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## CORRECTIONS

1. The phrase "This study was supported by METU BAP" has been added to the 1st article of TOJQI Volume 10, Issue 1 as acknowledgement.

2. The title of the 3rd article of TOJQI Volume 10, Issue 2 has been corrected as "Opinions of Secondary School Teachers About the EBA Course E-contents: A Qualitative Study".

Research Article

**Teaching as a Professionalism through Teachers' Perspective[1]**

Tuncay Yavuz Özdemir[2], Murat Demirkol[3], Hakan Polat[4]

**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to evaluate teacher professionalism within the framework of teachers' opinions. For this purpose, 45 teachers working at different educational levels and different types (primary, middle and high school) schools in a city located in eastern part of Turkey were included as participants. The data were collected through interviews and the data were analyzed through the content analysis method. The participants with sufficient professional and personal development level stated that they attended graduate education, read books, and followed the innovations to improve themselves. Also, it was found that teachers should be encouraged and motivated to advance their development. The biggest obstacle for their development, teachers mentioned school administration, parents and students. Teachers suggested that these obstacles must be overcome to increase teachers' willingness to advance their professional and personal skills, and in turn, to increase schools' achievement levels. Suggestions for future research is also provided.

*Keywords*: Teachers, teacher proficiency, development, professionalism

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## Öğretmen Görüşleriyle Öğretmen Profesyonelliğinin İncelenmesi

### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, öğretmen profesyonelliğini öğretmen görüşleri çerçevesinde değerlendirmektir. Bu amaçla, Türkiye'nin doğusunda yer alan bir şehirde farklı eğitim seviyelerinde çalışan 45 öğretmen ve farklı tipteki (ilk, orta ve lise) okullar katılımcı olarak dahil edildi. Veriler görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmış ve veriler içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Yeterli mesleki ve kişisel gelişim seviyesine sahip katılımcılar lisansüstü eğitime katıldıklarını, kitap okuduklarını ve kendilerini geliştirmek için yenilikleri takip ettiklerini belirtti. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin gelişimlerini ilerletmek için teşvik edilmeleri ve motive edilmeleri gerektiği bulunmuştur. Gelişimlerinin önündeki en büyük engel, öğretmenler okul yönetiminden, ebeveynlerden ve öğrencilerden bahsetti. Öğretmenler, öğretmenlerin mesleki ve kişisel becerilerini geliştirmeye istekli olmalarını ve ardından okulların başarı seviyelerini arttırma isteklerini artırmak için bu engellerin aşılması gerektiğini önerdi. Gelecekteki araştırmalar için önerilerde bulunuldu.

*Anahtar Sözcükler*: Öğretmenler, öğretmen yeterliği, gelişim, profesyonellik

## Introduction

Education as an entire social process is the change in knowledge and behavior that people gain in order to survive and exist in society. In this process, teachers are considered as a key for achieving the objectives of education. More specifically, teachers contribute the community life through individuals, lead the targeted changes, and guide them (Mattar, 2012), which enables people to live in societies. These contributions make teaching as an extremely important profession. Teachers with high level teaching skills are the basis of good schools; therefore, they are one of the most important investments of skills, knowledge, time, and money (Chanthy, 2016). Teachers are expected to have certain skills. Specifically, in order to understand the needs of students and give importance of their emotions and thoughts, teachers need to have a high level of communication skills (Venter & Poggenpoel 2005). Moreover, teaching requires devotion and self-sacrifice (Akkaya, 2015). In addition to basic skills, teachers need to be also experts in their fields (Ünlü, 2015). As Koşar (2015) stated, teachers who improve their personality and professionality become more effective in teaching; therefore, all of these qualifications must be improved in order to keep up with the changes in education. In recent years, researchers have focused on teaching, teachers, and effectiveness. At this point, the concepts of professional, professionalism, and teacher professionalism emerge.

While the term *professional* is used for skilled and specialized people (TDK, 2018), professionalism is used for individual's continuous development with personality, professionality and field expertise and keeping up with the changes (Shantz & Prieur, 1996) and the extent to which individuals can demonstrate their expected competencies in line with their occupations (Lee, 1981). Professionalism, which is used to classify the status of a profession in terms of respectability (Kennedy, 2007), requires that all the details of a job be performed in a thorough manner (Ekiz, 2003). In business, professionalism is considered as the synonym of the word *success* and expresses the expected behavior of individuals in certain occupations (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005). In this scope, teachers working in educational institutions are considered as professionals.

Teachers' willingness to create a school culture by acting collectively constructs a positive school climate, informally demonstrating the professionalism of teachers (Karakaya, 2003, p. 96). Due to its complexity, teacher professionalism has attracted researchers' attention for the last half century in countries including UK, United States of America, Canada, & Austria (Ekiz, 2003). With the increasing importance given to teacher professionalism, different concepts related to the characteristics of professional teaching have emerged. For instance, teacher professionalism is expressed with the terms of postmodern professionalism (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2002) and new professionalism (Hargreaves, 1994). Postmodern professionalism is defined as a combination of collective teaching, autonomy, professionalism, and the emotional and cognitive dimensions of teaching (Ekiz, 2003).

Professional teachers create awareness not only with their own development but also in their environment (Demirkasımoğlu, 2010). More specifically, while professional teachers try to interact effectively with each other (Nartgün, 2008), they also take an active role in students' academic lives in coordination with their colleagues. They make efforts to improve the success levels of the institutions they serve, their colleagues, and their students by developing certain programs and strategies with their colleagues (Muhammad & Jaafar, 2015). Teachers, who are "being good in their own work", "fulfilling the highest standards" and "achieving excellence" as professionals, need to cope with any difficulties and use their skills and experiences related to their profession (Baggini, 2005).

Teacher professionalism comes with the complex transformation in education, the increase in the difficulties in the learning environments due to this transformation, the need for new methods in the solution of these difficulties, the need for students to be more active in classrooms (Gesilva, 1996; Karaca, 2015). In order for schools to achieve their goals, teachers who have the skills to cope with these issues need to be the majority in schools. The desire of teachers to do the best changes their behavior and attitudes significantly, which also increases the level of professionalism. In other words, professionalism is measured by the best and highest standards (Phelps, 2006). While teachers with high level of professionalism have positive reflections on their students (Tschannen-Moran, Parish & DiPaola, 2006), teachers with reluctance in their

professionalism and teachers with different quests other than their professionalism have negative effects on the students (Gaziel, 1995).

When the teaching profession is taken from a professional point of view, expectations from teachers are constantly increasing and changing (Evans, 2011). Teacher professionalism can be examined in the dimensions of behavior, attitude and intellectuality (Çağdaş, 2014). While the behavior dimension includes teachers' degree of fulfillment of the profession requirements, the attitude dimension contains teacher's perspective and perception of the profession. The mental ability dimension includes teachers' having the knowledge and skills required by the profession, developing themselves constantly, mastering their fields, and following the developments in the field. In addition to having expertise in teaching, directing, guiding, training, assessment, and evaluation of students (Jumardin et al., 2014), professional teachers also possess competences in professional self-assessment, professional competence, and special activity (Day, 2007). Teachers with professional skills and knowledge can make a big difference in students' learning since they have sufficient decision-making rights, interrelation and authority among students, colleagues and parents (İlgan, Aslanargün & Shaukat 2015), and use important teaching tools to carry out teaching and training activities (Krull, 2002).

In regard to the definition and characteristics of teaching professions, this study aims to evaluate teacher professionalism through teachers' perspective. Specifically, professional teachers' effort for personal and professional development and the difficulties they face, the effect of individual characteristics on their professional development, the effects of professional teachers on their colleagues and students, the difficulties they face while performing their duties, and their perspectives on teaching are examined.

## Method

This qualitative research was carried out by using a case study approach in order to determine the perceptions of teachers on teacher professionalism. The phenomenon pattern focuses on cases that individuals may notice in their environment but not have a detailed idea (Patton, 2005, 104;

Yıldırım & Şimşek 2011, 72). The main purpose of the phenomenological study is to define the nature of the research as clearly as possible without a theoretical framework (Groenewald, 2004).

## *Participants*

The study group consisted of 45 teachers working at different educational levels and different types of schools (primary, secondary and high school) in a city located in eastern part of Turkey. Purposive sampling method for used for participant selection. This helps to identify common and similar aspects between events (Creswell, 2012; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The demographic information about the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1

*Demographic Information about the Participants*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | 21 |
| | Male | 24 |
| School type | Elementary school | 15 |
| | Secondary school | 10 |
| | High school | 20 |
| Teaching experience | <5 years | 13 |
| | 6-10 years | 5 |
| | 11-15 years | 10 |
| | 16-20 years | 9 |
| | >21 years | 8 |

## *Data Collection Tool*

In order to obtain teachers' perspectives on professional and personal development, a question pool with 13 questions was created based on the literature. After obtaining expert views (three teachers, two faculty members of the Department of Turkish Language, and two faculty members of the Department of Educational Sciences), six questions were chosen for interviews. In order to make sure the clarity of the questions, interviews were conducted with three teachers who were

not included in the study. Then, the questions were re-formed and become ready for the real interviews. The interview questions were as follows.

1. What do you think about teachers' professional and personal development levels working in your school and what are your colleagues doing to advance their professional and personal skills?
2. Do you think that there are any obstacles to the development of teachers? Please explain. (prompts given as needed)
3. Do you think the professional and personal development levels of teachers change according to age, gender, teaching experience, and school type?
4. Do you think that a teacher who does his job well has an impact on his colleagues and students?
5. What are the problems you encounter while doing your job?
6. What does teaching profession mean to you?

The data was collected in 2017-2018 school year. The researchers made arrangements to meet each teacher individually. At each meeting, the study was introduced to the teachers and they were ensured about confidentiality. After their agreement to participate, they were provided in-print version of the interview form. The forms were collected back by the researchers within a week.

*Data Analysis*

The forms collected from the participants were coded as O1, O2, O3… O45 and transferred into electronic environment. The categories to be used in describing teachers' views on professional and personal development were not identified at the beginning. The data analysis was completed in three stages. In the first stage, researchers individually read all the forms obtained from the teachers and identified main categories. After discussing and coming to consensus about categories, the researchers read the forms individually for clarification purpose. In the second stage, researchers read the forms one more time to identify themes that are suitable for each category. In some cases, one theme was considered as suitable for more than one category. Therefore, those themes were assigned under all categories that are suitable for them. In the last

stage, researchers discussed themes and their categories. Then, the coding between the two encoders were compared. In order to ensure the interrater reliability, a formula developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used (Reliability = Consensus / (Consensus + Disagreement) * 100) and the reliability between the two encoders was calculated as 97.5%. In qualitative studies, reliability level of 90% and more among coders is considered as quite good (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For disagreements, researchers made consensus. As a result, in the study, the desired reliability level was obtained among the encoders that the findings should be reported.

## Findings

Participants' thoughts were investigated in order to determine their opinions about professionalism. In line with the findings, answers were grouped and themes were created and interpreted. The participants were asked the following question: What do you think about teachers' professional and personal development levels working in your school and what are your colleagues doing to advance their professional and personal skills? Figure 1 is designed to show participants' answers to the question.



*Figure 1*. Professional and Personal Development Levels of Teachers

According to the participants 'opinions, the teachers' professional and personal development levels were determined as follows: sufficient (n = 24), moderate (n = 12), insufficient (n = 9) and changing according to age (n = 2). The teachers who considered teachers' professional and personal

development levels at the medium level stated that while some teachers advance their professional and personal development through various activities, the others do not have any effort on it and maintain their profession and lives at a monotonous level. Teachers who considered professional and personal development levels as insufficient put emphasis on several aspects including lack of motivation, failure of supervision mechanism, students' low academic achievement, occupational dropout, and economic concerns for insufficient professional and personal development. Example quotes are given below.

**O4***: Moderate. As well as very good ones, there are others who do not improve themselves. They attend seminars related to their field. They follow innovations in education. Some are willingly, others are forced by the administrators.*

**O6***: It changes according to the average age. Those over the age of 50 are more closed to developments. There are other teachers who use technology, modernize themselves at a low level but are generally open to improvements.*

**O10***: Everyone is quite good in the field, they are getting prepared for their classes. They use the smart board effectively. They attend in-service training programs, follow the publications related to their field.*

**O11***: I find most of the teachers in our school inadequate on the issues mentioned. Very few teachers are trying to be productive with a sense of responsibility. Few of them carry out professional development activities due to their personal interests. Some of them do not feel responsible for their duties. I don't think this can change unless there are compelling effects and internal motivation.*

In terms of the teachers who considered professional and personal development levels of the teachers as sufficient, how teachers perform professional and personal development is given in Figure 2.
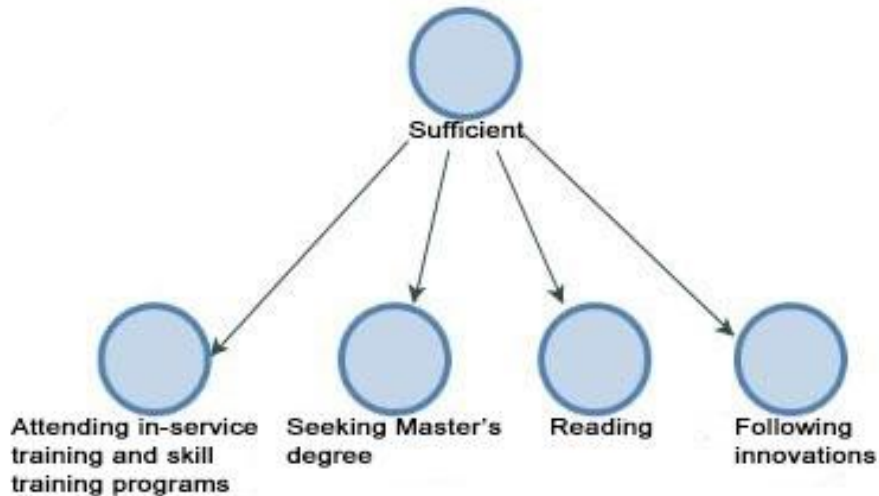
*Figure 2.* Things Teachers do to Improve their Professional and Personal Development Levels

Teachers stated that they attend various seminars and programs (n=8), seeking Master's degree (n=6), reading articles and books related to their field (n=4), and follow innovations with current publications and developing technologies (n=6). Examples of teachers' views are as follows:

> **O13***: The professional competence of the teachers working in our school is very good and they carry out cultural and sportive activities and read academic books in order to develop themselves.*

> **O1***: No one can interfere with information. To anyone who wants to improve, everything is clear. All of us are doing our best because we serve in a quality school. We are improving ourselves in the field. We read books as much as we can.*

> **O8***: Everyone is quite good in their field, they are getting ready for their classes. They use the smart board effectively. They attend seminars and in-service training programs, and follow the publications about their field.*

> **O27***: Our teachers in our school are trying to seek master's and doctorate degree to improve themselves. It is noteworthy that we have friends who seek doctorate degree for personal development. It can be said that there will be progress in this area in the future.*

The possible obstacles that cause teachers not to improve their professional and personal skills were investigated. The findings are given in Figure 3.
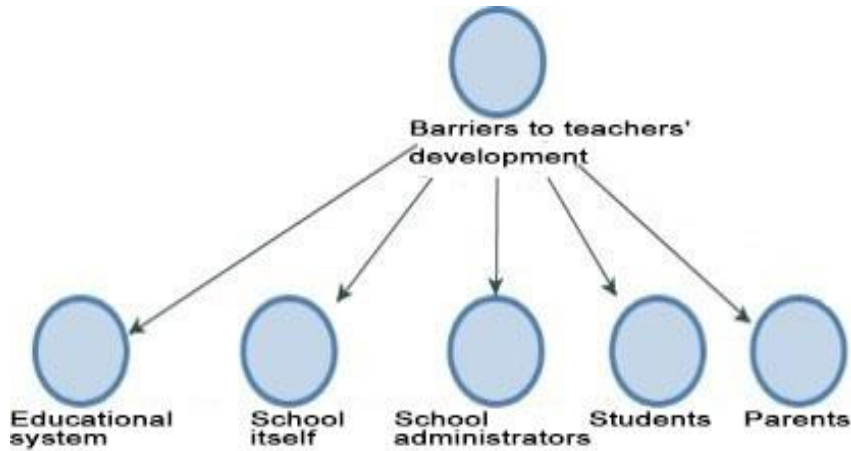
*Figure 3.* Barriers to Teachers' Development

The answers given by the teachers were categorized as school management (n = 20), parents (n = 14), students (n = 12), type of school (n = 8), and education system (n = 7). Among the participants, seven stated that there was no obstacle in front of the teachers' development by saying that no obstacle could stand in front of a teacher who wanted to improve himself. They also stated that the teachers who developed themselves personally and professionally were supported by the school administrators, colleagues, and parents. On the other hand, other teachers who pointed out school administration as an obstacle stated that the school administration did not provide enough motivation and teachers did not see the appreciation for their effort. Also, similar complaints were drawn for parents. Teachers mentioned the following barriers in terms of parents: parents' education level, their inadequate attention toward their children, their excessive pressure on teachers, and parents' lack of support for such development. Teachers also mentioned that students' lack of interest in the courses, their negative attitudes and behaviors in the classroom, and the lack of future anxiety were other barriers for teachers' improvement. Teachers also discussed schools' physical conditions as another obstacle. Example quotes are as follows.

> **O20***: students' unwilling to learn, non-enthusiasm of learning in students, and parents not asking about their children's status, not attending meetings are main barriers. Also, the materials in the school, they decrease our motivation.*

> **O13***: The biggest obstacle is the teacher itself. Although not in our school, there are administrative practices that limit teachers in other schools.*

> **O20***: The low level of education in terms of school environment and parent profile has negative effects, also the administrators not acting equally among the teachers,*

*the negative attitudes and behaviors of the students constitute an obstacle, the interference of the parents to the education-teaching affairs, students stand behind their negative behaviors.*

The participants were asked to evaluate the professional and personal development of the teachers in terms of certain variables including gender, school they work for, teaching experience, and age. The findings are represented in Figure 4.



Individual characteristics affecting professional and personal skills

Gender    School that    Years of teaching    Age    None
          is served      experience
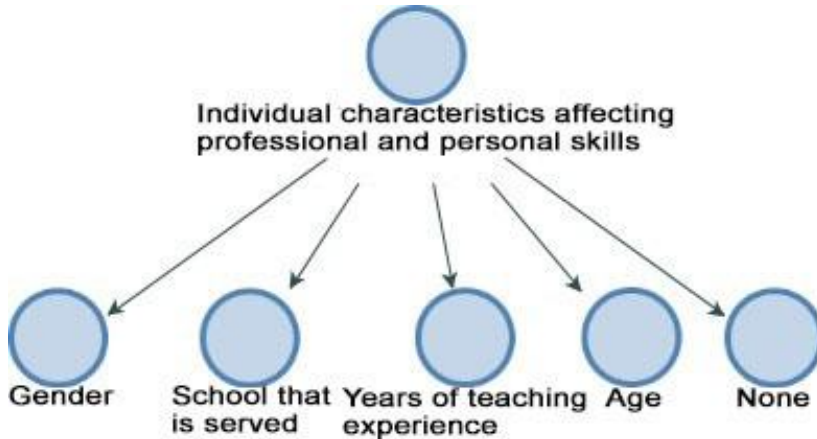
*Figure 4.* Personal Characteristics Affecting Teachers' Professional and Personal Development Levels

Participant opinions are grouped as follows: age (n = 31), school (n = 30), teaching experience (n = 16), gender (n = 10) and none (n = 3). In the light of these opinions, it is seen that age and the type of school in which the teachers work come to the fore. Some teachers stated that age brings experience so that older teachers are more productive in terms of professional and personal development. However, the majority stated that young teachers are more open to innovations. In terms of schools, participants stated that teachers who work in successful schools tend to improve their professional and personal skills. Also, teachers who work in private schools feel pressure to meet the expectations of the school administration and parents so that they are more likely to improve their skills. In terms of teaching experience, participants stated that the increase in teaching experience reflects in their professional and personal skills positively. However, they added that some teachers with high teaching experience did not prefer to update their knowledge and skills due to their burnout level. The views of participants reveal that female teachers are more open to innovations and have higher motivation to advance their professional and personal skills. Example quotes are given below.

