

Öğretmenlerin Yazılı Anlatım Öğretimi Hakkındaki İnanç ve Uygulamalarına Durum Çalışmaları Üzerinden Bir Bakış

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ÖZ:

Öğretmen inançları, öğretmenlerin eğitim-öğretim süreci içinde verdikleri kararlar ve öğrenci davranışları hakkındaki beklentilerini yönlendiren inanç sistemleri veya derin felsefi prensipleri olarak tanımlanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, ilkökul öğretmenlerinin yazılı anlatım öğretimi hakkındaki inançları ve uygulamaları hakkında bilgi edinmektir. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin yazılı anlatım öğretimi hakkında belirttiği düşünceleri ile sınıf uygulamaları, mesleki ve eğitim geçmişleri ve buldukları okul türü arasında ne gibi bir ilişki bulunduğunu tespit etmektir. Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmış ve veriler görüşmeler ve sınıf gözlemleri ile toplanmıştır. Veriler öğretmenler arasında yazılı anlatım öğretimi hakkında çok farklı görüşler benimsediklerini ve aynı kategoriye ait öğretmenlerin yazılı anlatım uygulamaları arasında önemli farklılıklar olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Veriler ayrıca öğretmenlerin benimsedikleri öğretim şekline aykırı olmasına rağmen beceriyi esas alan, öğretmen merkezli öğretim şeklini uyguladıklarını göstermiştir. Öğretmenlerin inançları ve uygulamalarının buldukları okul türüne göre –devlet veya özel- çok değişiklik göstermediği ama sahip oldukları eğitim ve mesleki geçmişlerinin etkili olabileceği gözlenmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: öğretmen inançları, yazılı anlatım

ÖZET

Problem Durumu: İlerlemeci-yenilikçi yaklaşıma dayanan en son yazılı anlatım teorileri bireyin kendi sesini keşfetmesi yoluyla kişisel gelişim ve benlik yapılandırma ile ilgili uygulamalar sunmuşlardır. Öğrencilerin birer yazar olmanın gerektirdiği birçok değişik rolleri araştırma fırsatı bulacakları çevreleri yaratmak için, öğretmenler öğrencilerin birer okur, yazar ve düşünür olarak kendileri hakkında sahip oldukları kanıları sorgulamalarını sağlamalıdır (Marzano, 1991). Bununla beraber öğretmenlerin yazı ve sınıf içindeki yazılı anlatım uygulamaları hakkında sahip oldukları inançlar öğrencilerin yazma süreci ve performans algılarını, hangi yazıyı iyi sayıldığı hakkındaki düşüncelerini ve ayrıca bu genç yazarların kendi kimliklerini şekillendirirken tavır ve rollere nasıl uyum sağladıklarını etkiler (Flint & Cappello, 2003). Öğretmenlerin sahip oldukları inançların onların karar verme süreçleri üzerinde büyük etkisi olduğundan ve gerçek sınıf uygulamalarını yönlendirdiğinden dolayı öğretmenlerin uygulamalarını içeren hangi tartışma olursa olsun inançların etkisi mutlaka düşünülmelidir (Brantlinger, 1996; Pajares, 1992).

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmanın amacı ilkökul öğretmenlerinin yazılı anlatım öğretimi hakkında benimsedikleri teorileri ve uygulamalarını araştırmaktır. Bu amaçla şu sorulara yanıt aranmıştır: (a) bu araştırmaya katılan ilkökul öğretmenlerinin yazılı anlatım öğretimi hakkında sahip oldukları düşünceler (benimsedikleri teoriler) nelerdir? (b) öğretmenlerin yazılı anlatım öğretimi hakkında belirttiği düşünceler ile sınıf uygulamaları, mesleki ve eğitim geçmişleri ve buldukları okul türü arasında ne gibi bir ilişki vardır?

