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Assessment of the curriculum of Turkish language teaching in the 2nd grade of primary education in terms of critical thinking skills

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Abstract

This study aims to assess Turkish language teaching program of the 2nd grade primary school in terms of critical thinking skills. The document examination method, a qualitative research method, was employed in the research. Giving information on the general structure, and content of Turkish language teaching program (6-7-8), gains there from were reviewed. These gains were classified under the titles of critical thinking skills. In the reviewed Turkish language teaching program (6-7-8), 158 gains among the total of 228 under the fields of “reading, listening/following, speaking, writing, learning, and grammar” were found to be intended for critical thinking skills. It was further ascertained that, these gains were intended more for “application” and “analyzing” skills than those of critical thinking.

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1. Introduction

Speed of the production of information is nearly beyond reach in the Information Age. Pedagogues and students are laid on too many responsibilities by the developments in technology, and by the improving and ever-regenerating science. While pedagogues complain from the lack of curriculums, students, on the other hand, complain from the excess number of learning subjects, and both two groups see this situation as the reason of failure. This unattainable part of science is thought to be attained by correct use of human brain.

Upon training and developing the unique feature of thinking, differing human beings from animals, no information will be left unattained, and no problem will be left unsolved. Critical thinking, the most distinguished skill of our times, has become popular in educational sciences, likewise in many other fields.

Critical thinking, being a subject commented on by many scientists, is a broad way of thinking that can not be limited to a single definition. Some of the definitions offered are as follows:

Critical thinking is an active and organized mental process that aims at interpreting ourselves by implementing our acquired knowledge through being aware of our own thought processes and taking into consideration that of others as well as the events taking place around us. (Cüceoğlu, 1993; 255).

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It is a skill that involves analyzing the phenomena, producing and organizing thought, defending opinions, making comparisons, making inferences, evaluating discussions and solving problems (Chance, 1986; 6).

According to Adler (1987) there are some universal skills related to critical thinking These are logical deduction, evaluation, analysis, inference, inquiry, perception, organization and thinking. (Quote. Bökeoğlu and Yılmaz, 2005).

According to Decaroli (1973) critical thinking consists of a total of seven skills which are complementary to one another, namely, identification, making hypothesizes, gathering information, interpretation and generalization, reasoning, evaluation and implementation.

Through embarking on various definitions such as those mentioned above, Facione (1990) states in his Delphi Report that “Critical thinking is a purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which judgment is based. *Critical thinking is essential as a tool of inquiry. As such, critical thinking is a liberating force in education and a powerful resource in one’s personal and civic life. While not synonymous with good thinking, critical thinking is a pervasive and self-rectifying human phenomenon.*”

1.1. Primary School Turkish Teaching Program (6-7-8) and its Structure

Raising individuals with critical thinking capacity depends on the degree of importance placed on such skill in educational institutions and on how functional such skill is. Through changing educational system, education programs have been transformed into an enterprise where students have become the center of focus in education and training materials and the practice of learning has become an effort acquired on by students themselves. Education programs thus arranged and the changing role of teachers have contributed in the applicability of the innovation made. Primary education program and teachers, as applicators of such programs, and course materials that are used as the basic reference are important factors in the development of critical thinking skill which is among the basic skills that is needed to be promoted by the education programs based on multiple intelligence theory, structural approach and skills. Karadeniz (2006) stated that education programs have effects on the development of critical thinking in students.

Education programs are of great significance in development of critical thinking skills through their general objectives, achievements, selected educational methods and directives intended for the instructors. However, it is still expected of teachers to be open to innovation, creation, guidance and to teach students how to think rather than what to think.

This study aims to determine the fact that, the gains from the Turkish Language teaching program in the Primary Education (6-7-8) are intended for critical thinking skills. It is also aimed herein to assess the existence of critical thinking skills as per the class levels. For this purpose, it has been sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. Which gains intended for “interpretation”, among the skills of critical thinking, are included in the Turkish Language teaching program?
2. Which gains intended for “analyzing”, among the skills of critical thinking, are included in the Turkish Language teaching program?
3. Which gains intended for “evaluation”, among the skills of critical thinking, are included in the Turkish Language teaching program?
4. Which gains intended for “application”, among the skills of critical thinking, are included in the Turkish Language teaching program?
5. Which gains intended for “classification”, among the skills of critical thinking, are included in the Turkish Language teaching program?
6. Which gains intended for “inference”, among the skills of critical thinking, are included in the Turkish Language teaching program?
7. Which gains intended for “questioning”, among the skills of critical thinking, are included in the Turkish Language teaching program?
8. Which gains intended for “comparison”, among the skills of critical thinking, are included in the Turkish Language teaching program?