**O24:** *Age, teaching experience and type of school. It cannot be compared to a negative teacher who has been working for years and who is new in teaching. The school is an important factor since the teacher working in a private school has to constantly renew herself.*

**O21:** *Younger teachers are more active and willing to develop themselves. In addition, the school in which he works has a great impact.*

**O19:** *There may be problems in different types of schools. Because some schools prefer high-rated students, some schools accept students with low academic achievement. This brings some problems.*

**O5:** *I see tiredness and professional burnout in our colleagues who are close to retirement. In science high schools, private schools and schools near high socio-economic neighborhoods, I think that a teacher motivates himself and tries to improve himself.*

**O2:** *As far as I observe, female teachers are more open to innovations. If the female is single, they can be more attentive and idealistic. Teachers married with children may not spend enough time for development.*

The participants were asked whether the teachers with high professional level/thought to have left any influence on the other teachers and students. The categories are given in Figure 6.
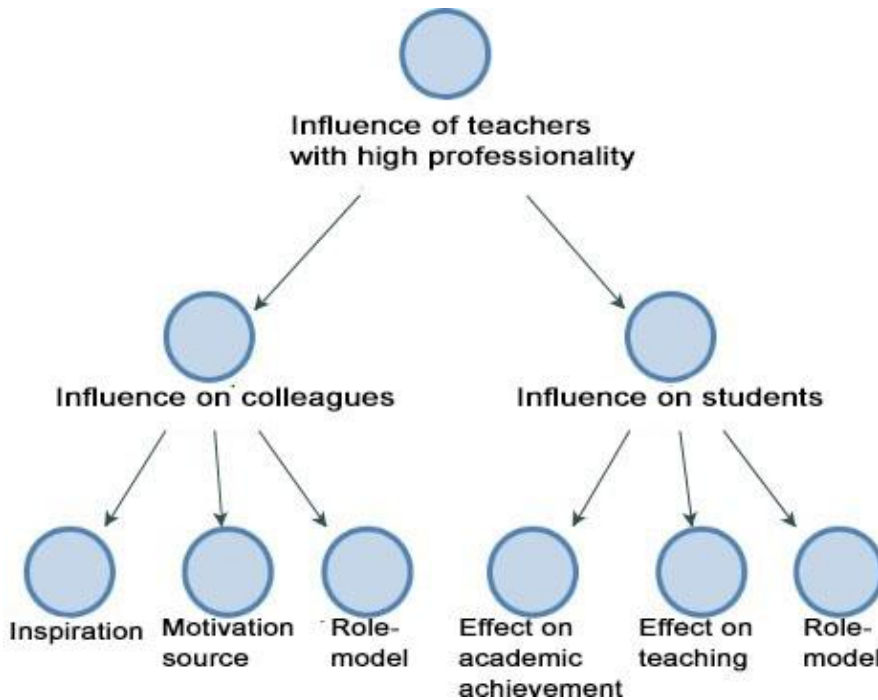


*Figure 5.* The Effects of Teachers with High Professionalism on their Colleagues and Students

Teacher opinions were categorized as students (n = 33), colleagues (n = 30). The teachers stated that they have positive effects on students by becoming role model, respecting students more, encouraging students to have self-confidence, and providing more effective instruction in the classrooms.

In terms of their influence on colleagues, they stated that they were role-models for other teachers and they were appreciated and respected by their colleagues. In addition, by sharing new information with colleagues, they believe that they create a motivation among colleagues, which creates a positive energy. Some of these thoughts are as follows.

> **O10:** *Very effective. A teacher who is good at his profession is very effective in educating students for the future. The teacher, who does his job with pleasure, constantly trains his student. It makes them successful.*
>
> **O12:** *As in any profession, the teacher's ability to do his job has an impact especially on the students. The teacher who does his job well is the teacher who likes his work and his students more and makes the lesson more enjoyable.*
>
> **O21:** *A teacher who does his job well is beneficial to both students and colleagues. A teacher can be influenced by the methods and techniques of the other teacher and renew himself. A good teacher will have an impact on the student as he will be a good role model for children.*
>
> **O40**: *Yes. Among the teachers who are good in the profession, other teachers who do not want to get lost so they get inspired.*
>
> **O33:** *Discipline in the classroom depends on his / her job and self-confidence. The teacher who develops by revising himself transfers the feeling of self-confidence and is respected. This increases our motivation.*

Another sub-objective of the study is to identify the problems that teachers face while performing their professions. The participants' opinions and the problems faced by the teachers in performing their professions are presented in Figure 7.
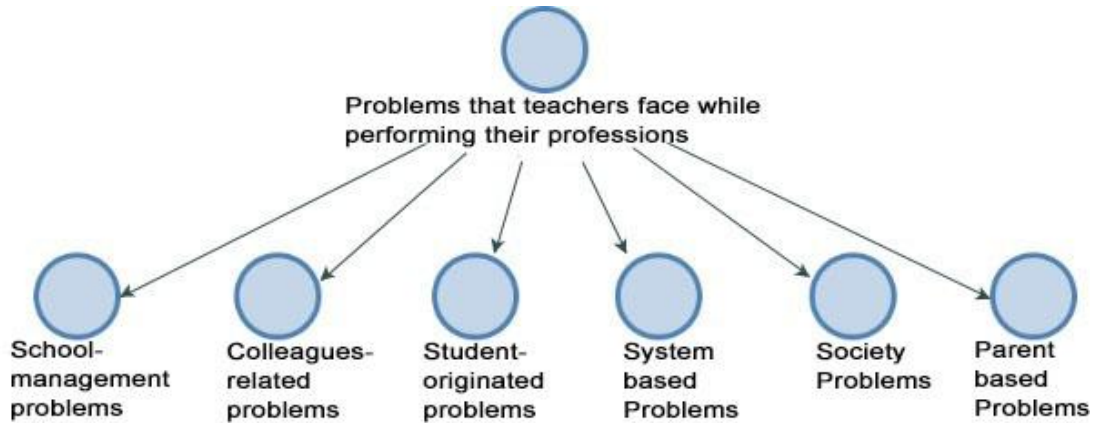
*Figure 6.* What Are the Problems You Face While Doing Your Job?

According to the opinions of the teachers, there were six main categories: school-management problems (n = 9), colleagues-related problems (n = 3), student-originated problems (n = 18), system-based problems (n = 7), society based problems (n = 4), and parent-based problems (n = 14). Specifically, student-originated problems include negative attitudes and behaviors of students in the classrooms, low level of readiness, low motivation, negative prejudices against the courses, and low level of academic achievement. In terms of parents, insufficient or excessive expectations from students/teachers, concerns only about grade, lack of support to teachers are considered as problems that teachers face while performing their professions. Specifically, they stated that the parents try to intervene in the learning environment in private schools and they see some courses unnecessary, which cause students to lose their interest.

Another source of problems is the problems arising from the school administration. Unfair distribution of tasks among teachers, unequal ways to treat teachers, exhibition of different attitudes and behaviors toward each teacher working in the same school are the main issues teachers face. In terms of system-based problems, teachers stated that crowded classrooms, excessive hours of classes, frequent changes in the education system and curricula, lack of sufficient time for personal and academic development, and overload of paperwork are other issues teachers face. The participant teachers also mentioned society based problems by discussing that the teaching profession is discredited and teachers are not economically comfortable. Example quotes are given below.

**O37:** *The most important problem is that students have low profile. Students who pushed us and who wanted to get more every day carry us further.*

**O34:** *The situation and movements of the student who does not come to the high achievement level and considers reading and writing as persecution.*

**O23:** *Disrespecting the course by the parents, Thinking of the informatics course as other artistic or sporting activities as a free-time activity, not being satisfied with the grades, the informatics course being seen as an internet and game lesson.*

**O41:** *While doing my job, the lack of equipment of our school is our most important problem. Sometimes we try to solve this problem with our own, sometimes equipment and tools, we can obtain from students and from outside the school.*

**O39:** *The work environment is uncomfortable due to poorly arranged curriculum, negative attitudes of the administration, unfair treatment among teachers by the administrators.*

**O44:** *Lesson hours and inadequate students. Classes are crowded and we cannot use our time efficiently. I'm improving myself academically. I'm spending more time on development.*

**O45:** *The biggest problem that I have encountered in doing my job is that people are prejudiced. The loss of importance of the teacher profile, discrediting the profession. I'm struggling to change that.*

**O24:** *There is no unity between teachers. Everyone should put their hands under the stone.*

In this study, the last question to answer was to determine how the participants describe the teaching profession. The questions asked to teachers was "what does your profession mean to you?" The findings are given in Figure 6.
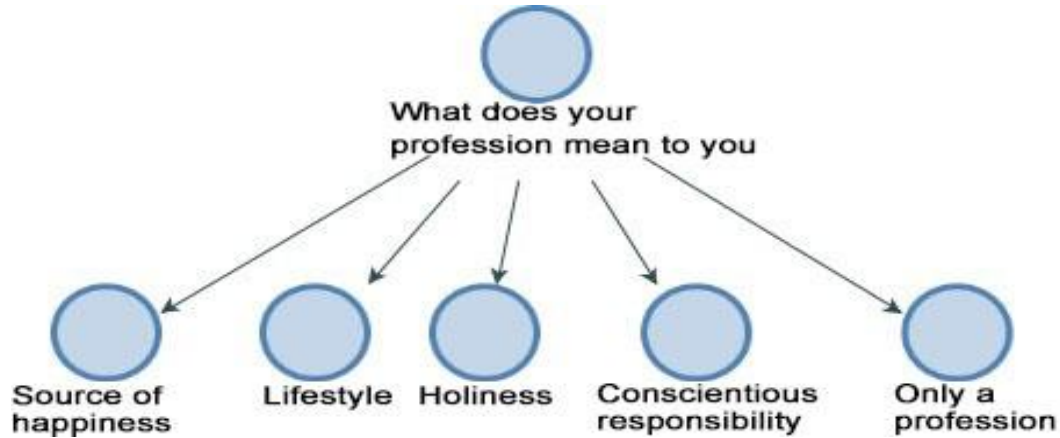
*Figure 7*. The Meaning of Teaching Profession According to the Teachers

The definitions of teacher profession based on teachers are categorized as source of happiness (n = 17), lifestyle (n = 13), conscientious responsibility (n = 11), holiness (n = 6), and only a profession (n = 3). When the themes were examined, it was observed that the spiritual aspect of the teaching profession was dominant. Teachers, who see their profession as a source of happiness, stated that it is a very special job to train people; they see their profession as an art whose raw material is human; they perform the profession of their dreams; and it is a great pleasure and happiness for them to teach. Participants who expressed teaching as a lifestyle stated that the way their students consider their teachers as a role-model, interaction with different people, the happiness due to teaching new information to people are the main reasons to consider teaching as a lifestyle. Teachers mentioning conscientious responsibility for teaching clearly stated that teaching cannot be done for salary. They mentioned the importance of touching students' lives, preparing them for life, shaping future generations in the construction of the society, and educating children of different characteristics. Teachers who pointed out the holiness of the teaching profession emphasized the fact that the teaching is a profession of the prophet, it is a sacrifice that requires patience and the weight of the spiritual aspects. Example quotes are provided below.

**O2:** *It is very nice to train people and I love my profession. I do my best. I become happy as I train successful students.*

**O29:** *It is a profession which is very laborious and its fatigue is forgotten when it is paid for. Understanding people, answering one by one, patience and knowing that you will take place in their heart.*

**O17:** *I see it as a branch of art whose material is human. I haven't had Monday's syndrome in my four-year teaching life.*

**O11:** *I think teaching is life itself. Life teaches us many things. However, the person I call teacher is the one who is with us in this process and guided us to learn the right things.*

**O36:** *I can describe my profession as touching or guiding lives, being light to them. This is both a great responsibility and a great opportunity.*

**O39:** *Our profession is truly sacred. Because it is a challenging process that wants to give direction, shape and make it right for young people. It is an indescribable pleasure to start undergraduate education and visit the school after graduation. It makes me love my profession more and seek answers to the question of how to be more productive.*

**O45:** *I'm playing my role on the stage. I get paid and the salary covers my expenses.*

### Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the phenomenology design of qualitative research method was used to determine teachers' opinions about their teaching professionalism. The study was conducted with the inclusion of 45 teachers working in primary, secondary and high schools in a city located in eastern part of Turkey.

The participants' views about their and other teachers' professional and personal development levels varied. It is noteworthy that, with a total of nine opinions, it has been determined that teachers' professional and personal development levels are not sufficient. Teachers are one of the critical parameters that affect instruction in classrooms (Özden, 2002); therefore, it is important to support the professional and personal development of teachers and to constantly motivate them in achieving the aims of education (Hildebrandt & Eom 2011). Specifically, the participants stating that their professional and personal development levels were sufficient expressed that they sought graduate degree despite the difficulties they face, participated in training programs, and constantly followed innovations to improve themselves. Based on the teachers' views, it is concluded that graduate education and in-service trainings are important for teachers to keep up with scientific developments and keep their knowledge up-to-date. This view is also supported by Şişman (2002),

Akpınar (2012), and Toprak and Taşğın, 2017. This implies that encouragement of teachers to enroll graduate schools in order to increase their professionalism as well as the effectiveness of schools. Future studies may consider focusing on the effects of graduate education and in-service training programs on teachers' professional and personal development. Such investigation may lead stakeholders to consider the aspects of effective support for teachers.

Another critical findings of the study is the barriers that discourage teachers to improve their professional and personal development, and in turn, decrease school achievement. Teachers mentioned school administration as one of the barriers. There are other studies that support this finding (Yirci, 2017; Çekin, 2015; Bakioğlu & Yıldız, 2014; Karaca, 2015). For school administrators who are the key variable for school achievement, it is unfortunate for them to be labeled as a barrier for teachers' professional and personal development. Indeed, teachers should be motivated continuously for instructional purposes and the obstacles in front of their professional and personal development should be eliminated by the school administrators (Güngör, Altınkaynak & Aksoy, 2018). Future research should expand the characteristics of school administration in order to identify the relationship between teachers and school administration and the attitudes of school administrators that teachers perceived as negative.

Parents' attitudes towards teachers and courses are also considered as a barrier by the participant teachers in this study. In addition to the fact that the parents were not interested in the education of their children, it was determined that parents' high levels of expectations also forced the teachers. In order to eliminate parent related problems, school-parent cooperation needs to be supported, which may encourage parents to visit schools not just annual meetings but other times as well (Gelişli, 2017; Kocabaş, 2016). Students are also considered a critical aspect in teachers' development. Specifically, it is found that their inappropriate behaviors and lack of responsibility decrease teachers' motivation. Similar results were found in other studies as well (Sürücü & Ünal, 2018). Another obstacle to the professional and personal development of teachers was gathered in the school theme. The analysis of the participants' views emphasized the inadequacy of the physical facilities and materials of the schools. It is known that the opportunities offered to teachers and students are lower in public schools compared to private schools (Sever, Kaysılı, & Soylu

2016). At this point, the necessity of improving the physical and educational facilities of public schools emerges (Petek & Önder, 2015).

According to participant opinions, it was determined that teachers' professional and personal development were affected by gender, school they serve, educational experience, and age. Even though teaching experience is stated to be important for the professional and personal development of teachers, there are opinions that teachers' desire to develop themselves decreases as years of teaching increases. This situation leads to the conclusion that while professional and personal development is positively related to years of teaching, the desire for development is negatively related with years of teaching. At this point, it is critical for policymakers to develop new policies to increase teachers' willingness to advance their professional and personal skills (Gökulu, 2017; Önder, 2018).

Another important point is that teachers working in private schools feel more obligated to continue their professional and personal development comparing with the other teachers who serve in public schools. It is thought-provoking that the teachers who work in schools with poor academic achievement have lower levels of professional and personal development than their colleagues who work in schools with higher achievement levels, which is also supported by Yılmaz & Altınkurt (2011) and Çapri & Adnan, (2007). The fact that the ratio of public schools to all schools in the Turkish education system is around 95% makes this situation more important. Future research may focus on specifically on schools to find out possible solutions for the low desire of professional and personal development.

Finally, it was determined that teachers who consider themselves with high professionalism level are an inspiration for their colleagues and they increase their motivation by becoming role-models for other teachers (Çekin, 2015). Similar conclusion might be drawn for students as well. Teachers with high professionalism considered themselves as a person touching young people's lives and shaping their future. In short, future research should employ other variables that affect teachers' willingness for professional and personal development in order to identify the factors causing low level willingness for development.

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Research Article

# Integrating Multiple Intelligences into Daily Plans: A Preschool Example

Tanju Gürkan[1], Çağlayan Dinçer[2], Burcu Çabuk[3]

## Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Multiple Intelligences Theory (MI) on preschool children's learning styles, interests and active participation to the daily activities. Researchers conducted a two-phased study in an urban preschool classroom of 14 children who are at the age of 6 with the cooperation of the classroom teacher. In the first phase, the teacher made observations of her class to decide the dominant intelligences, learning styles, interests and participation of the children while she was conducting her traditional semi-structured daily plans based on the National Preschool Education Curriculum. Based on the observations, for each child, she filled out the MI Inventory (MULIN) developed by the researchers. Then, each child was interviewed by one of the researchers and asked to mark the MI Self Evaluation Picture Control List (MISEC) developed by Fleetham (2008). The data collected was graphed and interpreted to conclude the MI Profile of the class. In the second phase, children were exposed to the Daily Plan Enriched with MI Inspirations in the leadership of the teacher. Researchers observed and videotaped the whole procedure. Then, the teacher was interviewed to find out whether there were differences on the children's interests and active participation during the daily plan enriched with MI inspirations comparing with the traditional daily plans she has been conducting. The findings of the study showed that Daily Plan Enriched with MI Inspirations made a positive effect on children's interests and active participation in the daily activities since they covered all the intelligences and addressed different learning styles of the children. Research findings not only provide insight into the role of MI on preschool children's interests and active participation but also draw attention to the importance of having all the eight intelligence and addressing all the learning styles of the children in the daily plans.

*Keywords: Multiple Intelligences, daily plan, preschool education, interest, active participation, learning style*

[1] Retired Prof.Dr., Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, tnjgurkan@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6122-2200.

[2] Prof.Dr., Hasan Kalyoncu University, Faculty of Education, Department of Preschool Education, fcdincer@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5468-9155.

