

## **Metaphoric Perceptions of Primary School Teachers on the Concept of Curriculum**

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### **Abstract**

One of the most important elements in educational system is curriculum. Being comprehensive and multidimensional notion and including the all learning experiences lived by individuals inside and outside school, curriculum plays a role as a bridge that transforms educational politics in a country to practice. Indoubtedly, achieving aimed output in the curriculums depends on how the teachers who will practice the curriculum perceive and practice curriculum. One of the tools to determine teacher perceptions is metaphor. Accordingly, in the study it was aimed to determine the metaphors primary school teachers used regarding “education program” and the study was designed as qualitatively in the survey method. This study was conducted with the participation of 200 primary school teachers from 16 primary schools in the city center of Eskişehir. A questionnaire consisted of open ended questions has been created to determine the views of teachers regarding education program. The questions are generally similar to “Education program is like ..... ; because .....”. Teachers’ views regarding education program has been analyzed with descriptive analysis technique. Chi-square test was applied in order to evaluate whether the appearing categories differ according to department of the primary school teachers. After the study, it’s been seen that teachers created 200 metaphors. These metaphors comprised categories as “set of elements to be prepared carefully”, “a changeable structure”, “directive”, “pressure element”, “multidimensional”, “complex structure”, and “indispensable element”. As a result, it has been found out that teachers had positive thoughts regarding curriculum. Also, it was observed that the conceptual categories formed related to the metaphors that teachers use have significant difference according to their departments.

**Keywords:** primary education, curriculum, teacher, metaphor

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## İlköğretim Öğretmenlerinin Eğitim Programı Kavramına Yönelik Metaforik Algıları

### Öz

Eğitim sisteminin en önemli bileşenlerden biri eğitim programıdır. Bireylerin okul içinde ve okul dışında edindiği tüm öğrenim yaşantılarını içine alan, kapsamlı ve çok boyutlu bir kavram olan eğitim programı, bir ülkedeki eğitim politikasını uygulamaya dönüştüren bir köprü rolü üstlenmektedir. Kuşkusuz eğitim programlarından istenilen verimin sağlanması, programı uygulayacak olan öğretmenlerin program kavramını nasıl algıladıkları ve uyguladıklarına bağlı bulunmaktadır. Öğretmen algılarının belirlenmesinde kullanılan araçlardan biri ise metaforlardır. Bu doğrultuda, araştırmada ilköğretim öğretmenlerinin “eğitim programı” kavramına ilişkin olarak kullandıkları metaforların belirlenmesi amaçlanmış ve araştırma, tarama modelinde nitel şekilde desenlenmiştir. Araştırmanın katılımcılarını, Eskişehir Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü tarafından belirlenmiş bulunan 16 ilköğretim okulunda görev yapan 200 ilköğretim öğretmeni oluşturmuştur. Araştırmada, öğretmenlerin eğitim programı kavramına ilişkin kullandıkları metaforlar, açık uçlu anket yoluyla toplanmıştır. Ankette ilköğretim öğretmenlerinden “Eğitim programı..... gibidir; çünkü.....” cümlesini tamamlamaları istenmiştir. Elde edilen veriler, ilköğretim öğretmenlerinin eğitim programı kavramına ilişkin kullandıkları metaforlar betimsel analiz tekniği kullanılarak; branşları ile eğitim programına ilişkin kullandıkları metaforlar arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığı ki kare tekniği kullanılarak çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında elde edilen bulgulara göre ilköğretim öğretmenlerinin eğitim programlarına ilişkin olarak toplam 200 metafor ürettikleri görülmüş; eğitim programına ilişkin olarak “dikkatle hazırlanması gereken ögeler bütünü”, “değişken bir yapı”, “yönlendirici”, “baskı unsuru”, “kapsamlı olma”, “karmaşık bir yapı” ve “vazgeçilmez bir öge” kategorileri oluşturulmuştur. Sonuç olarak ilköğretim öğretmenlerinin eğitim programı kavramına ilişkin algılarının genelde olumlu olduğu ve ilköğretim öğretmenlerinin branşları ile eğitim programına ilişkin kullandıkları metaforlar arasında bir ilişki olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** ilköğretim, eğitim programı, öğretmen, metafor

## Introduction

Among the most important elements of educational system, curriculum is an action plan that provides individuals with a learning environment where they gain learning experiences and make use of these experiences. In general, the main component consisting of arrangement of learning experiences (Demirel, 2007) is the teacher. Even though a curriculum is prepared to achieve the best, the quality of its application depends completely on how the teacher perceives it. In other words, how the teacher perceives the curriculum is the main variable on how he would apply it. Thus, the perceptions of teachers concerning the curriculum are highly important. One of the tools to determine teacher perceptions is metaphor.

