A Curricular Perspective on the Implementation Gap: Analysis of the 2018 ELT Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Schools[1]

Uygulamadaki Boşluğa, Öğretim Programı Penceresinden Bir Bakış: 2018 İlkokul ve Ortaokul İngilizce Öğretim Programının İncelenmesi

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Abstract. Following global educational trends, many countries have updated or redesigned their English language teaching (ELT) curricula to equip their citizens with the communication skills needed for the 21st century. Turkey is among those countries where the ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools was updated in 2018 according to the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). However, problems experienced during the implementation process of the new curriculum imply that some incongruences exist between the intentions and realisations in the Turkish ELT context. To shed some light on the curricular factors that might be hindering the successful implementation of the curriculum, Posner's (1995) curriculum analysis framework has been applied in this study. It was seen that despite the attention given to objectives, some of these such as, "resembling native speakers" might not be appropriate or realistic for the Turkish context. It was further claimed that the process dimension needs to be strengthened to facilitate the implementation of the curriculum. Finally, it was argued that context-sensitive solutions to suit the local needs through bottom-up approaches should be the priority, if the gaps between formal and operational curricula are to be minimised.

Keywords: "Language education reforms", "Implementation gap", "English language teaching", "Curriculum analysis".

Öz. Pek çok ülke, vatandaşlarını 21. yüzyılın gerektirdiği iletişim becerileri ile donatabilmek adına, küresel eğitim akımlarını izleyerek, İngilizce öğretim programlarında çeşitli güncelleme ya da düzenlemelere gitmektedir. Bu ülkelerden biri olarak Türkiye de, İngilizce öğretim programlarını, 2018 yılında Avrupa Birliği Ortak Dil Çerçevesi (ABODÇ) ilkeleri uyarınca güncellemiştir. Buna rağmen, güncellenen öğretim programının uygulanması aşamasında yaşanan sorunlar, Türkiye'deki İngilizce eğitiminde planlananlar ve gerçekleşenler arasında uyumsuzlukların bulunduğuna işaret etmektedir. Bu farklılıklara sebep olabilecek öğretim programı kaynaklı sorunları ortaya dökebilmek amacıyla, bu çalışmada Posner'ın (1995) öğretim programı analiz çerçevesinden faydalanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda, hedeflere verilen öneme rağmen, bunlar arasında "İngilizceyi o dilin konuşucuları gibi konuşabilmek" gibi bazılarının, ülkesel koşullar açısından uygun ya da gerçekçi olmayabileceği görülmüştür. Ayrıca, programın daha kolay uygulanabilir hale gelebilmesi için, programın süreç boyutunun güçlendirilmesi gerektiği ifade edilmiştir. Son olarak, resmi ve gerçekleşen programlar arasındaki boşlukların giderilebilmesi için önceliğin, ulusal ihtiyaçlara cevap verebilecek, ortama duyarlı çözümlere imkân sağlayan, aşağıdan yukarıya yaklaşımlara verilmesi gerektiği savunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: "Dil eğitim reformu", "Uygulama boşluğu", "İngilizce öğretimi", "Öğretim programı inceleme".

