

Research Article

Investigating the Current and Future Functions of Primary Schools Based on Primary School Teachers' Opinions¹

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Abstract

Serving to seed decency in children's manners in society, to help them adopt new habits and to expand their social skills and emotional features, the functions of primary schools are of great importance in building the society. Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe the goals and functions of 21st century primary schools based on the opinions of primary schools teachers. The study is conducted as part of an international research project. The research is designed as a qualitative study in order to describe the functions of primary schools from the perspectives of primary school teachers. In the study, the data is collected through semi-structured interviews from 20 volunteer primary school teachers working at different levels of primary schools located in Eskisehir, Turkey. Criterion and convenience sampling which are both categorized under purposeful sampling are used in determining the participants. The data obtained from the interviews is analysed through content analysis and the findings are presented under each

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research question. The findings of the research reveal that participant teachers emphasize three functions of primary schools as socialization, instruction and qualification. Nevertheless, socialization is perceived as the primary function of the primary schools, and functions of instruction and qualification follows it respectively. As for the findings related to role of families, teachers care about the cooperating with families especially in socialization issues.

Keywords: *Primary education, functions of schools, socialization, instruction, qualification*

Introduction

Schools have a prominent role in educating individuals in a society with desired and basic knowledge, skills, and behaviours. Even though education may be considered as a by-product of living in a society and several social institutions such as family, religion, and mass communication media, it is still the schools that provide a planned and programmed education in almost all societies (Bloom, 1979). Stating that every single concept that a society produces for itself is transferred to each individual through schools, Dewey (2010) believes that the best of any society for its own good can come true only in this way. An individual's cognitive, social, and professional skills and behaviours can be built on a fully developed personality (Altunya, 1995). Especially primary education has a tremendous influence on the development of children's social skills and emotional characteristics. In addition to social and emotional skills, primary schools also bear the most significant responsibility in improving children's cognitive skills such as knowing, understanding, analysing, applying, assessing, and creating (Genc, 2005). Primary schools teach literacy, mathematics, geography, and history to children in terms of cognitive skills (Dewey, 2010) as well as working to equip them with a rational and realistic point of view concerning the world and the society they live in (Egan, 2010). Taking the views mentioned above, primary schools may be described as performing three basic functions known as instruction, socialization, and qualification.

It is only the social skills that help children become a member of the society they dwell in, realize that they are a part of their society, and fulfil their social responsibilities. These social skills include building healthy relations with others, complying with social norms and rules, undertaking responsibilities, helping others, and using legal rights (Cubukcu & Gultekin, 2006). Primary schools are the base serving to seed decency in children's manners and attitudes, help them adopt new habits (Dewey, 2010), and expand their social skills and emotional features.

The expectations from primary schools are not limited to only improving children's cognitive skills and helping them socialize, they are also expected to guide them in actualizing their own potentials and establishing self-respect. Sanford and Donovan (1984) regard self-respect as a personality variable effective over different aspects of individuals' lives and as a prerequisite to cultivate a healthy personality (cited in Aydin and Guloglu, 2001). Advocating that an

individual must have self-respect to lead a productive and successful life, Maslow links this to two sources such as 'love, respect, and acceptance' that an individual welcomes from the others and 'feelings of success and competence' that an individual feels him/herself (Joseph, 1995; cited in Dogru and Peker, 2004). Thus, the foundation of educational programs may be based on facilitating the improvement of children's self-respect and personal differences in a positive way.

The educational program of primary schools in Turkey was designed in accordance with a realist and pragmatist philosophy based on a 'theme and process oriented approach' in the academic year of 2005 and 2006. As for realism, the main goal of education is to transmit the cultural legacy to new generations and to make individuals happy and virtuous by preparing them for social life (Sonmez, 2005). Thus, educational programs aim to provide individuals with not only cognitive skills but also values and norms easing compliance with the society. With regard to pragmatist philosophy, educational programs should host courses across all levels and practice should be favoured over theory through topics selected from real life (Sonmez, 2005). An overview of the weekly course plan of educational programs employed in primary schools shows that a total of 30 hours of lessons are completed each week. For the first graders, 26 of 30 hours are allocated for compulsory classes and four hours are spared for free activities while the compulsory classes take a total of 28 hours and only 2 hours are left for free activities weekly during the second and third grades. As for the fourth graders, no time is given for free activities and all 30 hours are used for compulsory classes. During the first three years of primary education, Turkish, Mathematics, and Social Studies comprise almost 65% of all the courses. Considering the fourth grade, the same rate continues with Science classes replacing Social Studies. This course outline used in primary schools may serve as a solid evidence as to how the program aims at cognitive skills. Developing social skills required for social harmony are conceived as secondary outcomes to be attained via activities conducted during the lessons. Moreover, the program contains no courses on choosing professional goals or about qualification function.