The term metaphor has been derived from the Greek word “metapherein”; meta means change, and pherein means endure (Levine, 2005). In Turkish it is defined as “using a word or a notion to mean something that is out of the accepted meaning” (TDK, 2013). Lakoff and Johnson (2005, p. 25) on the other hand define metaphor as “a thought material, a type of human understanding, and not only a figure of speech but at the same time a figure of thought. Moreover, Arslan & Bayrakçı (2006, p. 100) define metaphor as labeling a phenomena or a concept with more familiar and known terms. Miller (1987) interpreted metaphor as “the language of experiences” since they help people make individual experiences more meaningful (Cited in: Saban, 2004).

Metaphors are in close relationship with individuals’ cultures. Human language is a structure of culture, and since metaphors are formed as a product of individuals’ language, they are wholly affected by the culture of the individuals (Kövecses, 2005). Teachers use metaphors unconsciously most of the time in order to explain thoughts, concepts, and abstract notions, or make use of similar applications in their daily lives (Arslan & Bayrakçı, 2006). Moreover, metaphors have the ability to reveal true information. In the process of metaphor use, individuals, by forming relations with their own life and experiences, tend to express truth and reality consciously or unconsciously (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Metaphors, the main function of which is “to recognize”, are used as a way of experience and understanding in teaching learning applications and reflecting thoughts (Woon & Ho, 2005). Most of what we say about concepts, and how we form our thoughts mostly depend on our use of the metaphors. Metaphors help us construct our understanding and thoughts related to events in life (Perry&Cooper, 2011).

As Booth (2003) put forward, the meaning that metaphors define could change the context in some degree; the meaning value of metaphors is more emphasized than the real meaning values; at the same time metaphors hold relative and social meaning values; metaphors that individuals utter carry clues about the personality of the individual; they create a deeper thought in the individual; they could be used as a tool in defining character and culture; and lastly metaphors have functions in different science branches as data collection tools (Cited in: Girmen, 2007, p. 11).

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Nesterova (2001) defined the functions of metaphors as follows: (1) Naming; reforming the meaning, enhancing the language, (2) Forming abstract concepts; explaining concrete concepts in abstract thoughts, (3) Directing; helping to form new concepts by shaping metaphorical experiences and trying to understand other concepts with the help of these new concepts, (4) Production of new information; helping to learn unknown with the help of known truth, (5) Psychological effect; by adding psychological specialties to plain meanings trying to help other understand the concept. (6) Diversifying Paradigms; metaphors help form new concepts by opening up new perspectives, (7) Communicative and educational function; helps people with different characteristics to form communication easily, (8) Metaphor is a game of tongue; individuals can create their own metaphors to spread their own concepts.

When definitions and functions related to metaphors are considered, metaphor is forming of abstract and meaningful new images and concepts out of concrete concepts by combining individual senses and thoughts with experiences. Metaphors facilitate the duties of educational partners along with providing opportunities such as individuals' explaining ideas with new words by enriching their expressions.

It is known that people use metaphors too often. Individuals make use of metaphors in family relations, explaining some events and activities to other people, and to talk about good events along with revealing negative thoughts (Zanotto, Cameron & Cavalcanti, 2008). Moreover, improvement of some skills needs the use of metaphors (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999).

Metaphors are one of the tools used in explaining complex concepts and facts in education (Semerci, 2007). As a matter of fact, in the explanation of some concepts and facts metaphors are used in education. In this respect, metaphors related to concepts of teacher (Karadag & Gultekin, 2012; Alacapınar, 2011; Yıldırım, Unal & Çelik, 2011; Tasdemir & Tasdemir, 2011a; Michael & Katerina 2009; Pektas & Kılan, 2009; Cerit, 2008; Celikten, 2006; Saban, 2004; Ben-Peretz, Mendelson & Kron 2003, Lasley, 1994; Oxford, Tomlinson, Barcelos, Harrington, Lavine, Salehet.al., 1998; Clarcken, 1997); teaching and learning (Font, Bolite & Acevedo, 2010; Saban, Kocbeker & Saban, 2006; Levine, 2005; Guerrero & Villamil, 2002; Martinez, Sauleda & Huber, 2001); teaching (Taşdemir & Taşdemir, 2011; Mahlios, Shaw & Barry, 2010; Carter & Pitcher, 2010; Kasoutas & Malamitsa, 2009; Girmen, 2007; Massengill, Mahlios, & Barry, 2005; Price, 2002; Bullough, 1994; Bullough & Stokes, 1994); school (Ozdemir, 2012a; Saban, 2008; Aydoğdu, 2008; Engin-Demir, C. 2007; Inbar, 1996; Hardcastle, Yamamoto, Parkay & Chan, 1985); learning (Elmholdt, 2003); classroom management (Akar & Yıldırım, 2009); professional development (Hasim, Mohtar, Barnard & Zakaria, 2013; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011; Goldstein, 2005; Bullough & Stokes 1994; Bullough 1994); curriculum development (Semerci, 2007) were determined.

