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Teachers’ views about the primary curriculum regarding in-service training variable

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine practising teachers’ views on planning, implementation and evaluation dimensions of the primary curriculum and differences between those who have participated in in-service courses and those who have not. This survey study was carried out with 259 practising teachers in primary schools. A five-point likert style of scale, consisting of four parts, was developed as data gathering tool. Reliability coefficient of the scale was found as .81. Data were processed by using SPSS 15.0 software, running independent t-test, and analysed taking .05 level of probability into consideration. Findings showed that those who have participated in in-service training courses and those who have not do not share similar points of view in these dimensions of the new primary curriculum. In the light of these findings it is recommended that time allocated to in-service courses need to be increased and more teachers need to be reached through these courses.

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Keywords: Primary Curriculum, In-service Training, Teachers;

1. Introduction

Primary curriculum (PC) were started to be applied in all primary schools since 2005-2006 after its pilot scheme conducted in 2004-2005. The quality of education is mostly based on the curriculum which is being applied and according to Varış (1997) a curriculum covers national education which is provided by an institution of education to children, youngsters and adults and all the activities which are directed to accomplishing the aims of that institution (cited from Çetin, 2009). A teacher should select, apply and check external events which are appropriate to the characteristics of both students and learning process according to the educational targets fixed by him or her. Therefore, teachers should have the qualifications of planning, applying and evaluating the education (Senemoğlu, 2007). During the stages of planning, developing, renewing and evaluating a curriculum; anyone who is related to the matter must participate in the process actively. However, the most important factor in the achievement of the curriculum is the teacher, who is personally the applier himself, and their opinions are of much importance (Yiğit 2004; Ayyav ve Devecioğlu, 2009). When we look at the previous studies, it is seen that opinions of teachers were taken about some variables such as their qualification levels, perception levels, professional seniority, gender, the kind of school where they received their education and participation in in-service trainings (IST) within the context of designing and applying PC (Gözütok et al. 2005; Gömleksiz, 2007; Dindar and Yاغın, 2007; Şahin, 2008;)

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Kirikkaya Buluş, 2009; Önen et al., 2008; Kildan and Temel, 2008; Gültekin and Çubukçu, 2008). As for the studies which were conducted within the context of assessment of YLP, there are certain studies taking into consideration qualifications, perception levels and gender variables (Çakan, 2004; Öğuz, 2009). Not only teachers but also primary school students (Çetin, 2009; Bukova and Alkan, 2005), preservice teachers (Öğuz, 2009; Şahin and Ersoy, 2009), and assistants of provincial directorates of national education (Keleş et al., 2009) were asked for their opinions relating PC. The teachers who will apply the curriculum should possess the necessary knowledge, ability and attitude or they should be made to acquire these characteristics (Özsevgeç, 2006; Kılıç, 2005). Some studies are being conducted in our country relating the evaluation of curriculums depending on teacher opinions. Besides, in western countries, it is important to learn the opinions of students on whom the curriculum is being applied in addition to other concerned persons in terms of developing the curriculums (Yiğit, 2004). It is seen that studies directed to this expression are being conducted when we look at literature. Differences in the perceptions of teachers relating present curriculums from the perspectives of different variables in terms of planning, applying and evaluating were revealed since 2004. Especially, the studies which cover opinions of all primary school teachers relating PC according to their attendance to İST are few in number and this increases the importance of this research further.

2. The purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to reveal difference between the opinions of teachers who attend and not attend İST courses, whose topics are new primary curriculums, in terms of planning, applying and evaluating the curriculum. In accordance with this aim, the questions below were tried to be answered:

- Is there a significant difference between the opinions of teachers who attend and not attend İST courses in terms of planning PC?
- Is there a significant difference between the opinions of teachers who attend and not attend İST courses in terms of applying PC?
- Is there a significant difference between the opinions of teachers who attend and not attend İST courses in terms of evaluating PC?