In spite of the fact that goals targeting to expand students' cognitive and social skills and emotional characteristics are noteworthy within the official educational programs of primary schools, it is hard to know how to attain goals concerning emotional features since the nature and development of emotional characteristics are not known clearly (Ozcelik, 2009). Thus, it

is not obvious both how to dress students with emotional features in educational settings and what affects these features. Also, to what extent installing and enhancing these characteristics are prominent components of educational goals. Considering the fact that the emotional goals determined for children are closely connected with social values, it is not wrong to state that teachers' values, beliefs, and perceptions of social values are also influential over this process. Therefore, it becomes more vital to discuss the functions of future primary schools via teachers' opinions.

This study is conducted as part of an international research project named "Instruction and Socialization among Primary School Teachers: An International Comparison" (ISEP-CI) which involves more than 30 researchers across 11 teams from seven different countries (Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Mexico, Romania and Turkey). The aim of this study is to identify the goals of 21st century primary schools and the role of families in attaining these goals based on the opinions of primary school teachers. Accordingly, answers have been sought for the following two questions:

1. What do primary school teachers think about functions of primary schools?
2. What do primary school teachers think about the role of families in attaining the goals of primary schools?

Methodology

Research Model

This research was designed as a qualitative study which aimed to determine and describe teachers' opinions of the functions of education and schools. Qualitative studies involve interpretive and naturalistic approaches to the world in general and thus qualitative researchers try to make sense of or interpret the phenomena studied regarding the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). In this study, the opinions of primary school teachers were taken to describe the functions of schools and qualitative design was used in order to present a more detailed description based on teachers' own views and explore the phenomena in-depth. (Neuman, 2013).

Participants

The participants of the study are 20 primary school teachers working at various primary schools located in Eskisehir. They were determined through criterion sampling and convenience sampling both of which are classified under purposeful sampling methods that are commonly used in qualitative research (Yıldırım and Simsek, 2013). The criteria for determining the participant teachers are that they are all primary school teachers who teach in state schools in Eskisehir and expressed that they were volunteer to participate in the study. As for the convenience sampling, only the volunteer teachers who work in city centre were chosen, which can be stated as one of the limitations in the study.

Of all the participants, 16 are females and 4 are males. As for the age range, three are between 26 and 30, two are between 31 and 40, 12 are between 41 and 50, and three are over 51. The distribution of participants in terms of seniority is as follows: one has been working for less than 5 years, two for 6-to-10 years, 4 for 11-to-15 years, 7 for 16-to-20 years, and 6 for more than 21 years.

Data Collection

Data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews. All the interviews were recorded and notes were taken during the interview by the researchers. The questions to be used in the interview form were prepared during a 3-day workshop organized based on the opinions and contributions of almost 30 experts working on ISEP-CI Project. As mandated by the theoretical framework of the study, the questions on the form are easy-to-understand, logically sequenced, and free of any kinds of direction. There are 13 key questions and some sub-questions concerning the meanings that teachers assign to the word 'education', how teachers perceive the functions of schools, the courses and the goals of these courses, the role of families within the education process, the problems that schools have to face, and relevant solutions. There are several samples of interview questions below:

- What do you think when you hear the word "education"?
- What does the school function (mission, role) of teaching knowledge (to instruct) mean to you?

- What does the school function (mission, role) of ensuring learning related to social life at school (to socialize) mean to you?
- In your view, what is the role of students' families in their education nowadays?

The consensus was to utilize this semi-structured interview form during all the interviews to be conducted across all the countries within the project. Then the form was translated into Turkish by three researchers independently and three versions were negotiated during follow-up meetings to reach a final translated counterpart for all the items in the form. Two pilot interviews were held to test the clarity of the questions, and the form was finalized following the last modifications.