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: İlkökul öğretmenlerinin yazılı anlatım öğretimi hakkında benimsedikleri teoriler ve sınıf uygulamaları ile ilgili veriler görüşmeler, sınıf gözlemleri, alan notları, öğrenci yazılı anlatım çalışmaları ve öğretmen notlarını içeren nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak toplanmıştır ve sürekli karşılaştırmalı durum incelemesi metodu kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Katılımcıları belirlemek amacı ile kısa bir anket uygulanmıştır. Anketin sonuçlarına göre iki farklı teoriden –beceri merkezli ve süreç merkezli- her birine üç öğretmen seçilmiş ve bu öğretmenlerin inanç ve uygulamaları çok ayrıntılı bir biçimde incelenmiştir.

Bulgular: Veriler öğretmenler arasında yazılı anlatım öğretimi hakkında çok farklı görüşler benimsediklerini ve aynı kategoriye ait öğretmenlerin yazılı anlatım uygulamaları arasında önemli farklılıklar olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Veriler ayrıca öğretmenlerin benimsedikleri öğretim şekline aykırı olmasına rağmen beceriyi esas alan, öğretmen merkezli öğretim şeklini uyguladıklarını göstermiştir. Bu çalışmada öğretmenlerin ön hazırlık çalışmaları, konu seçimi, danışmanlık, sınıf

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yönetim teknikleri, ölçme ve değerlendirme gibi yazılı anlatım süreci aşamaları hakkında sahip oldukları inançları sorgulama ihtiyaçları olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır.

İlkokul öğretmenlerine kapsamlı bir şekilde rehberlik eden bir yazılı anlatım öğretim sistemi veya felsefesi sunulursa inandıkları ve benimsedikleri yazılı anlatım öğretim teknikleri geliştirilebilir yada değiştirilebilir. Öncelikle yazı alanındaki bu değişim, öğretmenler bu değişim sürecine aktif olarak katıldığında ve kendi inanç sistemlerine ve uyguladıkları öğretim tekniklerine eleştirel bakıp bunlar hakkında yorum yaptıklarında gerçekleşebilir. Ayrıca bu konudaki uzmanların çalışma ve destekleri anlamlı ve etkin bir yazılı anlatım öğretimi programının gerçekleştirilmesi için gereklidir. İlköğretim programı ilerlemeci (progressive) yaklaşımdan etkilenmesine ve yapılandırmacı yaklaşımın prensipleri esas alınarak yeniden düzenlenmesine rağmen yazılı anlatım öğretimi bu bakış açısından tam anlamı ile tartışılıp anlaşılamamıştır.

Sonuçlar: Bu araştırmanın sonuçları öğretmenlerin benimsedikleri teorilerin yazılı anlatım öğretimini ve yazılı anlatım müfredatının kullanım şeklini belirleyen önemli bir faktör olduğu görüşünü desteklemektedir. Beceriye esas alan öğretmenler eğitim alanında ve öğretim programlarında gerçekleşen değişimleri uygulama konusunda daha az istekli davranmaktadırlar. Görüşülen ve sınıflarında gözlem yapılan öğretmenler yazılı anlatım öğretimi hakkındaki herhangi bir teori yaklaşımını açıkça ifade etmemişlerdir. Yeni yaklaşımları anlamadaki ve kendi sahip oldukları inançların farkında oluşlarındaki eksiklikler etkin bir yazılı anlatım öğretimine engel olmuştur. Öğretmenlerin birbiri ile çelişen tutumları bu değişimleri iyi anlamadıklarının ya da desteklemediklerinin de bir kanıtı olabilir.

A Look within Individual Cases into Elementary Teachers' Beliefs and Practices of Writing Instruction

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ABSTRACT: Teachers' beliefs are defined as deep philosophical principles or belief systems that guide teachers' expectation about student behavior and the host of decisions they make during teaching. The purpose of this study is to investigate elementary teachers' beliefs towards teaching writing and their instructional practices and examine what relationships exist between teachers' self-reported beliefs about teaching writing, their instructional practices, professional / educational background, and type of institutional setting. In this study a qualitative method was employed. Teacher beliefs and practices concerning the teaching of writing were assessed through interviews and observations. A brief survey was also conducted with a sub-sample of participants. The data indicated a wide range of perspectives among teachers about writing instruction and there were significant differences in writing practices of teachers who were belong to same category. The data also revealed that teachers tended to use more skill-based practices even though this contradicts the self-reported beliefs.