There is a limited number of studies in explaining the use of metaphors in curriculums. Ozdemir (2012b) and Gultekin (2013) determined teacher candidates',

Tasdemir & Tasdemir (2011b) teachers', Aykaç & Çelik (2011) teachers' and teacher candidates' metaphors related to curriculums. Semerci (2007) on the other hand tried to find out about metaphorical perceptions of teachers related to primary curriculums. In addition to the above mentioned studies, Anglin & Dugan (1982) studied metaphorical perceptions.

Metaphors are among the strong tools that can be used in determining teachers' perceptions about curriculum concept. Thus, it is important to reveal the perspectives of the teachers who apply the curriculums in the education system.

This study has another importance since it is one of the first studies held on primary school teachers, and since it tries to reveal whether there is significant difference between the perceptions of classroom teachers and branch (in-field) teachers on curriculum concept. This study is expected to make precious contributions to curriculums and education field along with the limited number of research centers.

The aim of this study is to determine the metaphors primary school teachers used regarding curriculum. In this respect following research questions were asked:

- What are the metaphors primary school teachers create concerning the curriculum?
- In what categories are the metaphors they created about curriculum collected?
- Is there a statically significant relationship between the categories formed related to the metaphors and the field of study of primary school teachers?

### **Method**

This study, which aims to determine metaphors the primary school teachers use on "curriculum", is a qualitative study. The metaphors used by the teachers are obtained by a survey consisting of open-ended questions.

### **Participants**

The study was held with teachers working in state and private primary schools under the supervision of Directorate of National Education in Eskisehir. In the scope of the study, teachers working in 16 primary schools, located in the district of Uluönder determined by the Directorate of National Education in Eskisehir, participated in the study. Since one of the schools in this region was closed, it was excluded from the study.

The characteristics of teachers participated in the study are presented in Table 1.

Table1

*The Characteristics of Teachers Participated in the Study*

<b>Features</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	137	68,5
Male	63	31,5
<b>Seniority</b>		
Less than a year	5	2,5
1-5 years	18	9
6-10 years	55	27,5
11-15 years	46	23
16-20 years	29	14,5
21 years and over	47	23,5
<b>Field of Study</b>		
Classroom Teacher	103	51,5
In-Field (branch) Teacher	97	48,5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

As presented in Table 1, 68,5% of the teachers are female, and 31,5% are males. Most of the teachers (27,5%) participated in the study have a seniority of 6-10 years, 23,5% of them have 21 years and over seniority, and 23% have 11-15 years. 51.5% of the teachers from whom the data were collected were classroom teachers and 48,5% of them were in-field teachers.

**Data Collection**

In order to reveal the thoughts of teachers participated in the study about the concept of curriculum, a questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions was prepared. The questionnaire was given to experts in the field and final version was determined.

The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part consists of questions about personal information like gender, seniority in the job, and field of study. In the second part of the questionnaire, teachers were expected to complete the sentences such as “The curriculum is like .....; because .....”

**Data Analysis**

Perceptions of the teachers about the concept of curriculum were analyzed through content analysis method. In this respect, the process of analyzing and interpreting the created metaphors was as follows; determining the metaphors, classifying the metaphors, developing categories, ensuring validity and reliability.

In order to determine the metaphors related to the concept of curriculum used by the teachers, their answers were examined in detail, and the researcher determined the metaphors they used. In the step of determining the metaphors, it was examined to see whether a metaphor related to curriculum was significantly used or not. Then papers without metaphors or those not related to any kind of metaphors were

excluded. In the classification of metaphors step, metaphors created by teachers were reviewed once more, and the ones with similar qualities were grouped. The result of the analysis revealed that some teachers were not able to create expected type of metaphors in terms of metaphors and the relation of these metaphors with curriculum. Thus, 200 of the metaphors created were accepted and 31 of them were excluded based on the reasons such as insignificant metaphors, no definition, or insufficient definition. The categories were formed by keeping the relations between metaphors and curriculum together with metaphors created by teachers. Some of the teachers created same metaphors related to curriculum. Nevertheless, some of these metaphors were put under different categories since they define the relation formed with curriculum differently. Metaphors with similar qualities were put under same categories. In order to ensure reliability, formed categories and metaphors were given to another expert in the field, and analyzed by him. After the analysis, comparisons were made, the metaphors where there is difference in opinions were discussed, and categories were finalized.

After metaphor analysis, personal information and categories of metaphors were transferred to SPSS statistical analysis curriculum. Then, to see whether there is a significant relationship between branches of teachers and categories related to curriculum, chi-square analysis was administered.

The research findings, which were finalized at the end of all the analyses applied, were presented in parallel with research aims. In this respect, categories formed about curriculum were presented in figures; metaphors forming the categories were presented in charts and interpreted with direct quotations from teachers. Lastly, teachers' branches and categories formed about curriculums were presented through percentages and frequencies, and interpreted.