Before contacting the participant teachers, official permission was taken from the local authority. Since the interviews were done in the primary schools where the teachers worked, permission was also taken from each school principal. The participants were contacted before the interviews and an interview schedule was prepared by the researchers according to the available time of the participants. A demographic information form and a consent form were asked to fill out by the participants prior to the interviews. They filled out the forms and approved participating in the study. All the interviews were done in quiet classrooms in the primary schools that the participants work in. In order to maintain consistency across the interviews, first two sessions were run by all three researchers, and a brief assessment meeting was organized subsequently. At the end of this meeting, it was clear for all the researchers what to be careful about during the interviews, and a common understanding was established. Afterwards, each researcher conducted the interviews on his/her own. All interviews lasted between 40-to-50 minutes and all were audio-recorded. Then all the records were transcribed and documented as they were, and all relevant analyses were completed on these transcripts.

Data Analysis

The core elements of qualitative data analysis include reducing the data into meaningful segments and assigning codes for each, combining the codes into themes and displaying them (Creswell, 2013). This procedure is also defined as content analysis which includes coding the data, categorizing them under themes, organizing them, and finally describing and interpreting them (Yildirim and Simsek, 2013). The data collected in the study were analysed through

content analysis. In this sense, first thematic codes were identified as a result of examining the data set in accordance with the conceptual framework. During data interpretation based on these codes, new themes emerging from the analysis were added to the code list, or old codes were replaced with the new ones. Frequency distributions were calculated for the detailed codes obtained after working on the data. After that the findings were described and interpreted.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research includes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, and reflects the quality of the study (Given and Saumure, 2008; Guba, 1981; Yıldırım and Simsek, 2013). For the credibility in the study, triangulation and peer review were used. The study was conducted by three researchers who work in the field of curriculum and instruction. One of them was an associate professor in the field of curriculum and education. The other researchers were doctoral students during the study period. As for triangulation, the study and the data coding was carried out by multiple investigators. In this sense, one of the authors coded and analysed the interviews first. These codes were taken as the primary analysis of the research. Then, the other two researchers also coded and studied the interviews independently, and a comparison across these codes was conducted. The consistency percentages between the first researcher and the other two authors were also calculated via Miles-Huberman (1994) formula. As for Miles and Huberman (1994), the consistency percentage must be 70 or higher. Thus, consensus meetings were held for each interview with a consistency percentage lower than 0.70 and these percentages were calculated again following these meetings. So, the consistency percentage between the first and second researcher increased up to 0.77 from 0.63 after discussions and negotiation sessions. Similarly, the consistency percentage between the first and the third author went up to 0.80 from 0.75 following the meetings. All these data reflect the credibility and consistency of codes. As for the peer review, the interview form was developed by nearly 30 scholars who collaborated in the project during an international meeting. As for the transferability, purposeful sampling was used and the findings were presented through rich descriptions. Finally, data collection tools, collected data and the analysis procedure were under the control of three researchers and the other project partners, which serves as the confirmability of the study.

Another issue for the trustworthiness is the ethics of the study (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Ethical issues were considered in all phases of the study. Official permission was taken from the local authorities before data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of

the study and signed the consent form. The confidentiality was provided in the study by taking the privacy of the participants' information and data into consideration.

Findings

Findings Regarding the Research Question: “What do primary school teachers think about the functions of primary schools?”

Initially, teachers' opinions about the functions of schools were identified. The aim was to understand what basic goals of schools were of prior importance for teachers and also to analyse the meanings that teachers attributed to schools. Teachers' answers were thematically coded through meticulous study, and the most frequent responses are presented in Table 1:

Table 1
Teachers' Opinions about the Functions of Schools

Opinions	The number of teachers
Socialization	
- To guide students develop attitudes and behaviours necessary to fit in with the environment they live in.	19
- To improve students' reflective and critical thinking skills and to enhance their autonomy.	16
- To structure students to comply with social rules and norms through discipline.	13
Instruction	
- To furnish students with knowledge necessary to facilitate their liberation process.	19
- To provide opportunities where theoretical knowledge in the program can be put into practice.	10
- To provide a dense education loaded with information in order to help students actualize their autonomy.	3
Qualification	
- To provide opportunities where students can actualize and improve themselves, and where they can achieve happiness in a coercion-free environment.	18
- To guide students in planning their future in order to be successful.	18
- To help students prepare for their professional life.	16