Keywords: Teachers' beliefs, writing instruction, elementary

INTRODUCTION

Most of the recent writing theories related to progressive approach introduced practices concerning personal growth and the construction of identity through discovery of voice. To create these environments where students have a chance to explore a number of roles for the "self-as-writer" (Graham, 1999, p. 363), teachers need to challenge students' assumptions about themselves as readers, writers and thinkers (Marzano, 1991). However, beliefs about writing and writing events in the classroom have an impact on students' perceptions of the writing process, performance and what counts as good writing and also how young writers adopt positions and roles to shape their own identities (Flint & Cappello, 2003). Students also appeared to be impacted differently based on teachers' beliefs about language arts instruction (Fang, 1996; Fear, Anderson, Englert, & Raphael, 1987). Researchers found that teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their instruction by leading them to create programs consistent with their orientations to teaching and learning (Deryakulu, 2004). Since beliefs have a great influence on the decision-making process of teachers and guide teachers'

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actual classroom practices; therefore, any discussion of classroom practices should consider the influence of teacher beliefs (Brantlinger, 1996; Pajares, 1992).

During the past 20 years or so, research has had a great emphasis on the relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices. Researching the process of identifying beliefs and articulating them is somewhat difficult (Brindley, 2000) because teachers' beliefs are defined in various ways. Clark (1988) perceived teacher beliefs as preconceptions and implicit theories. Porter and Freeman (1986) explained teacher beliefs as teaching orientation and said it included beliefs about learning processes, the role of schooling, students, curriculum and pedagogy as well as beliefs about their roles. Harste and Burke (1977) defined teachers' theoretical orientations in reading as deep philosophical principles or belief systems that guide teachers' expectation about student behavior and the host of decisions they make during reading lessons.

Teachers' beliefs have also become a very important topic to examine because of the power beliefs are found to have, causing teachers to resist change and improvement. Research has indicated teacher education and professional development workshops have little impact on changing teachers' deeply held beliefs about how children learn and what the role of the teacher is in this process (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Öngen, 2003; Tabachnick & Zeicher, 1984).

Teacher beliefs and practices in literacy instruction have been influenced by two main models or philosophies referred or called as traditional and progressive. Traditional instruction models of teaching covers phonics instruction and favors teaching literacy skills explicitly. The underlying principles of traditional attributed to skill-based approach include correctness in writing and teaching writing skills systematically (Delpit, 1986; Dreher, 1990; Freedman, 1993; Graham, 2000). Using the correct form of abilities and dispositions are emphasized so the written product is the main concern for educators who focused on manuscript form, spelling, grammar, and mechanics of writing. In addition, copying text and handwriting were emphasized, but most of these efforts were devoted to helping children learn to read rather than write because it was believed that children had to be able to read well before they could learn how to write (Chomsky, 1971). Progressive approach which was categorized as whole language and process writing instruction emphasis on informal methods of learning and producing a holistic writing curriculum which uses real authentic literature and interaction are the heart of teaching writing. The more general application of teaching writing "as a process" movement is a workshop approach (Graves, 1983; Calkins, 1994; Dyson & Freeman, 1991; Harp & Brever, 1996; Harste, Short & Burke, 1996; Thompkins, 1997). Creating environments in which students engage in and practice the craft of writing has been emphasized. Students take the ownership of their writing by determining the topics, audiences, purposes and forms of their texts. With the support of their teachers and collaboration with peers, children are supposed to become more aware of their intentions in writing their texts. Grammar and mechanics are learned through recursive period and stages, such as drafting, revision, editing, and publishing.

Researches evaluating belief clusters towards reading and writing found that teachers' epistemological beliefs influence their writing instruction by leading them to create programs consistent with their orientations to teaching and learning. Teachers' beliefs about the role of direct instruction and using natural learning methods related to their classroom writing practices in a predictable and reliable manner (Deford, 1985; Graham, Harris, MacArthur & Fink, 2002; Lipson, Mosenthal & Daniels, 2000).

