in students.

"...Poems and texts studied improve their imaginary world..." TEACHER .1F

Effective use of language/accurate self-expression: The descriptive analyses suggest that Turkish Language and Literature teachers believe that the curriculum of the Turkish literature course contributes to the development of effective language skills in students.

"...It tries to teach them how to use the language and express themselves correctly..." TEACHER 1F

"...In lessons which involve mutual talks, we clearly see the students' perceptions of life and expression skills clearly..." TEACHER 13F

"...Since it is verbal, it is open to interpretation, and encourages the students to speak" TEACHER 14M

"It offers the students the chance to express themselves much comfortably..." TEACHER .23M

Leads to research: The descriptive analyses suggest that teachers of Turkish Language and Literature believe that the curriculum of the Turkish literature course contributes to the development of questioning and researching skills in students.

"...It helps students to research and socialize ..." TEACHER 3F

"...Leads the student to research ..." TEACHER .8F

"One of the greatest strengths of the new curriculum is the elimination of a system that was based on memorizing, and that it leads students to research and investigation." TEACHER 12F

"...It offers more research opportunities to students..." TEACHER 14M

"It is based on research and investigation..." TEACHER 22M

Content

As a result of descriptive analyses conducted, findings

were obtained in three sub-categories under the Content title.

Scope: The results of descriptive analyses suggest that Turkish Language and Literature teachers have a positive feeling about the curriculum when scope is concerned because the curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course has an enriched scope, has been designed comprehensively and offers room for examples from the most recent literature works.

"It covers the entire Turkish literature. It includes the contemporary Turkish literature and contemporary writers and poets." TEACHER 2M

"One of the most important strengths of the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course: It covers Turkish literature in depth..." TEACHER 5M

"...The fact that the literature belonging to era of 1860-1923 (modernization process) is being covered may be considered a strength of this literature curriculum ..." TEACHER 7F

"... It has a rich content in terms of diversity of subjects..." TEACHER 16M

"What was intended by increasing the duration of high school education to 4 years was have a comprehensive covering of the subjects ..." TEACHER 1F

"A useful course in which students may learn about historical evolution of Turkish language and its eras. One of the strengths of the curriculum is the fact that the curriculum explains the eras of our literature, the mindset during each era, the reflections of the mindset on literature and social life." TEACHER 18F

"It's been prepared with a rich content in terms of diversity of subjects..." TEACHER 24M

Structure of curriculum: The results of descriptive analyses demonstrated that the strengths of the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course were as follows;

- The curriculum of the Turkish Literature course has been prepared with a multidisciplinary understanding,
- It has been designed with a spiral arrangement using the constructivist approach,
- The curriculum is activity-oriented,
- It is intended to make the students achieve all gains,
- Turkish Literature course is given as an independent course,
- Curricula of the 10th and 11th grade Turkish literature course are suitable in terms of timing and scope.

Examples to such findings are presented as follows;

"...The fact that the curriculum has been enriched with the other disciplines strengthens the literature course and curriculum through an interdisciplinary approach... It is also an advantage of the curriculum of the literature

course that subjects are designed with a spiral arrangement according to the constructivist approach ..." TEACHER 4M

"... Activities on which the literature course relies makes the course enjoyable." TEACHER 5M

"...It is a great strength of the curriculum that the student is offered all the gains of Turkish literature." TEACHER 9F

"Offering Turkish literature as an individual course is the greatest strength of this system. Large space allocated to activities in the new curriculum is another strength of the curriculum." TEACHER 15F

"One of the strengths of the curriculum is the suitability of the 10th and 11th grade Turkish Literature curricula in terms of timing and scope..." TEACHER 19F

"It is a great strength that the curriculum includes innovations ..." TEACHER 22M

Textbooks: Based on descriptive analyses, it was found that Turkish Language and Literature teachers perceived it as a strength of the curriculum that the textbooks prepared for the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course included a rich content, abundant examples, and texts, and the activities in the books were designed to promote communication between the teachers and the students.