As clearly shown in Table 1, teachers' opinions concerning the functions of schools can be classified under three titles such as 'socialization', 'instruction', and 'qualification'. Socialization function seems to be the most frequent one mentioned by the participants. On the

contrary, teachers referred to the qualification function rather less frequently compared to the others. More detailed analyses regarding these themes were conducted via deeper questions.

Findings regarding teachers' opinions about the socialization function of schools

As for the socialization function of schools, the participating teachers underlined that schools should guide students develop attitudes and behaviours necessary to fit in with the environment. Following is one of the related quotations from the interviews:

“I mean, in the end, it will help him/them adapt to his/her environment. Isn't this the aim of life? The one who complies with the environment and who can deal with the problems in the environment will stand, not the strongest one.” (P7, 920)

Another point that teachers underpinned with respect to socialization function of schools is that students' reflective and creative thinking skills should be improved. One example quotation is as follows:

“... I help them keep up with what is going on in our society. For instance, we talk and exchange opinions about the daily news every morning. Or, I introduce an event either from our country or from the world, and we talk and discuss about it like, why is it like this, how should it have been, what are the problems here, etc... I think they should be treated as adults and directed to criticize the current issues.” (P5, 715)

Teaching social norms and rules to students through disciplining them is another opinion stated about the socialization function during the interviews:

“I keep saying that this is school. Every place has its own rules. Homes are no exception. Wherever we go, wherever we are, in the car, on the bus, there are rules. If you are at a hospital, there are some specific rules. Life turns out into an asylum without these rules. Thus, we have to comply with the rules where we are.” (P1, 36)

Table 2 displays other opinions stated by the participants about the socialization function of schools and the frequency of each opinion:

Table 2

Teachers' Opinions as to How Schools Should Perform Its Socialization Function

Opinions	The number of teachers
- Firstly, it should focus on cultural characteristics.	8
- Firstly, it should focus on approving and accepting cultural and ethnic variety in the society	8
- It should inoculate social norms and rules about citizenship to students.	5
- Firstly, it should be one of the responsibilities of schools.	5
- Firstly, it should be one of the responsibilities of families.	5
- It should not be a process limited with schools.	3

An examination of Table 2 reveals that a majority of teachers noted that the socialization function of schools should focus on cultural characteristics:

"In my opinion, one of the responsibilities of schools is to introduce students with social environments and to keep them there, and to organize many relevant activities. Social activities, going to movies and dramas, other settings such as interviews and symposiums all contribute a lot to school life. And I say that schools should do more of them." (P5, 725)

Another idea underpinned by a significant portion of the participants is that schools should ease approval and acceptance of cultural and ethnic differences in a society through socialization function:

"Other people should not be pressured. I will never forget one incidence, and I can say that I am, now, barely conscious about that. There was a Jewish friend at the university. No one used to make friends with him. He spent all four years alone. Why? Because he was Jewish. Now, it sounds really ridiculous, but we did it at that time. Why did we behave like that, because of his ethnic identity, the kid was excluded because of his belief. Is this necessary? We are all humans in the end." (P1, 174)

Moreover, some of the participating teachers think that socialization function should serve teaching social norms and rules to students as part of citizenship training:

"The main function of schools is to raise good people, qualified people, then good family members, be it the father or the mother, then good citizens and a good world citizen." (P1, 12)

When the participants were asked about the roles of families and schools in terms of socialization function, they stated that the primary role belonged to schools:

"I think all kinds of settings helping students improve should be arranged because children first socialize at schools. So, schools should be the primary environment. (...) Schools should be the number one choice for everything about socialization."
(P11, 1509)

However, some other teachers emphasized that socialization should not be a responsibility of schools only; instead, families should also bear a major role:

"It is a duty for all of us, it is not schools' responsibility only; kids need to pick up several things from their families in order to fit in with the environment...They should stand on their own feet, and shoulder some responsibilities. If these are not provided by families, then we go through difficulties at schools. It is just like the legs of a trivet, they should also be involved. Accordingly, families should definitely help teachers and schools to help kids adapt to their environment." (P9, 1206)

Findings regarding teachers' opinions about the instruction function of schools

Another topic that teachers frequently mentioned is the schools' function in helping children improve cognitively. The participants noted that schools should facilitate students in terms of living freely by instructing them with information necessary and useful in their lives.

