

An evaluation of 4th and 5th grade English language teaching program

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ABSTRACT. This study investigates state primary school English language teachers' opinions about the general characteristics, aims/outcomes and content of the new 4th and 5th grade English Language Teaching Program. To this end, a questionnaire was conducted with the participation of 72 teachers from 26 schools in Beyoğlu district of İstanbul city. The analysis of the data revealed that although the participant English language teachers have moderately positive opinions on the general characteristics, aims/outcomes, and content of the new program, they still think that there are inefficient points of the new Key Stage I English Language Teaching Program that need to be revised and developed.

Key Words: Primary school, English language teaching program, program evaluation, teachers' opinions.

INTRODUCTION

The ultimate aim of modern education system is to assist individuals to operate effectively in a future world of change, complexity, and competition. While undertaking this responsibility, nothing is left to chance: Goals are set; plans are made and implemented systematically. In this scheme, curricula and teaching programs play an indispensable role since they are tools through which expectations from individuals in terms of knowledge, ideas, values, and skills to be gained are materialized.

In a developing and evolving world, curricula and teaching programs also evolve so that the system can keep abreast with the changes in the society and individual. In order to achieve this, however, they need to go through a constant cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation. In this cycle, the significance of evaluation lies in the fact that the continuity of the process entirely depends upon getting constructive feedback about the effectiveness of planned and implemented educational actions (Bilen, 1999; Ültanır, 2003).

The success of any educational change, specifically as massive as a curriculum change, however, largely depends on how teachers perceive it and what they do to implement it, simply because "it is the teachers who reflect on change, absorbing and manipulating new ideas and developments" (Ekiz, 2004: 341). Therefore, any attempts to evaluate the new program changes should certainly include teachers who experience these changes in their current conditions and contexts as end-users. For this reason, the study described here investigates the opinions of practicing English language teachers regarding the general characteristics, aims/outcomes and the content of the new 4th and 5th Grade English Language Teaching Program, which was introduced in 2006. Given the shortage of research on the new English Language Teaching Programs, the study aims to contribute information about how teachers perceive the changes in the new program.

Below is presented a brief literature review capturing the main points of program evaluation and curriculum reforms in Turkey, which, is then linked to English Language Teaching Programs and their evaluation.

Teaching Programs and Program Evaluation

Program is generally defined as an organized and planned set of related activities directed toward a common purpose or goal. In line with this broad definition, an educational program can be specified as "a series of courses linked with some common goal or end product" (Lynch, 1997: 2).

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Similarly, a language teaching program is a series of foreign language courses teaching the language through some kind of methodology so as to fulfill aim/aims such as communication or passing a proficiency exam.

There is a strict connection between teaching program and curriculum as they are within the other. While curriculum is a general term that is commonly used to mean as ‘what schools teach’ (Eisner, 2002: 25) and includes philosophical, social and administrative choices that contribute to the planning of an educational program, a teaching program, on the other hand, refers to the content of the curriculum. It is concerned with what is to be learned, how is to be learned, and assessed (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Nunan, 1988; Yalden, 1987). It provides structure (content) for classroom teaching and learning suggesting ways of implementing the content and assessing learning outcomes.

Program evaluation, on the other hand, is a systematic work that includes the collection, analysis and synthesis of information, its main aim being to improve elements of curriculum separately and collectively (Brown, 1995). Purposes of program evaluation may differ in number depending on why the evaluator aims to evaluate the program. Despite the variety of purposes, however, program evaluation has two broad functions or goals: helping to improve the program also called formative evaluation and deciding whether a program should be continued, also called summative evaluation. In other words, the goal of formative evaluation is to design and improve an intervention or project while the goal of summative evaluation is to judge and decide on the effectiveness, efficiency, or cost of an intervention (Alderson and Beretta, 1992; Worthen, 1990). Whatever the purpose underlying the evaluation process may be, in order to understand how the program works, how teachers reflect it in their daily practices and whether it addresses students’ needs, etc., it is essential that programs be evaluated regularly and that informed policy decisions be made based on research (Akşit, 2007: 129).

Recently the teaching programs of state schools in Turkey have undergone some alterations. A new curriculum was launched in 2005 aiming to make major changes in all subject areas. The curriculum movement first focused on grades 1-5, gradually expanding to include grades 6-8 and 4-year secondary schools. The overall aim of these curriculum reforms is to make state schools more student-centered in their educational practices by encouraging the active participation of learners as meaning makers in a learning environment where research, discovery and cooperation take place. In other words, the new curriculum gives more importance to thinking skills of students and emphasizes “the eminency of students who prefer thinking and acquiring various skills, concepts and values instead of students who tend to memorize” (Akinoğlu, 2008: 198).