"Books that help the curriculum to be conveyed to the student have been prepared with a rich content. We are able to see the most distinguished texts of Turkish literature in these books." TEACHER 10M

"Activities included in our text-based books help the students and teachers to communicate any time." TEACHER 13F

"It's a great strength that textbooks have a rich content in terms of diversity of the subjects." TEACHER 16M

"Books help the subject to be understood with lots of examples." TEACHER 22M

Weaknesses of curriculum of the Turkish literature course

Based on the analysis of the written interview data obtained from teachers, it was observed that weaknesses of the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course and problems encountered by Turkish Language and Literature teachers in covering the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course were grouped under similar categories. As a result of descriptive analysis of the data, it can be argued that most of the problems encountered by the teachers were caused by the weaknesses of the curriculum. Therefore, weaknesses of the curriculum and problems encountered by the teachers were grouped under the same title. Findings derived from teachers opinions about weaknesses of the curriculum / problems encountered by teachers are presented separately under

seven sub-categories, and quotations from teachers which support the findings in every category are included.

Distribution of subjects by grades

Teachers suggested that the subjects of the Turkish Literature course were concentrated in the 9th grade to a great extent, and however, the weekly class hours were limited to 2 h despite the crowded content. It was found that teachers met difficulties in completing all activities with only 2 hours per week given the rich content. In addition, teachers think that the subjects are fewer, but class hours are higher at higher grades, compared with the crowded content and fewer class hours in the 9th grade.

"...The subjects have not been distributed equally by grades. Although the hardest subjects are included in the curriculum of the 9th grade, class hours are insufficient..." TEACHER 3F

"The weaknesses of the curriculum are too many subjects in the 9th grade, which are not sometimes consecutive." TEACHER 4M

"...Insufficient time is allocated for some of the activities..." TEACHER 5M

"Although the curriculum includes a wide range of subjects in the 9th grade, it includes less-than-necessary subjects in the other grades... Because there are too many gains in the 9th grade curriculum, not all subjects are covered." TEACHER 11F

"The weakest aspect of the new curriculum is the 9th grade curriculum. The 9th grade curriculum covers almost all the subjects. Moreover, it is also composed of activities that are beyond the 9th grade level..." TEACHER 15F

"The greatest problem is stemming from the 9th grade curriculum. Since it tries to cover all subjects, we are not able to go into details, which, in return, prevents the students from understanding the subjects. When we cover the subjects in-depth,, it is not possible to complete the curriculum on time. Therefore, so many subjects remain uncovered." TEACHER 15F

"... Activities and class hours do not go hand in hand ..." TEACHER 16M

"Unnecessary details have been included in the 9th grade..." TEACHER 17M

"...One of the weaknesses of Turkish literature curriculum is that this curriculum is too hard for the 9th grade students who have just graduated from primary school ..." TEACHER 18F

"Subjects included in the 9th grade are crowded, subjects aimed at LYS exam are given room only in the 12th grade and the 10th grade Turkish Literature course is too complicated..." TEACHER 19F

"Time problems are encountered in some classes –.e.g. the 9th and 10th grades." TEACHER 19F

"...There is a contradiction between content and class hours in the 9th grade. I mean, class hours are not enough..." TEACHER 24M

School types

In the Turkish education system, there are different types of high schools. Science high schools, Anatolian high schools and teacher high schools admit students who attain certain points score in a central exam. On the other hand, normal high schools and vocational high schools do not admit students according to any scoring system. Therefore, students who attend the Science high schools, Anatolian high schools and teacher high schools are students who have attained a certain level of success. Students of normal and vocational high schools are comprised of students with a lower success. Since 2005, a single curriculum has been prepared for several types of school that include students with different learning characteristics and skills.

It was found that language and literature teachers view it as a weakness of the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course that it stipulates the same structure, content and teaching and learning process for all schools, irrespective of the type of school. Quotations of teacher views concerning this finding are presented below:

"The same type of curriculum applies to all school types of the secondary education (general purpose high school, vocational high school, Anatolia and Science High Schools). That is because the students are of different levels, and applying the same curriculum to students with different levels may give rise to problems." TEACHER 1F

"... It's quite difficult to teach the same subjects to a student from a vocational high school and a student studying social sciences and mathematics... It's hard to apply the same book and curriculum to different types of schools." TEACHER 3F

"The same curriculum is applied to high schools of any level, which is a not a weakness only for the Turkish Literature course, but also for all courses ..." TEACHER 18F

Weaknesses/problems related to the students

The results of descriptive analysis conducted also showed that Turkish Language and Literature teachers expressed their opinions as regards those weaknesses and problems of the curriculum of the Turkish literature course which they deemed to be relevant with students. Accordingly, teachers believe that there are weaknesses / problems caused by students habits, lack of motivation for the lesson, socio-economic and cultural differences, individual differences among students and the level of readiness of students. Quotations which exemplify this

finding are presented below.