"...the more they know the freer they will be. The more they know, the freer they are, the better they will express themselves and the more confident they will be. I honestly think that knowledge makes them free." (P5, 697)

Based on teachers' opinions, practicality of information stands as a major point in terms of schools' instruction function:

"For sure, knowledge matters a lot, but we shouldn't focus only on knowledge. Children should know how to apply the knowledge. I think mere information, as I said earlier, doesn't mean much. They need to know how and when to make use of that information." (P4, 605)

In addition, some of the teachers advocated that students should go through information-oriented instruction so that they can reflect their autonomy:

“I believe students should be equipped with necessary information to pick up new skills, to achieve something on their own, to express themselves, to be independent, and briefly to fight and survive.” (P9, 1192)

Moreover, teachers’ answers as to what kind of information schools should mainly provide are grouped under five sub-themes in Table 3.

Table 3

Teachers’ Opinions about the Instruction Function of Schools

Opinions	The number of teachers
- Primarily, it should focus on the practicality of information.	7
- Primarily, it should focus on improving techniques and skills related with daily lives.	7
- Primarily, it should focus on enhancing students’ critical thinking skills.	5
- Primarily, it should focus on learning techniques and skills.	5
- Primarily, it should focus on instructing the topics in the educational program.	3

As depicted in Table 3, teachers think that schools should improve the use of information in daily life by focusing on developing relevant techniques and skills:

“I believe it should be about everything we make use of in our social lives, for instance, they should be able to cook, I don’t know, maybe, we should prepare a game or a drama with students, it may always be in the game format, not like making them memorize information, or transferring the information as it is, but helping them to be creative and functional (...) it could be anything that they can put into practice.” (P17, 2329)

Furthermore, the participants also underlined that students’ critical thinking skills and learning techniques and skills should be expanded as well as spreading the use of information to practical life:

“we should show them how to access information, information oriented, I guess there is no instruction like that, ways to access information. We should not give them fish, teach them how to fish.” (P3, 481)

Although few in number, still some teachers reported that instruction function of schools should primarily focus on transferring the information in the educational program to the students:

"yes, the information specified in the program should be taught; of course, the schools will have a function at that point." (P18, 2553)

When the participants were asked to give solid examples as to what kind of information should be taught, they produced examples that could be grouped under five types in Table 4.

Table 4

Teachers' Opinions Concerning the Kinds of Information that Should Mainly Be Taught at Schools

Opinions	The number of teachers
- Information necessary for students to fulfil their social functions (tolerating others, listening, being open to differences, etc.)	14
- Information necessary for mental development (critical thinking, scientific approach, analytic capacity, etc.)	6
- Information necessary to make sense of the development of mankind's cultural, scientific, and historical legacy (significant historical events, main artistic fields of work, great inventions, etc.)	6
- Information regarding the nature and humanity surrounding the students (earthquakes, global warming, etc.)	6
- Information that will be necessary for their professional career in the future (group work, effective communication, info-communication technologies, etc.)	4

Table 4 indicates that most of the participating teachers think that schools should primarily teach information necessary for students to perform their social functions:

"Efforts to turn students into individuals who consider others' rights, who know about children's rights, who have a sense of rights, and who can claim their rights at least at high school level..." (P8, 1128)

On the other hand, some underpinned the necessity of information that helps students' mental development, the improvement of mankind's cultural, scientific and historical legacy, and that is relevant with the nature and humans surrounding students:

"students should know that their existence is defined with many other life forms in the world, that the world is continuously evolving, that they should become a part of the world, that the same is true for schools on a micro scale. I mean children should be aware of survival rights of other creatures, and should recognize that humans need the creatures they destroy, but other creatures do not need humans.... Therefore, they should perceive the world holistically. For instance, modern children should know the size of their carbon footprint. I mean you can't learn that by only turning off the lights. It is not that simple." (P8, 1126)