[3] Res.Ass.Dr., Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Preschool Education, cabuk@education.ankara.edu.tr, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1166-9773.

**Çoklu Zeka Kuramı'nı Günlük Planlara Entegre Etme: Bir Anaokulu Örneği**

**Öz**

Bu nitel araştırmanın amacı, Çoklu Zeka Kuramı'nın okul öncesi dönem çocuklarının öğrenme stilleri, ilgi alanları ve günlük aktivitelere aktif katılımları üzerindeki etkililiğini değerlendirmek olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırmacılar, sınıfın öğretmeninin işbirliği ile 6 yaşındaki 14 çocuğun şehir içinde yer alan anaokulu sınıfında iki aşamalı bir çalışma yürütmüşlerdir. Birinci aşamada öğretmen, Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı'na dayanan yarı yapılandırılmış geleneksel günlük planlarını yürütürken, çocukların baskın zekalarına, öğrenme stillerine, ilgi alanlarına ve aktif katılım durumlarına karar vermek amacıyla sınıf gözlemleri yapmıştır. Gözlemlerine dayanarak, her çocuk için, araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen Çoklu Zeka Envanteri'ni (MULIN) doldurmuştur. Daha sonra araştırmacılardan biri her çocukla görüşmeler yapmış ve Fleetham (2008) tarafından geliştirilen Çoklu Zeka Öz Değerlendirme Resim Kontrol Listesi'ni (MISEC) işaretlemelerini istemiştir. Toplanan veriler sınıfın Çoklu Zeka Profili'ni oluşturmak amacıyla grafikler haline dönüştürülüp yorumlanmıştır. İkinci aşamada, çocuklara, öğretmen liderliğinde, Çoklu Zeka Kuramı'ndan Esinlenilerek Zenginleştirilen Günlük Plan uygulanmıştır. Araştırmacılar sürecin tüm aşamalarını gözlemleyerek videoya kaydetmişlerdir. Daha sonra öğretmenin, Çoklu Zeka Kuramı'ndan esinlenilerek zenginleştirilen günlük planı, geleneksel günlük planlarıyla karşılaştırdığında çocukların ilgileri ve aktif katılımları konusunda farklılıklar olup olmadığı yönündeki görüşlerini öğrenmek amacıyla görüşmelere katılmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları, Çoklu Zeka Kuramı'ndan Esinlenilerek Zenginleştirilen Günlük Plan'ın, tüm zeka türlerini kapsadığı ve çocukların farklı öğrenme stillerini ele aldığı için çocukların ilgi alanlarına ve günlük aktivitelere aktif katılımına olumlu yönde etki ettiğini göstermiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçları, Çoklu Zeka'nın okul öncesi dönem çocuklarının ilgileri ve aktif katılımları üzerindeki rolü hakkında fikir vermenin yanı sıra, sekiz zeka türünün tümünü kapsamanın ve günlük planlarda çocukların tüm öğrenme stillerini ele almanın önemine dikkat çekmektedir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Çoklu zeka, günlük plan, anaokulu eğitimi, ilgi, aktif katılım, öğrenme stili*

# Introduction

Preschool teachers' main purpose of preparing daily plans is mainly for the children to learn the essentials through fun, engaging and meaningful activities ranging from art activities to short trips. In a typical preschool classroom, teachers have a duty to not forget the importance of a colorful and stimulating atmosphere. Preschoolers constantly need to be surrounded by hands-on activities, as well as visual reinforcements. An ideal daily plan needs to be divided into sections, namely interactive big and small group and individual work. In this thought-provoking context, the children are able to accomplish goals presented by an attentive daily plan. After Gardner (1983) introduced the Theory of Multiple Intelligences to the area of education, by the practitioners, there is a raising trend of preparing curriculum by the inspiration of this theory.

Howard Gardner's (1983) view of intelligence is rapidly being incorporated in the daily plans in schools worldwide. In his theory of Multiple Intelligences, Gardner expanded the concept of intelligence to include different areas such as music and interpersonal knowledge, besides the mathematical and linguistic abilities. People draw on these intelligences, individually and/or corporately to create products and solve problems as they develop (Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2006a, 2006b) since intelligence is defined as "the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings" (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). According to this definition, the eight different intelligences explained by Gardner (2006a) are as follows:

*Logical-Mathematical Intelligence* consists of the capacity to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically. According to Gardner (1983), it "entails the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically". This intelligence is most often associated with scientific thinking (Bednar, 2002). *Linguistic Intelligence* involves sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. This intelligence includes the ability of using the language to express oneself rhetorically or poetically and language as a means to remember the information (Bordelon & Banbury, 2005). *Spatial Intelligence* involves the potential to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas

(Highland, 1999). *Musical Intelligence* involves skills in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns. It encompasses the capacity to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms. According to Aronoff (1988), Gardner (1983) believes that musical intelligence runs in an almost structural parallel to linguistic intelligence. *Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence* entails the potential of using one's whole or parts of the body to solve problems. It is the ability to use mental abilities to coordinate physical movements. According to Guss (2005), Gardner sees mental and physical activity as related. *Interpersonal Intelligence* is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people. It allows people to work effectively with others (Rettig, 2005). *Intrapersonal Intelligence* entails the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations. According to Gardner, it involves having an effective working model of ourselves and to be able to use such information to regulate our lives (Furnham & Thomas, 2004). Finally, *Naturalistic-Environmental Intelligence* enables human beings to recognize, categorize and draw upon certain features of the environment. It "combines a description of the core ability with a characterization of the role that many cultures value" (Carlisle, 2001).

Thousands of schools across the world have incorporated Multiple Intelligences principles into their curriculum, and in numerous languages, hundreds of books have been written on the relevance of Multiple Intelligences for educators and educational institutions (Chen, Moran & Gardner, 2009). Additionally, Multiple Intelligences enhanced instruction may be implemented to support learning for individuals from preschool through college to foster the discovery of their own interests and talents (Rettig, 2005). Juteau (2006) introduced Multiple Intelligences infused instruction by having students complete an inventory designed to identify Multiple Intelligences strengths followed by class discussions prior to the implementation. Following the implementation of instruction, students reported that "they develop an awareness of themselves, and a realization that they are smart in their own way". According to Lumsden (1997), the use of Multiple Intelligences in classrooms supports the detection of intellectual strengths which results in increased efficacy and greater learning.

Using Multiple Intelligences in schools can guide the teachers for individualized education and also Multiple Intelligences inspired practices provide promising approaches for effective teaching and learning in schools (Birchfield, Thornburg, Megowan-Romanowicz, Hatton, Mechtley, Dolgov & Burleson, 2008). In the light of Gardner's ideas, for effective teaching,

the teachers' vital role is to observe the children individually and give instructions by taking into consideration of the children's background and their unique intelligences.

Teachers use several implications of Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences in terms of classroom instruction. His theory states that all eight intelligences are needed to function productively in schools. Teachers, therefore, should think all intelligences are equally important. This is in contrast to the traditional education systems which typically place a strong emphasis on the development and use of verbal and mathematical intelligences. Thus, Multiple Intelligences implies that educators should recognize and teach children to a broader range of talents and skills (Silver, Strong & Perini, 1997).

**Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of the current qualitative study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Multiple Intelligences on preschool children's learning styles, interests and active participation. Gardner (1983)'s theory states that individuals all possess multiple intelligences that combine and use in their own unique ways. According to Gardner (2006a), in every individual, each intelligence develops at its own rate, and teachers need to focus on establishing a profile of each learner. The current study is significant, because the results of this study may prove that the Multiple Intelligences theory is a good framework to prepare daily plans and build curriculum for children to be engaged and feel comfortable of their own learning. Additionally, previous research has been limited to the data collection procedures where some researchers used questionnaires (Delgoshaeia & Delavaria, 2012, Almeida, Prieto, Ferreira, Bermejo, Ferrando & Ferrandiz, 2010), some used observations (Kuo, Su & Maker, 2011), some used interviews (Padurean, 2011) but in this study, for a deeper investigation, several data collection procedures (a total of eight) were used such as applying daily plans inspired by Multiple Intelligences, scales, observations, video recordings of the implementations and interviews were used.

## Method

### Research Site and Participants

This qualitative study was conducted with *fourteen* preschool children whose age was *six* (average of 58-month-old). The research group consisted of *seven* male children and *seven* female children and they were all from middle-class families. All of the participants were in the same full-day preschool program and in the same classroom located at a university campus in an urban area. It is located in the middle of the city and has an easy access. The university campus has plenty natural environments where children explore outdoors.

The classroom teacher who actively participated at the study as an implementer of the daily plan had an undergraduate degree in the field of Preschool Education and studying for her master's degree in the same field. She had been teaching in the current preschool for almost four years. Since this study was conducted in the second semester of the school year, she has been the teacher of this specific preschool classroom for more than seven months.

### Data Collection

The data was collected from *eight different sources* which are numbered below in *two phases:*

In the *first phase* of the study, while the classroom teacher were conducting her usual semi-structured daily plans based on the Ministry of National Education (MONE)'s National Preschool Education Curriculum, which is developmental and child-centered, she *observed* the children in her class to decide for their intelligences, learning styles, interests and participation throughout the days (1). After the teacher observed the class, for each child, she filled out the *Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MULIN)* developed by the researchers (2). During the *child interviews,* conducted by the one of the researchers (3), each child was asked to mark the *Multiple Intelligences Self Evaluation Picture Control List (MISEC)* developed by Fleetham (2008) (4). Before these interviews, one of the researchers showed the pictures of MISEC to the whole group one-by-one and explained what each picture meant. After this process, the interviews with the children took place in a private room in the preschool where the children are familiar with. There interviews were conducted individually and took 20 to 30 minutes for

each child. The researcher, working with each child, first, asked about the child's interests and his/her favorite activities he/she liked to participate, and then she introduced the child the *Multiple Intelligences Self Evaluation Picture Control List (MISEC)* and asked the child which activities the child thought she/he did best. After each child marked the activities, he/she was allowed to talk about the activities he/she was attending.

In the *second phase* of the study, to evaluate the effectiveness of *Multiple Intelligences* on preschool children's learning styles, interests and active participation in the activities, the researchers prepared a *Daily Plan Enriched with Multiple Intelligences Inspirations* for this particular preschool class with the cooperation of the classroom teacher (5). While conducting the daily play in the class, the teacher *observed* the class focusing on the children's intelligences, learning styles, interests and participation (6). *Professional observations* of the two researchers and video recordings were done during the application of the daily plan enriched with Multiple Intelligences in the class (7). Finally, the teacher was *interviewed* by one of the researchers to find out whether there were differences on the children's intelligences, learning styles, interests and active participation during the *daily plan enriched with multiple intelligences inspirations* comparing with the semi-structured daily plan based on the Ministry of National Education's (MONE) *National Preschool Education Curriculum* conducted by the classroom teacher previously (8).

### a. Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MULIN)

The researchers generated the items of the *Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MULIN)* based on the literature related with the theory of Multiple Intelligences. The inventory measures the eight dimensions of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory (2006a), which are as follows: *Linguistic Intelligence*, *Logical-Mathematical Intelligence*, *Musical Intelligence*, *Spatial Intelligence*, *Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence*, *Interpersonal Intelligence*, *Intrapersonal Intelligence* and *Environmental Intelligence*. The scale originally consisted of 84 items where the teacher marks whether the child performs the behavior in that statement or not. Before the study, the classroom teacher and another teacher of the same preschool observed their own classes and filled out the inventory for two of the children of their classes, one performing high and one performing low, according to the teachers' observations for the last seven months. After getting the opinions of both teachers, and three experts working in the field of Early

Childhood Education, the researchers rearranged the inventory by changing two items' wordings and deleting three incoherent items and one item which was not observed by both of the teachers. After all the validity and reliability studies, the final form of the inventory became 80 items in eight dimensions. Then, the classroom teacher filled out the inventory for each child of her class which is a total of 14 children.

### b. Multiple Intelligences Self Evaluation Picture Control List (MISEC)

*Multiple Intelligences Self Evaluation Picture Control List (MISEC),* developed by Fleetham (2008) has 21 pictures. In every picture, there is a child or a group of children showing an activity related with one or two intelligence(s). During the communication with Fleetham, the researchers learned that he conducted the validity and reliability studies of the list and it has been used by numerous people for several years and the researchers got the permission to use the list. After showing the pictures one-by-one to the whole group and explained what each picture meant, one of the researchers worked individually with each child privately, first by asking about the child's interests and his/her favorite activities he/she liked to participate, then asked the child which activities the child thought she/he did best and by carefully looking at the pictures and discussed what kind of activity was done in each picture. Then, each child was asked to mark five things that she/he can do best. The researcher told each child that this may be different from the things they like to do. Children's each choice indicated one or two various intelligence strengths. After each child marked the activities, he/she was allowed to talk about the activities he/she was attending.

### Procedure

In this qualitative study, to evaluate whether the theory of *Multiple Intelligences* affects the preschool children's learning styles, interests and active participation, first, the teacher prepared a semi-structured daily plan based on the Ministry of National Education (MONE)'s *National Preschool Education Curriculum*, which is developmental and child-centered, and the researchers prepared *a daily plan with Multiple Intelligences inspirations* where all the eight intelligences frequently functioned in the activities. This daily plan has also been prepared in order to meet different *learning styles* of the children in this particular preschool classroom and it was implemented in the class by the classroom teacher. By using observations, interviews

with teachers, video recordings and scales [Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MULIN) and Multiple Intelligences Self Evaluation Picture Control List (MISEC)], the effects of the enriched daily plan on these preschool children's intelligences, learning styles, interests and active participation were evaluated.

The *goals* of the daily plan used in this study have been selected on the grounds of the *past experiences* of the children obtained by the observations of the classroom teacher where she has been the main teacher of them for the past seven months as well as the knowledge obtained from the Ministry of National Education (MONE)'s *National Preschool Education Curriculum*. After determining the goals of the daily plan, with the contribution of the class teacher, the researchers prepared *seven activities* where at least four intelligences and several learning styles were supported with each activity. The children were exposed to the *Daily Plan Enriched with Multiple Intelligences Inspirations* in the leadership of the classroom teacher. Two of the researchers observed and videotaped the class during the implementation of the whole plan.

At the beginning of the study, during the *play time at the centers,* the classroom teacher drew the attention of the children to the figures of the shapes (circle, ellipse, pentagon and hexagon) hanging on the wall, which were also the *chosen concepts* of the *Daily Plan Enriched with Multiple Intelligences Inspirations*. During the *circle time*, by the leadership of the teacher, the class talked about the different sizes and colors of these shapes and where these shapes can be found in daily life. After the circle time, for the first activity, which is the *Language Arts Activity,* the teacher read a story, interactively, where the children needed to solve a problem related with the story. Each child told and drew their own pictures related with their solutions for the problem. For the second activity, the children attended a *Physical Activity*, a competition, related with finding the right shapes including; circle, ellipse, pentagon or hexagon. Then, for the third activity, they took a short *Field Trip*, where the children were taken to the green areas of the university campus which the preschool was located. For the detailed examinations of the environment, they used magnifying glasses. They also took the interesting materials of nature with them to the classroom for detailed observations. The children were told that if they picked up living things from the nature, they needed to bring them back to the natural environment. After observing the natural materials in the classroom, for the fourth activity, which is the *Science Activity*, they watched videos of moving animals,

talked about their movements and examined the photos of animals and their skeletons. Then, for the fifth activity, in pairs, they made animals with dough and skeletons of the animals with toothpicks and playdough at the *Arts and Crafts Activity*. For the sixth activity, which is the *Drama Activity*, they performed the impersonating of the skeletons of the animals with music in small groups. Finally, for the seventh activity of the day, which is the *Pre-Literacy Activity*, the children explored some pictures of the objects by working their short-term memories and talked about the relationships between the objects. The day was ended with another *play time at the centers* and an *evaluation time* where a big group discussion related with the activities took place. With interactive big and small group and individual work, all the eight intelligences were functioned productively several times throughout the *Daily Plan Enriched with Multiple Intelligences Inspirations*.

**Data Analysis**

Data collected from classroom observations, interviews, scales [Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MULIN) and Multiple Intelligences Self Evaluation Picture Control List (MISEC)], and video recordings during the implementations of the Daily Plan Enriched with Multiple Intelligence Inspirations were tallied, analyzed, and disaggregated in multiple steps. For the statistical analysis of the study, computer-based statistical software was used by the researchers. All the data gathered was, then, graphed to conclude the *Multiple Intelligences Profile* of this group of preschool children. Finally, based on the profile of the class, results of the data were examined to describe whether the *Multiple Intelligences Inspired Daily Plan* was effective on the attended 14 preschool children's intelligences, learning styles, interests and active participation in classroom instruction by comparing the observations with the regular every day activities.

**Findings**

The overarching purpose of this qualitative study was to evaluate the effectiveness of *Multiple Intelligences* on preschool children's learning styles, interests and active participation on activities. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of Multiple Intelligences in a group of preschool children, researchers conducted this study in an urban preschool class of 14, with the

cooperation of the classroom teacher. The data of the study was collected from *several sources* (recordings, observations, scales, interviews, implementation of a daily plan inspired by Multiple Intelligence) in *two phases*.

In this qualitative study, the findings from the data of interviews, observations, recordings and scales evaluated based on individual child. The findings of each child are as follows:

> *"E.S. was interested in each activity in the same degree and applied the directions given by the teacher carefully. She was sensitive for rhythm and dance. She was easily able to remember the objects in the activities requiring visual memory."*
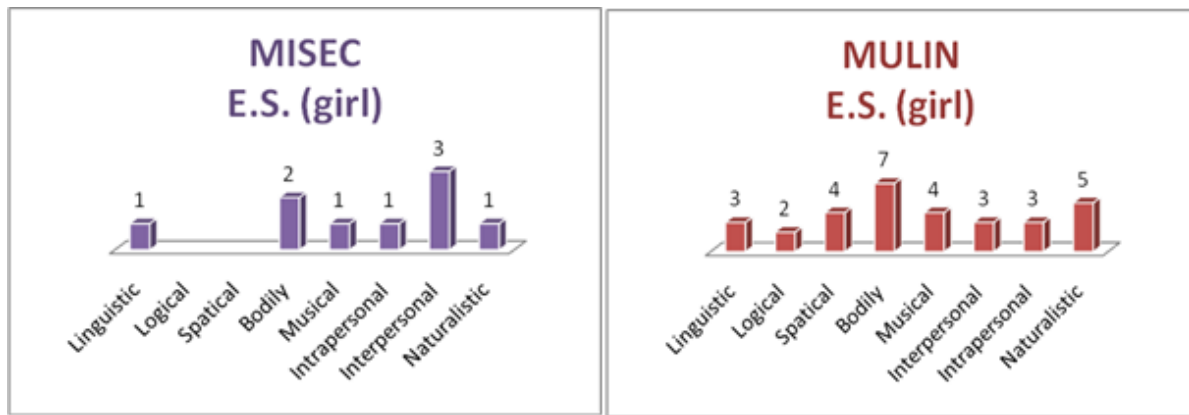


*Figure 1.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student E.S.