This educational reform, although set out to upgrade educational provision, face some controversies. One of the criticisms regarding the process of curriculum development is that it was rushed and the stakeholders, i.e. faculties of education, education unions, inspectors, administrators, teachers, students and parents were not fully consulted and involved. Another discomfort voiced by the stakeholders is that the piloting process was rapidly carried out and the results were not reported and discussed at length while another complaint centers around the lack of in-service training courses and seminars to inform the practicing teachers about the content, aims, instructional techniques and assessment types adopted with the new curriculum (Akşit, 2007: 133-134; İlköğretim 1-5. Sınıflar Öğretim Programlarını Değerlendirme Toplantısı, 2006).

Program evaluation studies in Turkey, on the other hand, have gained momentum with the introduction of the new curricula in 2005. Many research studies (see for example, Babadoğan and Olkun, 2006; Bayrak and Erden, 2007; Bulut, 2007; Şahin, 2007; Umay et al., 2006) have been carried out related to the content, effectiveness and challenges of the new curricula in relation to the subject areas of Turkish, science, social science and mathematics, since the curriculum development initiatives first began with these areas for grades 1-5 and their new teaching programs were the first ones to be implemented in 2005-6 teaching year. In contrast, primary school English language teaching program evaluation studies are yet to start, perhaps partly because the new programs have only recently been launched.

English Language Teaching Programs and Their Evaluation

An English language teaching program (ELTP) focuses on teaching English as a foreign language as efficiently as possible by bringing together specifications such as structures, functions, situations, topics, skills and tasks (MEB İlköğretim Kurumları İngilizce Dersi Öğretim Programı,

2006) . An ELTP is usually composed of Approach, Method, Techniques; Aims/Outcomes; Content; Materials and Evaluation procedures.

In historical perspective when the primary school ELTPs in Turkey and program development studies are investigated, it is observed that there are some turning points marking significant attempts to break new ground in educational processes. After 1924 many educational reforms took place since education was seen as the determining force of social change and modernization. In this context, foreign language learning was regarded to be essential for the transition of the country from a traditional state to a modern one. Therefore, the teaching of English, German and French in state schools was integrated into general education. However, it was after the World War II that the significance of foreign languages was fully recognized due to the social, political, economical and technological developments in the western world (Demirel, 1999).

As for foreign language teaching programs, it was not until 1980s that systematic curricular development endeavors started. Before then, basically the content of foreign language course books were taken as the content of foreign language teaching programs and published by the Board of Education as part of the general curriculum (Demircan, 1988: 135-136).

In 1997, however, with the extension of compulsory primary education duration to 8 years, English language teaching started from 4th grades (Official Gazette, 1997: 4306). In connection with this development, the state primary schools' 4th and 5th grades foreign language teaching programs were developed in line with the curriculum reforms that took place in all other subject areas. The 6th, 7th and 8th grade teaching programs that had been renewed in 1991, however, continued to be implemented without any changes.

The 1997 4th and 5th Grades' ELTP, similar to the general principles of the standardized curriculum, had a more traditional approach to teaching English. Although it upheld the ideals of communicative language teaching and emphasized the importance of student-centered, game-based way of instruction, in which language was used as a medium of communication, it largely depended upon the transfer of knowledge which was later recapped through exercises and games (see MEB İlköğretim Kurumları İngilizce Dersi Öğretim Programı, 1997). As it could be understood, this approach was founded upon the principles of behaviorist psychology taken as a departure point by the Turkish education system for years (Çınar et al., 2006), which considered learning as a matter of habit formation.

As for the studies evaluating the 1997 4th and 5th Grades' ELTP, Büyükduman (2001, 2005) conducted two studies and determined that most English teachers were content with the design of the program yet found the implementation of it almost impossible due to large classes, lack of resources, lack of training related to teaching English to young learners as well as the seminars that guided teachers in the implementation of the program. Similar conclusions were drawn by several other researchers (see Er, 2006; Erdoğan, 2005; Mersinligil, 2002; Yüksel, 2001). In some of these studies, however, the load of the content was also criticized for it presented too much work both for teachers and students (see Erdoğan, 2005; Mersinligil, 2002). Yet, in another study by Zincir (2006) the findings revealed that teachers prepared their lessons according to the course books without referring to the program booklet.

By the time it was 2004, the dissatisfaction with the quality of education, which was reported to be ineffective and in need of revision in some national and international studies carried out in especially mathematics and science education, the Ministry of National Education decided to initiate a curriculum reform movement (Şahin, 2007). It was based on constructivists learning approach, which claims that learning is more effective when a student is actively engaged in the construction of knowledge rather than passively receiving it (Özden, 2003). Parallel to the changes in different subject areas, the English language teaching programs were also redeveloped and as a result the implementation of the new ELTP started with the 4th grades in 2006-2007 teaching year, progressively including other grade levels as well (Official Gazette, 2006: 26076).