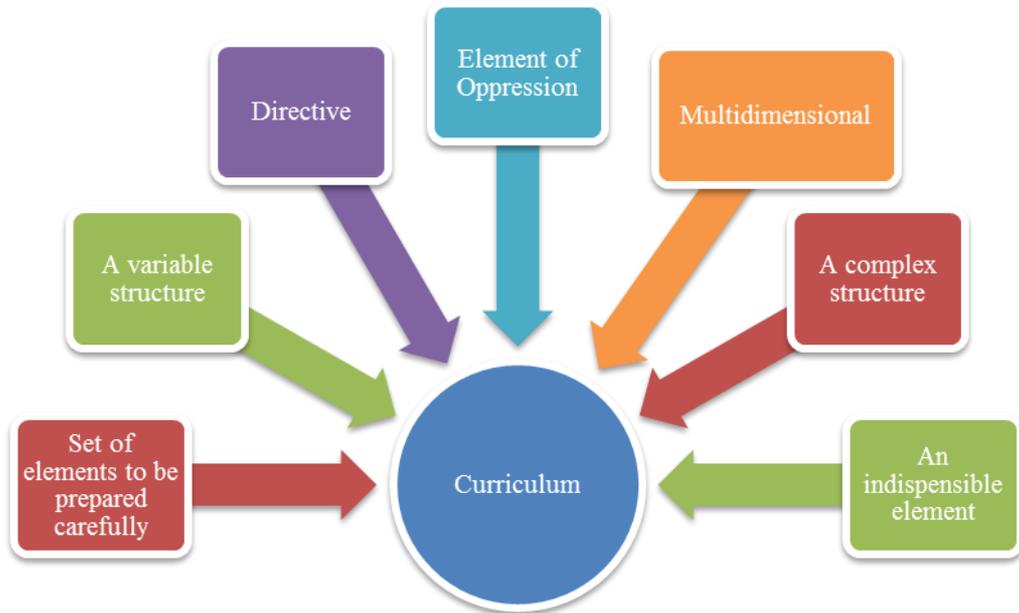
### **Findings**

In this part, findings of analysis to find out whether there is a significant relationship between categories formed by metaphors created by primary education teachers about curriculums and categories formed by primary school teachers' branches were presented.

Metaphors that primary school teachers created about curriculum are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Categories formed about Curriculum*



As seen in Figure 1, categories such as set of factors to be prepared carefully, a variable structure, directive, element of oppression, multidimensional, a complex structure, and an indispensable element were formed concerning the metaphors primary school teachers created about the concept of curriculum. Metaphors forming these categories were presented in charts with their frequencies. Metaphors collected under elements to be prepared carefully are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Metaphors Related to Elements to be Prepared Carefully*

Factors to be prepared carefully					
Metaphor	f	Metaphor	f	Metaphor	f
Medicine	1	Tree	5	House	1
River	4	Jigsaw puzzle	1	Juggler headpins	1
Flower	1	Chess	1	Train	2
Plant	1	Soil	1	Chain	1
Baby	2	Military force	1	Road	3
Garden	3	Parent labor	1	Food	2
Treatment	1	Car	1	Nature	1
Scientist	1	Organism	1	Army of ants	1
Honeycomb	1	Clock	3	Food recipe	1
Building	2	Cake	1	Image	1
Baklava	1	DNA	1	Dictionary	1
Olympic pool	1	Octopus	1	Elevator	1
Ferris wheel	1	Machine	1		
Yoghurt ready to be yeasted	1	Rotor gear	1		
<b>Total</b>					<b>57</b>

As seen in Table 2, most frequent metaphor in elements to be prepared carefully category is tree (f=5). This metaphor is followed in the order of frequency by river (f=4), garden (f=3), clock (f=3), road (f=3), baby (f=2), building (f=2) and food (f=2). Most of the metaphors found in the category were repeated only once. While one of the teachers who associated curriculum with “medicine” stated “Correct and sufficient medicine heals, but wrong and excessive use gives harm. Curriculums, similar to medicine, should be arranged with a great balance...”, one of the teachers who associated curriculum with a tree said;

*“If cared and given sufficient amount of attention, the students it raises would be character-wise”.*

Another teacher who resembled curriculum to a “building” suggested;

*“The stronger and well-made a building is, the stable it is against disasters and earthquakes, just like a curriculum”.*

While another teacher associated curriculum with “clock” stated that;

*“Curriculum consists of a whole and its pieces that concerns a student’s complete education life. Each class and each course available in curriculum is like gears of a clock. If any one of these gears were placed in a wrong spot, it wouldn’t show the time correctly...”*

A teacher who associated curriculum with “DNA” said;

*“All the characteristics of an individual is hidden in his DNA, curriculum consist of items which try to bring those characteristics to surface”.*

Another teacher who resembled curriculum to a “road”, on the other hand, claimed;

*“...Curriculum is a road with borders on each side. If your vehicle is good, if you have enough gas, in other words, if it is a whole with some items, then this road could be used. The borders of curriculum are also clear; the student can get to the target using this road”.*

By taking the teachers’ metaphors on the concept into consideration, it could be said that the preparation of a curriculum should be planned carefully; that a curriculum is a whole with its different items; and that a curriculum is like a frame with limited borders.