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Introduction

Curriculum is a term that has been used in various ways in the context of education such as to denote a written plan, a sequence of content units, or all the experiences of a child (Glatthorn et al., 2018). However, with knowledge and skills becoming quickly outdated, nowadays curriculum is being used almost synonymously with change, reform and transformation. As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates today, curriculum plays a significant role in meeting the demands of rapidly-changing world (OECD, 2020a). Since the ability to use languages effectively for communication has been acknowledged as one of the key competences individuals are expected to have (Council of Europe, 2018), many countries including Turkey, have considered renewing their national English language teaching (ELT) curricula in line with the premises of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which was designed to provide a common basis for language teaching curricula across Europe (Council of Europe, 2001). Since its inception, the framework has been utilized in many parts of the world for curriculum innovation and its influence is expected to increase in the following years both in and outside of Europe (Runnels & Runnels, 2019). Accordingly, in designing both the 2013 and 2018 ELT curricula for primary and secondary schools in Turkey, the principles and descriptors of the CEFR were followed so language learners can experience English as a means of communication rather than a topic of study (M.O.N.E., 2018). However, initiating such educational change in the desired direction is a daunting task since the outcomes are often hard to predict and there usually lies a gap between the intention and the realisation of the curriculum renewal, which is often addressed as "the implementation gap" in the literature (OECD, 2020b). In this vein, discrepancies between policy intentions and actual practices that arise from a number of factors are often reported within ELT contexts (Fang & Garland, 2014). While some of these barriers hindering innovation might apply to most cases, some issues are context-specific and are harder to pin-down, especially when the innovations originating in the Anglophone world have been exported to countries where English is a foreign language (Carless, 2012). The shortcoming of such policy borrowing thus is intimately related to the fact that any curriculum inevitably bears the ideology of its designers about education (Roche & Cummings, 1993).

Although the gap between policy and practice is a prevalent problem of the ELT teaching in Turkey, the number of studies addressing it is rather scarce (Aksoy, 2020). Therefore, an examination to uncover the assumptions and beliefs underlying the curriculum and documenting the issues concerning its implementation is necessary to expose whether or not these global education policies are valid and appropriate for national and local teaching contexts (Posner, 1995). To conduct such analysis, Posner's (1995) framework was employed in this study as a pioneering work in this area (Wang & Tan, 2019). Drawing on this framework, the present study first aims to track the genesis of the 2018 English curriculum for primary and secondary schools. Then, it attempts to examine the curriculum proper by teasing it apart into its main components. After that, the curriculum in use is discussed through the findings of relevant research concerning the implementation of the 2018 English curriculum in the Turkish context. In the final section, a critique is made by evaluating the strengths and limitations of the new English curriculum, and the study is concluded with some recommendations concerning curriculum enactment.

Method

In this study, a qualitative research methodology involving document analysis and literature review was employed as the purpose was to gain a detailed understanding about the curricular factors that might be possibly hindering the implementation of the curriculum. To this end, a curriculum analysis was performed by employing Posner's (1995) curriculum analysis framework, in which four

sets of questions related to the curriculum were sought to be answered concerning its origins, structure, implementation and critique respectively.
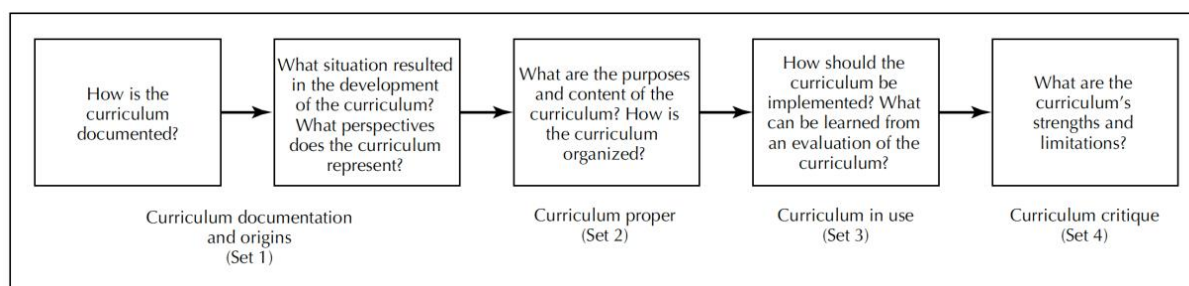

Figure 1. The process of curriculum analysis as employed in the study

Dealing with such questions, curriculum analysis is mainly concerned with issues of structural coherence, match among various curricular components, design characteristics, epistemological assumptions and theoretical or ideological framework with the goal of identifying potential merits and drawbacks of the curriculum (Ariav, 1986). This way, it serves to meet a variety of purposes such as deepening the understanding of curriculum problems; enhancing the understanding of the interrelationships between theory and practice; improving communication of curriculum ideas among educators or facilitating the identification of particular educational trends concerning types of objectives, teaching strategies and teaching aids (Ariav, 1986).