The new program claims to be more learner-centered, task-based and process-oriented where learners are guided to construct meaning in collaboration with their peers and teachers. The Multiple Intelligences Theory together with Constructivist Learning Approach forms the pillars of the new program. Therefore, the instructional techniques promote the use of more varied, task-based as well as communicative activities such as dramatization, student conversation, stories, games, chants, rhymes,

craft activities and so and so forth (for more detail see MEB İlköğretim Kurumları İngilizce Dersi Öğretim Programı 2006).

Since newly launched, the new primary school ELTPs have not been researched and evaluated intensely. In conclusion, therefore, as one of the first attempts to evaluate the new primary school English program, this study intends to shed light upon the practicing English teachers' opinions about the new 4th and 5th grade English Language Teaching Program while doing it from a broader perspective by putting the new ELTP's general characteristics, content as well as the aims/outcomes under the microscope. With this aim in mind this study tries to find answers to the following question:

What are the opinions of practicing English language teachers related to the general characteristics, aims/outcomes and the content of 2006 ELTP?

METHOD

This research study was primarily designed as a descriptive study and therefore adopts a quantitative approach. In line with the approach, survey methodology was used to obtain the opinions of participant teachers.

Setting and Participants

This research study was conducted with the participation of English language teachers teaching 4th and 5th grades in the state primary schools in the Beyoğlu district of İstanbul.

General characteristics of the participant English language teachers were investigated in terms of their gender, teaching experiences, whether they had attended seminars on the new program and if they had, whether they had found them useful.

A total of 72 teachers from 26 primary schools in the district participated in the study. The following table shows the general characteristics of the participants including gender and teaching experience.

Table 1. Distribution of gender and teaching experience (N=72)

	<i>f</i>	%
GENDER		
<i>Female</i>	51	71
<i>Male</i>	21	29
EXPERIENCE		
<i>1-5 years</i>	41	57
<i>6-10 years</i>	26	36
<i>11-15 years</i>	4	6
<i>21 years and over</i>	1	1
SEMINAR ATTENDANCE		
<i>Yes</i>	18	25
<i>No</i>	54	75

Of the 72 teachers 21 (29 %) were male and 51 (71 %) were female. As for the participants' teaching experiences as English language teachers, more than half of the participants (41, 57 %) were mostly experienced between 1-5 years while 26 teachers (36 %) reported to have 6 to 10 years' teaching experience. Whereas, only 5 English teachers (7 %) had 11 years and over teaching experience, which brings up the conclusion that the majority of the teachers working in Beyoğlu are moderately experienced teachers.

Another question asked to the participant teachers was about their seminar participation on the 2006 ELTP. As the table reveals, three out of four English language teachers reported that they had not attended any seminars related to the new English language teaching program, which may mean that Ministry of National Education needs to organize more seminars on the new program. Then 18

teachers who stated to have attended a seminar were also asked to report whether they found it useful. The findings are shown in the table below.

Table 2. Distribution of the opinions regarding seminar usefulness (N=18)

	<i>f</i>	%
USEFUL		
<i>Useful</i>	2	11
<i>Indecisive</i>	2	11
<i>Useless</i>	11	61
<i>Very useless</i>	3	16

Of the 18 participants who attended a seminar on the new program, most of them (14, 77.7 %) found the seminar either “useless” or “very useless”, which means that seminars in the process of new program developments should be handled more carefully and effectively, a fact that has been emphasized by many researchers several times (see for example İlköğretim 1-5. Sınıflar Öğretim Programlarını Değerlendirme Toplantısı 2006; Akşit 2007; Bulut 2007).

Instrument

The data were collected through a self-report questionnaire which was developed by the researchers. Two steps were covered during the development of the instrument: the preparation and the piloting phases.

As for the preparation, firstly, a vast amount of literature review was done on program evaluation and development. Then, similar research studies on program evaluation (for example Selvi & Yaşar 1999; Mersinligil 2001; Savran *et al.* 2002; Karatepe *et al.* 2004; Ekiz 2004; Ocağ & Beydoğan 2005; Korkmaz 2006; Gömleksiz & Bulut 2007; Bayrak & Erden 2007) were investigated and their data collection instruments were examined. Later, the scope of the evaluation of the new ELTP was narrowed down to include some general aspects of it as well as the content and aims/outcomes. With these goals in mind, the first version of the questionnaire was prepared. During this stage, some items from other researchers’ scales were taken while some of the others were adapted. Some new items concerning the aims of this particular study were also added. After that, three experts from Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University were consulted for the content validity of the instrument. Necessary alterations were done considering their ideas. Lastly, a final revision and editing was done for the pilot study.