Metaphors related to curriculum under “a variable structure” category are presented in Table 3.

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Table 3

*Metaphors Related to a Variable Structure Category*

<b>A Complex Structure</b>					
<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>
Chamaleon	10	A Guinea Pig	3	Car	1
Puzzle	12	Time Bomb	1	Fire in a Chimney	1
Windmill	1	Story	1	Child	1
Dough	4	Coat	1	Lamb	1
Rag Bag	2	A Ship without a	1	Plane	1
Fashion	1	Human	3	Bird	1
Toy Block	1	Stage	2	Medicine	1
Tire	4	Battery Charger	1	Cell	1
Food made by women	1	Sunflower	1	Table	1
<b>Total</b>					<b>59</b>

As seen in Table 3, when metaphors available in a variable structure category are ordered from the most frequent to the least, the order is as follows: puzzle (f=12), chameleon (f=10), dough (f=4), tire (f=4), a guinea pig (f=3), human (f=3), stage (f=2), and rag bag (f=2). Other metaphors placed under this category are all repeated only once. While one of the teachers who resembled curriculum to a puzzle stated his opinion as;

*“Every new comer changes something...”* another one said, *“It breaks very often, and tried to be fixed again and again”*.

A teacher who resembled curriculum to a “chameleon” stated;

*“Frequent changes are made. There are no long-term curriculum...”*

Another teacher claimed;

*“It should keep up with current conditions.”*

While a teacher associates curriculum with “a guinea pig” by saying;

*“It is always changed, new things are added without being piloted first.”*

Another teacher claims;

*“... If you put more wood into a fire, it would heat you more, otherwise the fire will die out. The same applies to curriculum as well, if new things are not added, or updated, it will not do any good, it would die out as the fire does”, by associating curriculum to “a fire in the chimney”*.

By taking the teachers’ associations concerning curriculum, it could be said that teachers have opinions that curriculum are flexible, and change rapidly. However, some teachers evaluate this situation positive since it allows them to follow innovations and improvements, on the other hand, other teachers consider it negative

since many changes are made very often, and it changes according to people who are in charge of managing the process change frequently. Metaphors related to curriculum under “directive” category are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Metaphors Related to “Directive” Category*

<b>Directive</b>					
<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>
Guide	2	Map	2	Jeweller	1
Compass	4	Lead	1	Sculptor	4
Assistant	1	Sun	2	Wind	1
Flashlight	1	Traffic Sign	1	Water	1
Lighthouse	2	Instruction	1	Master	1
Light	2	Wheel	1		
<b>Total</b>					<b>28</b>

As seen in Table 4, the most frequent metaphors are compass (f=4) and sculptor (f=4). These are followed by guide, lighthouse, light, map and sun metaphors. One of the teachers who resembled curriculum to “compass” stated his opinion as;

*“It is a beacon for a teacher. The target and the spot to be reached are determined by curriculum....”*

Another teacher said;

*“Curriculum is a beacon in the education process, if it shows the correct direction, it will take you to the target. If your compass is not showing the correct direction, then you will take a wrong path.”*

One teacher who resembled this concept to “guide” claimed;

*“Those who have a correct and successful guide would reach their aims slow but sure...”*

One teacher who likened curriculum with “master” said;

*“Masters can give any shape to the dough, likewise curriculum can shape a student, and direct him...”*

A teacher who resembled curriculum to a “sculptor” said;

*“Directing the behaviors that a student who comes to school should gain in order to be ready for life through curriculum can be resembled to a sculptor’s shaping a marble piece to a meaningful shape.”*

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While a teacher who related curriculums with flashlight said;

*“A good flashlight helps us see our way in the dark better. It helps us get to our target easily, it directs us...”*

Another teacher who likened curriculum with “light “explained his opinion as;

*“ ... Well-prepared curriculum are directive as a strong light that enlightens the environment...”*

Taking these expressions into consideration, it can be said that teachers think that curriculum is a beacon, shaper and a guide in reaching the targets and having students gain desirable behaviors. Element of oppression category which was formed related to curriculum is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

*Metaphors Related to Element of Oppression Category*

Element of Oppression					
Metaphor	f	Metaphor	f	Metaphor	f
Turtle	4	Consisted of choices	1	Disabled person	1
Mouse	1	Empty Glass	1	Race Horse	3
Basket	1	Jockey	1	Bee	2
Lame Duck	1	Medal	1	Fraction	1
A Drop in the Bucket	1	Parrot	1	Sisyphus	1
<b>Total</b>					<b>21</b>

As seen in Table 5, the most common metaphor occurred to be turtle (f=4). This metaphor was followed by race horse (f=3), and bee (f=2). Other metaphors in the category seemed to be repeated only once. One teacher resembling curriculum to “a turtle” expressed his opinion as;