3. Method

Survey method was employed in this study. This kind of research method, which is a descriptive research, is conducted in order to ascertain the present state (Çepni, 2009). The individual or the object, which is the subject of the research, is tried to be defined within its own conditions and just like the way it is. No effort is made to change them in no way. There is a thing which needs to be known and it is there. What matters is to observe and determine it in the most appropriate way (Karasar, 2009). Since the purpose of the study is to reveal the opinions of primary school teachers relating PC, this method was chosen. The study was conducted with class teachers and branch teachers who work in primary schools during 2009 and 2010. Participation was based on voluntariness and opinions of 259 primary school teachers from 11 cities (Ardaňan, Balikesir, Bayburt, Gümüşhane, Iğdır, İstanbul, Kars, Kocaeli, Kahramanmaraş, Şanlıurfa, Trabzon) were consulted. 129 of participants (49.8%) were female teachers and the rest 127 of them (49.0%) were male teachers. 5 point likert type scale (1= I totally disagree, 2= I disagree, 3= I reasonably agree, 4= I agree, 5= I totally agree) containing 4 sections was developed as data collection instrument. First section consists personal information, second section consists the opinions in terms of planning PC, third section consists opinions in terms of application and last section consists the opinions in terms of evaluation. The scale is comprised of 56 items in total relating three dimensions.

In this study, all significant items according to independent variable relating planning, application and evaluation were handled. Expert opinions relating the prepared scale were taken and its validation was provided with its reliability co-efficient as 0.81. Obtained data were evaluated using independent t-test in SPSS 15, 0 software and they were analyzed taking α= 0.05 significance level in to consideration.
4. Findings

Table 1 shows the findings relating the t-test results of items representing the opinions concerning dimension of planning PC according to teachers’ attendance to IST courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>IST attendance</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Units and student acquirements are comprehensible in the programme.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed activities are easily understood.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities are inadequate in terms of answering the aim of the unit and student acquirements</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen in Table 1 that primary school teachers reasonably (X=3.49) agree with “Units and student acquirements are comprehensible in the programme” and when we look at t-test results there is a significant difference according to teachers’ attendance to IST courses [t(254)=2.42, p<.05]. It is seen that teachers reasonably (X=3.30) agree with “Proposed activities are easily understood”. When we look as t-test result of this opinion, there is a significant difference according to teachers’ attendance to IST courses [t(253)=2.13, p<.05]. Again, it is seen that teachers reasonably (X=3.39) agree with “Activities are inadequate in terms of answering the aim of the unit and student acquirements”. When we look at t-test results of the opinion, there is a significant difference according to teachers’ attendance to IST courses [t(253)=2.50, p<.05].

Table 2 shows the findings relating the t-test results of items representing the opinions concerning dimension of applying PC according to teachers’ attendance to IST courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>IST attendance</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New curriculum is scarcely different from the older curriculum in terms of content and activities.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The curriculum made students’ ability to solve problem and making research more prominent.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen in Table 2 that primary school teachers do not agree (X=2.12) with “New curriculum is scarcely different from the older curriculum in terms of content and activities” and when we look at t-test results, there is a significant difference according to teachers’ attendance to HIE courses [t(251)=2.49, p<.05]. It is seen that teachers reasonably agree (X=3.52) with “The curriculum made students’ ability to solve problem and making research more prominent”. When we look at t-test results of this opinion, there is a significant difference according teachers’ attendance to HIE courses [t(251)=2.54, p<.05].

Table 3 shows the findings relating the t-test results of items representing the opinions concerning dimension of evaluation of PC according to teachers’ attendance to IST courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>HIE attendance</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and evaluation activities are comprehended.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students should not be the determinant factor in evaluation process.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and evaluation forms are more than necessary.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen in Table 3 that primary school teachers reasonably (X=3.45) agree with “Assessment and evaluation activities are comprehended”. When we look at t-test results, there is a significant difference according to teachers’ attendance to IST courses [t(253)=2.39, p<.05]. It is seen that teachers reasonably (X=3.42) agree with
“Students should not be the determinant factor in evaluation process.” When we look at t-test results, there is a significant difference according to teachers’ attendance to IST courses \[t(250)=2.27, \ p<.05\]. We can say that teachers reasonably (X=3.89) agree with “Assessment and evaluation forms are more than necessary.” When we look at t-test results, it is possible to say that there is a significant difference according to teachers’ attendance to IST courses \[t(252)=2.74, \ p<.05\].