Data collection

To collect data about the first set, namely curriculum documentation and origins, the 1991, 1997, 2006, 2013 and 2018 ELT curricula for primary and secondary schools were examined as documents. The 2018 English language teaching curriculum for primary and secondary schools was used as the primary data collection tool to analyse the second set, curriculum proper. Curriculum in use was mainly explored through literature review, summarizing the findings of relevant research that could be accessed in the literature concerning the implementation of the 2018 English curriculum for primary and secondary schools.

Data Analysis

In the study, the data gathered was analysed through descriptive analysis which involves organizing and summarizing the raw data according to a predetermined framework so the findings can be communicated to the reader in a meaningful and understandable way (Yildirim & Şimşek, 2016). Employing descriptive analysis, the data collected in the study was categorized, summarized and interpreted to reflect the main points concerning the questions identified for each set in the curriculum analysis framework employed for the study.

Results

Set 1: Curriculum Documentation and Origins

This first stage of the curriculum analysis is mainly concerned with the series of events that led to the development of the curriculum so the problem it attempts to address can be better portrayed (Posner, 1995). Thus, two questions this section aims to reveal are:

1-What situations resulted in the development of the 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools?

2-What perspectives does the 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools represent?

To answer these questions, first a brief background on the historical events that resulted in the development of the new English curricula in Turkey is provided before focusing on the perspectives that influenced its genesis.

Grabe (1988) associates the global spread of English largely with the need or desire for information access, technology transfer, and economic development. That is, countries that wish to modernize and develop scientific and industrial technology must have access to English (Grabe, 1988). According to Dogancay-Aktuna (1998), such were the reasons behind the initial spread of English in Turkey in the late 1900s, since as a developing nation, the country needed to open up to the Western world for technological development and international communication. These national needs inevitably shaped the ELT curricula of the time. Aims such as showing willingness to communicate in English and gaining awareness about the values of the English-speaking countries were already on the agenda of the 1991 English curriculum for secondary schools (M.O.N.E, 1991). With the introduction of the eight year compulsory education in 1997, a new English curriculum for the 4th and 5th grades was prepared. As such, the 1997 English curriculum was actually an add-on to the 1991 ELT curriculum (see Acar, 2021) whose vision was no different in that knowledge of a foreign language was considered as a requirement for keeping up with scientific developments and reaching an advanced state of civilisation (M.O.N.E, 1997).

In the following years, English policy in Turkey kept undergoing numerous changes. From the 2000s onward, Turkey's efforts to join the EU have provided a strong impetus for the language reforms (Kirkgöz, 2009). In the 2006 ELT curriculum, which replaced both the 1991 and 1997 curricula, English was valued as an indispensable part of the integration process with the world (M.O.N.E., 2006). The transition to the 4+4+4 education system in 2012, meant another drastic change for the ELT curriculum since the new system mandated English to be taught from the 2nd grade onwards rather than the 4th (M.O.N.E., 2013). While expressing the reasons behind the redesign of the curriculum, statements that reflect the means-ends reasoning such as "high-quality education", "effective curriculum" and "international standards" were often used (M.O.N.E., 2013). The use of such statements was hardly surprising since the 2013 English language teaching curriculum was designed following the principles of the CEFR which is an outcome-based curriculum with a backward design (Richards, 2013). Once again, communication was regarded as the key to achieve economic, political and social progress albeit, this time, the problem the curriculum attempted to address was explicitly formulated. It was acknowledged that in Turkey, a majority of students leave school unable to communicate in English due to the fact that language is presented to them as an abstract entity but not as a means of communication.