*“Subjects and activities in curriculum is so immense that students are squeezed under it, and they cannot carry the load. Just like the shell on a turtle. Moreover, teachers race to raise them....”*

Another teacher stated his opinion by saying;

*“It takes a long time for a turtle to reach its target, the curriculum is so immense that students’ reaching their targets is difficult and time consuming...”*

One teacher who likened curriculum with “race horse” stated his opinion by saying;

*“The system is dependent on examinations, so we apply the curriculum by running around like a race horse does...”*

Another teacher suggested;

*“Education turned out to be a system which only considers the results, what students do in the process is completely ignored.”*

A teacher resembled the education to a bee and said;

*“There is no spare time, holiday, sleep in education, likewise bees make honey, the curriculum is also very immense.”*

Another teacher who said education is like an “empty glass” uttered;

*“Curriculum is something in which the look outside of is attractive, but evaluated by tests with a structuralist education aim in mind, thus self contradictory; students are squeezed under performance works; decorated with flowers, but having the same content...”*

When the metaphors the teachers uttered for this category taken into consideration, it can be said that they find the content of the curriculum too loaded, the evaluation system is not suited to the curriculum, thus the curriculum has turned out to be an element of oppression. Metaphors related to multidimensional category about curriculum are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Metaphors Related to Multidimensional Category*

<b>Being multidimensional</b>					
<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>
Mother	1	Camera	1	Polyphonic Chorus	1
Supermarket	1	Musical Instrument	1	Rainbow	1
Peacock	1	Sea	2	Rain Drop	1
Song	1	Shopping	1		
Tree	4	Universe	1		
<b>Total</b>					<b>17</b>

As seen in Table 6, only tree (f=4), and sea (f=2) are repeated more than once in multidimensional category. While one teacher who resembled curriculum to a “tree” stated his opinion by saying;

*“The branches of a tree and their being long or short is similar to subjects in the curriculum...”*

Another teacher expressed;

*“Curriculum is like a tree which has a lot of branches and leaves. Branches and leaves placed on a main body are subjects in the curriculum”.*

As one teacher resembled curriculum and said;

*“... curriculum should be just like a mother. It should consider every kind of differences, defects, and conditions, but should not differentiate any of them...”*

Another teacher who related curriculum with “shopping” said;

*“...just like having too much products in store address to the consumers, the variety of subjects in the curriculum address the students.”*

Moreover, a teacher who resembled curriculum to a “rainbow” stated his opinion by saying;

*“It has all the colors, both main and secondary colors. Each color has its own characteristics, likewise each subject in the curriculum...”*

By taking the metaphors the teachers uttered in being multidimensional category, it can be said that they think different subjects in the curriculum is a richness, and important since they address to different students.

A complex structure category related to curriculum is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

*Metaphors Related to “a Complex Structure” Category*

A Complex Structure					
Metaphor	f	Metaphor	f	Metaphor	f
Puzzle	1	Tangled hair	1	Mixer	1
Labyrinth	3	Iliad	1	Outer Space	1
Woman	1	Fractal	1	Camel	1
<b>Total</b>					<b>11</b>

As seen in Table 7, only labyrinth (f=3) metaphor was repeated more than once in “a complex” structure category. Other metaphors placed in the category were only expressed once. While a teacher related curriculum with “labyrinth” stated;

*“It is complex, in order to find the way out and reach the target one should walk around a lot.”*

Another teacher claimed;

*“The curriculum is in a complex structure, you have hard time finding the way you have to follow.”*

A teacher who resembled curriculum to “the Iliad” expressed his opinion by saying;

*“It seems like it was written with very long sentences to make people not understand it”.*

A teacher resembling the curriculum to a “puzzle” claimed;

*“It is like a puzzle which is hard to solve, in order to find the truth it should be thought multi-directional, and spend time on it.”*

A teacher who used “outer space” for the resemblance suggested;

*“There is too much unknown about it. It covers everything, and it is full of details ranging from the general to the specific.”*

When metaphors in this category are taken into consideration, the teachers believe that it is hard to understand the curriculum, and the application of it is very complicated. Metaphors concerning “an indispensable element” category related to curriculum are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

*Metaphors Related to “an Indispensable Element” Category*

<b>An Indispensable Element</b>					
<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>f</b>
Basic Needs	1	Sun	1	Water	1
Gold	1	Skeleton	2	Oxygen	1
<b>Total</b>					<b>7</b>

As seen in Table 8, there are 6 metaphors in “an indispensable element” category. However, only skeleton (f=2) of these metaphors is repeated more than once. One of the teachers who resembled curriculum to “skeleton” stated;

*“Since skeleton is the most important element that forms our physical structure that holds us standing, curriculum is an indispensable structure that shapes our education, gives it life, and holds it standing...”*

Another teacher resembled curriculum to “oxygen”;

*“How skeletons of living creatures help them stand, and make them move, and it is the most basic constitution of living creatures, curriculum are the same for us. A teacher who states his opinions, as “an curriculum with qualities like being directive, and being convincing is necessary for education, it is as necessary as oxygen for body...”*

One of the teachers who associated curriculum with “sun” said;

*“Whenever the kids want, it warms them, since sun is necessary for the kids, curriculum is necessary for education.”*

Another teacher who likened curriculum to “water” claimed;

*“Water lets plants, human beings, living creatures live, likewise, curriculum brings education to life.”*

When all these metaphors created by the teachers concerning the curriculum are considered, it can be said that teachers think curriculum is necessary and indispensable for a quality education.