2. Method

2.1. Research design

This study which examines the presence and the extent of critical thinking skills in the primary education (6-7-8) Turkish Language teaching program is a descriptive study as it unveils an existing situation.

2.2. Collection of data

A qualitative research method was employed in the research. In a qualitative research, qualitative data collection methods such as observation, conversation and document analysis are used, and a qualitative process, which unfolds perceptions and facts in a natural environment and in a realistic and integral manner, is followed (Şimşek and Yıldırım, 2003, p.19).

2.3. Analysis of data

In the study, the primary education (6-7-8) Turkish Language teaching program was analyzed by employing the “document examination” method which includes critical thinking skills. Document examination includes the analysis of written materials that contain information about the fact or facts which are the subjects of the research (Simsek and Yildirim, 2003;140).

3. Findings

In this section, answers to 8 research questions of the study were sought. Gains from the primary education (6-7-8) Turkish Language teaching program were classified under the sub-skills of critical thinking skills. The study is composed of two sections. First of all, the gains were sorted out in the form of gains intended for critical thinking skills, under the inspiration from Akar's (2007) study. These gains were there after classified in line with the sub-skills of critical thinking skills. These sub-skills were described, based on the classifications and definitions of thinkers like, Decaroli (1973), Adler (1987), Facione (1990), Hannel-Hannel (1998), on critical thinking skills.

3.1. The findings from the first research problem

“Interpretation” skills among Critical Thinking included in the Turkish Language Teaching Program:

1. Interprets the emotions, opinions, and dreams by putting him/herself in the cadre of personalities and creatures.
2. Makes predictions towards what he/she listens/watches, based upon clues.
3. Fictionalizes the past, and/or future of what he/she listens/watches.
4. Describes the emotions arisen in him/her by the poem.
5. Derives the definitions of the words, and word groups, based on the context of the text.
6. Makes predictions toward the text, based on the clues within the text.
7. Fictionalizes the past, and/or future of the text.
8. Interprets the visual elements with regard to the text.

3.2. The findings from the second research problem

“Analysis” skills among Critical Thinking Skills included in the Turkish Language Teaching Program:

1. Recognizes the keywords from what he/she listens to/watches
2. Defines the subject of what he/she listens to/watches
3. Defines the main idea/feeling of what he/she listens to/watches
4. Defines the supporting idea/feeling of what he/she listens to/watches
5. Identifies the cadre of events, places, times, persons, and beings in what he/she listens to/watches, as well as the aspects correlated with them
6. Determines the cause-effect links in what he/she listens to/watches
7. Determines the purpose-result links in what he/she listens to/watches

8. Defines the implicit meanings in what he/she listens to/watches
9. Distinguishes the subjective and objective considerations in what he/she listens to/watches
10. Recognizes the difference of poetic language
11. Uses the words from the same conceptual field by considering their differences in meaning
12. Establishes cause-and-effect relationships in what he/she speaks
13. Establishes purpose-and-result relationships in what he/she speaks
14. Specifies the keywords in the text
15. Describes the meaning of the text.
16. Defines the main idea/feeling of the text
17. Defines the supporting ideas/feelings in the text
18. Identifies the narrator of the narration
19. Identifies the cadre of events, places, times, persons, and beings, as well as the aspects correlated with them
20. Recognizes the cause-and-effect relationships in the text
21. Recognizes the purpose-and-result relationships in the text
22. Finds out the implicit meanings in what he/she reads
23. Recognizes the subjective and objective considerations in what he/she reads
24. Recognizes the transitions and correlations between the elements, constituting the text
25. Recognizes the contribution of the rhetoric to the narration in the text
26. Recognizes the difference of poetic language
27. Establishes cause-and-effect relationships in his/her writing
28. Establishes purpose-and-result relationships in his/her writing
29. Distinguishes the noun stem and verb stem.(6.)
30. Distinguishes the derivational affix and inflectional suffix.(6.)
31. Recognizes the basic, derivative, and compound words
32. Distinguishes the indicative and subjunctive moods.(7.)
33. Recognizes the adverbs determining/supporting the concept of time in the sentence.(7)
34. Finds out the words, or word groups linked to verbals.(8)
35. Recognizes the expression being emphasized in the sentence.(8)
36. Recognizes the dominant feeling in a sentence.(8)
37. Determines the misuses causing incomprehensibility in the sentence.(