Another small group of participants stated that schools should primarily teach information that will be necessary in terms of students' future professional careers through its instruction function:

“Primarily the information that will be useful for students, the society, and the country. But, first of all for themselves. Thus, we claim that each individual should be trained in accordance with his or her own interests and skills. Therefore, primarily the information that will guarantee them a profession and a good future...” (P15, 2124)

Findings regarding teachers' opinions about the qualification function of schools

During the interviews, teachers emphasized the functions of instruction and socialization more often than qualification. Yet, three noteworthy opinions were recorded about qualification. A significant number of participants underlined that schools should provide opportunities where each child can actualize and improve him/herself, and become happy in a coercion free environment:

“The goal of education is to guarantee the happiness of the nation, society, and individuals.” (P15, 2091)

Besides, teachers also mentioned that schools should facilitate students in planning their future in order to be successful later in life:

“Yes, education may also focus on planning future because we are generally late helping kids shape their future, especially for choosing their careers. It should be like right after the secondary school, and kids should choose their branches in the high school.” (P10, 1323)

Lastly, the participants noted that primary schools should offer help to students in order to prepare for professional world:

“...actually, I train them in this direction, preparing them for their future careers; I constantly tell them that they need to study more, and they need to have a job in the future because this is how education is perceived in our society... In Turkey, in the society we live in, this is a must. Thus, this turns out to be my first goal.” (P5, 691)

Findings regarding the research question: “What do primary school teachers think about the roles of families in attaining the goals of primary schools?”

As mentioned earlier, teachers underpinned the significance of family involvement in furnishing students with social skills. Families keep up their role as a major partner in education not only during preschool, but also throughout primary school. Teachers' answers concerning the role of families in education are grouped across five themes in Table 5.

Table 5

Teachers' Opinions about the Role of Families in Education

Opinions	The number of teachers
- Families should partake in students' social development (confidence, freedom, etc.)	13
- Families should cooperate with schools	8
- Families should be responsible to follow students' homework assignments	7
- Families should help children learn the importance and function of schools	6
- Families should teach children to obey the social norms and rules	5

As can be seen in Table 5, a great majority of the participants think that the role of families in education should mostly be helping their children improve their social skills and be socially functional:

“Sometimes schools can fall short in terms of socialization. Let me give you an example; some schools have swimming pools used for swimming courses. If the school doesn't have such facilities, families should provide support here. I value socialization more than others, I mean.” (P4, 624)

Another bigger portion of teachers noted that families should cooperate with schools as part of their responsibilities:

“Of course, the families and schools should cooperate. They shouldn't have a broken relationship. It shouldn't be too close of a relationship though, like it is in our schools. In that case, families, either one of the parents, get involved in more things than necessary. As teachers, you can't feel free then.” (P9, 1270)

Furthermore, some teachers said that families should also be responsible for the monitoring of homework assignments:

“It is very important. Sure, the role of families can’t be instruction of a topic. The difficulty level of homework assignments should be within the reach of students so that they can do the homework. Families’ responsibility is to create a suitable study environment, which is quite, mild, and adequately lighted. They should provide this.” (P19, 2739)

As for some of the participants, the role of families in education is to help children understand the function and importance of schools:

“One more thing, I expect families not to reflect their negative feelings and opinions about education and school onto their children.” (P4, 624)

Another role of families, as mentioned by the participants, is to teach the social norms and rules to their children:

“Families should teach certain things to their children until the age of 5, and control them as well. They should support their children, but also they should establish some rules at homethere must be some ground rules. Kids are having trouble complying with the rules at school if there is no rule in the family. Therefore, there have to be some rules.” (P9, 1268)

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

What are the goals and functions of education and schools? No accurate list of goals and functions that educational philosophers agree upon has been produced yet as an answer to this question. Current research aims to determine teachers’ perceptions about primary schools’ functions. In this regard, semi-structured interviews have been held with teachers, and it has been noted that teachers mostly emphasize three functions of education, which are socialization, instruction, and qualification. The ways how the teachers, as the actual implementers and one of the stakeholders group, perceive the curriculum can be considered as an important aspect in such that they may possibly reveal how the curriculum comes into being in the classrooms. In a recent one of such studies, Kruger, Won & Treagust (2013) investigated teachers’ perceptions on the changes of in the curriculum of K-10 schools in Australia and found that teachers welcomed the added contents that leded students to learn about how the topics can be applied to their daily lives. This finding of the study is compatible with the overall perceptions of the participant teachers of the current research on the functions of schools, in

that most of the teachers, as regard to function of instruction, emphasized the practicality of the information presented in the curriculum.