The latest 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools was introduced as a minor revision that was done by taking teachers', parents' and academicians' views into consideration. Although the names of these stakeholders are mentioned, no reference is made to students' voices which implies that they are not represented. As in the previous curriculum, the necessity of achieving communicative competence in English for social and economic progress is reiterated. However, some differences concerning the purposes in particular are noticeable. One of the distinguishing features of the new curriculum is stated as its emphasis on key skills and values as these are addressed under separate headings in the curriculum. It can be alleged that by focusing on such generic skills and values, the curriculum aims to provide a more all-round education for students by taking a more humanistic

stance. Another difference is that, with the inclusion of competences, skills and values, a greater attention is given to outcomes in this curriculum. A large amount of space that is devoted to the objectives and evaluation indicates that they are viewed as highly important. Apart from those aspects, the claims of the previous curriculum are preserved almost verbatim.

As seen, rather than the subject specific-issues or learner-centred problems, it is primarily the legislative changes in the general educational system that led the way for the genesis of the 2018 ELT curriculum as it is the case with other ELT curricula in Turkey. The frequency and number of the curriculum innovations that have been developed over the years is also striking. ELT curriculum in Turkey has changed once in almost every six years or so which is a quite short time for changes to take effect. It is also evident that the ELT curriculum reforms that took place in Turkey often resulted from broader societal, political and economic pressures. Hence, a contemporary philosophy reconciling wider progressivist and reconstructivist perspectives calling schools to take action and contribute to the nation's problems seems to play a decisive role in determining the English language teaching policy in Turkey (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993). Against this background, like the previous ELT curricula, the 2018 ELT curriculum was primarily designed to help the country achieve its goal of development and progress by improving learners' ability to communicate in English. When considered from this perspective, the main problem the curriculum attempts to solve is hardly new. Having said this, some fresh perspectives are surely to be found in the 2018 English curriculum such as the inclusion of several stakeholders in the curriculum revision process, prioritisation and elaboration of outcomes and the keen focus on key competences and values.

Set 2: Curriculum Proper

Each ideology puts forward a different proposal regarding the aims, content and methodology of the language curriculum, producing distinctive types of education (Saylor et al., 1981). This section hence, mainly focuses on the inherent form and substance of the curriculum proper to investigate how and for what purposes its components are brought together. The questions that are posed in this section are as follows:

1-What are the purposes and content of the 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools?
2-How is the 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools organized?

Purposes

As an outcome-based curriculum designed in line with the principles of the CEFR and thereby mainly accommodating the tenets of reconstructivist philosophy, the educational aims are given considerable attention in the new English curriculum. These predetermined educational aims are presented in the form of competences, skills and values in the general objectives section of the curriculum. Among those aims, communicative competence is dealt with first as the major problem the curriculum seeks to address. It is argued that to tackle this problem, students need to experience English as a means of communication rather than an academic or intellectual exercise (M.O.N.E, 2018). To attain this, the necessity of providing students with real-life practice of English is accentuated. In fact, achieving a native-like competence is implied as a target since students are expected to listen and speak just as they would in a target language community (M.O.N.E, 2018). Yet, the important role that affective factors play in attaining this ambitious goal is not ignored. Creating a positive attitude toward English by taking students' interests and needs into consideration is underscored as a decisive factor in the language learning process. Another aim of the new English curriculum is oriented around the way English is learned, that is, students' approach to English learning. This aspect is discussed under

the concept of learning strategies which, as the curriculum claims, can be promoted through various in-class tasks and assignments (M.O.N.E, 2018). As such, aims encompassing both the products and the process dimension of English learning and teaching have been formulated. That said, not all the aims of the curriculum are directly linked to language-specific issues. Apparently to highlight this point, aims related to key skills and values are handled under separate headings. Admitting that incorporation of such non-linguistic aims into language programs is challenging, they are addressed through the teaching of the themes and topics in the curriculum.

When all those aims that the curriculum aims to attain are considered, it is possible to arrive at several conclusions. First, it is appropriate to say that, in terms of its purposes, the curriculum seeks to give weight to different types of learning by addressing competences, attitudes, skills and values. It is understood that more concrete aims like advancing students' communicative competence are sought to be balanced with some general ones like attitudes and values. This means that while formulating the aims, a broad educational perspective is taken rather than a narrow one focusing on training students for preordained positions or particular contexts (Posner, 1995). Moreover, even though the curriculum can be claimed to reside within product oriented, ends-means approach due to its specification of outcomes and its strong emphasis on developing language competence in particular (Nunan, 1988), a large number of references that are made to active learning, thinking and learning processes and humanistic education reveal that the ideas of progressivist education have also been influential while formulating the aims (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993). In this respect, it can be argued that both product-oriented thinking associated with reconstructionism and process-oriented rationality linked to progressivism are considered in setting out the educational aims of the new English curriculum.