The second phase concerning the development of the research instrument was the piloting process. To this end, the designed questionnaire was applied to 35 randomly chosen English language teachers representing the sample. The data gathered were then analyzed for its reliability by using SPSS.16.

Reliability analysis of the questionnaire was done part by part except Part I as it is designed to find out the personal profile of the participant teachers. The reliability coefficient for Part II General Characteristics was determined to be .88, for Part III-A Aims/Outcomes .95 and lastly for Part III-B Content .94. As the reliability coefficients reveal, all three parts were found to be highly reliable.

After the reliability analysis, the questionnaire took its final form, which included three parts. Part I aimed to gather demographic information from the participants (gender, teaching experience, seminar attendance and opinions about the seminars). Part II had 13 statements and intended to collect participants’ opinions on the general characteristics of the new ELTP by using a three point Likert Scale with anchors at *yes*, *partly* and *no*. While Part III – A had 13 statements and sought to obtain the participants’ opinions on the aims/outcomes of the teaching program, Part III – B, with 21 statements, aims to gather information on the content of the new ELTP. In Part III a five point Likert Scale with answers ranging from *completely agree* to *completely disagree* was used. In Part III- A and B and at the end of the questionnaire participants were also encouraged to write their own comments about the new ELTP.

Data Collection and Analysis

Having obtained the necessary permission from the Provincial Education Directorate City of İstanbul, the primary state schools in Beyoğlu district were visited and questionnaires distributed in

the fall term of 2007-2008 teaching year. The participants responded to the questionnaires within a one-week period.

The data gathered by using the self-report questionnaires were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences; SPSS.16. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were calculated.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To ease understanding and achieve clarity, the findings related to the research question are discussed separately in relation to the different parts of the instrument and presented below.

Opinions of English language teachers regarding the general characteristics of 2006 ELTP

Part II of the questionnaire aimed to obtain participant English language teachers' opinions on the general characteristics of the new ELTP. To do this, the mean and standard deviation was calculated and the analysis revealed that the participant English language teachers have moderately positive opinions about the general characteristics of the new program (Mean=1.75 out of 3; SD=.45).

When all the mean values are considered item by item, it can be observed that teachers' opinions vary on each specific item. Table 4 below illustrates the opinions of teachers related to the general characteristics of the new program.

Table 4. Opinions of the participants related to the general characteristics of the new ELTP (N=72)

Part II- General characteristics		Mean	SD
<i>Total</i>		1.75	.45
Item No	Statements		
1	It is easy to understand the program.	2.25	.68
3	One can plan his/her lessons by considering the program.	2.11	.77
12	It is possible to make students enjoy English by implementing the program.	2.02	.78
7	The program gives an opportunity to use methods and techniques that lead students to participate in the lesson actively.	2.01	.68
8	The program provides students with knowledge of "learning to learn".	1.81	.71
5	The program has enough guidance for the teacher.	1.79	.73
4	It is hard to understand the program without the course book.	1.77	.73
9	The materials used while implementing the program are not sufficient.	1.59	.66
2	The program needs to be revised again.	1.52	.64
10	The course book of the program is inadequate.	1.48	.62
13	The program is suitable to implement so as to teach English all over the country.	1.48	.64
6	The program has been introduced to the teachers adequately.	1.47	.71
11	It is hard to implement the program owing to various problems of primary state schools.	1.45	.60

As demonstrated in Table 4 above, the teachers have positive opinions about the clarity of the new program (Mean=2.25; SD=.68). Additionally, the participants believe that one can plan his/her lessons by considering the program (Mean=2.11; SD=.77).

However, the findings also show that teachers have some low opinions on the general characteristics of the new program, the strongest one being that it is hard to implement the program because of various problems in state primary schools (e.g. number of students, availability of the sources etc) (Mean=1.45; SD=.60). This finding supports those that have been put forward by several other researchers who conducted their studies with different subject area teachers. In their studies, Çınar et al. (2006) investigated the opinions of 195 teachers and principals about the new curriculum reform and found out that they think there are not enough resources to implement the new curriculum effectively in state primary schools. Similarly, in another study Toptaş (2006) and Bulut (2007) worked with mathematics and primary school teachers and reached the same conclusion that teachers have huge complaints over the shortage of resources needed for the implementation of the new

curriculum, which also proves that problems related to availability of the resources are widespread regardless the subject areas taught.

Furthermore, a dissatisfaction can also be observed with the inadequacy of the introductory seminars on the new teaching program (Mean=1.47; SD=.71). This finding is parallel to the findings of several other ones which indicated the significance of in-service training provided by the Ministry of Education about the implementation of the new curriculum and its insufficiency. For example, Baturay and Karaca (2008), in a small scale study, report that teachers are in need of training about the new curriculum. Similarly, Akşit (2006) points out that one of the major controversies the new curriculum change faced is the lack of information regarding the new content, objectives, teaching strategies and assessment types introduced via the new curriculum movement.