Since the aims of education and functions of schools has been a challenging and controversial issue for ages, each philosophy has a different answer for the issue (Turan, 2010). According to one approach, the goal of schools is “to transfer the dominant cultural values distilled since the beginning of history to students, and to help them comply with the society in this way” whereas another perspective considers the goal of schools as “to teach the constantly changing aspects of life, rather than stable and conventional standards in a society”(Neill, 1990; cited in Kiraz, Demir, Aksu, Daloglu, &Yildirim, 2010).The aims of education were also discussed by Webster (2009) from a Deweyan perspective and focusing on ‘personhood of the learner’ is emphasized as the runner of the curriculum. He asserted that the learners should be seen as social beings and aims should primarily be designed to feed these social beings, rather than emphasizing the benefits of teaching only for effective learning or transmitting knowledge (Webster, 2009). This point of view was also emphasized by the teachers participated in the current study as most of them suggested the view “*furnishing students with knowledge that facilitates their liberation process*” in concern with the instruction function of schools. The view was also supported by the perception of the teachers on qualification function of schools, in that nearly all of them considered function of qualification as “*providing opportunities where students can actualize and improve themselves, and where they can achieve happiness in a coercion-free environment.*”

As for teachers, socialization function of schools has three dimensions such as helping children fit in with their environment, improving students’ reflective-creative thinking skills and autonomy, and teaching social norms and rules through discipline. In their study investigating what school administrators think about the goals of education, Kucuk and Polat (2013) concluded the following results: “furnishing students with skills necessary in life”, “matching the behaviours students acquire with the goals of society”, “raising individuals loving their nation and country”, and “equipping children with desired behaviours.” The findings of this study examining the opinions of school administrators are mostly consistent with the present research studying the opinions of teachers. In both studies, socialization function refers to complying with the society and the environment and developing suitable behaviours. However, improving students’ reflective-critical thinking skills and enhancing their autonomy are the

aspects that only teachers in this research, but not administrators in Kucuk and Polat's (2013) study, mentioned concerning the socialization function.

Analysis of teachers' opinions regarding the socialization function reveals that teachers think that socialization should focus on the approval and acceptance of cultural characteristics and cultural and ethnic varieties. Furthermore, teachers also underline the role of families in helping students gain social functionality. In this sense, teachers believe that socialization is not only schools' responsibility; rather it is a process to be completed in cooperation with families.

Another point that teachers underpinned about the socialization function is that norms and rules concerning citizenship training should also be taught to students via this function. This finding is consistent with those of Kucuk and Polat's (2013) study, too. Similarly, this is also parallel with conclusions of Esen's (2005) in which teachers were found to identify the goals of education as "transmission of social and ethical values" and "raising virtuous and honest individuals."

Along with socialization function aiming to help students comply with the society, schools also fulfil the function of instruction. What construct the foundation of educational programs are some crucial questions such as "What information is more necessary than others?", "What should students be taught first?", and "What information is valuable in a society?" (Guttek, 1988). In this research, examination of teachers' opinions concerning the instruction function of schools has yielded that teachers mostly think that schools should provide information that will facilitate students' liberation process.

Teachers believe that instruction should focus on developing students' critical thinking skills. Besides, teachers have been identified to prefer teaching practical information and learning techniques and skills, rather than an instruction process loaded heavily with information. In this sense, teachers value acquisition of different ways to access information and "learning how to learn" more than directly pouring information into students.