3.3. *The findings from the third research problem*

“Evaluation” skills among Critical Thinking skills included in Turkish Language Teaching Program:

1. Evaluates what he/she listens to/watches in terms of language and expression.
2. Evaluates what he/she listens to/watches in terms of content
3. Evaluates the person he/she listens to/watches in terms of his/her use of voice and body language
4. Evaluates his/her speech in terms of content
5. Evaluates his/her speech in terms of language and expression.
6. Evaluates his/her speech in terms of his/her presentation technique
7. Evaluates his/her speech in terms of his/her use of voice and body language
8. Evaluates the text in terms of language and expression.
9. Evaluates the text in terms of content
10. Evaluates his/her writings in terms of form and content
11. Evaluates his/her writings in terms of language and expression.
12. Evaluates his/her writings in terms of compliance with spelling and punctuation rules

3.4. *The Findings from the fourth research problem*

“Application” skills among Critical Thinking Skills included in Turkish Language Teaching Program:

1. Produces different solutions to the problems being introduced in what he/she listens to/watches
2. Finds different titles to the text he/she listens to/follows
3. By understanding the semantic relations between the words, gives examples of semantically correlated words
4. Memorizes/uses puns, such as nursery rhymes, riddles, etc.
5. Memorizes texts in the form of poem, ballads, and songs
6. Uses the idioms and proverbs being told in what he/she listens to/watches in his/her own sentences
7. Creates dictionaries with his/her newly-learned words from what he/she listens to/watches

8. Attends to the artistic and scientific activities suitable for his/her age as audience
9. Attends to poem, story, and tale concerts
10. Follows multimedia publications suitable for his/her interests, demands, and needs
11. Creates personal archives from such sources as cassette, CD, film, etc.
12. Begins his/her speeches with proper introductions
13. Uses proper salutations during his/her speech
14. Develops a speaking attitude suitable to the environment he/she is in
15. Speaks in standard Turkish
16. Builds up sentences in compliance with the rules of Turkish language
17. Uses Turkish synonyms of words being brought in from foreign languages, and of those not fully established in our language
18. Speaks fluently with a tempo not difficult to be comprehended by his/her listeners
19. Abides by the rules of courtesy in his/her speech
20. Speaks without repetitions
21. Finishes his/her speeches with proper expressions
22. Balances his/her breath while speaking
23. Speaks with an audible tone
24. Pronounces the words correctly
25. Avoids unnecessary sounds while speaking
26. Making proper stresses, intonations, and pauses while speaking
27. Speaks with a tone away from artificiality, imitation, and pretension
28. Pays attention to the harmony between his/her words and gestures/mimics
29. Uses his/her voice in a way evoking the beings and heroes being animated
30. Establishes eye contact with the audience
31. Does researches with regard to the subject of his/her speech
32. Prepares the texts of his/her speeches
33. Plans his/her speech around a main idea
34. Supports his/her main idea with supportive ideas
35. Uses ways of developing opinions suitable with the subject of his/her speech
36. Enriches his/her narration by making use of proverbs, idioms, and rhetoric in suitable moments
37. Makes use of audio-visual materials, and various media tools while delivering his/her speech
38. Gives suitable explanations before delivering his/her speech
39. Gives clear, sufficient, and accurate answers to the questions being asked during his/her speech
40. Avoids from too much details diverting the audience's attention
41. Finishes his/her speech in the specified time, and with salutation
42. Makes use of speaking methods and techniques
43. Verbally expresses his/her feelings, opinions, dreams, impressions, and experiences
44. Makes use of his/her newly-learned words, concepts, proverbs, and idioms
45. Makes efficient use of his/her voice and body language
46. Reads fluently
47. Pronounces the words correctly
48. Reads by paying attention to the tune of the word
49. Makes use of reading methods and techniques
50. Summarizes what he/she reads with his/her own words, and in a chronological and logical order
51. Responds to questions with regard to the text
52. Builds up questions with regard to the text
53. Explains the functions of the methods being used in the text for developing opinions
54. Produces different solutions to the problems being introduced in the text
55. Puts different titles to the text he/she reads
56. Obtains information about the author or poet of the text
57. By understanding the semantic relations between the words, gives examples of semantically correlated words
58. Uses the words from the same conceptual field by considering their differences in meaning
59. Uses the idioms and proverbs being told in the text in his/her own sentences
60. Creates a dictionary with the words he/she has learned from what he/she has read
61. Makes up a reading plan
62. Supports the main idea of his/her text with supportive ideas
63. Puts a short and attractive title to the text related with the subject thereof
64. Writes incidental texts