Opinions of practicing English language teachers regarding the aims/outcomes of 2006 ELTP

To obtain the participants' opinions on the aims/outcomes of the new ELTP, the overall mean and standard deviation were calculated and it was found out that the participant teachers have slightly negative opinions on the aims/outcomes of the new ELTP (Mean=2.83 out of 5; SD=.96). Further descriptive statistical analysis was run to find out the participants' ideas about each item on the questionnaire. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5. Opinions of the participants related to the aims/outcomes of the new ELTP (N=72)

Part III – A – Aims/Outcomes		Mean	SD
Total		2.83	.96
Item No	Statements		
11	Aims/outcomes of the program can be evaluated.	3.30	1.10
5	Aims/outcomes of the program are clear.	3.04	1.26
10	The program consists of aims/outcomes that can be useful in real-life.	3.01	1.16
12	Teaching and learning activities of the program are consistent with the aims of the units and outcomes for the students.	2.90	1.22
9	Aims/outcomes of the program are determined according to Multiple Intelligences Theory.	2.90	1.22
6	Aims/outcomes of the program are in accordance with student-centered teaching and learning.	2.90	1.35
8	Aims/outcomes of the program are in accordance with the approach of the program.	2.90	1.06
4	Aims/outcomes of the program are in accordance with Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th Grades) students' psychomotor development.	2.75	1.30
13	Aims/outcomes of the program aim to teach learners how to access and use information.	2.73	1.26
3	Aims/outcomes of the program are in accordance with Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th Grades) students' emotional development.	2.65	1.22
2	Aims/outcomes of the program are in accordance with Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th Grades) students' cognitive development.	2.51	1.24
1	Aims/outcomes of the program are effective enough for Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th Grades) students to learn English.	2.34	1.12

As observed, an item by item analysis of the answers ranges from a mean of 3.30 to 2.34. The means indicate that the participant teachers' perceptions are not high. The highest mean values being slightly above 3 show that the participant teachers partially believe that the aims/outcomes of the program can be evaluated (Mean=3.30; SD=1.10) and that they are clear (Mean=3.04; SD=1.26). Though moderately, they think that the aims and outcomes of the new ELTP are in line with the theories that it is said to be designed accordingly.

In addition, the participant teachers also have some negative opinions about the aims/outcomes of the new program. The teachers reported that they are not effective enough for 4th and 5th grade students to learn English (Mean=2.34; SD=1.12). They also have a low opinion of the aims/outcomes of the new program regarding their concordance to the 4th and 5th graders' cognitive development (Mean=2.51; SD=1.24), emotional development (Mean= 2.65, SD= 1.22). These findings are in

parallel to the findings reported by Er (2006). Although his study included the evaluation of the former ELTP, the participant teachers in his study stated that the aims/outcomes of the program were difficult to attain and should be revised. The findings of this particular study show that in relation to the cognitive, emotional and affective learning domains in the new ELTP teachers still have complaints.

Opinions of practicing English language teachers regarding the content of 2006 ELTP

Another point of discussion in this study is the content of the new ELTP. In this part, the participants were asked to report their opinions about the characteristics of the content such as topics, activities, course books, vocabulary, and grammar. The mean for the overall opinions of the participants was found out to be 2.69 (SD=.86), which shows that the participant teachers have slightly negative opinions on the content of the new ELTP. The item by item analysis of the opinions is also given below.

Table 6. Opinions of the participants related to the content of the new ELTP (N=72)

Part III – B – Content		Mean	SD
Total		2.69	.86
Item No	Statements		
15	The topics of the content are suitable to apply different methods and techniques.	3.15	1.15
16	The content of the program is suitable to gain the skill to prepare individual and group projects.	3.09	1.22
7	Vocabulary of the content of the program is sufficient for Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th grades) learners.	3.02	1.34
1	The topics of the content of the program are the ones that Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th grades) should learn.	2.98	1.38
3	The topics of the content of the program are appropriate to the Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th grades) learners' interests.	2.90	1.30
10	The grammar topics of the program are necessary for Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th grades) learners.	2.80	1.28
2	The topics of the content of the program are appropriate to the Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th grades) learners' age.	2.80	1.33
14	There is a contradiction between the topics of the content and aims/objectives.	2.77	1.16
9	The content of the program is mainly grammar-based.	2.75	1.28
4	The content of the program forms basic English knowledge for Key Stage II (6 th , 7 th and 8 th grades) English courses.	2.73	1.44
11	The content of the program has adequate activities for teaching and practicing.	2.66	1.23
18	The program is clear and comprehensible without the course book.	2.63	1.12
13	The sequence of the topics of the content is presented from easy to difficult.	2.55	1.23
5	The content of the program integrates four skills (reading-writing-listening-speaking).	2.54	1.25
17	The texts in the course book can be understood by the learners.	2.50	1.22
21	The content of the program can be finished at the end of the education year considering the Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th grades) weekly English Schedule (3 hours a week).	2.43	1.19
6	The content of the program forms a basis to communicate in English.	2.41	1.29
20	Course book and workbook are enough to present, practice and product the topics of the content.	2.37	1.16
12	The content of the program is supplemented by extra materials except the course book.	2.37	1.13
8	Vocabulary of the content of the program is memorization-oriented.	2.36	1.22