> *"Ü.E.A. was impatient for the play activity. He had difficulty in waiting for his turn. He was really successful and willing in the movements requiring bodily coordination. He succeeded in producing different movements in drama activity. He made the animal imitations easily. He was very successful in conveying his thoughts. He prepared the animal models and their skeletons from play dough and toothpicks as if they were real. He also helped one of his friends after he finished his own work."*
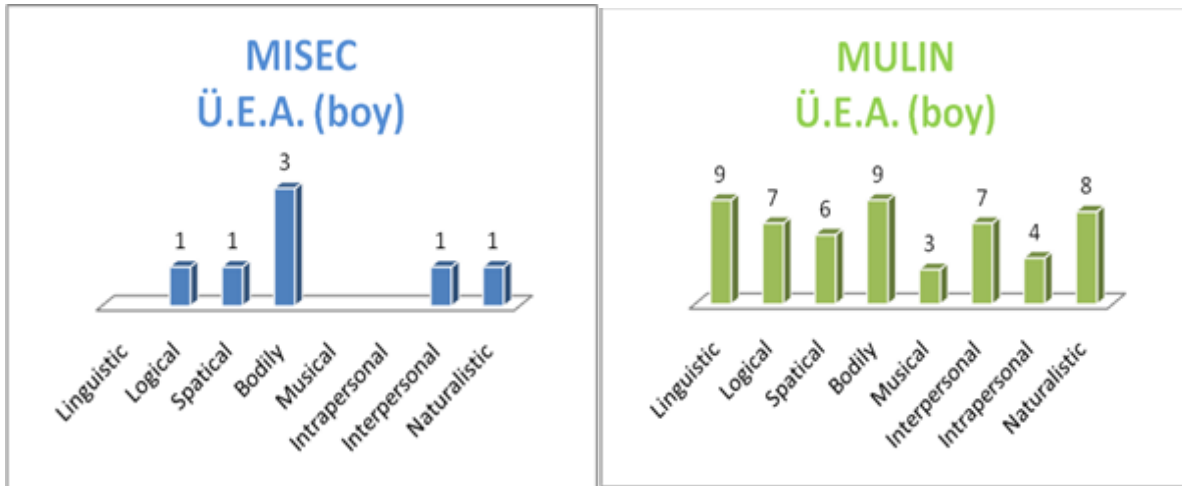
*Figure 2.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student Ü.E.A.

"**C.K.** *was very careful and successful in the activities requiring visual memory and also in the activities requiring logic. She showed more interest in the activities requiring physical power and she carried out the related directions correctly. She had difficulty in sitting on her chair since she was very active. She was pretty well in producing dance moves suitable for the music. She expressed herself well in the activities requiring oral skills, too. She was quite successful in the pictures she drew in the art activity and the animals and its skeleton she made from play dough and toothpicks. She related the pictures which were cut with each other and used them in the ways suitable for her aim."*
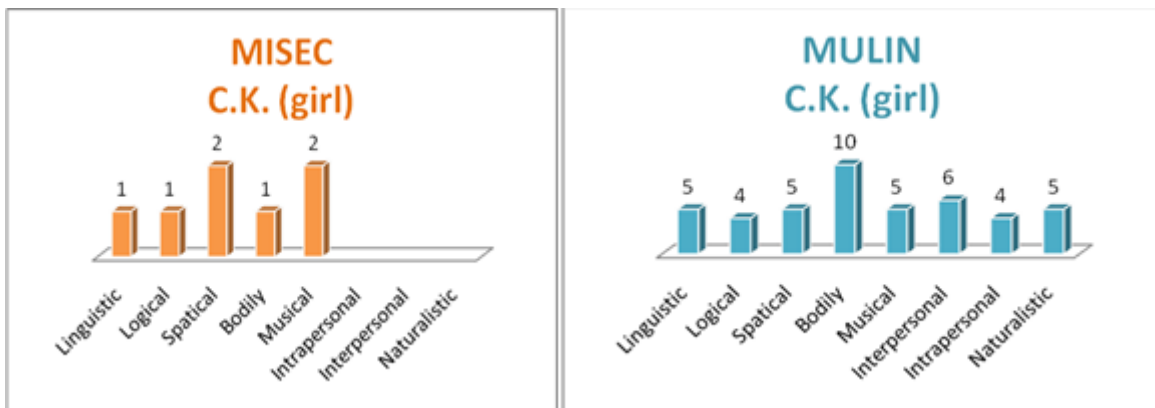


*Figure 3.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student C.K.

"**C.Ü.** *observed his surrounding carefully in order to find different objects in the field trip. He was quite successful in imitations and dance. He was also good in the activities requiring hand skills."*
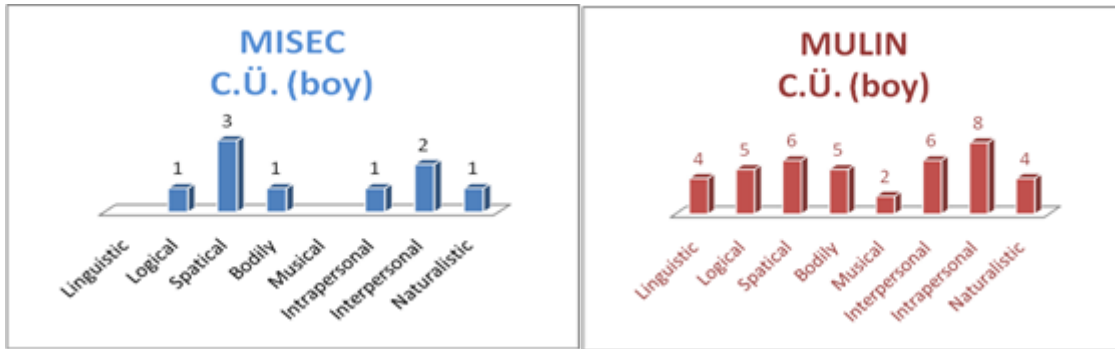
*Figure 4.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student C.Ü.

> *"Ş.N.B.* didn't want to take part in the activities in which she thought she would exhibit a low performance. She continuously wanted help in the activities that she thought they were difficult and that she believed she couldn't succeed. She was good in sound and rhythm activities. At first, she thought that she wouldn't perform the activities requiring visual memory but she was easily able to make connections between the related objects in the pictures."
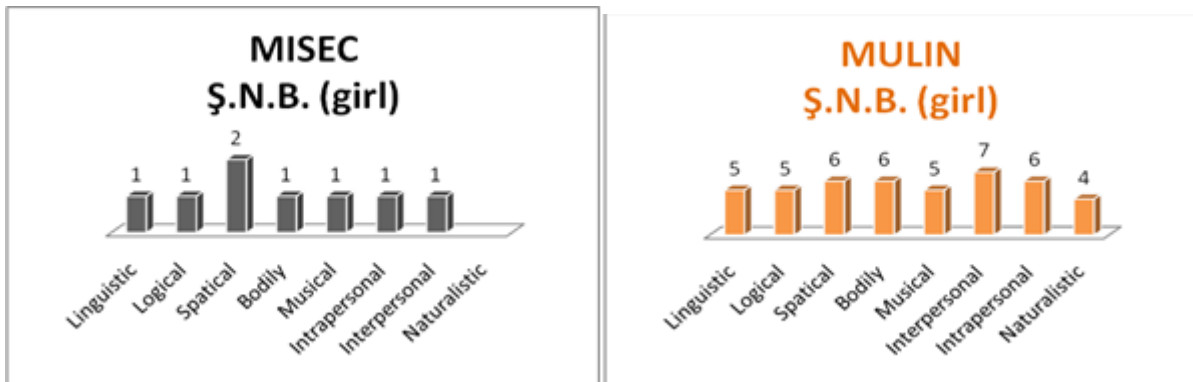


*Figure 5.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student Ş.N.B.

> *"E.K.S.* was more interested in the activities requiring logic, visual and based on problem solving rather than the rhythmic activities. He watched the videos about animals carefully. He was easily able to convey his thoughts in the art activity. He worked harmoniously and successfully in the activities requiring small muscle skills."
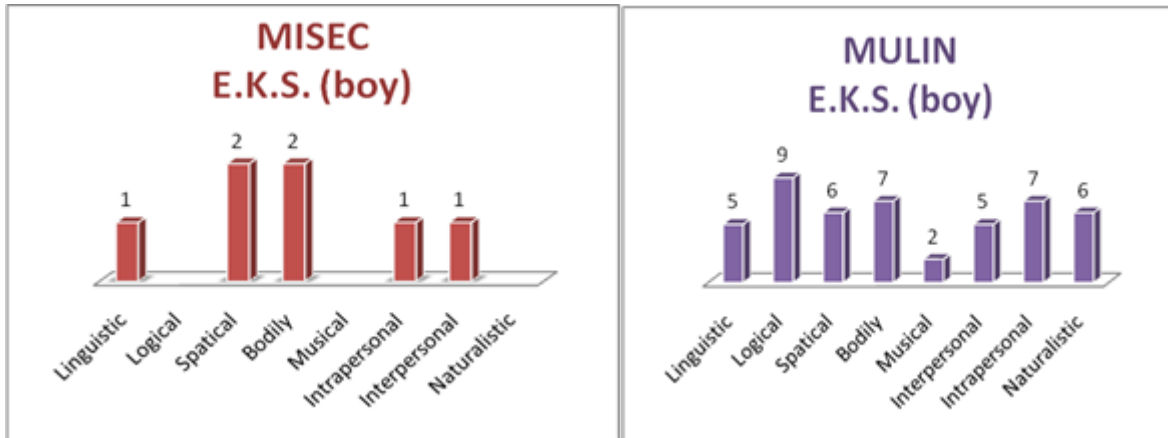
*Figure 6.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student E.K.S.

"**I.K.A.** *was successful in sound and movement imitations. She was also quite good in the activities requiring hand skills and in using colors. The compositions she formed connecting the shapes cut great.*"
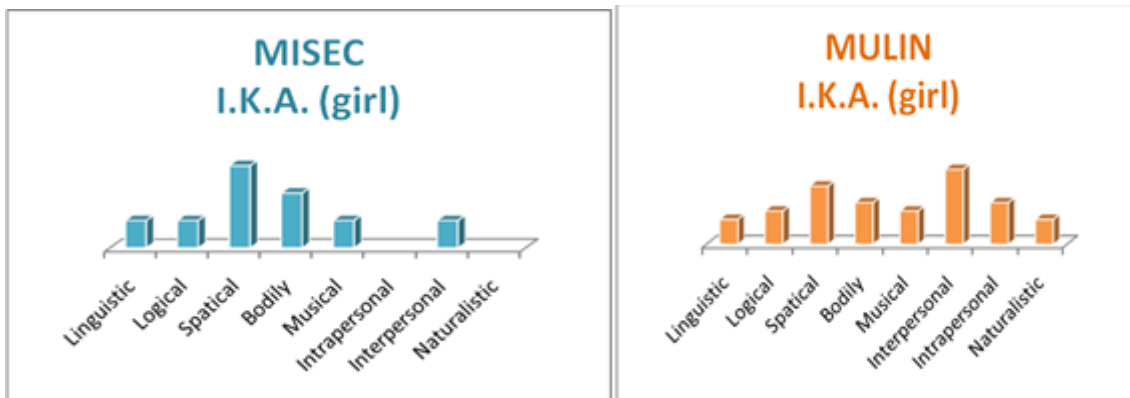


*Figure 7.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student I.K.A.

"**E.Ş.** *was successful in oral activities. Many objects in the field trip attracted him. He was sensitive for the events and the noises around him. He couldn't join the afternoon activities because she had to leave early.*"
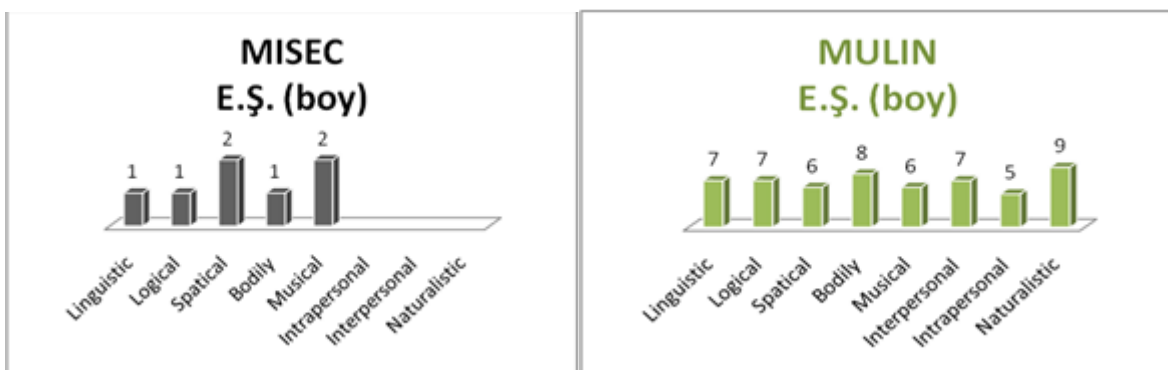


*Figure 8.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student E.Ş.

*"**I.A.**'s participation in the activities requiring physical power was quite high. She had difficulty in waiting for her turn in the activities and also in obeying the directions of the teacher. Her interest in the activities generally was little. She preferred saying the pictures which she had to keep in her mind by looking, not by remembering them."*
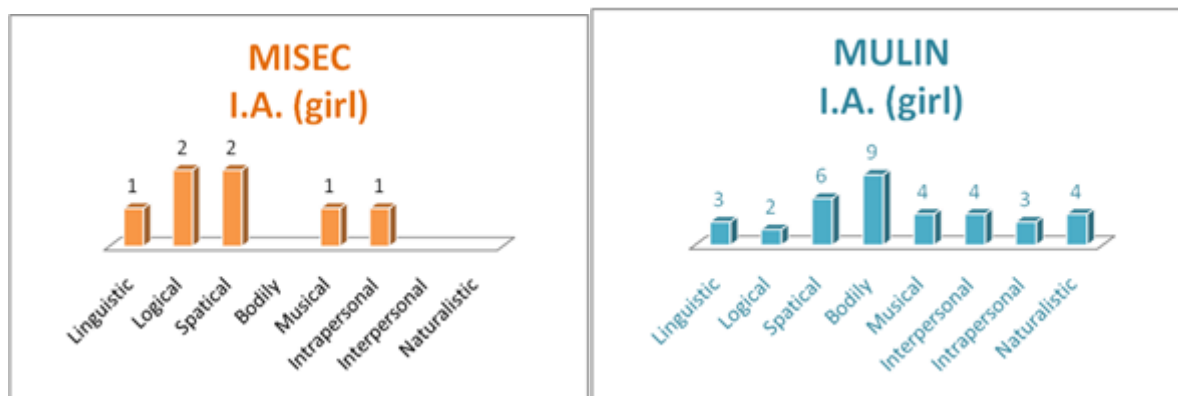


*Figure 9.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student I.A.

*"**A.B.D.** was very willing in the play activity. The play took his attention and he performed the directions related with the play correctly. The videos that was watched related with the movements of the animals also took his attention very much. He was successful in the activities requiring hand skills. He was able to express his feelings that he wanted to tell in his drawings easily."*
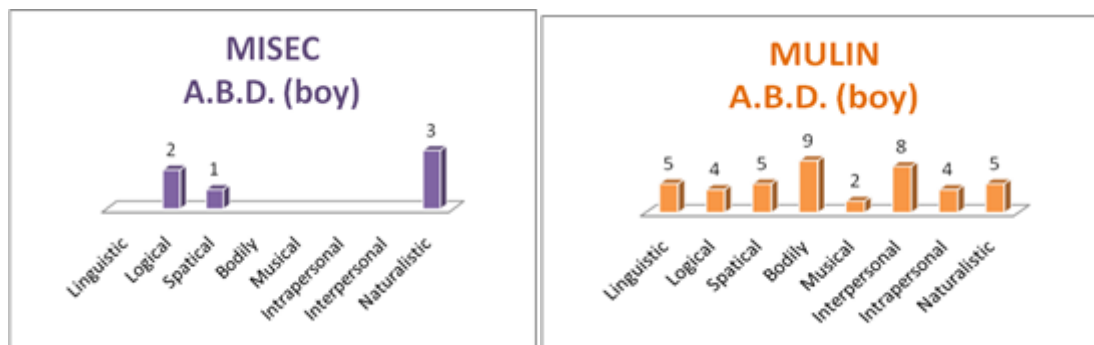


*Figure 10.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student A.B.D.

*"For **E.T.**, activities with sound and music were more attractive to her and her participation was higher. She wasn't interested in the field trip and animal videos very much. Since she wanted to be active, she had difficulty in sitting on her chair. She was able to use the pictures which were cut harmoniously. She was very good in the activities requiring small muscle skills. She succeeded in working with her friends cooperatively."*
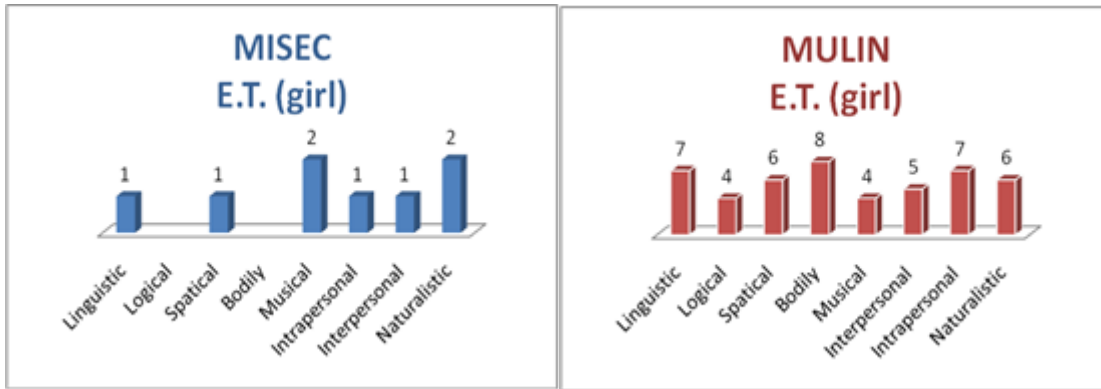
*Figure 11.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student E.T.

"**O.K.Ü.** got tired quickly in the activities. He really enjoyed animal imitations and performed them successfully. He showed a low performance in the activities which he normally would be able to achieve because he was ill."
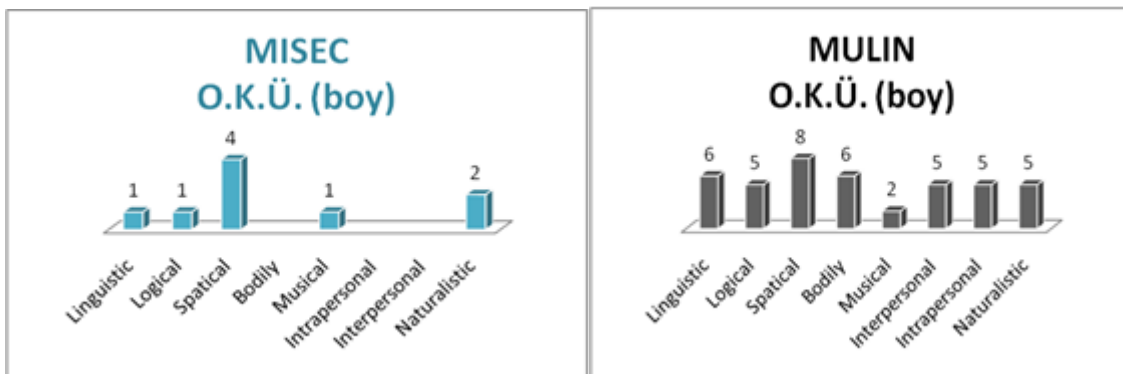


*Figure 12.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student O.K.Ü.