65. Writes argumentative texts
66. Writes informative texts
67. Writes poems
68. Expresses his/her feelings, opinions, dreams, impressions, and experiences in writing
69. Makes use of his/her newly-learned words, concepts, proverbs, and idioms
70. Writes according to his/her own fields of interest
71. Keeps a story book
72. Keeps a diary
73. Collects the words, texts, and poems of his/her choice
74. Makes functional use of punctuation marks
75. Understanding the function of the noun in the sentences, makes functional use of nouns thereby (6.)
76. Understanding the function of the pronoun in the sentences, makes functional use of pronouns thereby (6.)
77. Understanding the function of the adjective in the sentences, makes functional use of adjectives thereby (6.)
78. Understanding the functions of the preposition, conjunction, and exclamation in the sentences, as well as the conceptual features they bring in the sentences, makes functional use of these types of words thereby (6)
79. Uses the words with different functions in the sentences (6)
80. Makes use of verbs with different structural features by taking their conceptual features into consideration
81. Makes applications with the positive, question, and negative inflections of verbs (7)
82. Understanding the function of the adverb in the sentences, makes functional use of adverbs thereby (7)
83. Uses the words with different functions in the sentences (7)
84. Uses the verb moods in a way describing different times and meanings (7)
85. Makes functional use of complementary verbs (7)
86. Uses the composite structures in time and mood inflections as per their features (7)
87. Uses the gerunds as per their features (8)
88. Makes use of noun and verb sentences as per their conceptual and usage features (8)
89. Makes use of regular and irregular sentences as per their conceptual and usage features (8)
90. Corrects incomprehensibilities (8)

3.5. *The findings from the fifth research problem*

“Classification” Skills among Critical Thinking Skills, included in Turkish Language Teaching Program:

1. Narrates the events and information in an order.

3.6. *The findings from the sixth research problem*

“Inference” skills among Critical Thinking Skills included in Turkish Language Teaching Program:

1. Derives the definitions of the words, and word groups, based on the context of the text.
2. Fictionalizes the past, and/or future of the text.

3.7. *The findings from the seventh research problem*

“Inquiry” skills among Critical Thinking Skills included in Turkish Language Teaching Program:

1. Asks for what he/she cannot understand, or wonders

3.8. The findings from the eight research problem

“Comparison” skills among Critical Thinking Skills included in Turkish Language Teaching Program:

1. Makes comparison between what he/she listens to/watches.
2. Compares what he/she listens to/watches with his/her own life, and with daily lives
3. Makes comparisons with regard to the text
4. Compares what he/she reads with his/her own life, and with daily lives
5. Reveals the relation between the title and content of the text
6. Correlates what he/she listens to/watches with audio/visual elements
7. Reveals the relation between the title/name and content of what he/she listens to/watches

3. Results and Discussion

In view of the findings of the study, 158 gains among the total of 221 from the fields of reading, listening/following, speaking, writing, learning, and grammar within Turkish Language (6-7-8) Teaching program were found to be intended for critical thinking skills. Having these gains more privatized, and classified as sub-skills, abundance of gains intended mostly for application skill, then for analyzing skill, draws attention.

1. Interpretation (8)
2. Analysis (37)
3. Evaluation (12)
4. Application (90)
5. Inference (2)
6. Comparison (7)
7. Classification (1)
8. Inquiry (1)

In view of the aforesaid, it may be said that, more than half of the program gains are among the gains of critical thinking skills. In accordance with the findings, program tool is sufficiently supportive in bringing up critical thinkers. It may be said with that, primary education (6-7-8) Turkish teaching program is productive, and thinking-oriented for the sake of bringing up contemporary, and requisite individuals. Contemporary, productive individuals seem clearly to be achieved thanks to the focus of the gains from the program on the application skill among the sub-skills. In other words, it may be said that, without ignoring the fact that this sufficiency in the teaching program, as being one of the trivets of education, cannot be successful by oneself, but it should be deemed as a helpful tool and guide in the hands of the pedagogues.

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