Similar to the findings regarding the aims and outcomes of the new program, the mean values ranging from 3.15 to 2.36 reveal that the participant teachers do not hold positive opinions about the content of the teaching program. As can be seen in Table 6, the topics of the content are believed to be partly suitable to apply different methods and techniques (Mean=3.15; SD=1.15) such as individual and group projects (Mean=3.09; SD=1.22), an aspect which is actually promoted in the new ELTP

(see MEB İlköğretim Kurumları İngilizce Dersi Öğretim Programı, 2006). Teachers also moderately think that the vocabulary and the topics covered in the new program are suitable for 4th and 5th grade learners (Mean=3.02, SD=1.34; Mean=2.98; SD=1.38 respectively).

On the other hand, the participant teachers have slightly negative opinions especially about the course books of the new program (Mean= 2.37, SD= 1.16) and the availability of supplementary materials (Mean= 2.37, SD=1.13). This complaint should be specifically noted when the dependency of the teachers on the ready-made materials are considered. For example, Zincir's study (2006) on 1997 English Language Program revealed that teachers tend to prepare their lessons according to the course books they have rather than taking the program booklet into consideration. Therefore, supporting teachers with ready-made, photocopiable materials as well as ideas for different activities will definitely increase the effectiveness of the new program's implementation.

Moreover, the sequencing of the topics from easy to difficult and the insufficient number of activities are reported to be problematic by the participants (Mean= 2.55, SD= 1.23; Mean= 2.66, SD= 1.23 respectively). Er (2006) in a study on the former ELTP reached at similar conclusions and suggested that the content should be revised accordingly.

Other opinions stated in the open ended parts of the questionnaire

As aforementioned, the questionnaire included open ended questions for participants to state their extra opinions, suggestions and/or complaints about the 2006 4th and 5th Grades ELTP. In this study, 53 out of 72 (73.6 %) teachers voiced their own ideas.

In order to analyze the data gathered in this part, content analysis was carried out. The two researchers read the opinions of the teachers independently and pooled them. The 53 participants generated 163 extra opinions as the participants commented on more than one aspect of the new ELTP. After this step, all these ideas were filtered and recurring ones were listed. As a result 10 general ideas were found to be repeated. The following table presents the findings.

Table 7. Extra opinions of the participant teachers related to the new ELTP (N=53)

Reported Opinions	f	%
1 New program is better than the last one; however, it still needs revision.	34	64.1
2 There should be more seminars on the new program.	29	54.7
3 4 th grade content contains too much vocabulary and almost no grammar; 5 th grade content contains too much and difficult grammar subjects.	21	39.6
4 Physical conditions and resources should be considered while developing the program.	18	33.9
5 The content of the new Key Stage I (4 th and 5 th grades) ELTP cannot be taken as a basis for Key Stage II (6 th , 7 th and 8 th grades).	15	28.3
6 The content does not follow an order of from easy to difficult, especially the 5 th grade's.	13	24.5
7 Four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are not integrated; they are mostly dealt with separately.	12	22.6
8 The new program lacks materials; more audio visual materials should be included.	9	16.9
9 Aims/outcomes of the program are based on grammar subjects.	7	13.2
10 There should be more lesson hours for Key Stage I learners; 3 lesson hours a week is not enough.	5	9.4

As seen in Table 7, the participants stated that the new program is better than the former, a fact which is also reported by several researchers from different subject areas (see for example Baturay and Karaca 2006; Çınar et al., 2006; Gömleksiz and Bulut, 2007). Therefore, it can be concluded that the curriculum change is welcome by many teachers. However, the participants also reported that it needs revision. The other ideas concerning the need for in-service seminars on the new program, the availability of the resources, the too much content load were the most frequently stated opinions by the participants. Besides, some of them reported that sometimes the educational principle of sequencing the content from easy to difficult is violated. The participants also stated that four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are not well integrated and mainly reading and writing skills are encouraged, and especially the 5th grade program is still plagued by too much grammar teaching. They emphasized that more cognitive, emotional, psychomotor aims/outcomes should be included. Finally,

they pointed out the insufficiency of 3 hour-lesson period indicating that more time should be allocated to English. Some of these ideas concerning insufficient sources and time of instruction as well as insufficient number of activities have also been pointed out by several researchers from different subject areas such as mathematics and science teaching (Bulut, 2007; Toptaş, 2006; Gömleksiz and Bulut, 2007), which also shows that the problems stated by the participant English language teachers are prevailing problems affecting all subject areas in the primary school education.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