A closer look at teachers' opinions about the qualification function of schools indicates that teachers generally emphasize providing opportunities where students can actualize themselves and plan their future. Furthermore, teachers also noted the significance of preparing students

for their professional life with respect to qualification function. These findings are compatible with those of Kucuk and Polat's (2013) study in which they investigated the schools administrators' opinions about the goals of education. Kucuk and Polat (2013) concluded that school administrators regarded education as a means of raising members of professions and preparing students for the business world. Similarly, some of the views noted by the teachers in current study seem parallel with the findings in Winch's (2002) study. He remarked the economic aims of education as important in a society from both an individual and a social perspective by noting that students should be encouraged both to realise their own goals in life and to be part of the society economically. The perceptions of teachers in current study similarly reflects these views, in that most teachers considers qualification function as guiding students in planning their future in order to be successful and helping them prepare themselves for their professional life.

As for the information that should be taught at schools, teachers have been determined to think that firstly the information necessary for social functions should be instructed, which compatible with the findings is obtained about the socialization function. Along with social functions, teachers stated that instruction should also include information necessary for children's mental development. Other aspects that participating teachers emphasized concerning the kinds of information to be instructed primarily at primary schools are those that are necessary to understand the evolution of cultural, scientific, and historical legacy and that are relevant to human life and nature. In addition, the participants also stated the significance of practical professional information. The fact that teachers noted the necessity of practical information related with professional life indicates that the qualification function of schools is also considered important by the participants.

Teachers' opinions regarding the role of families in education were another aspect of the current study. Findings have pointed out that teachers consider the role of families in education as taking responsibility in completing social functions and cooperating with schools. Responsibility in monitoring homework assignments and inculcating the importance/function of schools in children are two other aspects of teachers' opinions about the role of families, which reveals that teachers care about cooperating with families. This is totally compatible with the findings of Argon and Kiyici (2012), Celenk (2003), and Gokce (2000), who examined the opinions of teachers. In these studies, teachers, initially, noted the vitality of cooperating with

families, and stated that parent support was definitive for this cooperation. Nevertheless, analysis of teachers' opinions shows that families are expected to be less dominant than teachers in terms of instruction function. As for teaching social norms and rules, some teachers believe that families' role is prior than that of schools, and any malfunctions on part of families to perform this role harms the processes of socialization and instruction at schools. Views on the collaboration with families were also stated in Forster's (2012) study focusing on the codes of ethics in Australian education. She valued paying regard to multiple voices including teachers, students and their families in constructing a new society (Forster, 2012). With regard to this issue, Boon (2011) and Cohen (2006) stated that the overall beliefs that values education mainly be carried out under the responsibility of families and other stakeholders had recently been abandoned. Thus, they emphasized collaborative work among teachers, families and other stakeholders.

Briefly, participating teachers have emphasized socialization, instruction, and qualification as three main functions of education. Furthermore, teachers' opinions can also be interpreted as socialization function should be emphasized more and the information provided within instruction function should be more practical. These perceptions of participant teachers are highly consistent with the views of Cohen (2006), in that he considered overemphasizing literacy/mathematical learning and neglecting socialization processes as among the educational problems in the United States.

In conclusion, upon being asked to rank the functions of socialization and instruction in terms of importance, teachers stated that both were crucial. However, one possible way to interpret the overall findings is to conclude that teachers care more about socialization than instruction and qualification respectively. This ultimate finding of the current research was highly supported in several studies. Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivicha and Linkins (2009) and Ong (2013) described such a process by using the term "positive education", in which social, emotional, behavioural development, happiness and life satisfaction are aimed to be achieved. Similar views were also highlighted by Hinchliffe (2001) and Diamond's (2010) studies, in that they both proposed a fundamentally and multiply interrelation among the aspects of academic achievement, social-emotional competence, physical and mental health, which goes parallel with the aspects, namely socialization, instruction and qualification, of education discussed from the perspectives of teachers in current study.

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The study also has some limitations in that the data reflects only the views of 20 primary school teachers who taught in city centre of Eskisehir, Turkey. In other words, the views of other stakeholders such as the parents, school directors or local authorities and students were not taken in the study. The same design in different regions may be carried out in order to describe the same issue and compare the results in further studies. The issue may also be focused on through collecting data from other stakeholders of the issue. Mixed designs which include gathering both qualitative and quantitative data from larger groups of participants may be used and the differences in the opinions of various stakeholders for different variables may be examined in further studies.

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