In her research, Wing (1989) found preschool teachers' beliefs about reading and writing highly consistent with the philosophies of their affiliate program. The teachers' beliefs and practices in Montessori schools reflected more of a mastery of a specific "skills/text-based" orientation. On the other hand the teachers in constructivist schools reflected more "holistic/reader-based" orientation.

Kinzer (1988) stated that most teachers use a skill-based approach to reading no matter what they believe because of mandated state or district curriculum guidelines. Any study conducted in Turkey should consider the possible effect of curriculum because the curricula of public and private schools are controlled by the State Board of Education. Kinzer's viewpoint that the realities of school and the classroom may work against teachers' personal beliefs is strongly supported by other researchers. Davis, Konopak and Readence (1993) found that teachers with similar theoretical orientations varied considerably in their instructional practices due to curriculum requirements, social, psychological and environmental realities of participants. Some studies indicate that constraints of classroom life and social realities shape teachers' instruction and may cause some practices to be

incompatible with stated beliefs (Bawden, Bruke & Duffy, 1979; Davis, Konopak, & Readence, 1993; Kinzer, 1988).

METHOD

Setting and Participants

I conducted this study in the capital during the second half of the school semester and selected five third-grade elementary schools using purposeful sampling according to their location. Three of them were state and two of them were private elementary schools.

There were twenty-two third-grade teachers in these schools and I asked all of them to respond a short questionnaire. The responses of 22 teachers to the small survey showed that many of them held multiple and competing beliefs about writing instruction. Specifically, 45.45% had widely conflicting positions, with high scores on both orientations; 40.90% held beliefs associated with process approach; and 13.63% held skill-based beliefs. However, according to survey results the overall differences among teachers in terms of the belief cluster held by teachers was not significant; it was significant between the six teacher participants chosen for more in depth study. On the other hand, all six teachers' self-reported writing practices reflected skills-based orientation because the frequency of a specific activity or an instructional procedure assigned to skills-based orientation occurred more than process oriented activities.

These six teachers included one male and five female teachers. The years of experience of these teachers were ranged from 5 to 30 years. The teachers in private schools have at least 20 years of experience in state schools. The number of students they were teaching ranged from 23 to 31. Four teachers -Fatma, Zehra. Melda, Selvi- graduated from teacher training high school and had 2-year associate degree in Elementary Education. Firdevs has B.A in General Art Education and M. A. in Elementary Education. Ferhan had B.A. in Language and History.

Data Collection

Instruments

The survey I used was the Writing Orientation Scale developed by Graham, Harris, MacArthur and Fink (2002), which measured teachers' beliefs and orientations toward teaching writing. This scale also includes the Teaching Writing Practices Scale which assesses how often teachers or students engage in specific writing activities and instructional practices because the validity of the instrument was supported through showing that the teacher beliefs were related to writing practices in a predictable and reliable manner. Through use of descriptive data, exploratory factor analysis, and validity criteria analysis, the scale was proven a reliable, valid instrument for discriminating teachers as to their orientation to writing.

I adapted the survey by reducing it to a ten-item questionnaire, and in order to represent each approach equally I included five each of the two types of items. I also made some changes in sentence structure to overcome translational errors and prevent misunderstandings. Five of the items—2, 3, 4, 6, and 10—were worded to be consistent with the process approach view, while the other five—1, 5, 7, 8, and 9—were worded to be consistent with skill-based position. The items included:

1. A good way to begin writing instruction is to have children copy a good model of each particular type of writing.
2. Instead of regular grammar lessons, it is best to teach grammar when a specific need for it emerges in a child's writing.
3. Students need to meet frequently in small groups to react and critique each other's writing.
4. The act of composing is more important than the written work children produce.
5. Before children begin a writing task, teachers should remind them to use correct spelling.
6. With practice in writing and responding to written messages, children will gradually learn the conventions of adult writing.
7. Being able to label words according to grammatical function (e.g., nouns, verbs) is useful in proficient writing.
8. Formal instruction in writing is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in writing.
9. Teachers should aim at producing writers who can write good compositions in one draft.
10. It is important to teach children strategies for planning and revising.