5. Conclusion and Discussion

According to research findings; we can reach the conclusions below relating different dimensions of PC after IST courses:

- In relation to planning of the curriculum, IST courses which are given with PC provides comprehension of units and student acquirements and proposed activities are easily understood, however, it is also seen that activities are inadequate in terms of answering the aim of the unit and student acquirements. This result may be an indicator of the fact that teachers are more element with the curriculum compared to previous years.
- In relation to application of the curriculum in IST courses which are given with PC, it is revealed that the new curriculum is scarcely different from the older curriculum in terms of content and activities and it made students’ ability to solve problem and making research more prominent. This led to the conclusion that although teachers adopted PC, they are having difficulty in terms of application.
- It was also revealed that assessment and evaluation activities are comprehensible, students should not be the determinant factor in evaluation process and assessment and evaluation forms are more than necessary. This conclusion refers to the fact that teachers adopted the new assessment and evaluation activities, which were brought with constructivism approach; nevertheless they experience problems in applying the things required by the approach in terms of assessment and evaluation. Similar results relating the results of this research are given below.

Erdoğan (2005), Ercan and Altun (2005) emphasized the fact that teachers have difficulty in applying PC while Gömlekşiz (2007) stated that teachers adopted PC at a high level in terms of application. There may be many causes behind the fact that teacher opinions relating PC in terms of evaluation changed negatively in this study. Among these causes, we can mention a high level of effect on teachers due to lack of support provided by National Education Ministry, school administration, and families to the teachers who work in the schools that are included in the research, education of teachers and classroom environment and facilities. Similar results were obtained in other studies with the purpose of evaluating PC in our country.

Şeker (2007) revealed from the opinions of teachers who participated in his study that new curriculum lacks the adequate explanation and example relating assessment and evaluation and new approaches of assessment and evaluation. It can be said that teachers both lack the adequate theoretical knowledge about new approaches which are defined as alternative assessment and evaluation, which were revealed as a result of constructivist learning theory on which the new curriculum is based, and practical experience, therefore, they think that the explanations and examples relating assessment and evaluation are insufficient. Gözütok, Akgün, Karacaoğlu (2005), Güzel and Alkan (2005), Çakan (2004), in their studies, emphasized that primary school teachers feel themselves substandard relating PC in terms of assessment and evaluation. Teacher opinions which were taken in this study show parallelism with literature. Besides, the fact that there are limited examples in new curriculum relating each of alternative assessment and evaluation methods may be a reason for this situation. That the teachers, who were educated according to traditional education methods, cannot adopt the philosophy of new curriculum and the approach it is based on in a short period of time thoroughly may be a reason to their return to older education methods from time to time during the education process.

Additionally, IST courses which are given for the introduction of the curriculum are insufficient and this may be another reason (Gömlekşiz, 2005, Çakan 2004, Erdoğan 2005). In Primary School 1\textsuperscript{st}-5\textsuperscript{th} Grades Curriculum Evaluation Meeting, “Teachers were not given adequate in-service training before the application of PC” is one of the conclusions (EPÖAPK, 2006)
6. Recommendation

Considering the results of this study; the attitudes of teachers and administrators towards curriculums should be positively developed in order to plan and apply the curriculums more efficiently. The arrangement of more effective and long-term IST courses can be recommended as a solution. Giving applied examples in the arranged IST courses both for applying YİP and introducing assessment-evaluation methods and techniques may be helpful in making teachers more familiar with the curriculum and adopting it as a result. These kinds of difficulties which are encountered in conducting IST can be eliminated via IST courses that are prepared in accordance with the purpose.

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