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Qualitative Study on International Education Foreign **Experiences Teachers** Working International Schools in Istanbul

Okullarda İstanbul'daki Uluslararası Calısan Yabancı Öğretmenlerin Uluslararası Eğitim Deneyimleri Üzerine Niteliksel Bir Arastırma

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Abstract

This study aims to try to understand the perceptions, opinions, thoughts and experiences of foreign teachers working in primary schools that provide international education in Türkiye. This research was conducted using qualitative method and in-depth interview technique. The study group comprised 10 foreign teachers working in an international school in Istanbul, none of whom were Turkish citizens. The interviews were conducted face to face between April and June 2023 and lasted from 60 to 120 minutes. According to the findings; all the teachers had at least seven years of teaching experience in both national and international curriculums, were between the age of 34-44, mostly married with kids. Teachers defined international education as an educational philosophy that raised multicultural, multilingual, tolerant, openminded, respectful world citizens. Finally, these results were discussed in the context of different studies in the literature. Some suggestions were presented for both educational institutions and further researches about the field.

Keywords: International schools, foreign teacher, world citizen.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de uluslararası eğitim veren ilköğretim okullarında görev yapan yabancı öğretmenlerin algı, görüş, düşünce ve deneyimlerini anlamaya çalışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu araştırma nitel yöntem ve derinlemesine görüşme tekniği kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma grubunu İstanbul'daki uluslararası bir okulda görev yapan ve hiçbiri Türk vatandaşı olmayan 10 yabancı öğretmen oluşturmuştur. Görüşmeler Nisan-Haziran 2023 tarihleri arasında yüz yüze gerçeklestirilmis ve 60 ile 120 dakika arasında sürmüstür. Bulgulara göre; öğretmenlerin tamamının hem ulusal hem de uluslararası müfredatlar da en az yedi yıllık öğretmenlik tecrübesi vardır, 34-44 yaşları arasında ve çoğunluğu evli ve çocukludur. Öğretmenler uluslararası eğitimi, çok kültürlü, çok dilli, hoşgörülü, açık fikirli, saygılı dünya vatandaşları yetiştiren bir eğitim felsefesi olarak tanımlamışlardır. Son olarak bu sonuçlar literatürdeki farklı çalışmalar bağlamında tartışılmıştır. Hem eğitim kurumlarına hem de alanla ilgili yapılacak araştırmalara yönelik önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararası eğitim, yabancı öğretmenler, dünya vatandaşı.

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Introduction

International schools are not affiliated with any national education system or are formed by combining more than one national education system, whose students and teachers are citizens of different countries, whose language of instruction is English, and which covers the pre-university period. The international schools included in our research have international accreditation (IB) and are not affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. Schools that follow another national curriculum or provide education in a language other than English are not included in the scope of our research.

These schools were established to provide education for the children of individuals from different professions, such as multinational company employees, officials, volunteers, sportsmen, artists, and journalists, who work outside their home countries. The schools within the scope of this research included primary schools providing international education. The number of these schools and their students is increasing day by day around the world. One of the reasons for this can be listed as the increase in the number of multinational companies due to the effect of globalization, the increase in the rate of people living outside their countries of citizenship for various reasons, and the fact that some of the families prefer the international education system, especially an advanced level of English education, without being bound to a national education system. The educational philosophy of international schools can be summarized as "raising world citizens" who are multicultural, multilingual, respectful of differences, tolerant and inquisitive (Husen, 1994). Although some countries, including Türkiye, do not allow their own citizens to enroll in these schools, families in many countries, especially in the Middle East and the Far East, prefer this form of education for their children. Since they have the status of private schools and have high fees compared to other schools, the children of people with high-income levels can attend these schools.

International education, which has a large place in the literature abroad, has been the subject of a very few studies in Türkiye. Although the studies on teachers in our country are quite extensive, studies on foreign teachers are limited, which has remained under-researched. The studies on foreign teachers are mostly limited to foreign language learning. An example is the recent study conducted by Aydın et al. in 2019. The importance of the current study is that it is thought to have a unique value in the domestic literature in terms of including the views of teachers in primary schools providing international education, which has been little studied in Türkiye. It is thought that examining the views of expat teachers on international education will make valuable contributions to the field of international education in particular and to the field of education in general.