Organization

Wette (2011) illustrates that in ELT theory, the design of the curriculum is often classified as belonging to either product-oriented approach in which the aims and topics of the curriculum are specified in advance or process-oriented approach in which such components of the curriculum are produced retrospectively through constant negotiations with learners during the learning-teaching process. Likewise, White (1998) claims that progressivist or reconstructionist approaches give birth to two distinctive types of syllabi which are named as interventionist and non-interventionist, the former dealing with what is to be learned that is content and skills, and the latter is more concerned with how it is to be learned that is process and pedagogical procedures. A similar classification with respect to curriculum designs can also be found in Ornstein's work (1993), where a distinction is made between progressivist learner-centred designs focusing on learners and the learning-teaching process and reconstructivist problem-centred designs which are usually planned and decided in advance, before the students' arrival.

When the structure and design of the new English curriculum are investigated through this lens, it might be claimed that, it mainly represents the reconstructionist-interventionist category since it takes predetermined communicative functions as its leading element for the organization of the content. Indeed, while describing the structure of the curriculum, this purpose is made explicit by stating that the curricular model is divided into three stages that are determined with respect to the language uses, functions and learning materials (M.O.N.E., 2018). Accordingly, listening and speaking skills are given more emphasis at the early grades whereas reading and writing skills are addressed at the higher grades (M.O.N.E., 2018). As a consequence, each unit included the specified functions and uses of language that learners are expected to produce. To promote these predetermined functional uses of language, the use of communicative language teaching approach (CLT) which is often associated with reconstructivist thinking is emphasized (Dendrinos, 1992 as cited in Kamhuber, 2010). It is worthy to note at this point that among the lines, a few references to action-oriented approach

are also made in which, beyond communication, language is seen as action and learners are raised as social agents primarily through projects and tasks (Germain-Rutherford, 2021). This vague use of the terms in the explication of the methodology of the curriculum has been found problematic by some scholars like Acar (2021) with the claim that contrary to what the curriculum asserts it is indeed communicative-oriented rather than action-oriented.

The themes in the curriculum are also structured in advance as to support the use of the language patterns and functions specified. As understood, the selection and grading of the content was realised through the application of several criteria such as interest, relevance and learnability/teachability. Like the themes, the activities to be carried out and instructional materials to be used at the classroom level are aligned with the main tenets of communicative approach, and the use of communicative activities and authentic materials are recommended (M.O.N.E., 2018). Testing and assessment on the other hand, is dealt with right after the outcomes, and even before the structure section, which reveals that it is regarded as an important organizing element. This emphasis of the curriculum on pupil performance also coincides with the reconstructivist view in which attainment of outcomes is given priority to bring about the changes deemed necessary (Clark, 1987).

From all these aspects, the new English curriculum reflects the properties of the interventionist tradition that represents reconstructivist rationale to a large extent. In terms of its organization, two salient features of the curriculum that can be associated with the non-interventionist approach might be listed as its emphasis on tasks and approaches to learning since such issues are related to procedural aspects of teaching (White, 1988). Yet, the tasks, as the curriculum conceives them, mostly include communicative activities that are employed "to help students practice the input and language skills" together with the contexts and assignments specified (M.O.N.E., 2018). Further, these are presented as bullet lists of recommendations which implies that they are only given a minor role in the organization of the curriculum. The tasks as they are found in experiential curricula however, are typically in the form of projects that serve as the main building blocks of the curriculum (Posner, 1995). Like tasks, learning strategies are also handled rather perfunctorily. Although some general ways of promoting those strategies are touched upon briefly, other significant issues such as how students' learning approaches can be coped or how effective second language learning strategies can be taught haven't been clarified (Oxford, 1990). In brief, these aspects concerning the process dimension are only partially developed.