“Weaknesses caused by insufficient readiness of the students. Students have difficulty in understanding some works, or they find some texts beyond their level...”

TEACHER 1F

“One of the problems we face is that students find it hard to adapt to the new curriculum. Since the adoption of the new curriculum, it has not been applied properly. Shifting to lazy side, students prefer receiving the knowledge from teachers, instead of searching for it. This, in turn, prevents the curriculum from reaching its target.”

TEACHER 1F

“Students are not interested in the activities, students fail to give up their old habits”

TEACHER 2M

“Problems arising out of the failure of teachers and students in adopting the new education system... Problems caused by the fact that level of some texts included in curriculum are beyond the current level of students... Failure to draw students’ attention to the subject”

TEACHER 8F

“The weakest aspect of Turkish Literature is the fact that it does not address all levels and everybody ... We have hard times due to individual differences among students.”

TEACHER 9F

“Most of the time, students fail to prepare before the class and to do what they are supposed to do in the class”

TEACHER 10M

“...Some activities which are demanded without taking into consideration student needs or environmental conditions fail to attract the students’ attention. Therefore, activities are not conducted or are conducted casually.”

TEACHER 11F

“... Those students who have not developed a reading habit find it difficult to access and interpret knowledge. In such cases, we may have to resort to the presentation technique.”

TEACHER 13F

“... The greatest problem I have when I apply the curriculum is the failure of students to understand the words and sentences...”

TEACHER 18F

“This curriculum is too heavy for the student profile we have. A child who is not even capable of bringing his books with him is asked to research, examine, synthesize and make a presentation to the class. It makes no sense. These children are unable to put two words together. The book asks us to discuss and divide into groups.”

TEACHER 21F

Inconsistency between textbooks and the curriculum

Turkish Language and Literature teachers stated that although textbooks were full of activities and reading passages, these books failed to contain theoretical information necessary for comprehending the subject, and books were empty and textbooks were hard to understand. Additionally, teachers also pointed out that

the contents of the textbooks were not consistent with the subjects which ÖSYM (Turkish educational institution in charge of university exams) kept the students responsible for at the exams, and this directed the students to different sources, and that books had several activities and it was hard to cover all of these activities. Quotations exemplifying these findings are presented as follows;

“... The density and repetition of the activities, lack of information in the books, insufficient readiness cause us problems during lessons...”

TEACHER 3F

“Books are extremely inadequate in terms of knowledge, which further pacifies some students ...”

TEACHER 5M

“... Since the books are empty, students are receiving the knowledge from the teachers, rather than the books...”

TEACHER 14M

“... The textbook is awful, and what it tries to tell is not really clear. It must have been prepared by aliens...”

TEACHER 21F

“... Lack of adequate knowledge in the textbooks...”

TEACHER 22M

“What textbooks tell is different from those subjects ÖSYM keeps the students responsible for. This leads us, the teachers, to different sources.”

TEACHER 23M

“... Time given to cover all of the texts and activities included in the course book are inadequate...”

TEACHER 24M

Class atmosphere and number of students

During the talks with the teachers, one common thought shared by all teachers was the physical environment in the classroom and the number of students. Teachers told that they had hardship in covering the lessons in the way it was explained in the curriculum. Quotations that exemplify this finding are presented as follows;

“One of the problems I had while applying the curriculum was the crowded classrooms...”

TEACHER 2M

“... Number of students, density of the subjects prevent effective covering of the courses”

TEACHER 3F

“... A crowded classroom is one of the problems we had during the application process of the curriculum.”

TEACHER 4M

“Crowded classrooms prevent the activities from being applied properly. There is inadequate ground for some of the activities and some activities are above the level of students.”