Since early education has a fundamental position in the formation and formation of individuals' characters compared to later periods (Hayden et al., 2000), primary school teachers were preferred within the scope of this study. In addition, it is thought that analyzing international education from the perspective of teachers, one of the basic building blocks of this system, will provide the opportunity to look at this field from a closer perspective and provide various information to the related field.

Definition of International Education and International Schools

A clear definition of international education and international schools is very difficult

and there is no clear consensus (Hayden & Thopmson, 2011, p. 107). International education has been used in various meanings throughout history. International education schools are generally defined as institutions that offer an international programmed or a combination of more than one national curriculum in which no national education system predominates. The common characteristic of all international schools is that their curricula are different from the curricula of the country in which they are located, and teachers are mostly from different nationalities (Hayden & Thompson, 2011). According to McKenzie (1998), the word "international" in education is used in five different senses: not bound to the standards or requirements of any national system, aiming to build bridges between countries, adopting a multinational curriculum (taking the strongest aspects of many national curricula), creating a new curriculum that is valid in various parts of the world and is considered ideal.

International schools were first opened to provide education for the children of United Nations officials, diplomats and employees of multinational companies working outside their home countries (IBE, 2020). For people working in these organizations, there is the possibility of working in many different countries. Therefore, for the education of their accompanying families and their children, it has become an important need to open "international schools" that provide "international education" where they can continue the same education system even if they are in different parts of the world. The number of these schools has increased in parallel with the need and demand (Hayden et al., 2000).

According to Husen, international education should be evaluated from theoretical and practical perspectives; according to him, international education is the approaches, attitudes, studies and their institutionalization to achieve an international perspective (Husen, 1994, p. 2972). International education is an institution that aims to increase students' awareness of world affairs and enable them to form opinions and ideas about global issues and to work in this field (Husen, 1994, p. 2973). Thus, it is aimed to raise world citizens who have a broad vision with an international perspective on global issues (Sylvester, 2002, p. 92).

Another dimension of international education can be characterized as global education. Clarke (2004) defines it as the placement of themes, such as cultural diversity, tolerance, breaking prejudices, and the richness of differences in the curriculum, while Marshall (2007) defines it as the adoption of a global understanding.

Although the existence of international schools is older than the concept of globalization, the changes and regulations made in the fields of education with the dimensions reached by globalization and different education systems in the world have paved the way for the formation of international schools in a sense used today and have been the main reason for the demand for these schools and thus the increase in the number of schools. The desire of young people to continue their university education abroad has increased in recent years, which has led to an increase in the interest of schools and students in the IB and Cambridge systems that provide international validity (Thompson & Cambridge, 2004).

In today's world, where borders have become artificial, where development in one country affects other countries, where all people are affected without any protection of

borders when a natural event or a virus occurs, where communication, transport, information transfer and technology are gaining speed like never before, it is no longer valid to keep the field of education fixed and to educate young people only in line with the needs and expectations of the country (Wilkinson & Singh, 2010). As the world population increases, people have become physically closer to each other, and this situation necessitates an international understanding and solidarity. This will be possible through the joint action of many organizations and the steps to be taken especially in education (Hayden et al., 2000, p. 112).

According to Kandel, while national education aims to raise citizens, the aim of international education is to raise world citizens as human beings; in fact, although these two concepts are different, they are complementary to each other (Kandel, 1955, p. 12). Since the seeds of the idea of war are planted in the minds of children in schools, peace and understanding can also be instilled in schools, and while not ignoring the importance of other formations, he argues that the real change is through schools (Kandel, 1955, p. 13). Respect for universal diversity, commonalities of humanity, tolerance for differences, the spirit of co-operation, non-violent problem-solving skills, serving the needs of society, nation and the world, protection of the world's cultural heritage, being prepared for changes, the necessity of perseverance and persistence for progress, getting rid of prejudices, self-confidence and self-control, investigative spirit, awareness of individual responsibility in ensuring peace, loyalty to the family, society, nation, the whole world and humanity are the basic features of international education (Kenworthy, 1947, p. 32). Kenworthy also argued that teachers should undergo a special preparation and training process to raise children with these characteristics. He emphasizes the importance of research on teachers who have adopted the philosophy of international education.