Set 3: Curriculum in Use

After giving an overview of the developments that gave way to the genesis of the English curriculum, underlying its main assumptions and investigating its organization by looking at its constituting components, in this section the curriculum in use is explored. This way, how claims and intentions that are put forth by the formal curriculum are actualized in the Turkish ELT context is attempted to be revealed. To this end, two questions that are dealt with in this section are:

1-How should the 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools be implemented?
2-What can be learned from the evaluation of the 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools?

As indicated by the curriculum itself, the curriculum that is put into use differs in many respects from the one that is planned due to the numerous factors affecting its application (M.O.N.E., 2018). To minimise those possible disparities between intended and implemented curricula, several issues regarded as important for the application of the curriculum are listed in a separate section of the curriculum. These guidelines, which are prepared to ease the implementation of the curriculum at the

classroom level, actually include a summary of the prescriptions for the successful application of the communicative language teaching approach, such as the use of target language as the medium of instruction, the promotion of fluency over accuracy, the employment of communicative activities and authentic materials which are often mentioned in the literature (Richards, 2013). By echoing these principles of the communicative approach, the general focus of learning and teaching is encapsulated as deepening communication rather than completing the items in the curriculum (M.O.N.E., 2018).

One way of understanding whether or to what extent this aim of the curriculum is realised in practice might be consulting the findings of research that has been conducted in the literature. To throw light on the operational curriculum thus, a body of research focusing on the implementation and evaluation of the 2018 English curriculum for primary and secondary schools has been investigated. In one of those studies, Körhasanoğulları (2020) examined the outcomes, content, teaching-learning process and assessment of the 2018 ELT curriculum for 2nd and 8th graders and found that although the aims, outcomes and content of new curriculum were found in tune with the communicative approach, teachers experienced many difficulties in the teaching-learning process. Evaluating the eighth grade 2018 English curriculum according to the CIPP Model, Kerimoğlu (2021) concluded that curriculum objectives partially met students' needs, student-oriented teaching methods were partly employed in the learning process and the exams conducted hardly measured the integrated skills all of which hindered the successful application of the curriculum. Contrary to this, it was stated that teachers generally held positive views on the program's objectives and they felt quite competent to implement the curriculum (Kerimoğlu, 2021). Also employing the CIPP model to evaluate the eighth grade 2018 English curriculum of secondary education, Başaran et al. (2020) revealed that, the curriculum's and teachers' aims were incongruent. Moreover, many problems concerning the implementation phase, namely program intensity, classroom environment, insufficient class hours, level differences among students and bias towards the course were listed, the program was considered as insufficient in reaching its targets and a revision of its theory was suggested (Başaran et al., 2020). Investigating the updated curriculum with Stake's (1967) congruence-contingency model, Aksoy's (2020) research results showed that whereas the teachers found the curriculum suitable and effective, classroom observations displayed that wide gaps exist between theory and practice. Using Eisner's model of educational criticism to evaluate the 7th grade English curriculum through interviews with teachers, students, parents and school administrators, Çetin (2018) concluded that even though the teachers considered the curriculum generally good and applicable, they experienced problems in using and practicing the four language skills effectively. To alleviate these problems some suggestions including the revision of the course contents, activities and course books, increasing the number of English lessons and reducing the classroom sizes were made (Çetin, 2018). The problems concerning the classroom environment were also indicated as a serious drawback to implementing the curriculum as intended in Salma's (2020) study. As found out, the communicative skills and other vital outcomes of the curriculum were not practiced as suggested, or ignored due to the physical constraints and inappropriate seating arrangements (Salma, 2020).