TEACHER 5M

Weaknesses/problems connected with access to researches and sources

As a result of descriptive analysis, it was found that problems were experienced due to lack of access to sources in research-based studies. It was suggested that

the course was limited to presentation alone because students failed to conduct the required researches, and most of the time students arrived at the classroom with no preparation at all. Those students with no computer or internet connection were dependent upon the teacher. Students conducted researches casually, and the Internet was assumed to be the only source (Google), and students had weak research skills.

"... Since students do not conduct the researches they are expected to do, the lesson is limited to presentation alone..." TEACHER 7F

"Most of the time, students fail to prepare before the class and do what they are supposed to do" TEACHER 10M

"... At the application phase, we had difficulties in terms of research at the 9th grade in particular..." TEACHER 12F

"... Those students with no computer at home and research opportunities are more dependent upon the teacher." TEACHER 14M

"... We experience some difficulties due to superficial researches and use of Google by the students for all subjects." TEACHER 17M

"... A curriculum that encourages one to research, but not all students have tools such as a library, internet... Problems related to lack of resources are frequently experienced..." TEACHER 20F

"... Since students are not much research-oriented, they have hardship in accessing concrete information ..." TEACHER 24M

Teacher recommendations concerning problems encountered

Descriptive analysis was used to examine the data derived from recommendations of Turkish Language and Literature teachers for the solution of problems they experienced with regard to the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course. Findings derived from teachers' recommendations for the solution of problems encountered in the application of the curriculum are given separately under six sub-categories and quotations from teachers which support the findings in every category are included.

Recommendations for research opportunities

It was found out that teachers believed that students should be provided with adequate references, libraries and tools so that they can conduct researches.

"First, research media should be provided to the students in order to lead the students to research. The fact that schools are inadequate in terms of library and computer capabilities weakens the research efforts of the students."

TEACHER 1F

Distribution of subjects by grades

From their recommendations concerning the weaknesses of the curriculum and problems encountered during its application, it was found that Turkish Language and Literature teachers thought that the curriculum content should be re-arranged according to the years, class hours re-adjusted according to the content and activities recommended. They specifically pointed out that the content of the 9th grade Turkish Literature course should be re-arranged in compliance with class hours.

"... I believe that subjects have to be re-arranged gradually according to the grades in a more balanced manner..." TEACHER 5M

"Levels and class hours have to be arranged more regularly. For instance, the 12th grade Language and Expression class has to be allocated 3 class hours instead of 5. By contrast, class hours of the 9th grade Language and Expression courses should be increased..." TEACHER 14M

"... The 9th grade curriculum should be reviewed, number of subjects should be reduced and it should be arranged in a way that will make literature a more enjoyable course for the students ..." TEACHER 15F

"Especially Turkish Literature curriculum should be re-structured. An infrastructure may be established for the higher classes in the 9th grade." TEACHER 19F

Flexibility of the curriculum

According to the results of descriptive analysis, teachers recommended that the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course should be prepared flexibly. They pointed out that the curriculum should be prepared taking into consideration regional differences, conditions of the environment where the school is located and individual differences between students. Quotations from teachers which exemplify such finding are presented as follows;

"...Regional characteristics should be taken into consideration in designing the activities..." TEACHER 2M

"...The curriculum should be prepared taking regional characteristics into consideration..." TEACHER 5M

"...The circumstances of Turkey should be measured well..." TEACHER 6M

"The curriculum should be rendered flexible. It is not reasonable to apply the same curriculum Turkey-wide, and regional characteristics may be taken into account. Individual differences have to be considered." TEACHER 9F

"The curriculum should be restructured taking environmental circumstances into account..." TEACHER

11F

Classroom environment and number of students

Turkish Language and Literature teachers were found to believe that the curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course should be prepared by taking into consideration the physical environment of classrooms, schools should be supported for the teaching techniques, and the number of students in the crowded classrooms should be reduced.

“Classroom environments should be rendered much suitable...” TEACHER 2M

“Improvement in the physical condition of the school and the classroom will enable to reach objectives of the curriculum...” TEACHER 5M

Different school types

It was found that Turkish Language and Literature teachers emphasize the fact that the curriculum of the Turkish literature course, considering its basic elements, should not be recommended for different types of schools, and the curriculum should be prepared according to the type of school.