Since Turkish teachers use a national curriculum, I included an additional item to assess teacher beliefs about the effect of the national curriculum on their teaching practices:

11. The national curriculum positively affects writing instruction.

I used the Teacher Writing Practices Scale (Graham et al., 2002) with no alterations.

I used observation and interview as data sources. I prepared Interview questions after a critical analysis of research studies examining teacher beliefs and practices and studies using interview methods and surveys requiring narrative explanations or responses (Brindley & Schneider, 2002; Donlan, 1974; Fang, 1996; Lipa & Harlin, 1993; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, Lloyd, 1991; Wing, 1989). Also I used Harste and Burke's (1977) definition of theoretical orientation in reading as a guide. Prior to the main study, I carried out an informal pilot study to evaluate the effectiveness of the interview questions.

Procedures

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the six informants and also informal conversations with the participants occurred. I observed each teacher throughout a five day period during typical working days. I observed classroom environment on a number of levels: (1) classroom organization, the plan of the classroom; (2) writing displayed in the classroom; and (3) availability of reading materials such as novels, newspapers, and magazines, and of the tools of writing (i.e., dictionary, manuals, charts). I recorded observations in narrative form.

During each observation I took descriptive and reflective field notes. These field notes recorded an overall impression of the classroom climate and teacher description about pre-observation activities - the activities started before the time of observation - when needed. I gave specific attention to instructional writing practices and described them in detail. I photocopied students' writing samples with the permission of the teachers.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, I used a constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998). The constant comparative method of data analysis attempts to come up with grounded theory at the end of the study. It involves comparing one segment of data to another, grouping segments according to their similarities and differences, and finding patterns in the data. This "method of data analysis has been adopted by many researchers who are not seeking to build substantive theory" (Merriam, 1998, p.159).

I transcribed the interviews and examined narrative responses for emerging themes related to two major belief categories about writing. I also examined the written observations with descriptive and reflective notes, and organized themes around the issues addressed in the interview questions. I reported findings under three headings: (1) teacher beliefs about writing instruction in an elementary setting; (2) the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their instructional decision making, (2a) the general characteristics of learning environments, and (2b) writing instruction and teachers' general teaching processes.

RESULTS

The data indicated a wide range of perspectives among Turkish teachers about writing instruction. Interviews and observations revealed that teachers tended to use more skill-based practices even though this contradicts the self-reported beliefs reflected in the survey results. Interviews and observations brought to light dual attitudes toward approaches to the teaching of writing and also revealed differences in instructional practices between teachers who were members of the same belief cluster.

Teacher Beliefs about Writing Instruction in Elementary Setting

All of the teachers reported a belief that personal expression is the primary purpose of writing; none had a clear and convincing explanation of the definition of writing or the importance of writing. Further, none of the teachers had a comprehensive philosophical understanding of written language that they could articulate nor had they apparently reflected on the formation of their beliefs about writing instruction.

Writing as a mechanical process

Ferhan and Zehra were representative of teachers who shared a skill-based orientation about writing; they had a more structured definition than others, but had a limited awareness of the purpose of writing. Their orientation was strongly reflected in their instructional practices. They complained that education is "getting worse" and expressed the desire to return to "old-time" practices.

The focus for both of these teachers was generally on the mechanics of writing. Ferhan believed that if a student had a problem with applying basic punctuation rules, that the student could not be a good writer.

Skill-based instruction versus non-skill-based instruction

As mentioned earlier, the teachers in the study identified as process oriented had dual orientations toward teaching writing. They barely mentioned the importance of teaching grammar for good writing. Selvi, who had high scores on the process-approach belief cluster items on the survey, strongly advocated skill-based instruction in her interviews and practices. Unlike Ferhan and Zehra, she also emphasized different aspects of writing instruction. She did not see her students as writers. She believed that the mechanics of writing were very important for good writing practice and should be taught before anything. She also brought up the issue of being a good model for students. She elaborated that good writing practices can be taught by good teachers who understood the importance of writing.