History of International Education

To understand the development of international education, it is necessary to analyses the historical process. The 19th century was a period in which important changes and steps were taken in the field of education and collective national education was shaped (Sylvester, 2002, p. 94). Although each system is based on different approaches, all of them are based on providing and protecting national/national benefits and interests (Scanlon, 1960, p. 3). The concept of international education, which has been in use since the 1860s, was put forward against the strong nationalist approaches that intensified in this century as a view that transcends borders, is peaceful, gives importance to people and humanity and can bring people together in common values regardless of their nationality. Although it was considered quite utopian at the time, approaches that believed that a "cross-border" perspective could only be achieved through education and schools began to emerge. The prominent thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment in Europe argued that education should be oriented towards an international understanding, but they were ignored by the majority, who argued that education was a national policy rather than an international understanding (Sylvester, 2002, p. 4).

UNESCO, founded in 1946, organized a seminar in 1950 and stated that international understanding and a universal perspective should be a principle in the field of education and listed the elements that should be included in education as follows:

explaining the reasons for cultural differences, stating that civilization is formed by the efforts of different nations, recognizing that all kinds of development and progress are the product of the common work of humanity, emphasizing the obligation and responsibility of nations to act in common, glorifying the culture of peace in young people, encouraging children's attitudes towards international understanding and joint work. UNESCO stated that the world is shrinking globally, but the inner world of human beings is expanding and that tension and unrest in one area will spread to other areas because humanity and nations are part of a whole; therefore, with a universal approach and perspective, people will be more understanding and tolerant towards each other, and that they should fulfil their responsibilities to the people of the world and world peace by protecting nationalist feelings, loyalty and loyalty to their homeland, and that these are concepts that complement each other, although they seem different from each other (Watras, 2010, p. 223).

Founded in 1924, the International School of Geneva and Yokohama International School were among the first representatives of these schools. The International School of Geneva is recorded as the first school with "international" in its name in the literature (Sylvester, 2002, p. 97).

International Schools in Türkiye

The international schools included in our research are internationally accredited (IB) schools and schools that are not affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. Schools that are affiliated with another national curriculum or provide education in a language other than English are not included in our research. According to the Council of International Schools (CIS) 2018 data, the number of these international schools is 27 in Türkiye, 15 of which are in Istanbul (CIS, 2018). The number of schools offering an internationally recognized IB diploma is 67 across Türkiye (IBO, 2018). Students admitted to international schools in Türkiye must fulfil certain conditions. Children with Turkish citizenship are required to attend schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), so children without foreign citizenship cannot attend international schools. These schools generally operate for the children of parents who come to work temporarily in our country.

Methods

Research design

This study was conducted to understand the evaluations, comments and perspectives of teachers about international education and the pupils raised with this education. One of the aims of the research design is to understand the relations, connections and interactions between the concepts of national education, teacher, world citizen, tolerance, multiculturalism.

Using qualitative research method in the research, it is possible to obtain in-depth information about more subjective and unique characteristics of people, such as attitudes, behaviors, values and emotions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, p. 39). Since it was tried to understand how the teachers evaluate international education and their opinions about the students who grew up with this education, the qualitative research method, which provides an understanding of how individuals see and evaluate the social world,

was found appropriate. In qualitative research, it is aimed to include people who have knowledge and experience about the basic elements of the research and from whose experiences it is possible to generate information about these elements (Patton, 2018, p. 245).