“The curriculum has to be re-arranged according to the types of schools...” TEACHER 3F

“Curricula have to be prepared separately for each high school level.” TEACHER 18F

Textbooks

According to the findings of the descriptive analysis, Turkish Language and Literature teachers believe that textbooks should, in addition to activities, contain theoretical information, texts should be selected more carefully, long texts should be avoided, and shorter and interesting texts should be selected. A teachers thought that textbooks were full of unnecessary details and information. Another teacher pointed out that textbooks should be prepared in line with the exams organized by ÖSYM (YGS and LYS).

“... Apart from activities, textbooks should also contain information about the subject. Reading passages, sample texts should be selected more carefully, and texts that students can read and comprehend and are not too long to cause distraction should be selected.” TEACHER 3F

“... Texts contained in the textbooks should be shorter and more interesting ...” TEACHER 8F

“At the solution stage of the problems, I believe that textbooks should be reviewed in particular. Textbooks

are filled with unnecessary details and information.” TEACHER 12F

“... Summary information may be added to textbooks considering the possibility that student may not reach all the information.” TEACHER 13F

“... More care should be taken for the selection of activities, and more space should be offered for knowledge apart from the activities...” TEACHER 14M

“... Textbooks should be in line with the exams that are organized centrally.” TEACHER 16M

Training for teachers

Teachers interviewed suggested that teachers should receive an informative in-service training seminar for the effectiveness of the curriculum.

“... Teachers should be given a seminar about the curriculum ...” TEACHER 6M

“... Some concepts covered by the new curriculum are far from the reality of the students and the community, and teachers also feel estranged. Teachers should be given proper seminars about the new curriculum...” TEACHER 17M

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Although the review of relevant literature revealed that many researches had been conducted about the assessment of the curriculum of Turkish course at the first and second levels of primary education, there is small number of studies conducted and published with regards to *Curriculum of the Language and Expression Course* and *Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course* at the secondary education. The findings of the current study provided a new perspective to the researches conducted previously. As it is known, there were several courses in the branch of language and literature such as “literature”, “literary texts”, “composition” and “grammar” before 2005. In 2005, two separate curricula were prepared for the language and literature courses, that is “Language and Expression” and “Turkish Literature” within the framework of constructivist learning theory.

The results of descriptive analysis of the written interview data obtained from the teachers suggest that a majority of the Turkish Language and Literature teachers had a more positive view about the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course, compared with the former curriculum, and they stated their views about those features of the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course Curriculum which they saw as strengths. Looking at the analysis of interview data, it was seen that the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course and the Former Curricula of the Language and Literature Course were compared in three sub-categories. It was found that

Turkish Language and Literature teachers believed that the curricula of the former language and literature course used to give the information in a readily available manner, rendered the student passive, while the curriculum of the Turkish Language and Literature course was designed to place the student in the center.

In the study conducted by Uçan (2010), some results supporting the findings of this study have been obtained. In this study, it is stated that the Turkish Language and Literature curriculum has been arranged as two different curricula, that is the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course and the Curriculum of the Language and Expression Course, and that modern theories have been used in designing the two curricula. In addition, it is pointed out that activities have been included in both curricula and they enable the students to learn through learning by doing. It is found that Turkish Language and Literature teachers see the measurement and assessment dimension of the new curriculum much differently than the former literature curricula: Another dimension which Turkish language and Literature teachers believe is different from the new curriculum is that it drives students to research. Accordingly, it may be argued that Turkish Language and Literature teachers believe that the curriculum of the Turkish literature course encourages students to research, question and think, unlike the former curricula.

Based on the findings arrived at, the strengths of the curriculum of the Turkish literature course may be grouped under the headings *student gains and content*. As far as the student gains are concerned, it may be suggested that Turkish Language and Literature teachers believe that the curriculum of the Turkish literature course contributes to the development of a taste of art and aesthetics as well as creative thinking and imagination skills in students. According to Turkish Language and Literature teachers, another gain which the curriculum of the Turkish literature course provides the students with is the contribution to effective use of language through activities and the development of self expression skills. Moreover, it may be argued that the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course helps students develop researching and questioning skills. In the light of the data obtained, it may be said that Turkish Language and Literature teachers have positive feelings about the curriculum when content is concerned, because the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course has an enriched scope, is comprehensive and offers room for examples of the most recent literature works.