The next three teachers were more reflective about how they taught writing methods and what was happening in their classrooms. They were tired of taking all the responsibility for teaching every writing skill, but they did not know an alternative practice. Firdevs expressed the belief that students should be at the center of teaching and learning. She thought that writing has the power to educate students as thinkers. When it comes to the mechanics of writing, Firdevs emphasized procedural aspects of writing such as structure and organization. She stated that ownership is necessary and that teachers need to help students feel that they are writers and poets.

Fatma said that she totally changed the way she taught four years ago when she joined an in-service teacher program on theater and drama. She said that she had come to understand after a long time that teaching a set of skills and procedures in a sequential order is really boring and does not support real learning. She saw writing as a meaningful and effective communication device.

Melda also perceived writing as a means of communication and thought that its importance comes from its characteristics as a way of recording information. According to her writing could be an effective tool; it could build on what students know, and help them to explore new understandings, to conceptualize what was being learned and to construct meaning.

The Relationship between Teachers' Beliefs and Their Instructional Decision-Making

There was a strong correlation in these teachers between a skill-based orientation and skill-based instructional practices. On the other hand, the process-oriented teachers showed a moderate affinity for process-based instructional practices and because of this they sometimes implemented conflicting writing practices in their classrooms. Selvi especially, whose beliefs reflected a more process-based orientation, applied very strong skill-based instruction in her classroom. For all teachers, practices and beliefs did not seem to vary much based upon the type of school they were in. For instance, being in a similar type of school -- state or private -- did not cause teachers' beliefs and practices to be similar. On the other hand, Ferhan and Selvi who were belong to different orientation cluster and different institutional setting practiced skill-based instruction. They were chosen and sent to Germany to teach for six years as elementary teachers in a Turkish school run by the Turkish government. They both bilingual and Ferhan also could speak Arabic fluently. They both mentioned that their experiences in Germany were very influential in shaping their teaching practices. We might say that these teachers' advocated skill-based instruction unintentionally during their teaching because researches mostly emphasize that traditional methods work better for some children such as minority students whose home dialect or home language is different, second language learners and students with special needs. (Fitzgerald & Stamm, 1990; Spigel, 1992; Delpit, 1988; Hagemann, 2003; Graham & Harris, 1994; MacArthur, Schwartz & Graham, 1991b).

General characteristics of learning environments

None of the classroom environments indicated that writing was valued and actively promoted. Very seldom were children's writing samples, either formal or informal, on display. In fact, only one classroom displayed students' writing, and this consisted of work from a one-time, teacher-led activity completed by all students which focused primarily on handwriting. In this case, what could be observed showed of the teachers followed traditional tendencies of classroom organization, all preferring a classroom with straight rows of desks facing the teacher's desk. In Selvi's classroom the students were uncomfortable and unable to move because they were seated together at the back of classroom.

The atmospheres in Fatma, Melda and Firdevs's classrooms were less strict than those in the other three classrooms. Social interaction occurred between students during the day. Discipline was not perceived as control over students. None of them took time to set classroom rules with students.

Insufficient strategies for handling classroom problems and discipline resulted in interrupted and inadequate teaching.

Teachers' Instructional Decisions about Writing

Prewriting activities

During the prewriting stage students generally begin preparing to write by generating and developing ideas. None of the Turkish teachers aided students in this process completely. Most of the prewriting activities were defined as limited and insignificant in their overall quality. During observation one good prewriting activity took place in Firdevs classroom, but she did not require the students to write at the end of the activity, even though it was apparent that a follow-up writing activity was quite necessary.

Topic selection

Five of the teachers indicated that their students self-select their writing topics half of the time, whereas Ferhan said that his students “never” select their writing topics. During the observations conducted for this study none of the teachers let students write about any topic of their choosing or develop their own topics, nor did they provide them with any invitation or opportunity to uncover or generate new topics. In the private school, the teachers tried to merge writing with other subjects under the name of thematic study, but neither the theme nor the topics related to the theme were chosen by the students.

Drafting

When asked about the importance of drafting, all but one stated the belief that a good composition could not be written in one draft. However, during observation the data revealed that teachers had a “one draft only” mentality, because all their writing practices were “get it done” and “move along.”