Participants and research context

The population of this study consisted of foreign teachers working in primary schools within the international education system. Since the research aimed to understand, explore, and comprehend foreign teachers' evaluations and experiences of international education through their perspectives and perceptions, careful attention was paid to selecting a research sample that was both appropriate for the study's objectives and reflective of the diversity within the research population. The sample comprised foreign teachers teaching at an international primary school in Istanbul. The criteria for inclusion were that all participants should be non-Turkish nationals, have relocated to Istanbul from different countries, possess formal teaching qualifications, and have at least five years of teaching experience in national and international education systems prior to their current positions. Given that the study aimed to directly understand the evaluations of teachers working in international schools, a homogeneous and purposive sampling method was employed to fully represent the target group (Kümbetoğlu, 2008, p. 99).

An 'in-depth interview' technique was used in this study to obtain detailed data on the research topic, employing open-ended questions. A semi-structured interview guide, predetermined for the participants, was utilized during the interviews. This guide ensured that all relevant questions concerning the subject under investigation were covered (Kümbetoğlu, 2008, p. 75).

The in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher in English between April and June 2023 with foreign teachers at an international primary school in Istanbul. Pilot interviews were conducted with two individuals to ensure the clarity of the questions, and the questions were finalized accordingly. To evaluate the perspectives of teachers from different countries on international education, the selection of participants ensured that each represented a different nationality. The interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes.

This study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines and principles.

Research Questions

In this framework, answers to other dimensions related to this research were sought in the context of the following questions.

- -What is meant by the concept of international education?
- -Evaluation of national education and international education with its pros and cons.
- -What international education contributes to teachers?
- -What international education contributes to individuals?

Findings

Of the participants of the 10 interviews, four were male and six were female.

Accordingly, seven participants were married, and three participants were single. Their ages are in the range of 34-44. All teachers who had children have their children in the same school with them. All of them were educated in the fields of education and/or teaching at the university. Then, they received the necessary certificates by participating in special certificate training related to international education and have been teaching since the day they started their professional life. All participants had taught in different countries before Istanbul, and their tenure in their countries varied between two and five years. Their teaching experience was between 7-11 years. It is thought that experience is an important feature in terms of making more comprehensive and detailed evaluations of international education. All of them had also taught in national education systems before moving to international education. Coming to Istanbul to work in this school was their own decision and desire. All participants resided in the neighboring complex of the school where they taught.

Participants prioritized international education over all national education systems and defined international education as far from rote learning, researcher, innovative, multicultural and tolerant. They defined international schools as "supranational" places and emphasized that it does not matter who comes from where, everyone is one, everyone is equal, no one nation's values predominate and that these differences constitute cultural richness.

All participants think that international education is much more effective, especially at a young age, since children grow up with children from all over the world in their natural environment at a young age. They grow up with the richness of differences without knowing what it means to be different, to be different, and without forming such concepts. They stated that the rest of human life is shaped by the experiences and approaches acquired at an early age and that our view of life in the following years is based on the perspectives we acquire at an early age. For these reasons, all teachers emphasized the benefits of international education especially at a young age.

All participant teachers had taught in national schools in their countries of citizenship before working in international schools. This criterion was considered important for teachers to make comparisons and evaluations.

When the teachers compared national and international education, they stated that national education, wherever it is in the world, raises children with the positive aspects of the states' own history and culture. They mentioned that children grow up unaware of the rest of the world or common cultural heritage, and that while emphasizing national feelings, they actually sow the seeds of discrimination and difference, causing people to approach people of other nationalities more distantly. They argued that in national education systems, the state tends to raise citizens in accordance with its own norms with its ideological perspectives, but in our world where borders became artificial with globalization, an approach that embraced the world in general without depending only on national values is right. They emphasized that national values and culture should always be protected and glorified, but these should be with an approach that embraces and embraces differences rather than separating them. They believe that each culture and language should be seen as a color and humanity should be considered a whole that cannot be separated by borders. While emphasizing the importance of being raised to be aware of these differences to embrace and tolerate differences, they stated

that friendship and peace can only be possible when people get to know each other, otherwise, as long as they remain closed within their own borders, others cannot be welcomed. They think that the discriminatory and exclusionary attitude towards foreigners in most countries stems from this.