Without doubt, the findings of the research mentioned are invaluable in understanding the fit between intentions and realisations. The results clearly indicate that there are wide gaps between the formal and the operational ELT curricula in Turkey. Drawing on the findings, it is possible to come to the conclusion that, even though the proper curriculum has been found coherent, its implementation seems to be conceived as challenging, if not impossible, on the condition that necessary improvements are made. Erarslan's (2019) study also yielded a similar result in that teaching-related issues were stated among the main factors hindering the implementation of primary school ELT programs in Turkey. Reporting the findings of evaluative research on English curriculum, Kaya (2020) also concluded that the discrepancy found between theory and practice is the fundamental problem of the English language teaching in Turkey. The causes and possible solutions to the problem are discussed in the next section, curriculum critique.

Set 4: Curriculum Critique

Curriculum critique is the last step in Posner's (1995) analysis framework where an overall appraisal is made to determine the strengths and limitations of the curriculum. A more important aim of such a critique according to Posner (1995) is to decide how the curriculum can be adapted to the educational context through maximizing its strengths and minimizing its weaknesses. Hence, the question this section attempts to address is as follows:

1- What are the strengths and limitations of the 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools?

To address this question, Posner (1995) invites the researcher to delineate the features of the curriculum that receive the most or least attention. The outcomes of learning in this respect seem to lie at the heart of the 2018 ELT curriculum. This preoccupation of the curriculum with the outcomes can be interpreted as a direct result of the reconstructivist perspective whose values also shape the recent works of Council of Europe (Clark, 1987). Such outcome-driven philosophy mainly concerned with bringing about required social changes via honing students' communication skills, necessitates careful planning and thus pre-specification of all aspects of the curriculum from the outset as it is the case with the 2018 ELT curriculum. Reconstructivist perspective has attracted strong criticism in that respect, largely for reducing the dynamic and creative nature of the learning-teaching process and giving way to predetermined and highly-structured curriculum which is assumed to work in every teaching context (Clark, 1987). According to Clark (1987), the common fate of such perspective treating curriculum renewal as a top-down or imposed affair is the internal constraints such as the time-table, class sizes, insufficient resources most of which are also pointed out by the research findings concerning the operational curriculum in the Turkish context.

Still, it would be unfair to categorize the 2018 ELT curricula as merely reconstructivist by claiming that the subject matter, learners and learning process are totally subordinated to outcomes. It is possible to find traces of progressivist thinking in most aspects of the curriculum from the formulation of outcomes to the organization of the content, assessment and evaluation. The emphasis given to learning strategies, the inclusion of various learning tasks, the incorporation of self and peer assessment techniques and a section devoted to the implementation phase of the curriculum are concrete examples of such thinking albeit some of these aspects are not fully developed. In that respect, it would be more appropriate to appraise the curriculum as a blend, reflecting the elements of both reconstructivist and progressivist philosophies.

This eclectic nature of the curriculum has some consequences with regard to curriculum innovation as well. First, since it is more concerned with plans and end-products, the curriculum renewal in reconstructionism is often actualized through a centralized, top-down way which is initiated from outside the classroom (Clark, 1987). Clark (1987) suggests that if this model is to be adopted, some form of in-service education is required so teachers can amend the curriculum package to classroom realities as intended. Alignment of the supported curriculum including all the sources and allocations required for the implementation with the written curriculum might be helpful in managing such type of curricular change (Glatthorn et al., 2018). A more bottom-up, progressivist curriculum renewal on the other hand, has its own challenges. This model of curriculum renewal is more concerned with the development of teachers to allow them to diagnose and treat the learning-teaching problems they encounter during the process with the necessary support (Clark, 1987). As proposed by Clark (1987), teachers can be provided with outside agents or experts with whom they

can work together or they can be offered permanently available support or service for teacher development so they can actually take part in the curriculum renewal process.

Clearly, teachers are perceived as the key in both curriculum renewal models despite the different roles they are given in each. Whereas in the reconstructivist model teachers are treated more like adopters and executors of already decided plans and end-products, in progressivist model they are seen as researchers and innovators, taking part in the whole reform process. Marsh & Willis (2007) also suggest the use of approaches that focus on group involvement such as action-oriented research, concerns-based adoption model, curriculum alignment and comprehensive school reform programs to support curriculum implementation. In this context, the crucial role students' voices play as a means of reconciling pragmatics with policy has also started to receive considerable attention recently since they are regarded as critical stakeholders in ecosystem approaches to curriculum redesign and implementation (OECD, n.d.).