"**M.Y.** joined the activities in which there was rhythm. She was more sensitive in these types of activities and she caught the details and small differences very easily. She produced very beautiful products in the art activity with her ideas and harmonious colors she used in her pictures. She worked cooperatively with her friends in paired play."
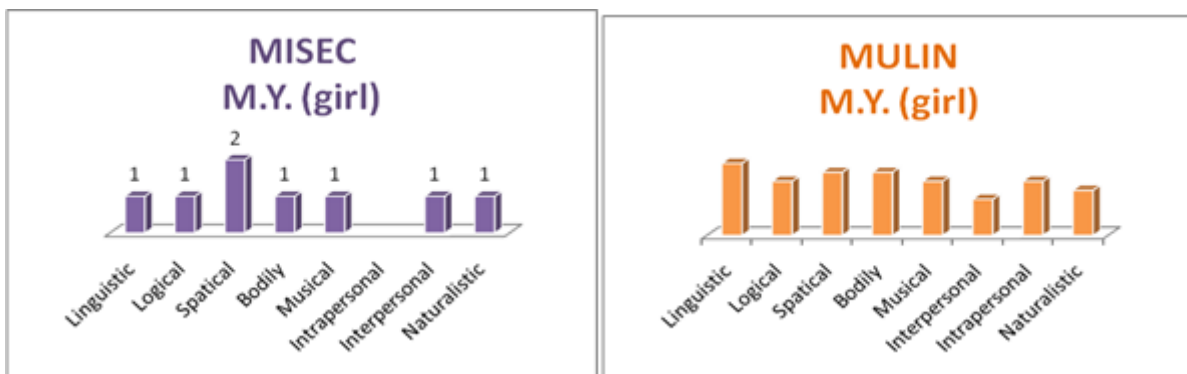


*Figure 13.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student M.Y.

*"**T.M.A.** was more successful in the activities requiring logic. Field trip and activities performed in nature didn't attract him. He took more pleasure in visual activities. He was willing and successful in the activities requiring body coordination."*
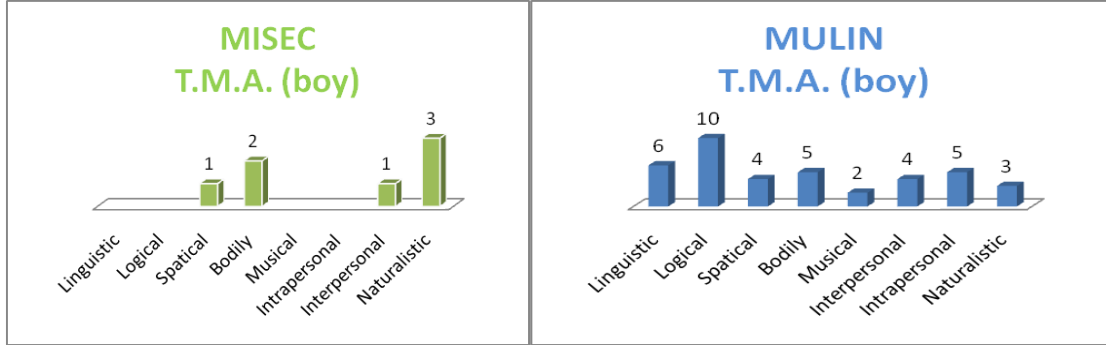


*Figure 14.* Data Gathered from the Scales for the Student T.M.A.

After evaluating each of the 14 children's several data, researchers, then, compared the *Multiple Intelligences Self Evaluation Picture Control List (MISEC)* scores and *Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MULIN)* scores of each child based on the dominant intelligences of the children. Findings of the comparisons of these two scales showed that the dominant intelligences of this group of preschool children were *Spatial and Bodily Intelligences*. Details of the comparisons can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

*Comparisons of MISEC and MULIN Scores of Each Child Based on Dominant Intelligences*

| Children | MISEC Scores Based of Dominant Intelligences | MULIN Scores Based of Dominant Intelligences |
|---|---|---|
| E.S (girl) | Interpersonal and Bodily Intelligence | Bodily and Naturalistic Intelligence |
| Ü.E.A. (boy) | Bodily Intelligence | Bodily, Linguistic and Naturalistic Intelligence |
| C.K. (girl) | Spatial and Musical Intelligence | Bodily and Interpersonal Intelligence |
| C.Ü. (boy) | Spatial and Interpersonal Intelligence | Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Spatial |
| Ş.N.B (girl) | Spatial Intelligence | Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Bodily and Spatial Intelligence |
| E.K.S. (boy) | Spatial and Bodily Intelligence | Logical, Bodily and Intrapersonal Intelligence |
| I.K.A. (girl) | Spatial and Bodily Intelligence | Spatial and Interpersonal Intelligence |
| E.Ş. (boy) | Spatial and Musical Intelligence | Naturalistic and Bodily Intelligence |
| I.A. (girl) | Logical and Spatial Intelligence | Bodily and Spatial Intelligence |

| Children | MISEC Scores Based of Dominant Intelligences | MULIN Scores Based of Dominant Intelligences |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A.B.D. (boy) | Naturalistic and Logical Intelligence | Bodily and Interpersonal Intelligence |
| E.T. (girl) | Musical and Naturalistic Intelligence | Bodily, Linguistic and Intrapersonal Intelligence |
| O.K.Ü. (boy) | Spatial and Naturalistic Intelligence | Spatial, Bodily and Linguistic Intelligence |
| M.Y. (girl) | Spatial Intelligence | Linguistic, Spatial and Bodily Intelligence |
| T.M.A. (boy) | Naturalistic and Bodily Intelligence | Logical and Linguistic Intelligence |

## Results

After reviewing the findings of the interviews, observations, the graphs of the scales [Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MULIN) and Multiple Intelligences Self Evaluation Picture Control List (MISEC)], and the comparisons of MULIN and MISEC scores of the children based on the children's dominant intelligences, the researchers generated the *Multiple Intelligence Profile* of this preschool class. The Multiple Intelligences Profile of the class showed that the children saw themselves as *Spatially, Bodily* and *Naturalistically Intelligent* whereas their classroom teacher saw the children as *Bodily, Spatially* and *Interpersonally Intelligent*. Based on the *Multiple Intelligence Profile* of the class, for both the children and the classroom teacher, *Spatial* and *Bodily Intelligences* were the common intelligences of the children. As it is mentioned in the theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983) that every person has all the intelligences in some degrees, other intelligences, mainly Linguistic, Logical, Intrapersonal and Musical Intelligences were also appeared in the scores of this group of children in different but lower percentages. By generating the *Multiple Intelligence Profile* of the class, the researchers had an approach about preparing the *Daily Plan Enriched with Multiple Intelligences Inspirations.*

Since the children's dominant intelligences were *Spatial and Bodily Intelligences*, the researchers prepared the daily plan where children can use all their intelligences but mainly their Spatial Intelligence; ability to draw accurate conclusions from observing a three-dimensional (3D) environment, and their Bodily Intelligence; being good at body movement, performing actions and physical control. As it is mentioned in the work of Gardner (1999) that Spatial Intelligence involves interpreting and making judgments about the shape, size,

movement, and relationships between surrounding objects, as well as the ability to envision and manipulate 3D models of things that are not immediately visible, the researchers prepared activities for children to use this form of reasoning. Additionally, researchers included activities involving Bodily Intelligence where children are strong and tend to have excellent hand-eye coordination and dexterity.

According to the findings of the scales, interviews, video recordings and observations, it was determined that *Daily Plan Enriched with Multiple Intelligences Inspirations* made a positive effect on the attended 14 preschool children's interests and active participation on their dominant intelligences and learning styles. In the last phase of the study, during the interview with the classroom teacher, she specifically mentioned that while she was routinely applying semi-structured daily plans based on the Ministry of National Education (MONE)'s National Preschool Education Curriculum, some of the children were not actively participating and they got bored easily even at the very beginning of the activities, but for this study, during the *Daily Plan Enriched with Multiple Intelligences Inspirations*, since the activities were organized based on the children's dominant intelligences and learning styles, children were more active and involved in the activities. Classroom teacher explained her thoughts about how the children and herself acted during this enriched daily plan in these words:

> *"First, the class was arranged to apply the enriched daily plan and all the necessary materials were made ready in the class. Different levels of affectivity of the activities made the application easier. Each child found the opportunity to express himself/herself and it helped me not to have any difficulties in taking their attention. At least four or five kinds of intelligences were used in each activity in this plan, prepared by taking Multiple Intelligence Theory at the base, helped me take pleasure from it. The children and I both enjoyed ourselves during the activities. However, because it was an intensive plan which we all are not used to, it became necessary to shorten some activities."*

During the interview, the classroom teacher also had some comments on the enriched daily plan itself. Her words related with the assessment of the daily plan are as follows:

> *"The activities in the enriched plan were very attractive and interesting for the children in my class. Because it was heavily raining in the field trip, we turned back to the class earlier and we couldn't observe the insects and animals on campus in a sufficient amount of time. For this reason, I told the children that we are going to watch the insects and animals online. The daily plan was applied without any*

*incidents except the rain. But we deeply processed and compared the collected material in class. It was not a planned activity but some of the children who have musical intelligence wanted to produce different sounds by using the collected materials. They even danced with the materials while making these sounds. The materials prepared were interesting for the children. The first stage of the drama activity took a very long time and the children were observed to be tired, I asked the children to cut the activity but the children resisted to continue so the other two stages were performed shortly. They were highly interested."*

Results of this qualitative study not only provide insight into the role of the theory of *Multiple Intelligences* on children's interests and active participation to the activities but also draw attention to the importance of having all the eight multiple intelligences and different kinds of learning styles in the daily plans of preschools since children show more interest on the activities they had dominant intelligence.

## Discussion and Implications

Before considering the implications of the current study and the possibility of similar research, it is important to consider the possible limitation of the study. This limitation lies with the amount of observation time. Although researchers carefully considered the amount of time and compared it to similar previous research, it is difficult to determine whether a full day of classroom observations were sufficient to see the instruction in action in preschool classrooms. Although the focus of the current study was observing the children on a daily instruction in a preschool, it is certainly possible that the research may be provided during a few days- or a few weeks- instruction. This could provide the researchers for an understanding of the effects of *Multiple Intelligences Inspired Curriculum* in a preschool. Additionally, covering all the eight intelligences in the daily plan made the plan very intense. By preparing a whole-year-curriculum inspired by Multiple Intelligences would spread the activities in days and solve the problem of intensiveness.

The current study proved that Multiple Intelligences can be applied in the daily activities of preschool classrooms and preparing activities where children can use their dominant intelligences would improve their intelligences and make them actively participated in the daily activities. Research also supports the results of this study. For example; according to Norel, Niculescu, Usaci & Lupu (2009)'s study, using Multiple Intelligences in classes encourages

the active participation of the children in the educational activities and make them learn in a fun and engaging way since the activities are based on their interests. Actively participating children also lead the teachers to become more effective in the classroom settings. In Lai Imm & Bahauddin (2008)'s study, it is mentioned that meaningful learning experience emphasizes active participation of children in activities so the child can apply learning with daily life experience, overall it results with effective learning and this can be happened with implementing the theory of Multiple Intelligences in classrooms.

Studies exploring Multiple Intelligence in preschool classrooms show that children develop in several areas. For example, in Gündüz ve Özcan (2017)'s research, after conducting a curriculum related with Multiple Intelligence for a school year, 5-year-old children's (N=24) linguistic/verbal intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily kinesthetic and naturalist intelligence were highly developed and positive effects were seen in their logical-mathematical intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence. Parallel to those results, according to the study of Delgoshaei & Delavari (2012), applying Multiple Intelligence approach in the preschool classrooms of 40 children as an educational method caused increase in all domains of the participating children's development. In a study of Economidou Stavrou, Chrysostomou, & Socratous (2011), the pre-primary school children who participated in their study responded with enthusiasm to innovative activities based on Multiple Intelligences and benefit in several ways. In addition, since each child was given the opportunity to better understand the concepts taught, they led their own ways of learning.

Schools worldwide have often sought to help children develop a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. Gardner's theory of *Multiple Intelligences* provides a theoretical foundation for recognizing the different abilities and talents of children. Although National Preschool Education Curriculum of Ministry of National Education (MONE) was prepared based on the theory of *Multiple Intelligences* besides other theories of early childhood education, it is not common for teachers to prepare daily plans for declamation of all the eight intelligences and all the learning styles of the children. This theory acknowledges that while all children may not be verbally or mathematically gifted, children may have dominance in other areas, such as bodily and spatial relations as it is the current situation of this study. Similar to the current research, in Özdemir Beceren (2010)'s study, children's spatial relations were also found to dominant. According to her study, 232 4-to-6-year old children were selected from different

socio-economic backgrounds and both boys' and girls' spatial intelligence were leading. In some areas of the country where children has less contact with nature, this may not be the situation. For this reason, carrying some activities outdoors may help covering the children's need of spatial and movement needs. Similarly, in Erkan & Öztürk (2013)'s study on 208 kindergarteners from different socioeconomic backgrounds, for musical intelligence, children from middle socioeconomic status scored higher than the children from low socioeconomic status. This result can be interpreted as teachers working in the low socioeconomic areas may have other priorities than music activities. The results of these studies lead educators to the idea that teachers need to use more music and visual reinforcements and take children outdoors where they may feel more comfortable since they may use their different intelligences and they may learn better.

Based on research in literature, Multiple Intelligences also allows the children to learn the content of the curriculum better. For example, based on Kelly (2006)'s study, developing understanding and/or insight on the learning activities allows active participation or passive reflection of the children. Additionally, a child-centered pedagogy, like Multiple Intelligences promotes active participation in the activities, physical engagement with the materials used, self-directed learning through sensory experience and spontaneous creativity derived from experiences (Huang, 2013).

Throughout the world, based on the concept knowledge of newer curriculum of the preschools, early childhood educators already realized that the curriculum content should be selected from the aspects of children's background experience, respect each child's unique development, raise of comprehensive early childhood development, admire the learning style of each child and fulfill the needs and interests of children, especially all types of intelligences (Jiang, 2011). According to the results of the current study, approaching and assessing learning in this manner allows a wider range of children to participate actively and successfully in the preschool classroom learning. In the light of the results of this study, while implementing the everyday activities, it is a necessity for teachers to meet all the eight intelligences of the preschool children in their classrooms.

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Şakire Erbay Çetinkaya, Selma Yılmaz

Research Article

# An Investigation of Student Satisfaction with an Applied Linguistics Graduate Programme

Şakire Erbay Çetinkaya[1], Selma Yılmaz[2]

## Abstract

Universities are key institutions that serve to improve society and meet its needs by contributing to scientific research, technology, and social and economic welfare, helping social transformation, equipping individuals with versatile skills, to list but a few. Hence, it is of utmost importance to investigate students' satisfaction level with universities, for student opinions serve as a very important criterion to evaluate education quality and help them survive in competitive education environment. The existing literature documents several studies investigating student satisfaction in a wide array of areas. Yet, it lacks studies on satisfaction with graduate education at Applied Linguistics. Thus, the current exploratory case study aims at finding out the satisfaction level of MA and PhD students enrolled at the Applied Linguistics programme of a public higher education institution in Turkey. A qualitative inquiry was conducted via individual and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 13 MA and 6 PhD voluntary students at the programme. The findings gathered from a qualitative content analysis show that the programme was found efficient due to high education quality thanks to well-equipped teaching staff, good services, and encouragement to produce academically. Yet, assessment and evaluation and academic supervision were found as two aspects to be improved. In the end, programme coordinators are provided ways to enhance both education and service quality of similar programmes.

*Keywords:* Graduate education, satisfaction, PhD, MA, education, quality

[1] Asst.Prof.Dr., Karadeniz Technical University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature, sakireerbay@ktu.edu.tr, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2594-1205
[2] Graduate Student, Karadeniz Technical University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature, selka_80@hotmail.com, https://orcid.org/ 0000-0002-5985-7629

# Bir Lisanüstü Uygulamalı Dilbilim Programına Yönelik
## Öğrenci Memnuniyeti Araştırması

## Öz

Yüksek öğrenim kurumları bilimsel araştırma, teknoloji ve sosyal ve ekonomik refaha katkıda bulunarak, sosyal dönüşüme yardımcı olarak ve bireyleri çeşitli becerilerle donatarak toplumu geliştirip ihtiyaçlarını karşılayan önemli oluşumlardır. Bu yüzden bir nevi üniversite müşterisi olan öğrencilerin memnuniyetini araştırma son derece mühimdir çünkü öğrenci fikirleri eğitim kalitesini değerlendirmede ve kurumun rekabetçi eğitim ortamında hayatta kalabilmesi için çok önemli bir ölçüttür. Var olan alan yazın çeşitli programlarda öğrenci memnuniyetini irdeleyen pek çok çalışmayı özetlemektedir. Ancak bu alan yazında lisansüstü uygulamalı dilbilimi programlarına yönelik memnuniyet çalışmaları eksiktir. Bu yüzden mezkûr durum çalışması, Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinin uygulamalı dilbilimi programına kayıtlı yüksek lisans ve doktora öğrencilerinin memnuniyet derecesini araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu nitel araştırma kapsamında gönüllü 13 yüksek lisans ve 6 doktora öğrencisi ile bireysel ve yarı yapılandırılmış yüz yüze mülakatlar gerçekleştirilmiştir. Nitel içerik analizi sonucunda elde edilen bulgular, programın donanımlı öğretim kadrosu, tatmin edici hizmetler ve akademik üretimi teşvik sayesinde kaliteli yüksek eğitim sunması hasebiyle çoğunluk tarafından etkili bulunduğunu göstermektedir. Ancak, ölçme değerlendirme ve akademik danışmanlığın iyileştirilmeye ihtiyaç duyulan iki önemli alan olduğu görülmüştür. Çalışma sonunda program koordinatörlerine benzer programların eğitim ve hizmet kalitesini artırma konusunda öneriler verilmektedir.

*Anahtar Sözcükler: Lisansüstü eğitim, memnuniyet, doktora, yüksek lisans, eğitim, kalite*

## Introduction

Higher education in a large spectrum of disciplines is significant for a society as it is supposed to contribute to scientific research, economic productivity, culture enhancement, creativity, to list but a few. These institutions offer education that helps effective human resources planning in industrialised communities to meet social needs, ensure production (Bozan, 2012; İçli, 2001), save and enhance both local and cultural and universal cultural heritage (Batmaz, Öztürk, Vardar, Yanık, Yarman & Yazıcı, 2011; Tekin, 2007), and equip individuals with versatile skills including creativity, critical thinking, analytic thinking, productivity, and problem solving (Oğuz, 2004; Öztemel, 2013).