The teachers who favored international education over national education stated that the most obvious disadvantage is that children's families often have to change countries or cities due to the duration of their assignment. In this case, children are often separated from their friends and teachers and have to get used to new people and environments regularly.

Teachers did not agree with the criticisms about the loss of national culture and values that may develop in international education. They emphasized that children should protect their own national feelings and values and that these are elements that should be protected as their richness. Since the richness of diversity is frequently emphasized in international education, it was stated that all children are encouraged to highlight and introduce their own languages, cultures, traditional clothes, food, and dances to their friends through various special days celebrated at school. Teacher 1 emphasized her thoughts on this issue as follows:

I believe that international education is a system that has been meticulously designed to meet the world's needs, serving neither any particular view nor ideology, but rather contributing to the development of humanity and the achievement of global peace. I also believe that, instead of filling children's minds with certain ideas, education should focus on nurturing them as inquisitive and critical-thinking individuals (T1).

All participants mentioned that children raised with international education were tolerant, respectful of differences and peaceful. They mentioned that the coming together of different cultures, nations and languages on a common ground adds a different perspective to children and that they would gain significant advantages both culturally and professionally in their future lives. Globalization was a concept frequently emphasized by the participants at this point. They mentioned both the fact that young people preferred different countries for university education and the increase in the number of international companies and said that individuals raised with international education can easily live and continue their lives anywhere in the world. Teacher 2 emphasized her thoughts on this issue as follows:

I believe that international schools instill values such as freedom of self-expression, creative thinking, acceptance and appreciation of diversity, respect, and tolerance in children. Furthermore, being in a multicultural, multinational, and multilingual environment broadens and enriches children's perspectives (T2).

The main reasons for these teachers, who defined teaching as continuous learning and self-development, to turn to international education can be listed as follows: the inadequacies of the national education system they have experienced, their belief in and defense of the views and ideologies that form the basis of international education, the necessity for teachers to continuously improve and renew themselves in this education system, and the opportunity to go all over the world and be with different countries and cultures.

All teachers emphasized that they would continue to be teachers in international schools

as long as their life and health permitted and none of them had any plans to return to their country in the near future.

Discussion and implication

International education and schools adopting this education cannot accept Turkish citizens by law. This rule is also valid for various countries. Most countries find it suitable for children to receive education in their national systems and the laws are in this direction. Although citizens of the country cannot generally attend schools providing international education, the principles of international education can be incorporated into national education. When we look at the codes that are frequently encountered concepts within the scope of the research, tolerance, respect, world peace, world citizen, globalization, potential, multiculturalism, multilingualism come to the fore. Accordingly, schools providing national education can make additions to their curricula from the elements adopted by international education so that children can think in this direction and their awareness can be increased.

Children can be provided with information about other cultures, countries and histories. By abandoning rote learning, children can be encouraged to research and question, and their own potential can be brought to the fore rather than conforming to stereotypes.

Instead of traditional education, where only the teacher has a say in the classroom, a more interactive education model where students can freely discuss their ideas and a classroom atmosphere where teachers and students actively question can be adopted (Şanver, 2016, p. 90).

Cooperation with schools from different countries can be established to bring students and teachers together through mutual cultural presentations and various organizations. According to the data of a study conducted with teachers in Türkiye, extracurricular activities develop responsibility, co-operation and helpfulness components in students (Şanver, 2016, p. 93). Organizing regular training for teachers, who have a crucial role in the development of students, encouraging teachers to continuously improve themselves instead of sticking to patterns and establishing support mechanisms in this direction will make significant contributions to both teachers and students. Thus, it would be beneficial to train teachers with an international logic and provide education for students with a common culture, civilization, art, foreign languages, and science courses as well as a more "unifying" tendency that glorifies the differences of each nation with their contributions to history, civilization, and culture rather than denigrating other nations (Sylvester, 2005, p. 130).