According to the findings of this research study, it could be concluded that although participant teachers have moderately positive ideas on some aspects of the general characteristics, aims/outcomes and the content of the new ELTP, they nevertheless think that some parts are inadequate. The findings reveal that the program is clear and understandable, yet its implementation is problematic due to the factors such as large classes, loaded content, time constraint, lack of resources such as photocopiable materials, CDs, tape recorders etc. As it is known, active involvement in the learning process usually requires use of several different materials in one class hour. Since the new curriculum reform movement also upholds the idea of “learning by doing”, teachers’ complaints about the lack of resources become more meaningful. Therefore, it seems that more financial investment should be considered for the provision and a successful implementation of the new program.

Many problems concerning the 4th and 5th grade ELTP stated in this study could definitely be solved at a macro scale or policy level since the solutions to them are beyond what teachers can do in their own classrooms. Therefore, while developing a new teaching program, physical conditions (technological devices, number of students in a class, etc.) should be considered more realistically and reflected in the program accordingly.

On the other hand, it would not be an overstatement to say that the quality of the curriculum reform basically depends on teachers’ work and ways of thinking since most of the time whatever the change is in theory, when it comes to practice, teachers choose their own ways of teaching (Baturay, 2007). Therefore, it is a must that teachers’ professional development should be encouraged so that they could be equipped with the knowledge, understanding and skills to put the program into practice. As emphasized several times before to accomplish this, more in-service seminars should be conducted where teachers may come together to learn from one another by sharing their experiences. A platform where teachers can benefit from successful implementations of the new program as well as how they can solve the common problems faced will broaden the horizons of teachers. Also, the new program book can be expanded to include more information about the ideals that the new program encourages, such as constructivist learning, multiple intelligences theory, task-based learning so and so forth. More importantly, more games, activities, tasks together with their classroom implementations should be added to the program book.

There are several limitations to these findings, however. First, this research study is limited to the data obtained from the English teachers working at state primary schools in Beyoğlu district in İstanbul and implementing the 2006 ELTP at the time the research study was carried out. Therefore, the results as well as subsequent conclusions apply to the specific sample and should not be broadly generalized. Keeping this in mind, the results presented here should be compared and contrasted with the results obtained from English teachers working under different circumstances and in different places in Turkey.

In addition, it is also worth noting that the results of this current study are limited to the data collected via a questionnaire which was designed and developed by the researchers themselves. The nature of the instrument, therefore, limits the possibility of a more in-depth analysis than the one presented in this article. Therefore, different self-report instruments, structured interviews, diary keeping studies, as well as observations can reveal more specific data about the new program as well as the effectiveness of its implementation. Moreover, there are several other components of a foreign language teaching program including the approach, method, techniques, topics, activities, and the integration of four skills, materials and assessment procedures. Thus, further research studies may deal with one or several of these components to find out what works best with the primary school students during classroom teaching and learning. Such studies would certainly contribute to our understating of the whole picture.

Finally, the findings here have been drawn from the opinions of English language teachers. The other stakeholders, i.e. students, parents, administrators in different regions of the country should also be included in evaluation studies to be able to make broader generalizations.

Despite its limitations, however, this study makes contributions to the existing literature on program evaluation in general and English Language Teaching Programs in specific. It also mirrors results from previous research studies by showing the existence of similarities not only among the opinions of practicing English teachers on some aspects of English Language Teaching Programs but also among the opinions of teachers from other subject areas concerning the teaching programs of their own fields, proving that problems faced related to the new curriculum are shared by teachers and administrators although they differ in their academic and professional backgrounds.

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4 ve 5. sınıf İngilizce öğretim programının değerlendirilmesi

ÖZET

Amaç ve Önem: Bu çalışmada 2006 yılında uygulamaya konulan 4 ve 5. sınıf yeni İlköğretim İngilizce Öğretim Programının öğretmen görüşleri doğrultusunda değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Öğretmene temel aldığı yöntem, uygulama teknikleri, konu sıralaması, materyal desteği ve değerlendirme boyutları ile yol gösteren bir araç niteliğinde olan öğretim programının etkililiği, diğer bir söylemle hedeflerine ne kadar ulaştığının da belirlenmesi gerekir. Bu süreçte şüphesiz en önemli geribildirim kaynağı programların uygulayıcısı ve yorumlayıcısı konumunda olan öğretmenlerdir. Bu çalışmada ortaya çıkan bulguların program tasarımcılarına öğretim programları üzerinde yapacakları düzenleme, düzeltme ve değişikliklerde yol göstereceğine inanılmaktadır. Ayrıca çalışma, 2006 İngilizce Öğretim Programları düzenlemelerine ilişkin ilk değerlendirme çalışmalardan biri olma özelliği taşıdığından ilgili alan yazına katkıda bulunmayı hedeflemiştir.