Higher education institutions started to serve as a basis for economic development and information generation for large masses rather than solely elite classes particularly after the Second World War (Göksu, 2015) at not only local but also global levels (Erdem, 2013). Determining student expectations, opinions, and satisfaction level is of utmost importance to evaluate quality of higher education institutions and thus helps their survival. The existing literature documents several studies on undergraduate and graduate program evaluation from student perspectives in a wide variety of fields covering teaching English (Hernandez, 2009), special education (Moses (2008), administration and economy (Al-Dulaimi, 2016), business (Mai, 2005), health/nursing (Hahessy, Burke, Byrne, Farrley, Kelly, Mooney & Meskell, 2014), public policy, affair, and administration (Bright & Graham, 2016), pharmacy (Chumney & Ragucci, 2006), music (Serenko, 2010), to list just a few. Turkish scholars have not shut their eyes to the importance of measuring students' satisfaction: education science (Sümen & Çağlayan, 2013; Yılmaz, Tonga & Çakır, 2017), primary education (Özçetin & Gök, 2017; Şahin, 2009), nursing (Özdelikara & Babur, 2016), Turkish teaching (Kara, 2017), office management and executive assistance (Ay & Koç, 2014), computer education and instructional technologies (Tatlı, Kokoç & Karal, 2011), business administration (Erdoğan & Bulut), to list but a few.

Despite these satisfaction studies in various fields, qualitative exploratory case investigations on English teaching covering both Master of Art (MA, henceforth) and Philosophy of Doctorate Education (PhD, henceforth) programmes together to draw a holistic picture are rare.

Furthermore, the current ones mostly chose quantitative research designs, i.e., surveys, to measure satisfaction level of a high number of students (see, for instance, Al-Dulaimi, 2016; Özçetin & Gök, 2017; Mai, 2005). Yet, explorative studies with in-depth and open-ended questions rather than questionnaire surveys are needed to dig deep into the answers of students. Thus, as a response to the calls to fill in this research niche, the current exploratory case study was designed to investigate to what extent MA and PhD students enrolled at an Applied Linguistics graduate education programme find the programme efficient regarding its education and service quality. Besides, the current study is believed to be important as it meets the originality criteria of Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2010) in social sciences. It is original as the researchers were the first one to investigate student satisfaction with MA and PhD together in the aforementioned programme, and they obtained new information written for the first time via a self-devised data gathering instrument. Also, the findings could stimulate other researchers to conduct parallel studies and contribute to the existing literature by comparing and contrasting their findings. Last but not least, such small-scale explorative studies are of paramount importance to help higher education institutions develop compensating strategies to survive in competitive education environment, reform to overcome deficiencies, attract new comers and retain the current ones (Al-Dulaimi, 2016; Alves & Raposo, 2007; Durmaz, 2011; Koshkin, Rassalov & Novikov, 2017; Serenko, 2010; Tan & Kek, 2004).

## Review of Literature

### Higher Education

Historically speaking, University of Humboldt first offered the degree of PhD in return for thesis defence of an original research study and has become a model for universities as the centres of modern science, research, and publication. In Ottoman period, *Darulfünun* stood for university, and it took about half century for universities to be transformed into research-oriented institutions in Turkey, for doctoral programmes made no progress until 1946. However, in accordance with the law (No: 4936), Turkish universities were granted with legal autonomy, and thesis study became obligatory in that candidates are supposed to conduct an authentic investigation with a systematic research design and defend it in front of a scientific committee in pursuit of a PhD degree, and scientific research becomes compulsory for professors in academic area (Giorgetti, 2014).

In Turkey, universities with an important and respectful position in society due to their knowledge, economy, culture, and generation-related functions offer two degree education under the guidance of Council of Higher Education. The first one is undergraduate education that covers both Associate's degree of education and Bachelor Art degree education (BA). While the former aims at cultivating qualified work force on a specific vocational area in 2 years, BA equips students with a large variety of capacities in eight semesters except for dentistry and veterinary programmes with 5-year education and 6-year medicine programme (Official Gazette, 1981).

The second degree education is graduate education that should be understood as formal training process covering master and doctoral education under the responsibilities of universities (Karakütük, 1989). It undertakes a significant role in the development of a country and further improvement in scientific and technological disciplines (Koğar & Sayın, 2014; Ören, Yılmaz & Güçlü, 2012; Sevinç, 2001). In another word, it holds a strategic position both in generating and spreading information and transferring it into life as well as ensuring qualified work labour force (Bozan, 2012). Universities in Turkey offer two kinds of MA education: MA with thesis and without thesis. MA with thesis aims at equipping students with abilities to use various research methods and techniques to access, compile, interpret, and evaluate data. The MA degree candidates are supposed to complete certain credits and seminar courses. They are appointed an academic supervisor under whose supervision they complete their MA thesis and take their degree after a successful thesis defence in the presence of a jury. On the other hand, in the graduate programme without a thesis, candidates are equipped with knowledge in professional fields and learn how to utilise the existing knowledge by completing certain credits and course projects (Official Gazette, 2016). Doctoral degree programmes aim at equipping candidates with intellectual autonomy to produce new scientific knowledge. Holders of a PhD degree are supposed to conduct independent research for responding to demands regarding economic and technological growth (Anderson, Cutright, & Anderson, 2013; Ersoy, 2015; Özmen & Güç, 2013, Varış, 1972).

**The Concept of Satisfaction and Its Importance**

Satisfaction in general should be understood as a reaction or feeling towards an offered product or service (Athiyaman, 1997; Giese & Cote, 2002). Similarly, Kotler and Keller (2012) note that satisfaction should be understood as personal judgement regarding expectations.

Particularly, student satisfaction refers to the state that comes about when students' various needs are responded by education institutions (Altaş, 2006; Uygun & Yelken, 2017). According to Aydemir (2016), student satisfaction is influenced by various elements including education quality, library service, transportation, consultancy, accommodation, food, social activities, and employment opportunities for alumni supported by the university.

It is of paramount importance to explore student satisfaction in universities for a number of reasons. Thanks to such investigations, university administrations can develop strategic plans to overcome their deficiencies (Al-Dulaimi, 2016; Durmaz, 2011). These student reports help universities attract potential students and retain the existing ones, thereby contributing to their attempts to be superior in competitive education sectors (Mehdipour & Zerehkafi, 2013; Tan & Kek, 2004).

From another perspective, Mwiya et al. (2017) highlight that student satisfaction is regarded vital due to advisability and reputation. When they are satisfied, they talk about the institution positively and suggest it to other people including their friends and relatives. Furthermore, their satisfaction encourages them to come back there to have further degrees.

**A Slice of Previous Research**

A great number of scholars from different education contexts have investigated to what extent students from diverse departments are pleased with their institutions (see, for instance, Al-Dulaimi, 2018; Bright & Graham, 2016; Chumney & Ragucci, 2006; Erichsen, Bolliger, & Halupa, 2014; Jalali, Islam, & Ariffin, 2011; Kashan, 2012; Mai, 2005; Moses, 2008, to list but a few). To illustrate, Hernandez (2009) investigated satisfaction level of 41 MA holders in teaching English as a foreign language programme at University of Costa Rica with a questionnaire study. A majority of the participants were found satisfied with what they learned regarding teaching English classes, planning courses, organising teaching classes, planning

courses, and developing materials. However, several weak areas were identified, teaching of grammar and pronunciation, including language assessment. The participants reported that the programme did not offer enough knowledge about language assessment, and the teaching of grammar and pronunciation. However, they were unhappy as the programme did not provide them sufficient language, and thus they were having difficulties with grammar and pronunciation during teaching English. Also, the information that the department offered them about needs analysis and English for Specific Purposes, course design and practicum, and foreign language learning theories was reported to overburden them, and only some employed the teaching methods they had learnt during their education. Also, it was verbalised that they were not adequately taught how to utilise technological devices in language classes.

Turkish scholars have not shut their eyes to the need to conduct satisfaction studies for programme improvement (see, for instance, Kara, 2017; Kaya & Engin, 2007; Özçetin & Gök, 2017; Özdelikara & Babur, 2016; Sümen & Çağlayan, 2013; Şahin, 2009, to list but a few). To illustrate, in a recent study Yılmaz et al. (2017) investigated the satisfaction level of the graduate students in the institution of educational sciences of a long-established public university in Turkey within the scope of instructors, advisors, managers, the graduate education process, and the physical conditions with a descriptive survey. The findings show that female students were more satisfied with lecturers, and this satisfaction is much higher than those in the PhD programme. They also found that satisfaction level with advisor, the graduate education program, physical facilities, and management was not affected by gender. What is more, it was articulated that doctoral students had more academic attainments than master students. Thus, it was suggested that administrative staff should dwell on this issue, and measures should be taken to encourage academic attainments of master students, for all MA students may not have the chance to continue their graduate education in PhD. The graduates who were working as academician were found less satisfied with the instructors, and physical conditions than the teachers, and overall satisfaction of teachers with the graduation education was higher compared to the academicians. The researchers commented that academicians had superior-subordinate relationship with the instructors, and they might consider some aspects other than education. . Hence, satisfaction was concluded to be affected by professional experiences rather than gender, program, and occupation.

Overall, the existing literature has documented several related studies. Yet, these earlier studies either investigated student satisfaction generally at one level (BA, MA, or PhD) or opted for a

quantitative research design and conducted large-scale surveys. However, the current study aimed at filling the research niche in that it qualitatively investigated the issue from a holistic perspective, i.e., student satisfaction with not only MA but also PhD programme. The current study aimed at investigating the satisfaction level of the students in the graduate education programme of a large-scale public university with both the education and service quality. To this end, the following major and minor research questions were devised:

1. Are the MA and PhD students satisfied with the graduate education offered by the institution?
    1.1. Are the students satisfied with education/program quality?
        1.1.1. Are they satisfied with supervisor? Why/Why not?
        1.1.2. Are they satisfied with instructors? Why/Why not?
        1.1.3. Are they satisfied with curriculum? Why/Why not?
        1.1.4. Are they satisfied with course content? Why/Why not?
        1.1.5. Are they satisfied with course teaching methods? Why/Why not?
        1.1.6. Are they satisfied with assessment and evaluation of exams? Why/Why not?
        1.1.7. Are they satisfied with learning climate of classroom? Why/Why not?
        1.1.8. Are they satisfied level with academic attainments of program? Why/Why not?

    1.2. Are the students satisfied with service quality?
        1.2.1. Are they satisfied with administrative services? Why/Why not?
        1.2.2. Are they satisfied with physical facilities? Why/Why not?
2. Are there any suggestions to improve the program?

**Methodology**

To answer the research questions above a qualitative methodology was opted for. The current study shows the features of qualitative research that Bogdan and Biklen (2007) list. The study could be entitled as naturalistic in that the practitioner researcher and the student one spent time

in the natural setting, i.e., the university, to gather the data. Besides, the desire to describe not reduce the richness of data encouraged the researchers to indicate this richness with excerpts taken from the data. Last but not the least, the present study is qualitative in that it paid much attention on meaning by analysing the MA and PhD students' perspectives, feelings, and attitudes.

An exploratory case study was conducted to gather in-depth data as one of the most preferred research methods with the qualitative methodology (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). Case studies should be understood as research attempts to develop deeper understanding and description of single instances with careful analysis in unique contexts rather than numerical generalizations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Yin, 2009). It is one of the research methodologies appropriate for educational research, and in this education case it enabled the researchers to provide an exploration into the students' satisfaction with the programme and their reasons. Also, the desire of the researchers to seek for in-depth exploration, quality, and data richness contrary to the earlier related studies that mostly adopted survey methodology and focused on quantity necessitated a case study research design. The investigation of attitudes and feelings "invite(s) the use of in-depth case studies with qualitative data" as Denscombe (2010, p. 165) rightly notes. Besides, such case studies are also believed practical in that the information that could be applied by practitioners (Koshkin, Rassalov & Novikov, 2017; Serenko, 2010).

The case of the current research was the applied linguistics graduate programme of a public higher education institution in Turkey. Semi-structured individual in-depth interviews were utilised to gather the qualitative data that could help explore the world of graduate students and gain their experiences. This specific education case was chosen as the practitioner researcher has been working at the institution for 9 years, and the student researcher is an active student having close contact with students from all levels. This enabled them to gather rich data easily.

Despite the well-documented advantages of this research design, its subjective nature in data analysis and reporting (Cohen et al., 2007) is one of its limitations. To overcome this limitation, the two researchers coded and categorised the data separately, and then they compared and contrasted their findings. Another criticism case study has received is the small number of subjects, which avoids making scientific generalisation. However, exploring the feelings of the

students in this single specific case rather than generalising from it was the ultimate aim of the current study.

**Setting and Participants**

The current study was conducted at a Turkish public university, which has a large number of graduate programs, and the MA and PhD programme in Applied Linguistics is one of them. The graduate education programme is housed by the Department of Western Languages and Literature, which grants undergraduate students with BA degree in the field of English Language and Literature and graduate ones with MA degree on Applied Linguistics and PhD degree on English Language and English Literature. The staff includes 2 associate professors, 7 assistant professors, 2 lecturers, 4 instructors, and 3 research assistants. The MA and PhD programme offers several course, including  Scientific Research and Publication Ethics, Sociolinguistics, Qualitative Research, Literature and Language in Education, Statistical Analysis, Media Studies Language, Text and Context, Pragmatics, Education of Scientific Research and Project Preparation, The Rise and Development of the Novel, Research in Social Science, Seminar,  MA Thesis,  Syllabus Design, Culture and History,  Semantics and Pragmatics,  Qualitative Research Methods, Educational Psychology, Using Corpus for Language Pedagogy, Exploring the Language of Drama,  Special Issues in Research Methods, and PhD Thesis. The department also encourages both undergraduate and graduate students to have classes from local and foreign universities via exchange programmes like Erasmus, Mevlana, and Farabi.

This program offered by the Institute of Social Sciences is hosted by the Department of English Language and Literature founded in 1999. The graduate education programme offers degrees for Applied Linguistics (MA), and English Literature (PhD) and English Language (PhD). The program has been running for over 18 years. The MA programme started in 2001-2002, and the PhD programme was initiated in 2008-2009 education term. Although this graduate programme has been offering these degrees, there is no study examining the programme, namely student satisfaction.

The participants of the current study were chosen with convenience sampling which serves "an excellent means of obtaining preliminary information about some research question quickly

and inexpensively" (Berg, 2004, p. 35). 19 participants (F=10; M=9) voluntarily accepted to be interviewed. The demographic information related to the participants is provided in the following table.

Table1

*Demographic Profile Data of the Participants*

| Participant | current Profession | Working Place | Degree | Gender | Age | Homeland | Interview Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seyma | Lecturer | State University | PhD | ♀ | 34 | Trabzon | 17 Jan. 2018 |
| Zeliha | Research Assistant | State University | MA | ♀ | 24 | Rize | 22 Jan. 2018 |
| Sude | Research Assistant | State University | PhD | ♀ | 26 | Kayseri | 6 Feb. 2018 |
| Gizem | English Teacher | Private College | MA | ♀ | 36 | Trabzon | 6 Feb. 2018 |
| Tugce | Lecturer | State University | PhD | ♀ | 35 | Trabzon | 16 Feb. 2018 |
| Kemal | Lecturer | State University | MA | ♂ | 37 | Trabzon | 19 Feb. 2018 |
| Cetin | Lecturer | Private University | MA | ♂ | 27 | Giresun | 26 Feb. 2018 |
| Hayri | Translator | Private Sector | MA | ♂ | 23 | Palestine | 26 Feb. 2018 |
| Ali | English Teacher | Ministry of Education | MA | ♂ | 27 | Trabzon | 1 Mar. 2018 |
| Ebru | English Teacher | Private College | MA | ♀ | 37 | Trabzon | 3 Mar. 2018 |
| Busra | Lecturer | State University | MA | ♀ | 43 | Trabzon | 6 Mar. 2018 |
| Zilan | Lecturer | State University | MA | ♀ | 30 | Trabzon | 7 Mar. 2018 |
| Yusuf | Lecturer | State University | PhD | ♂ | 34 | Rize | 7 Mar. 2018 |
| Ebrar | Lecturer | State University | MA | ♀ | 30 | Ordu | 8 Mar. 2018 |
| Hamit | Lecturer | State University | MA | ♂ | 27 | Trabzon | 12 Mar. 2018 |
| Mustafa | Research Assistant | State University | MA | ♂ | 25 | Erzurum | 16 Mar. 2018 |
| Umut | English Teacher | Ministry of Education | MA | ♂ | 24 | Sivas | 19 Mar. 2018 |
| Tarık | Lecturer | State University | PhD | ♂ | 38 | Samsun | 04 May 2018 |
| Zennure | Research Assistant | State University | PhD | ♀ | - | - | 17 May 2018 |

As is seen above, 19 participants are from diverse provinces of Turkey although most come from Trabzon. Only one is foreign, i.e., from Palestine. Age range is large in that ages start from 24 and go on till 43.

**Data Gathering and Analysis**

Semi-structured individual in-depth interviews were opted for to investigate the participants' satisfaction level and dig deep into their reasons. This technique allows researchers to investigate participant' insights and feelings about a specific program, case, or notion thoroughly (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Queirós et. al, 2017). Besides, via in-depth interviews, it is possible to check answers, ask further questions, and obtain comprehensive information on the subject (Queirós et. al, 2017; Qu & Dumay, 2011). In this case, semi-structured interview was utilised as it enabled the researchers to design a series of questions, change the sequence of them if needed, and ask further questions in response to the replies of the participants. What is more, it was opted for as it is less intrusive in people's lives in that the process may take up much time in organisational settings such as education institutions, otherwise (Bryman, 2004). Here, as most of the participants have been working as academic staff, the researchers did not want to violate the rhythm of responsibilities and thus chose interview at their best convenience.

Two apparatus, Samsung brand, were utilized in the process as tape recorder so as to tolerate data loss in case of possible malfunction. Once the data were gathered, they were stored in a file to be transcribed. In order to eliminate the language related-barriers, collect rich data, and create authentic atmosphere in communication, the interviews were conducted in Turkish. The participant whose mother language was Arabic requested to speak in English as a second language. However, from time to time both parties code-switched from English to Turkish as both the interviewer and the interviewee were fairly fluent in English. As two participants (one male and one female) openly stated their discomfort with being audio recorded, they were offered the chance to respond in a written mode at their best convenience and send the written self-reports to the researchers. The data were gathered in five months, starting in January 2018 and finishing in May 2018. It was challenging to get participants' best convenience. Further the duration of interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 49 minutes.

The qualitative data gathered thorough individual interviews were analyzed by means of content analysis which is a popular method among social scientists to understand people's practices by analysing textual formats of various texts including TV programs, adds, films and news, and scripts gathered from interviews and making interpretations (Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Macnamara, 2005; Yan, McCracken & Crowston, 2014).

All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, a suitable format, soon after the meetings and printed out with the aim of revising and increasing familiarity of the transcribed texts. Following this transaction, the data on narrative text were taxonomically classified and coded to draw meaning, i.e., codes were used as means of inference (Gocer, 2010). Coding is "the process of organising the data into chunks of information and writing a word that represents a category in the margin" (Theron, 2015, p.7). In this case, coding is useful to indicate frequency of occurrences on the transcripts to constitute categories and sub-categories. In content analysis, basically three steps were followed: data organising, data reduction, and data representing (Creswell, 2007). Before starting to analyse the data, the researchers converted the audio data into text data via verbatim transcription. Then they separately looked through this data several times, identified the codes, and created the categories. Later, they compared and contrasted their draft analysis. Lastly, they tabulated their findings and picked up excerpts from the interviews, which are "more illuminative and direct" than the researchers' own words (Cohen et al., 2007).