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has some limitations. First, this study is limited due to the small number of participants. The small number of participants creates a problem for the generalize ability of the data obtained. This limitation is mitigated by the fact that this study is qualitative and does not seek to generalize. However, based on this limitation, future quantitative and qualitative studies can be conducted with more prominent participants.

The teachers, who stated that international education has many advantages over national education and that international education is more investigative, questioning, aimed at discovering children's potential, and that the opinions of the students are also given importance, described national education as very prescriptive, teacher-centred and rote learning, which supports Titiz's (2013, p.27) view that "the biggest problem of education systems is rote learning."

With the number of students expected to reach 8.26 million in 2025 (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013), the expansion of the quantity and quality of research on international education and the inclusion of international elements in national education has started to gain importance.

Conclusion

International education schools are generally defined as institutions that offer an international programmed or a combination of more than one national curriculum in which no national education system predominates and in which teachers and students come from different countries (Hayden & Thompson, 2011).

Among the general characteristics of international education, all participants listed concepts, such as tolerance, peace, respect, multiculturalism and embracing differences. In the literature, Clarke (2004) defines international education as the placement of themes, such as cultural diversity, tolerance, breaking prejudices and richness of differences in the curriculum, while Marshall (2007) defines it as the adoption of global understanding. In this context, teachers' evaluations of international education support the literature.

As mentioned by Wilkinson & Singh (2010) in their research, in today's world, where borders have become artificial, where development in one country affects other countries, where all people are affected without any protection of borders when a natural event or a virus occurs, and where communication, transportation, information transfer and technology are gaining speed like never before, it is no longer valid to keep the field of education constant and to educate young people only in line with the needs and expectations of the country (Wilkinson & Singh, 2010). Within the scope of the present research, teachers emphasized the globalization of the world, that the world is a whole, that borders are no longer as important as they used to be, and therefore the necessity of adopting education systems that include international elements instead of the patterns of national education systems.

As a result of the categorization of the data obtained during this research, the teachers' evaluations of international education revealed that this education raises world citizens who research, question, respect different nations and cultures, are tolerant and embrace differences. It was emphasized that individuals raised with international education are raised as "world citizens," respectful and tolerant to differences, and that they can easily live anywhere in the world and adapt to changes easily. These comments of teachers are frequently mentioned in the literature on international education. Sylvester (2002) states that the foundations of international schools are based on universal and idealistic educational views, such as the common values of humanity, the richness of differences, tolerance, understanding, open-mindedness, peace, and being a citizen of the world, while Husen (1994) defines the educational philosophy of international schools as raising multicultural, multilingual, tolerant, tolerant, researcher "world citizens."

The concept of "world citizen," which was emphasized by the participants, was also included in Kandel's (1955, p.72) explanations and according to him, "while the aim of national education is to raise citizens, the aim of international education is primarily to raise world citizens as human beings."

Teachers emphasized that international education also made significant contributions to teachers and enabled them to improve themselves continuously. Aydın, Toptaş, Demir, and Erdemli, as a result of their research conducted in 2019, stated that foreign teachers' having different experiences in different countries contributed to their professional development.

Declarations

Ethics Committee Approval Information: This study was conducted with the approval of the Scientific Research, Publication, and Ethics Committee of Istanbul Commerce University, as per the decision numbered 03245-261, dated 11/03/2023.

Author Conflict of Interest Statement: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Author Contribution: The article is single-authored.

Consent to Participate: Verbal and written consent to participate was obtained from all participants.

Publication Approval: I confirm that I have transferred all rights to the Journal of Basic Education. The statements and explanations in the article belong to the author.

Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all participants. All participants and their families were informed about the study's purpose, data collection tools, and methods. Written and verbal consent to participate was obtained from both the participants and their families. All participants were included in the study on a voluntary basis. Participants and their families were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Throughout the application and data collection process, no actions or verbal conduct violated the participants' privacy. During data processing, participants' identities were kept completely anonymous, and their privacy was respected.

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