When all the metaphors related to curriculum is taken into consideration, it is seen that teachers take the subject into consideration from different aspects of it. While some teachers drew the attention to its positive aspects like being multidimensional, being indispensable, being directive, etc., others consider its negative sides like its being complex, being oppressive, etc. Moreover, some teachers made statements about its structure by indicating that it should be prepared carefully, it should be a system that is open to change and systematic.

The results of chi-square analysis conducted in order to reveal whether there is a significant relationship between the teachers’ branches and the formed categories are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

*The Relationship between Teachers’ Branches and Categories*

Category \ Branch		Category						
		Factors to be prepared carefully	A variable structure	Directive	Element of oppression	Multidimensional	A complex structure	An indispensable element
Classroom	N	23	37	17	13	6	6	1
Teacher	%	22,3	35,9	16,6	12,6	5,8	5,8	1
In-Field	N	34	22	11	8	11	5	6
Teacher	%	35,1	22,7	11,3	8,2	11,3	5,2	6,2

As seen in Table 9, most of the teachers (35,9%) think that curriculum has a variable structure. Only 1% of the classroom teachers claim that curriculum is indispensable. Moreover, 22,3% of the classroom teachers reclaim that curriculum is a set of factors to be evaluated carefully, 16,6% consider it to be directive, 12,6% element of oppression, 5,8% multidimensional, and again 5,8% consider it to be complex. Most of the field teachers (35,1%), on the other hand, consider curriculum

to be a set of factors to be prepared carefully. A small number of field teachers (5,2%) consider curriculum to be a complex structure. Additionally, it was also revealed that among the field teachers 22,7% consider curriculum to be variable, 11,3% directive, again 11,3% multidimensional, 8,2% element of oppression, and 6,2% an indispensable element. Accordingly, while most of the classroom teachers consider curriculum to be in a variable structure, most of the field teachers perceive it to be a set of factors to be prepared carefully. As a matter of fact, the results of chi-square analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between the categories formed related to curriculum and the branches of the teachers [ $X^2 = 13,378$ ,  $p < .05$ ].

### Results and Discussion

In literature, curriculum concept, like the other concepts related to education, is also described using metaphors. As a matter of fact, Varış (1996, p. 12) uses “bridge” metaphor while explaining the function of curriculum in the system by saying “curriculums play the role of a bridge in spreading and realizing national education politics that is based on the development of Turkish nation in unity and integrity to the furthest part of the country”. In his study called “The Metaphorical Roots of The Program” Klebard used “production”, “travel” and “cultivation” metaphors while explaining curriculum concept. Curriculum is a production because student is a raw material to be processed. Curriculum is travel because the education process is a travel for students. Curriculum is cultivation because student is a member of plant community that should be growing in the garden (Baptist, 2002). Baptist (2002), based on cultivation metaphor used by Klebard, tries to explain curriculum with “garden” metaphor, and draws the attention to the similarities between garden and curriculum. Style (1996), on the other hand, explains curriculum with “window and mirror” metaphors. According to him, curriculum has the function of window and mirror because curriculum allows the child to see him and multi-cultured world.

In this study aimed at to determine the perceptions of primary school teachers about curriculum through metaphors, it was observed that primary school teachers created 200 different metaphors. These metaphors that teachers created revealed that they resemble curriculum to different creatures, objects, and concepts. It was also noted that primary school teachers explained curriculums with metaphors like “chameleon, puzzle, tree, compass, turtle, river, sculptor, labyrinth, garden, a guinea pig, human, clock, sun, and road”.

The metaphors such as “puzzle, turtle, car, nature, child, flashlight and food” that primary school teachers created related to curriculum in this study were also created in the study conducted by Tasdemir and Tasdemir (2011b). Similarly, the metaphors, “tree, puzzle, DNA, cell, octopus, map, flashlight, sun, soil, train, water, fashion, a guinea pig, car, camera”, were created in the study conducted by Ozdemir (2012b) on teacher candidates. Moreover, the metaphors, “basic needs”, “food recipe”, and “father and mother labor”, are similar to the metaphors “basic”, “rain”, “cook book”, and “mother and father”, created in the study conducted by Ozdemir (2012b). On the other hand, metaphors, “sun”, “tree”, “compass”, “child”, and

“guide” created in this study for curriculum were created for curriculum improvement in the study conducted by Semerci (2007).