In the first step of data gathering, some of the participants were visited in their offices, and some were called up since they lived in different cities to have appointment in the best convenient time and place and inform the participants about the study. It was a long and challenging process to have the participants' convenience due to fact that they had to deal with many things simultaneously such as thesis writing, article writing, lecturing, conferencing, and having other academic tasks in addition to their family responsibilities. Also, prior to appointment time most of the participants whose consents were obtained were reminded via messages. In essence, voluntary participation was grounded in the study, i.e., considering their willingness to be interviewed. Before the interviews, the participants were informed about ethical considerations, and they were politely asked for permission of voice record. Additionally, it was emphasized that their contribution would mean a lot to the study. During the interview, when the participants were reluctant to respond any addressed question, they were allowed to leave it unanswered, i.e., participants could skip any

question they were unwilling to answer. To stick to ethical principles, personal identities of the participants were excluded in the study to ensure anonymity. Hence, the participants were given nicknames. In the final step, they were sincerely thanked for valuable contribution and offered kindly chocolate as incentive. It is also worth to note no deception was included in the methodology of study.

The researchers attempted to ensure validity as the touchstone of research through some steps. First, inspired by some studies documented in the related literature (see Hernandez, 2009 and Yılmaz et al., 2017), the researchers devised several interview questions to investigate student satisfaction with both education and service quality of the aforementioned programme. However, for the content validity of the data gathering instrument, the researchers prepared the final version of the prompts taking time and motivation of the participants into account. They also paid much attention to whether the questions cover these two domains from all aspects, i.e., education and service. Both of the researchers worked on them from September 2017 to January 2018. They translated them into Turkish and worked on the translations separately and then together. To increase the reliability, validity, and practicability of the interview questions, i.e., to identify the possible problems with wording and check timing, the first researcher asked for the opinions of her thesis supervision students. After getting their feedback, they prepared the final version of the questions.

Second, the use of multiple researchers is another way of ensuring internal validity. This investigator triangulation (Denzin, 1970, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007) enabled the researchers to design the instrument, identify codes and categories independently in data analysis and later compare and contrast the findings to reach a total agreement. Also, they improved the validity of the qualitative data gathered with interviews by being honest in data representing and documenting the data in its depth and richness via codes, categories, qualities and excerpts taken from interviews without limiting the data to solely numbers (Cohen et al., 2007). During the interviews the researchers encouraged the participants give detailed answers and utilised bridging questions and paraphrase to ensure the correct understanding, and in while reporting their data, they supported the research qualities with detailed respondent excerpts, for "in-depth responses of individuals secure a sufficient level of validity and reliability" (Agar, 1993, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 135) in qualitative research.

Besides, the researchers tried to ensure the transferability of their findings by providing a thick description of research, i.e., every research details about data gathering, analysis, "so that others can decide the extent to which findings from one piece of research are generalizable to another situation" (Schofield, 1990, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 137). In order to address credibility, the researchers utilised peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007) in that the first researchers asked for the opinions of two colleagues, holding MA and PhD degrees in Applied Linguistics, about general methodology. Besides, another expert colleague in the same institution detected some general errors in the data analysis, i.e., overemphasis on quantification of the codes, and therefore the researchers paid much attention to qualities and their support with excerpts in the final version of the report rather than quantifying their findings. Also, the researchers tried to ensure credibility via member checking in that the interviewer paraphrased the responses to check correct understanding and offered the interviewees to add further information.

The present study endeavoured to relieve the participants and elicit honest and detailed answers. The researchers were aware of the possibility that the participants might feel hesitant to answer the questions due to the risk of identification and thus might not voice their real feelings. They tried to control this issue by creating a comfortable interview environment, offering them interview options, developing a rapport with them, allocating enough time to respond, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and offering chance to learn research results in the future. The researchers tried to create a comfortable environment by asking the participants where and when to be interviewed. While most chose to be interviewed in their own office to avoid possible interruptions, some opted for the school cafeteria as they came to school once a week, it was convenient for them, and they could avoid wasting time due to their hectic professional and academic life. Besides, to relieve the participants the researchers offered them options. As two of them voiced their discomfort in being audio recorded, they were asked to answer the questions by writing their answers on paper at home and sending the written reports to the researchers later. Besides, the researchers tried to establish a good rapport with the participants by informing them that they were investigating their satisfaction as a BA graduate project and they were going to present the findings in an international conference in Sinop, a Turkish province along the Black Sea situated on the most northern edge of Black Sea. This transparency was believed to help them trust the researchers and be honest with their answers (Booth & Booth, 1994). They also tried to reduce their possible anxiety by making

small talks about their life, studies, and the department. They also allowed time for responding and waited patiently when they were silent as these are believed to ensure honest answers (Elmir, Schmied, Jackson & Wilkes, 2011). Furthermore, at the very beginning of the process the participants were ensured confidentiality and anonymity by not asking any personal information and promising to give nicknames to them in the report. Lastly, they were offered chance to learn research results by asking the contact information of those who wanted to learn more.

The methodology part should conclude by clarifying the roles of the researchers. The first researcher working as a both researcher and lecturer at the institution for 8 years is an expert in Applied Linguistics, and thus she guided the whole process from reading to reporting and gave the right methodological decisions about data gathering, analysis, and reporting. They read and internalise the existing body of literature together. The second researcher studying at the department for 4 years took an active role in that she got appointment from the participants and conducted most of the interviews at the best convenience of the participants. However, the first researcher made contact with the participants and asked whether they were willing to be interviewed. After the researchers transcribed the data, they analysed it separately, compared and contrasted their findings, and prepared a reader-friendly research report at the end.

## Findings and Discussion

The results of the content analysis are presented theme by theme and supported with tables in a reader friendly way. Besides, excerpt taken from interviews are utilised to support each theme.

### Satisfaction with Education Quality

In the current study education quality should be understood as a concept with diverse parameters, including supervisor, instructor, curriculum, course content, teaching methods, assessment and evaluation, learning climate, and academic attainments. The related findings are presented one by one below.

Most of the participants seemed to be highly satisfied with their supervisors/advisors as the positive codes exceed the negative ones (n=74; 12, respectively). The following table quantify the related findings.

Table 2

*Encoded Participant Comments about Supervisors/Advisors*

| Satisfaction Codes | f | Dissatisfaction Codes | f |
|---|---|---|---|
| Being specialist in field | 11 | Not sharing enough time for students | 2 |
| Having good communication with students | 9 | Having really busy schedule | 3 |
| Having pedagogical competence | 8 | Not giving detailed supervisor feedback | 2 |
| Guiding students in thesis writing well | 7 | Supervising too many students together | 2 |
| Being expert in research/academic issues | 6 | Having difficulty in accessing supervisor whenever they want | 1 |
| Supervising students about various issues | 5 | Getting feedback late | 1 |
| Providing needed feedback and guidance | 3 | Not offering orientation training | 1 |
| Being accessible whenever students want | 3 | | |
| Providing expert opinion for students' works | 2 | | |
| Getting highly detailed feedback | 2 | | |
| Being understandable | 2 | | |
| Being student-friendly | 2 | | |
| Having open vision | 1 | | |
| Being meticulous | 1 | | |
| Behaving well | 1 | | |
| Publishing in prestigious journals | 1 | | |
| Having academic conversation out of class | 1 | | |
| Providing encouragement about academic tasks | 1 | | |
| Valuing students work | 1 | | |
| Encouraging critical thinking | 1 | | |
| Sharing his own sources with students | 1 | | |
| Capable of making a topic understandable for students | 1 | | |
| Allocating much time for students | 1 | | |
| Providing hints about academic writing | 1 | | |
| Showing required care and attention | 1 | | |
| Guiding students how to reach sources | 1 | | |
| TOTAL | *74* | | *12* |
| | *86.04* | | *13.95* |

The fact that supervisors are equipped with knowledge seems the basic reason for high satisfaction with the programme. The participants admired their supervisors as they were believed to have deep subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, expertise in their field, and the capacity to supervise their students about several issues. To illustrate, the first participant clarified how her supervisor's field knowledge expanded her horizon and satisfied her:

> *"Field information. Absolutely, he has the command of field information. And, he has both the command of field information and of the eee research well research traditions. Namely, what we mean by field information, he has the command of courses, topic in the field of applied linguistics. As I said, I learned from him whatever I learned on how to research, how to publish to broaden my horizon. Plus, that is to say, I think that he is pretty competent in field information."* (Seyma, female, PhD, 17 January 2018)

Besides, the participants were found happy with good communication with their supervisors. They reported that their supervisors were accessible all the time and they could ask for their expert opinion whenever and wherever they wanted. The following excerpt exemplifies the good communication between students and supervisors:

> *"Absolutely, I am satisfied with his communication very much. There is no time limitation anyway of my advisor. He is a well someone who can be accessible well at all hours. At least, this is true of me. I do not know for others. However, eee, for me, any moment that I want including weekend, evenings, when a problem occurred, when ee I asked, he gives answers all my works that I did. I am satisfied with him."* (Yusuf, male, MA, 7 March 2018)

The participants were also found satisfied with personal qualities of their supervisors, for they described them as students-friendly, encouraging, understandable, kind, careful, and encouraging. To illustrate, the following participant expressed how encouraging her supervisor was and appreciated whatever she did in the programme:

> *"Eee now, I did masters' and doctorate here. Ee, I studied with the same advisor in both. When I generally considered I was satisfied with my advisor. Why was I satisfied? Ee, my advisor has a broad ee vision, he encouraged me consistently in terms of academic works. He appreciated what I did. You know, he encouraged me in respect of publishing consistently. Indeed, I was satisfied with him in this sense. I learned things on research from my advisor. To tell the truth, as I think that he was one of the best of program I am generally satisfied with my advisor."* (Seyma, female, PhD, 17 January 2018)

Although satisfaction with supervisors is high, based on their supervision experience three participants complained about the busy schedules of their supervisors, which result in less time spent for each students and insufficient feedback. This may result from the fact that the academic staff is limited although the programme accepts approximately 10 new students each year. Lecturers have to supervise more than ten students altogether, and this automatically decreases the quality of time the two parties spend together. For instance, the following excerpt shows that as supervisors are responsible for guiding so many students simultaneously, they cannot allocate enough time for each, and thus the students cannot get enough feedback about their academic products:

> *"There were some points that I was not satisfied with. That is to say, since my advisor was very busy, for instance, ıımm time, he was limiting the time that he would allocate me. Maybe he had to do so or he trusted my competences, namely, he was setting me free. If I had kept order, this might have caused procrastination. But, what happened, I could manage the process thanks to my competences. In another words, one biggest complaint of mine is that my advisor could not allocate me enough time."* (Seyma, female, PhD, 17 January 2018)

The picture about programme instructors is almost the same in that almost all were found satisfied with the academic staff. While the positive codes about instructors are 56, the negative ones are 17. Similar to supervisors, the academic staff was found really sincere and friendly (n=8) and quite competent in their fields (n=15), thereby equipping students academically well in a friendly atmosphere. They were praised to have good communication with their students (n=9), to adopt positive attitudes towards students (n=5), to have pedagogical competence (n=4), to share their sources with students (n=2), to be accessible (n=2), and to encourage students (n=2). The following two excerpts exemplify two common aspects that the students were happy with, i.e., good communication and field expertise:

> *"In the class and out, I saw, namely, other universities. I had been in ee many universities. I took courses. Well, that is to say, I mean, the environment in KTU is friendlier. There is a very close relationship between lecturers and students here. Ee, I mean, within affection and respect without crossing the line, to me it should be so, and there is a friendly relationship between lecturers and students. Let's say friendship. Namely, it goes beyond sometimes. I mean, it sometimes becomes just like brotherhood beyond friendship for us. I mean, I like this very much, this condition."* (Hayri, male, PhD, 17 February2018)

*"Their pedagogical competences are pretty good. That is to say, as I said, I learned from them whatever I learned. Their materials, rich methods are suitable for critical thinking. They are the characters who offer you every kind of opportunity to stand on your legs by yourself in an independent way in this world, I mean academic world, to widen your horizon and to publish."* (Seyma, female, PhD, 17 January 2018)

Despite several strenghts of the programme, the participants self-reported some negative aspects: lecturers extending class time (n=4), assigning students with heavy course loads (n=3), lacking expertise in various fields (n=3), lacking experience (n=3), providing inadequate feedback for student assignments (n=1), having poor communication with students (n=1), and not encouraging them about academic career (n=1). The former two codes should be interpreted with caution in that these points cannot be interpreted as negative ones solely by looking at self-reports. As the programme administration has high expectations of the programme, the lecturers may need to extend course duration which is 90 minutes to keep up with the heavy course load and schedule.

The results that show that participants openly expressed how content they were with their supervisors and academic staff prove that education quality is more influential agent towards students' satisfaction than service quality. This finding is tandem with the ones of Osman, Saputra and Saha (2017), who found a direct relationship between student satisfaction and programme quality. They concluded that program quality covering academic factor, curriculum, and teaching methods is vital in the sense that students tend to associate it with reputation and more job opportunities. These two apply to Turkish education context as universities are the prime requirements for job placement in Turkey. These also support the findings of Ekinci and Burgaz (2007) in that their participants found academic services and relations very important. They were really happy with their supervisors, which may show that academic supervisors do things appropriately and on time. However, in the current study although the participants were happy with expertise of and good relationships with their supervisors, they complained how they spent insufficient time and they could not provide timely feedback. This could be explained with the high number of students per advisor. Besides, they found that their participants were less satisfied with the academic guidance of their supervisors about career prospects after graduation, which should be interpreted as high future anxiety. However, in the current study future anxiety was not identified, which may result from the fact that the MA and PhD candidates are well equipped with abilities to make themselves heard in the academic world and provided chances to express

themselves in conferences and articles during their education. Some lecturers also require them to publish as course requirement, which all inform the candidates about future career prospects. The findings of the current study are also in line with those of Elliot and Healy (2011), who found that academic consultancy and educational adequacy, i.e., instructional effectiveness, influence satisfaction degree of attendees much. Similarly, the results support those of Erichsen, Bolliger and Halupa (2014), who found that majority of the trainees were satisfied with their mentors thanks to their characteristics of being communicable, friendly, cooperative, respectful, expert in their fields and willing to allocate time for consultation and feedback. Similar to the current study, they also found that some complained about their supervisors as they were incommunicable, distanced, inexpert in their practice, inadequate in supporting feedback and time, and it was difficult for them to change their supervisors.

The participants were found highly satisfied about programme curriculum and course contents (42 positive and 5 negative related codes). They openly reported their satisfaction as the programme staff is transparent in that they inform them about the course syllabus at the very beginning of the term (n=13), and the course syllabuses are carefully followed (n=9). They also reported that the programme provides course variety (n=6), courses cover current issues (n=4), and course contents are relevant to the field (n=3). They were also found happy to have been offered elective courses and those about sub-disciplines (n=2). They also stated that recent articles were read and analysed in the course (n=2), and their awareness increased with interesting, high-level, and serious topics. For instance, the following excerpt illustrates how courses attracted their attention and encouraged them to analyse, synthesise, and make inferences:

> *"Course contents were very crashing and effective. Without focusing on only one source, we had lessons focusing on research and exploring. Theory knowledge was not provided readily available. We reached this knowledge by ourselves and in the process of application we made them more strengthened. Thus, I am very satisfied."*
> (Zennure, female, PhD, 17 May 2018)

On the other hand, four participants complained that the programme still needs to cover various applied linguistics courses, and the course contents should be enriched. The point to be made here is that there is still plenty of room for further improvement in the programme as it lacks variety at academic staff and thus course level.

The participants were all found positive about teaching methods and techniques used by the academic staff in the programme. They reported that these techniques of their instructors providede theme good examples as they are directly applicable in their own classes (n=7). They said that they loved the discussion technique (n=6), which stimulated student participation and interaction. They also expressed how much they loved these student-oriented techniques that encouraged active learning. They found these techniques appropriate for the academic world and useful to contribute to their self-confidence and academic career development:

> *"Oh! Method and technique! As we learn consciously, let's say, we study more. Well, the method here is mostly oriented to student. Since, students make presentation, students do research ee, for instance our lecturers let us make presentations. Every week, one talks about a chapter, for instance, or we start a research paper in the class. At first, proposal later on, we go on writing introduction, literature review. I mean, it is applied as it has the name applied linguistics program. We do it in an applied way. I am pretty satisfied. You can already watch things on the internet via videos or read them on books that instructors lecture, they are the same. Here, in an applied way, instructor guide us like a supervisor. We try to learn consciously by ourselves."* (Hayri, male, PhD, 26 February 2018)

Although most participants were satisfied with their supervisors, lecturers, programme curriculum and course content, the content analysis brought several complaints about assessment and evaluation. The ones who were dissatisfied with assessment and evaluation are almost equal to those positive ones as is seen in the following table:

Table 3

*Encoded Participant Comments on Assessment and Evaluation*

| Satisfaction | f | Dissatisfaction | f |
|---|---|---|---|
| Having fair assessment | 9 | Having unfair exam assessment for some courses | 7 |
| Benefiting from alternative assessment techniques | 8 | Not benefiting from multiple-choice exam | 2 |
| Making use of paper writing | 2 | Undertaking over course-load for scoring | 2 |
| Utilizing pen and paper exam | 2 | Facing with unfamiliar topics in exam | 2 |
| Benefiting from reading to get knowledge | 1 | Getting low mark in spite of working hard | 2 |

| Satisfaction | f | Dissatisfaction | f |
|---|---|---|---|
| Getting high marks from instructors | 1 | Forgetting things due to fill in the blank exam | 1 |
| Benefiting from proposal writing | 1 | Ignoring general performance | 1 |
| Taking advantage of techniques to help article writing and publishing | 1 | Getting shocked with unexpected exam result | 1 |
| | | Having make-up exam in spite of working hard | 1 |
| | | Not getting what they really deserve in exams | 1 |
| | | Taking exams in a short time | 1 |
| TOTAL | 25 | | 21 |
| | 54.34 | | 45.65 |

As is seen in the table above, 9 participants were found happy with assessment and found testing fair. It also seems that the participants appreciated the use of alternative assessment techniques rather than solely using traditional pen and pencil exams (n=8). The following female participant listed several testing techniques employed in the programme and said how appropriate these were for graduate education:

> *"It is a good question now. Normally, there are not many such exams called pen and paper as we know traditional pen and pencil. What is then? Well, you take courses all along the semester. You read, your instructor gives you tasks during the semester or in the semester. You carry out those tasks. For instance, they may be observation, paper writing, proposal writing, or some instructors say that you will attend at least one conference to pass this course or you will write a full paper or so on. I mean, there is not traditional pen and paper exams in this department. There is alternative assessment. Namely, that is to say, preparing well, presenting we made many presentations. Accordingly, I am quite satisfied, it should be like this."* (Seyma, female, PhD, 17 January 2018)

However, the number of dissatisfied ones with the testing system is almost equal (n=7) as they found exam results unfair. Besides, the programme utilises alternative assessment techniques such as open book exams, take home exams, portfolios and etc, and two were found unhappy with this as they openly voiced their wish for multiple-choice written exams. This wish may result from the fact that students are mostly familiar with this testing technique as the centrally structured Turkish education system evaluates student success with multiple choice exams. Two also found course load really heavy and complained that they had serious responsibilities to pass courses. To illustrate, the following excerpt states how unhappy she was as average matters most in admission to PhD programmes:

> *"Here, that is the point I am not satisfied with. To me, I can tell I am satisfied with given education. However, assessment and evaluation, namely, we are master students. To tell the truth, I come here from a different department, too, I studied very much, I believe that I focused on my works. But, in a word, the marks I got made me upset. Okay, marks are not important; however, namely, I put my efforts and you do homework, in return, how I should know. Yes, the marks I got sometimes made me upset at the same time, namely, or if you ask our instructors, they will state that marks maybe are not important. But, you are required to get an average to enter PhD program. Well, for instance in some classes, well I actually do not tell this for all, well, I got the good marks in the classes I did homework. In a class, something happened, namely, ah, right I did this, I did this too, I did, yet the mark is CB that well makes me upset."* (Zilan, female, MA, 7 March 2018)

Similarly, in the following excerpt the participant told an experience in which he got a very low mark despite much effort; however, in another one, he got the highest mark although he did not do much. He showed how perplexed he was about these two testing experiences as he could not understand the criteria used to test his knowledge and evaluate his effort:

> *"Do I consider it fair? Ee, ah, to me ee, for instance something happened like this. I laughed at that very much. I took a course from L1 in the first semester. Ee, it was like well, it was well like this. Even, well, he himself brought me a book when I was in a different course. We were in old building then, ee, namely, it is going well, he said that let's make this a paper so-and-so. Later, it was going well. Then, it was semester vacation so-and-so, but you know there is not a thing namely such a thing like break. You go on, you go on. Later on, now, I looked that the instructor gave me CC. Again, in the second semester, I took a different course. This time, I did not put much effort. It was normal, I got AA, now, this time I felt well, let's not say unfair to that ee or let's not say unfair, but I felt a contradiction. In a word, there is a parameter that I do not understand. Well, one waits, you say that this work is very good. Let's make it a paper and present it in the conference so forth. E you say that things are going well you get CC. This time, you get AA from the work he did not tell a positive thing. I wonder whether he confused courses or students, namely let's not say unfair, but ee just like a little consistent, maybe consistent is not a correct word. However, well, I got a result that I did not expect."* (Umut, male, MA, 19 March 2018)

It is clearly seen that fair testing and evaluation is one of the main factors that ensures programme satisfaction and advisability. These findings about assessment and evaluation are in line with those of Ekinci and Burgaz (2007), who reported that their respondents cared about fair evaluation of exams, projects, other tasks, and quality of activities in the course that would contribute to their achievement. They rightly concluded that students have high expectations of fair assessment and evaluation. Similarly, the participants in the current study were found

highly sensitive about appropriate and fair evaluation of their work as everybody naturally wants good conclusions about what they have done in a process. Also similar to the study of Kaya and Engin (2007), some participants were found dissatisfied with assessment and evaluation of their exam results. A possible explanation for this finding is that the participants in both studies were unhappy as the assessment criteria were not shared with them. This may affect them negatively in that their anxiety increases and their motivation to study and learn more decreases. In line with what they suggest, the participants in the current study voiced their wish for improvement of correlation between course content and assessment and transparency about assessment and evaluation.

Another aspect of education quality is learning climate. The participants were found satisfied with it in that there were more positive codes than the negative ones (30; 6, respectively). The classroom environment was found warm (n=9) as there was good friendship among peers (n=3), and the sparsely populated classrooms (n=4) enabled good peer to peer interaction (n=3). However, one participant found the learning climate stressful particularly when MA and PhD students took common classes. And one voted for more flexible environments as the existing ones are sometimes boring. The following excerpt illustrates the general attitude towards classroom climate:

> *"Well, this program necessarily includes class that has few students utmost 5, 6, or 7 students. And, graduate education is always paid great importance in this department. The best classes were allocated for them. They were given priority. The best place was allocated for them. The classes were equipped technologically. For instance, there is projection. Accordingly, communication among peers is very good. For example, such well, you know, we are an eastern community. There is a strict relationship between teacher and students. Normally, it should be like that. But, it is not the same in doctorate education or masters' education. You are more sincere. As the occasion arises, you can have incentives. For instance, your lecturer can offer you chocolate, coffee or he can say that let's go to the canteen, he can say that let's have lunch in that cafe. When I think generally, I put them all in concept of classroom climate. And, I am pretty satisfied."* (Seyma, female, PhD, 17 January 2018)

The last element of education quality is academic attainments. Almost all the participants were found quite content with the academic attainments of the programme. They reported that the programme taught them how to research (n=13), enhanced their oral presentation skills (n=11), taught them how to write academic articles (n=11), fostered their academic language and awareness (n=5), instructed them about how to read and interpret scholarly journal articles

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(n=4), enabled them to practise language (n=3), provided opportunities to present in conferences (n=2), taught them how to research and publish in prestigious journals (n=3), and helped them gain new insights in language teaching (n=2). Yet, two complained that the programme did not improve their language skills enough and not encourage them to produce academically. In the following excerpt, the participant reported how this graduate education helped him make his voice heard in the academic platforms by producing academically:

> *"Research abilities. We learned what research is, what to do from the beginning. We researched ee especially in research classes. Well, we wrote proposals, we wrote articles. For instance, as I said, I attended two conferences there are things of them. Well, I have 3 published articles in total until now. Well, I carried out them with things that I attained here, I mean, with the supports of instructors, thanks to feedback of them. I mean I published by studying ee with instructors."* (Cetin, male, MA, 26 February 2018)

The results show that most of the participants were content with the programme's academic attainments as it helped them improve professionally and made their voice heard in the academic arena thanks to conferences and academic articles. Many of the students were found to utilise the classes on research; however, this finding is contrary to those of Hernández (2009) in that it was seen that knowledge on research method was not greatly benefited by the participants in that study. A possible explanation for this is that the graduates in their study mostly work as teachers, and they cannot or do not want to apply research methods at their job and do not see research as their main duty. However, in the current study one of the ultimate aims of the programme is to equip students well regarding theory and academic productions, and the students regard conducting systematic scientific research and publishing in scholarly journals as their main responsibility in their job. Yılmaz et al. (2017) also found that MA students did not gain academic attainments as doctoral students did. Similarly, in the current study PhD students seem to have obtained more attainments in the program compared to those of MA students. This might result from the fact that the ability to conduct scholarly research is gained in time, and as MA students in the current programme are at the very beginning of their academic journey and not well-equipped with publication skills yet, they generally try to get as much as theoretical information, and in PhD they transfer whatever they have learned into practice and start to produce academically.

**Satisfaction with Service Quality**

In addition to education quality, students' satisfaction with service quality was also investigated in the current study. Service quality should be understood as administrative services and physical facilities. The related findings are presented one by one below.

While 22 positive codes were created about administrative services, 9 negative ones were identified. The participants were satisfied with getting answers for their questions by Social Educational Institution (n=5), gaining required support in academic, registration, and technique terms (n=4), getting good service by departmental administration (n=3), being treated well by the departmental administration (n=3), having easy communication with them (n=1), having student-friendly and smiling staff (n=1 for each), and adopting an open-minded and innovatory management (n=1). However, three participants complained about the careless/too many procedural steps by Social Educational Institute (n=3), strict attitude by Social Education Institute (n=2), quite strict thesis writing guide (n=2), delayed announcement by the departmental administration (n=1), and the difficulty in reaching Social Educational Institute by phone (n=1). To illustrate, the following excerpt shows how hard the head of the department worked and how students appreciated his administrative efforts:

> *"The manager of program, the coordinator of masters' program is (...), but our head of department is (...) as he is the head of Western Language and Literature. (...), pretty how to say, works like a municipality. He works like an atom ant. He provides his support for everyone in everywhere. He organizes everything in a good way. He coordinates. I am pretty satisfied. Amongst these, organizing lecturers, courses, I mean, he even gives an idea that where a chain should be placed in any case. That is to say, I can say that he keeps alive the department."* (Hayri, male, MA, 26 February 2018)

When the answers about the physical facilities were analysed, it was seen that the picture is almost the same in that most were found content with these services. While the positive codes are 78, the negative ones are 33. The participants were found satisfied due to clean classrooms (n=16), good Internet connection (n=9), good security service (n=8), technologically well-equipped classrooms (n=7), easy transportation (n=7), good library loan service and off-campus service (n=6), rich online library service (n=5), satisfactory canteen service with food variety and friendly staff (n=11), and good heating (n=1). On the other hand, some complaints were identified: lack of financial assistance for academic attempts (n=7), entrance fee to

campus (n=4), poor security service (n=5), poor transportation service (n=3), problems with Internet connection (n=4), lack of a departmental library (n=2), hygiene problem with canteen service (n=2), poor library sources (n=2), lack of support for accommodation (n=1), poor food quality in the canteen (n=1), crowded and small central library (n=1), and unclean classrooms (n=1). To illustrate, in the following excerpt the participant expressed how online library services and off-campus connection helped him reach sources easily:

> *"Let's say that there is no printed book anymore. We use online library anymore. To me, (...) University is very good. We have plenty of online library, online data base. When we entered well into catalogue page or well into online library, I mean, there is almost nothing you cannot find that you look for. That is to say, we can find thousands of articles, thesis, well, book. I mean, you can access and down load these in the event that you have internet connection of university or use off-campus access when you are out without any trouble."* (Hayri, male, MA, 26 February 2018)

However, the following excerpt exemplifies how students were unhappy as they were not supported financially by the programme as the participant needed to pay all his expenses on his own although what he did all contributed to the academic prestige of the institution:

> *"Whereas, when a student attends again on behalf of (...), you represent (...)there, as I said the name of (...)is mentioned in your article ee in the full text article; however, there is no support related to this. I went to Vienne and came. Later, again I went to Rome last year. I went to Italy, there were expenses nearly 3000 Turkish liras that was paid from my pocket. I did not take any financial assistance either from school or from others, but only with my family's support simply because to get certificate and to have a published article. Ee later, I went to Ordu, it was an international conference, it was cheaper in Ordu, but I paid about 500 liras from my pocket. When you save all these, now, I have paid ee about 6 thousand or 7 thousand from my pocket for conferences in two years. The name of (...) was included in all, ee we increased the thing, I mean, it increases ee academic level recognisability, whatever it is, we increased its rank. But, I have not even taken any financial assistance from (...)until now."* (Cetin, male, MA, 26 February 2018)

Poor library service and lack of financial support were also found as two aspects that decrease student satisfaction with the programme in the recent study of Al-Dulaimi (2016). Also the satisfaction with the administrative staff was also identified in earlier studies (see for instance, Özçetin & Gök, 2017). On the other hand, student satisfaction with service quality is contrary to the results of Okumuş and Duygun (2008), who found that the participants were unsatisfied with physical facilities such as efficiency of materials employed in the class, cleaning of

classes, course surroundings, and modern appearance of the department. High satisfaction with the physical facilities in the current programme could be associated with the fact that the administration attaches great importance to the quality of the graduate programme and allocate resources for it. Besides, the building where the graduate education is offered is the newest building of the campus, and therefore it is natural to be clean and modern.

**Self-reported Suggestions to Improve the Programme**

The participants were also asked to provide their suggestions to improve both education and service quality of the programme. Their suggestions are listed in the following table:

Table 4

*Participants' Suggestions for Programme Improvement*

| Participant Suggestions | n |
| --- | --- |
| Offering accommodation service | 8 |
| Inviting guest lecturers in different fields | 3 |
| Employing more instructors expertising in various fields | 2 |
| Offering rubric for assessment and evaluation | 2 |
| Increasing field sources in library | 2 |
| Assigning supervisors with fewer students | 1 |
| Offering more careful supervision services | 1 |
| Providing a more flexible thesis writing guide by Social Education Institution | 1 |
| Offering stronger and more effective advising service | 1 |
| Supervising students about steps of thesis writing well | 1 |
| Studying more practical issues in language teaching | 1 |
| Accepting fewer students for graduation program to spare quality time | 1 |
| Providing more flexible schedule | 1 |
| Offering courses related to ELT | 1 |
| Sharing syllabus with students | 1 |
| Speaking English rather Turkish in classrooms | 1 |
| Encouraging students with financial aid for academic works | 1 |
| Allocating office for students | 1 |
| Adding elective course | 1 |
| Investigating the reasons for dropping out the program | 1 |
| Improving good communication between lecturers and students | 1 |
| Providing clear announcement on web-site by Social Education Institution | 1 |

| Participant Suggestions | n |
| --- | --- |
| Serving updated information on departmental web-site | 1 |
| Equipping library with enough computers | 1 |
| Holding student festivals for recognisability | 1 |
| Preparing weekly language magazine | 1 |
| Providing self-service food in canteen | 1 |
| Offering more understanding management service | 1 |

One of thee suggestion was to add variety to courses the programme offers by increasing the number of lecturers expertising in various fields:

> *"(...) but as I said before, if diversity in instructors can be provided, course curriculum automatically will become verified, too. To illustrate, for instance, I have graduated from here. I had my doctorate degree from here, for instance, I study in the field of English as an international language or English as a lingua franca. For instance, I do not see why not such a course is offered here. If I were an instructor here, this course automatically would be offered. For example, we have an instructor here graduated from this program; his field is corpus, well corpus. Accordingly, when this instructor is accepted to the program, corpus course will be offered right away. What does it show? Just as diversity in instructors increases so the richness of course curriculum increases."* (Seyma, female, PhD, 17 January 2018)

In addition to course variety, one common complain about the programme was the busy schedules of the supervisors, which hindered them from providing effective feedback and dealing with students individually and carefully:

> *"Oh! A better way, I feel lack of, well, namely to me, now we will go on the stage of thesis writing. I think that we are not guided for thesis writing process well. It is as if they wanted us to research and find on our own. I wish that they show us one by one. You will start just like this and you will go on like this, and so on. Apart from this, I wish to have opportunity to meet with advisors one by one. That is to say, both we do not have time and instructors do not have, too. I wish to have one by one meeting."* (Umut, male, MA, 19 March 2018)

**Overall Satisfaction and Programme Advisability**

The participants were also asked whether they would suggest the programme for new candidates to investigate the advisability of the programme. 3 of them certainly advised the PhD programme for the opportunity of overseas study, collaboration with recognizable and

prestigious universities, and academic staff with field and pedagogical knowledge. 3 recommended the PhD programme with the condition that the newcomers should spend much time and effort on their classes, get used to heavy course load and busy schedule, and take the programme seriously. Similarly, while 4 recommended the MA programme for the newcomers, 8 advised it on the condition that students should be ready for heavy course load.

Lastly, the participants were asked to score the programme out of 10. The median score was 7.4, which should be understood that the participants were fairly satisfied with the programme mostly due to high education quality. Yet, it was seen that there is much room for improvements regarding supervision, schedules, assessment and evaluation, and financial support.

## Conclusion

The aim of this exploratory case study is to find out the satisfaction level of MA and PhD students' enrolled at the Applied Linguistics programme of a public higher education institution in Turkey. The findings show that education quality was found as an influential agent in student satisfaction. The participants valued the field knowledge of both their supervisors and lecturers and appreciated their attempts to direct their academic works. In another words, they seemed to value the academic staff having a sound knowledge of academic issues. They openly stated how happy they were as this knowledge enables them to make their voice heard in the academic arena by presenting in conferences and publishing in scholarly journals. Yet, the participants complained about the busy schedules of their supervisors as they cannot spend enough time for them. As Phillips and Pugh (2010) observe, students expect their supervisors carefully read their works, write comment on them, and make an overall evaluation, and if they cannot get this attention, bad feeling and communication breakdown are indispensable. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to assign fewer students to each supervisor in such programmes to ensure healthy MA and PhD supervision process with effective feedback sessions, which could bring about high quality academic attainments. However, unfortunately the number of MA and PhD students is really high in Turkish universities, and it may not be possible for advisors to offer individual care. Here, increasing student autonomy and equipping them well with academic strategies including time management could serve well to boost student independence. Such self-sufficient students may help themselves to learn

independently, their peers to conduct fruitful tasks, and their advisors to save much time. Besides, peer coaching could be encouraged in that more experienced and proficient students could lead small groups, guide them, analyse their needs, and may report back to their advisors. As Phillips and Pugh (2010) rightly note, the attempts of giving effective feedback are vital, for this process help them "eventually learn how to evaluate their own work and so take over this part of the supervisor's job themselves", and "In the longer term, they have to be taught how to become independent researchers in their own right" (Phillips & Pugh, 2010, p. 158). Although the existing lecturers were highly appreciated, the findings show that the number of academic staff should be increased to ensure course variety, better consultancy services and high-quality time allocated for students, which all could promote university rank and prestige.

It is also seen that they value their relationship with their supervisors and lecturers, in that the friendly communication and easy access to them encourage them and earn the sense of programme ownership. Having good communicative skills is one of them most desired socio-affective skills for effective language educators and supervisors, and they are expected to have the personality traits of being understanding, open, supportive, caring and loving, motivating, and friendly (Erbay, Erdem, & Sağlamel, 2014; Phillips & Pugh, 2010). Thus, as Phillips and Pugh (2010) rightly put, an effective supervisor should not only deal with academic issues but also evaluate their relationship with their students and attempt to find ways to better it.

However, one of the most commonly criticised points is assessment. The ones who are satisfied and dissatisfied with assessment and evaluation were found almost equal. They complained that the lecturers should be transparent about their rubrics and evaluation criteria. Also it was seen that they are not happy as they cannot get whatever they deserved no matter how hard they try sometimes. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to announce scoring rubrics and criteria and their justification at the very beginning of course or any performance and to be open about all requirements. Similarly, Brown (2004) suggests that all grading criteria about the final grade "need to be *explicitly stated in writing* to students at the beginning of the term of study, with a designation of percentages or weighting figures for each component" (p. 285, emphasis in original). This transparency, i.e., student awareness about the reasons why these are set, is vital to motivate student learning (Jonsson, 2014). Besides, it could be practical to use alternatives in assessment, i.e., *triangulation*, in that only formal tests cannot serve well to "capture the totality of students' competence", and thus techniques beyond tests including

portfolios, journals, conference and interviews, observations, and self and peer-assessments could be utilised (Brown, 2004, p. 284).

As indicated by the findings, some graduate students grumbled about heavy course load. Seeing that they have to travel from different cities to their school every week and have both professional and familial responsibilities, a more flexible program might be created. Here distance education could be suggested for those who come from distance provinces.

In addition to education quality, service quality was also found satisfying by the participants. Yet, lack of a departmental library seems to bother them much. Thus, it could be better to design a library full with related academic sources at the department as library services contribute to student satisfaction in a positive way (Erdoğan & Bulut, 2015). Here academic staff could share their sources to create a common library that can serve well for academic needs of MA and PhD candidates.

A note of caution is necessary that as this is a small-scale explorative case study, the findings cannot be generalised to larger settings to provide a full description of Turkish graduate education context. Besides, as the participants might feel hesitant as they could be identified and this could hamper their academic career, they might not voice their real feelings. Therefore, further studies could utilise options to avoid respondent bias, i.e., to boost the participants' willingness to give accurate answers experiences and talk about their experiences such as self-reporting, which served really well in the current study for the two participants feeling uncomfortable about being recorded. Besides, "assessment and evaluation" phenomenon was found as one of the most significant aspects to determine student satisfaction, and thus further studies could focus on this particular issue in depth.

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