According to Turkish Language and Literature teachers, the strengths of the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course are as follows:

- The curriculum of the Turkish Literature course has been prepared with a multidisciplinary understanding,
- It has been designed with a spiral arrangement using the constructivist approach,

- The curriculum is activity-oriented;
- It is intended to make the students achieve all gains,
- Turkish Literature course is given as an independent course,
- Curricula of the 10th and 11th grade Turkish literature course are suitable in terms of timing and scope.

In the study conducted by Ataseven (2011), the curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course prepared in 2005 was assessed in terms of the objective – gain dimension. As a result of study, it was found that the objective-gain dimension of the curriculum was achievable, applicable and could be turned into a gain, yet there were some shortcomings, which could be corrected to a great extent through revisions and plans.

As a result of the study conducted by Çelik (2010), it was found that the Curriculum of 9th grade Turkish Literature Course was partially sufficient in respect of the ability to assess the universality of the critical thinking dimension. With the study conducted by Demiral (2011), Turkish Language and Literature teachers and the Curricula of the Turkish Literature Course and Language and Expression Course were assessed according to the international criteria. For such purpose, both curricula were compared with the curriculum of International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP) Turkish A1 Course. As a result of the study, it was found that the curricula of the Turkish Literature and Language and Expression Course were similar to the curriculum of the IBDP Turkish A1 course in terms of objectives and targets/gains. However, it was determined that the measurement and assessment processes of the IBDP Turkish A1 course were more significant and objective, and teachers did not use common criteria particularly in the application phase. In the light of the data obtained, Turkish Language and Literature teachers think that it is strength of the curriculum that textbooks prepared for the Turkish Literature curriculum have been designed to contain abundant examples, rich content and texts.

Based on the data of written interview obtained from teachers, it was observed that the weaknesses of the Turkish Literature Course Curriculum and problems encountered by the Turkish Language and Literature teachers in the covering of Turkish Literature Course Curriculum were grouped under similar categories. It can be argued that most of the problems encountered by the teachers are caused by the weaknesses of the curriculum. Therefore, weaknesses of the curriculum and problems encountered by the teachers were examined under the same title.

According to findings, teachers stated that although the subjects related to the Turkish Literature course were widely covered in the curriculum of the 9th grade, the class hours were only limited to 2 h a week. The failure of teachers to cover all subjects due to the concentration of the subjects at the 9th grade may be attributed to the fact that they have only 2 h a week to complete all

activities. In addition, teachers think that the subjects are fewer, but class hours are higher at higher grades, compared with the crowded content and fewer class hours in the 9th grade. The fact that a single curriculum has been prepared for different types of schools is another weakness of the curriculum according to teachers. One of the problems teachers focus on with this study is a single curriculum has been prepared for all types of schools. In the study conducted by Çakır (2009), it was found that teachers working at Anatolian High Schools had less trouble in applying methods and techniques of the constructivist approach compared with teachers working at other schools.

One of the factors which teachers describe as a weakness of the curriculum is related with students. Accordingly, teachers believe that there are weaknesses/problems caused by old habits of students, lack of motivation for the course, socio-economic and cultural differences, and individual differences among students and level of readiness. In the study conducted by Acar (2007), it was concluded that the new curriculum may be applied at schools located at city centers, but may not be applied at rural schools and in combined classes, that teachers should undergo in-service training with regards to the curriculum, and the validity and reliability of the measurement and assessment tools should be studied properly. Turkish Language and Literature teachers also addressed the strengths of the textbooks prepared in line with the curriculum of the Turkish literature course, and emphasized the weaknesses of, and problems posed by, the textbooks. According to the findings achieved, Turkish Language and Literature teachers suggest that although textbooks are full of activities and reading passages, they fail to contain theoretical information necessary for comprehending the subject, and the textbooks are poor in content and are hard to understand. In the light of these findings, according to teachers, there are too many activities in the books and not all of them are covered, and they need to seek different sources because the content of the textbooks are inconsistent with the subjects that ÖSYM keeps the students responsible for.