Seven categories, “set of factors to be prepared carefully”, “a variable structure”, “directive”, element of oppression”, “multidimensional”, “a complex structure”, and “an indispensable element”, were formed in the study from the metaphors primary school teachers created. In Ozdemir’s (2012b) study on teacher candidates eight categories appeared as “an organization/mechanism that was formed orderly and hierarchically; a process that is directive; a vehicle to reach a significant aim; a proposal prepared in terms of a rule, principle, or aim; an indispensable element; a pattern that shapes individuals, and a concept which is changed regularly. The findings of these two studies overlap. In this respect, “directive”, and “an indispensable element” categories fully overlap, and others are similar.

Moreover, the categories formed in this study are similar to the four categories appeared in the studies conducted by Wahyudi (2007) and Schubert (1986) as “a planned activity curriculum, content or subject field, desired results, and basic duties and concepts” which were determined to be an curriculum.

According to the findings of the study, primary school teachers noted in the category of “set of factors to be prepared carefully”, it could be said that the preparation of a curriculum should be planned carefully and secondly a curriculum should be a whole with its different items; and finally a curriculum should have a frame with limited borders.

In “a variable structure” category primary school teachers seemed to have opinions that curriculum is flexible and changes rapidly. In this respect, some teachers found it positive since it allows them to follow innovations and improvements closely, but some found it negative since sudden changes occur and since the curriculum has to be changed with the change of each director. In “directive” category, teachers thought that curriculum has the qualities of directive, formative, and guiding in helping students gain the desirable qualities, and in reaching its aims. As for “Element of Oppression” category, the teachers found the content of the curriculum loaded, the examination curriculum not suitable to the given curriculum, and thus create a kind of oppression on both teachers and students. When the metaphors that teachers mentioned under “Multidimensional” category, it was seen that teachers believe the different subjects are a kind of a richness, and it is important that the curriculum addresses the needs of different students. In “a complex structure” category, it was seen that the teachers think the curriculum is difficult to understand, and confusing to apply. Moreover, as for the “an indispensable element” category, the teachers find curriculums necessary and indispensable for a qualified education system.

“Element of oppression”, “a complex structure”, and “a variable structure” categories which emerged from metaphors the teachers created, revealed that the curriculum is complex and forms an oppression on teachers. In this respect, teachers

preferred to use negative metaphors concerning the curriculum like “labyrinth, chameleon, puzzle, time bomb, a ship without a compass, rag bag, a Guinea pig, turtle, race horse, lame duck, consisted of choices, parrot, etc.” Similarly, in Tasdemir and Tasdemir’s (2011b) study metaphors such as “scratch pad, turtle, blank sheet, muppet, chameleon, refrigerator, war, waterleaf, etc.” appeared; Ozdemir’s (2012b) study reported “fashion, a Guinea pig, chaos”; Aykac and Celik’s (2011) study displayed “slave, oligarchic structure, an empty box, salary food, dirt cloth, a lost kid, a planet without an orbit, etc”; and Semerci’s (2007) study demonstrated “moss-covered lake, dream, a child with an unformed personality, a failed operation, diesel oil in the sea, and snowball” as negative metaphors.

The results of this study revealed that primary school teachers mostly used positive metaphors concerning the curriculum. This finding of the study is consistent with the finding in Ozdemir’s (2012b) study that teacher candidates generally have positive perceptions concerning the curriculum. On the other hand, the results of this study is inconsistent with the findings of Aykac and Celik’s (2011) study where they found that teachers and teacher candidates have negative perceptions for new primary curriculums applied in primary schools, and Tasdemir’s (2011b) study where 75% of primary school teachers created negative metaphors concerning primary curriculums.

Another finding of the study is that there is a relationship between primary school teachers’ branches and the categories formed concerning curriculum concepts. According to this, most of the classroom teachers perceived the curriculum as a variable structure, whereas, most of the branch teachers perceived it as a set of factors to be prepared carefully. This finding of the study is similar to the study conducted by Anglin and Dugan (1982). They found that primary school teachers perceived curriculum as “recovery directional”, secondary school teachers found the curriculum as “production directional”, which, in turn, showed that the perceptions of teachers of different branches differ about the curriculum.

As a result, the study revealed that, the perceptions of primary school teachers concerning the curriculum are generally positive, they formed numerous and different metaphors related to curriculum concept, they explained curriculum concept with the help of positive and negative metaphors, and they associated curriculum concept mostly with non-living things.

In regard of the results gathered through the study, following suggestions can be made:

- With the help of in-service training, primary school teachers should be made aware of curriculum concept, and how to use it effectively.
- The reasons of why negative metaphors were used related to the curriculum should be investigated.
- Opinions of teachers on curriculum should be determined with the help of other techniques and methods.
- The same study should be conducted again for different teaching curriculums.

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