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study, Posner's (1995) framework was selected as a method to analyse the 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools in Turkey so its appropriateness for the Turkish context can be discussed. It was concluded that two theoretical philosophies, reconstructivist and progressivist, have significantly influenced both the genesis and the design of the curriculum. As the aspect receiving the most attention, outcomes are claimed to be the backbone of the new ELT curriculum. Having a clear vision that is strengthened with specific outcomes and a content organized around the ultimate aim of improving students' communicative competence thus, can be regarded as the distinctive feature of the new ELT curriculum. Still, it might be necessary to question whether such aims that are mostly drawn from the CEFR are really suitable or attainable in the Turkish context or not. As Clark (1997) warns, a serious flaw with such conceptualization of communicative competence through the works of the European Council is assuming that the needs of the native speakers and foreign language learners are identical although full integration into the target language community and building a communicative bridge are obviously separate goals to be pursued. Drawing attention to this role of context for foreign language learning, Graves (2008) illustrates that innovation and reform in English language teaching curricula in target language-embedded contexts in which the target language is also the language of the community and in target language-removed contexts where language is learned in classrooms should be treated in different ways (Graves, 2008). Therefore, to what extent these aims which are mainly based on the CEFR reflect the needs of Turkish learners is a matter of debate.

Moreover, the means of attaining the outcomes specified seem to require further elaboration. Some procedural aspects that are embodied in the curriculum proper such as the use of tasks, promotion of learning strategies and teaching of key competences and values are far from being transparent and some others appears to be misunderstood as seen in the methodology of the curriculum. Concerning this, Hazar (2021) suggests that a more thorough understanding of the CEFR is needed if English teaching in Turkey is to benefit from its offerings to the full. For this reason, it might be reasonable to elucidate or review some of the methodological and procedural aspects so the process dimension of the curriculum can be strengthened. Besides, more concrete guidance on the implementation phase seems necessary. The research findings reporting the practical challenges teachers encounter during the implementation process support this argument. Similarly, Aksoy (2020) indicates that the lack of support in terms of instructional materials and sources and the inadequacy of in-service training are the most salient weaknesses of the curriculum.

One way of overcoming these problems might be to revise some aims or methodological aspects of the curriculum to make it more context-sensitive since CLT methodology might not be suitable for all cultures and contexts due to its excessive demands on teachers and learners (Bax, 2003).

From this perspective, it might be better to consider CLT as a set of ideas to be adapted to suit cultural contexts (Littlewood, 2013). As Acar (2019) claims, methods and policies for English teaching need not to be directly imported or adopted from other countries and they can -and should be- informed by the Turkish culture of learning as well. Therefore, what the ELT teaching in Turkey needs, might be to decide whether the objectives of the ELT curriculum that are based on the CEFR truly reflect national needs and consider how these can be translated into context-sensitive teaching practices through appropriate learning experiences from the inside out. Rather than top-down or centre-periphery models, grassroots and bottom-up approaches to curriculum renewal envisaging a more active role for teachers and learners, might satisfy this need and help bridge the gaps between intentions and realisations (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Change in education is easy to propose and say, hard to implement, and extremely challenging to sustain (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). This paper attempted to demonstrate that how ideals and assumptions that underlie the formal curriculum might have serious repercussions for the implementation phase especially when the intervening contextual (f)actors are disregarded. It is therefore necessary to remind that without situatedness, curriculum-as-plan is only an abstraction, and it only comes alive in the presence of teachers and students (Aoki, 2004). Aiming to emphasize this fact, the present study is limited to the analysis of the 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools. More research that would reflect the curriculum renewal process from the teachers' and students' perspectives should provide more cues for closing the long-existing gap between theory and practice in the Turkish ELT context.

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