Audience awareness was not emphasized by any of the teachers. No authentic reasons for writing or realistic settings for conveying messages were provided. Existing opportunities were not sufficiently used either. For instance, the private school invited a famous children’s book writer to the school. No appropriate activities were done before or after the invitation.

Conferencing

All the teachers except one indicated that they conference with their students about their writing, but that conferencing and revising were not central aspects of their teaching. None of them conducted significant informal or scheduled writing conferences that were timely in focus and positive in nature. Therefore, no revising activity took place.

Peer conferences

All the teachers agreed that students need to meet frequently in small groups to react to and critique each other’s writing. However, they all perceived student conferences as student feedback after sharing a written piece and generally discouraged student conversations during writing periods. For instance, Ferhan considered this cheating and depending on others’ work. He always reminded his students to work individually and not to talk.

Assessment

The teachers do not believe that assessment is necessary for developing writing, since they perceive assessment only as grading. The underlying philosophy of assessment for teachers with a skill-based orientation was that performance-based tasks were the only criteria for learning. The teachers assessed writing only through conventions and writing errors.

None of the teachers gave students time for reflection, to think deeply about the meaning of what they had learned. They needed a system of evaluation because students did not take responsibility in setting expectations nor were they clearly informed about the process and the expected product. Checklists were not collaboratively developed with students prior to involvement in writing activities, even though this was necessary in order to involve students in their evaluation. During observation it was apparent that students needed to self-assess their learning through sharing, discussing and reconstructing—for instance, when students were sharing their writing in front of the class.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The findings from this study support the assertion that teacher beliefs are an important factor in teaching writing. The strong relationship between beliefs and writing instruction was apparent among two teachers who held a more skills-based orientation towards schooling and learning. The

other participant teachers who were identified as process-oriented tended to use more skill-based practices even though this contradicts their self-reported beliefs. The major effect to this strong relationship and tendency to use skill-based practices is the curriculum used in Turkey until 2003. The strict curriculum guidelines did not let the teachers apply different classroom practices. Teachers feel safe by keeping former well established goals and practices and resist to use new curriculum. On the contrary I can say that teachers' previous experiences and well established instructional habits due to the curriculum lead them to continue conventional practices and reaffirming, rather than challenging, their past.

As revealed in this study, teachers' beliefs are an important factor in the way they use the curriculum which determines writing instruction. Skill-based oriented teacher were less willing to address changes happening in education and the national curriculum. They insisted on keeping their familiar practices and ignored any suggestion or new regulation even when otherwise obliged to follow them. As they are obliged to follow new guidelines they interpret all the goals and practices using the lenses of skill-based approach.

While new curriculum give a space for teachers who advocate process oriented approach, the lack of understanding of new approaches and lack of awareness of their own beliefs toward writing acted as a barrier to teaching writing effectively. Furthermore, when we consider the reform movements happening in Turkey, teachers' ambivalent attitudes may also be evidence of the low level of understanding and support for these changes.

Implications

Although Turkish schooling became effected by progressive education, teaching writing was not fully discussed in the light of this perspective. Since this approach was supposed to be a shift from a static view of education to a dynamic and proactive one which has had very little reflection on teaching writing curriculum. Teaching writing should be added to the list of subject matter for the Teacher Training Department of the Ministry of Education. Otherwise teaching writing will continue to be misapplied and ignored. The need for systematic assessment of writing also became apparent from the results of this study.

The internal consistency of the curriculum related to writing should have redesigned. The major components of the process approach would allow teachers to engage their students in writing offering them continuous opportunities under a consistent philosophy. Teachers in this study were given a course to teach, but they needed to become aware of their beliefs, to reconsidered and think about them critically.

The teachers who were observed and interviewed did not explicitly express an understanding of any theory about teaching writing. Thus teacher development programs should weave the knowledge of theoretical frameworks about the teaching of writing, and alternative writing practices that embody those frameworks. Teachers need to learn the theories supporting new writing practices and have opportunities to see and reflect upon successful teacher practices.

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