Another common problem which teachers agree upon is the physical environment of the classroom and excessive number of students. It was found that teachers faced difficulties in covering the lessons in the way it was explained in the curriculum. In the study conducted by Kurudayıoğlu et al. (2008), it was found that some problems were experienced in measurement – assessment due to crowded classrooms, and measurement – assessment activities could not be conducted properly. In the same study, it was found that it was quite difficult to carry out group exercises due to crowded classrooms. Teachers experienced problems due to lack of access to sources in the research-based studies. It was found that students had poor research skills, were not able to carry out researches in the way required, they sufficed with

superficial researches, they took the Internet as the one and only reference point (Google), or those students with no computer or internet were dependent upon the teacher, and therefore, lessons were taught by the presentation of the teacher (presentation method).

The following results were achieved based on the findings derived from the recommendations of Turkish Language and Literature teachers for the solution of problems they experienced with regard to the Turkish Literature Curriculum. Teachers believe that students should be provided with adequate sources, libraries and tools so that they can carry out researches. Another recommendation shared by a majority of the teachers is that the distribution of the content of the curriculum by years should be reviewed, and class hours should be re-aligned based on the content and the activities suggested. They particularly pointed out that content of the 9th grade Turkish Literature course should be re-arranged in compliance with class hours.

Another noteworthy recommendation by the teachers is that the curriculum of the Turkish Literature course should be designed flexibly. They believe that the curriculum should be prepared, taking into consideration regional differences, conditions of the environment where the school is located, and individual differences between students. It was found that Turkish Language and Literature teachers believed that Turkish Literature course curriculum should be prepared, taking into the physical environment of classrooms into account, schools should be supported in respect of teaching techniques, and the number of students in the crowded classrooms should be reduced. Another vital suggestion by Turkish Language and Literature teachers is that the curriculum of the Turkish literature course, considering its basic elements, should not be recommended for different types of schools, and the curriculum should be prepared according to the type of school.

It was found that Turkish Language and Literature teachers believed that textbooks should contain theoretical information apart from the activities, texts should be selected more carefully, long texts should be avoided, and shorter and interesting texts should be selected. A teacher pointed out that textbooks were full of unnecessary details and information while another teacher suggested that textbooks should be prepared in consistency with the exams organized by ÖSYM (YGS and LYS). It was also found that teachers believed that they needed in-service training about the new curriculum so that curriculum can be effective. One of the problems Turkish Language and Literature teachers pointed out in connection with curriculum is that teachers were not given adequate in-service training about the curricula. In the studies conducted by Kurudayıoğlu et al. (2008) and Çakır (2009) it was stated that Turkish Language and Literature teachers needed an effective and organized in-service training seminar about the new curriculum, and some of the previous in-service training seminars that took place

before failed to satisfy the expectations.

In the light of the results derived above, it may be argued that the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course was regarded positively by the Turkish Language and Literature teachers in general and accepted as effective. However, it may also be said that problems and weaknesses that could be considered limitations of the curriculum may be improved in line with the results and recommendations to be derived from the researches to be conducted. Within the framework of these results, the following suggestions may be listed;

- (i) The curriculum should be revised in terms of content according to the grades.
- (ii) Class hours of the 9th grade should be increased in line with the content.
- (iii) Textbooks should be re-arranged to be consistent with the curriculum
- (iv) Classroom environment and school libraries should be enriched with books and sources that will satisfy the activities, research and project studies in the curriculum.
- (v) Reading passages should be reviewed in terms of length.
- (vi) The curriculum should be re-examined given the fact that students have different learning backgrounds, characteristics and skills at the time they start secondary education.
- (vii) The curriculum has to be re-arranged for the different types of schools.
- (viii) The number of students in the classrooms should be re-arranged to allow activities to be carried out.
- (ix) Much importance should be attached to the written expression activities.
- (x) The content of courses and question types should be revised in a such way to allow students to prepare for the university exams.
- (xi) In-service training should be given to the teachers with regards to the curriculum.
- (xii) MEB should seek teacher opinions about the content of the curriculum, and the activities, methods and techniques recommended.
- (xiii) More comprehensive researches may be carried out with regards to the Curriculum of the Turkish Literature Course.

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