Yöntem: İstanbul’ un Beyoğlu ilçesinde bulunan 26 ilköğretim okulunda 4 ve 5. sınıf düzeylerinde öğretmenlik yapan 72 İngilizce öğretmeni bu çalışmanın örneklemini oluşturmuştur. Veri toplamada üç bölümden oluşan bir anket kullanılmıştır. Birinci bölümde katılımcıların kişisel ve mesleki özelliklerine ilişkin bilgileri edinmeye yönelik sorular sorulurken diğer bölümlerde de yeni İngilizce öğretim programının genel özelliklerini, amaç/kazanımları ve içeriğini değerlendirmeye yönelik ifadeler sunulmuştur. Ayrıca katılımcıların farklı düşüncelerini almaya yönelik açık uçlu sorulara da yer verilmiştir. Örneklem özelliklerini analiz etmede frekans analizi, öğretmenlerin yeni programa ilişkin düşüncelerini rapor etmede ise ortalamalar ve standart sapmalar hesaplanmıştır. Açık uçlu sorulardan elde edilen nitel veri de içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur.

Bulgular: Elde edilen bulgulara göre katılımcılar, genel özellikleri bağlamında, programın açık/anlaşılır olduğu ve ders planı hazırlamada kaynak olarak kullanılabileceği hususlarında orta düzeyde hem fikir olurlarken programın hem ülkenin her yerinde hem de sınıf içinde uygulanabilirliğinin düşük olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir Ayrıca, program tanıtımının yeterliliği konusunda da olumsuz görüş bildirmişlerdir. Amaç/kazanımlara ilişkin olarak ise amaç ve kazanımların açık olduğuna ilişkin düşük düzeyde olumlu görüş bildirmişler, öte yandan Çoklu Zeka Kuramı, Yapılandırmacı Yaklaşım, öğrenci merkezli öğretim gibi yeni programın dayandığı temel

yaklaşımlara uygunluğu hususunda ise olumlu değerlendirmeler yapmamışlardır. İçerikli ilgili değerlendirmelerde ise katılımcılar, program içeriğinin farklı yöntem ve tekniklerin uygulanmasına elverişli olduğu ayrıca grup ve proje çalışmaları yapmak için uygun olduğu yönünde düşük düzeyde olumlu görüş bildirmişler. Bu bölümde, yeni programın ders kitaplarının uygunluğu ve farklı materyallerle desteklenmesinin yeterliği konuları öğretmenler tarafında en düşük düzeyde değerlendirilmiştir. Açık uçlu sorulara verilen yanıtlar, katılımcıların yeni programı 1997 programından daha iyi bulduklarını ancak daha fazla tanıtıcı seminere ihtiyaç duyduklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, katılımcılar özellikle 5. sınıf programının içerik yoğunluğuna işaret etmişlerdir. *Sonuç ve Öneriler:* Sonuç olarak, 4 ve 5. sınıf yeni İngilizce Öğretim Programının eksikleri olduğu ve çeşitli düzenleme ve düzeltmelere ihtiyaç duyulduğu söylenebilir. Özellikle, daha fazla tanıtıcı seminere ihtiyaç olduğu aşikârdır. Bu bağlamda, bakanlığın bu tür seminerler düzenleyerek yeni programı her yönüyle daha anlaşılır kılması programın uygulanabilirlik düzeyini arttıracaktır. Ayrıca seminerlerde, öğretmenlerin yaşadığı uygulama sorunlarını ve çözüm noktalarını paylaşabilecekleri bir platform oluşturulursa yine programın uygulama boyutuna kolaylık sağlayacaktır. Öte yandan, yeni programın materyallerle desteklenmesi boyutunda eksiklikler olduğuna ilişkin diğer saptamaya yönelik olarak da ders kitaplarının ek fotokopi-edilebilir materyallerle desteklenmesi, CD, CD çalar gibi malzemelerin zamanında okullara ulaştırılması önem kazanmaktadır. Ayrıca, program kitabı çoklu zeka uygulamalarına ve yapılandırmacı öğretime uygun daha fazla etkinlik örnekleri ile zenginleştirilebilir. Özellikle 5. sınıf program içeriğine ilişkin olumsuz düşünceler ışığında da bu sınıf seviyesinde programın amaç/kazanımlarının ve buna paralel olarak da içeriğinin tekrar ele alınması gereği ortaya çıkmaktadır.