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For all enquiries regarding the TOJQI, please contact Assoc.Prof. Abdullah KUZU, Editor-In-Chief, TOJQI, Anadolu University, Faculty of Education, Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technology, Yunus Emre Campus, 26470, Eskisehir, TURKEY, Phone #:+90-222-3350580/3519, Fax # :+90-222-3350573, E-mail : akuzu@anadolu.edu.tr; editor@tojqi.net.

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'Closer to the Ground': Pupil 'voice' and the Development of Knowledge about Schools

Margaret Wood

York St John University, UK

m.wood@yorksja.ac.uk

Abstract

Most pupils, if asked, might be expected to have a view about their school and increasingly the value and significance of including pupils' perspectives in matters and decisions which affect them and their lives appears to be gaining recognition. The rationale for, and importance of, including the views and perceptions of those we have described as 'closer to the ground', namely the pupils, are asserted in this paper. The argument is advanced that pupils have an important role in helping to develop the knowledge base in schools about learning and the development of the school community. This is based on a belief that pupils have unique perspectives to offer and they deserve to be listened to when constructing our knowledge about schools. Drawing on metaphors from the literature of 'bird's eye' and 'worm's eye' perspectives on schools, the paper argues that knowledge has been traditionally constructed from the adult 'bird's eye' view and that the view from closer to the ground, the 'worm's eye view' must neither be overlooked nor constructed from an adult standpoint. A model for engaging 'pupils as partners', devised by a primary school in the City of York in England is examined. It is analysed and critiqued in the light of some of the issues surrounding pupil voice which are synthesised from the literature. The substantive argument made in this paper is that whilst the discourse about pupil 'voice' may often sound progressive, the language can be vague and imprecise and the practical applications varied. A case is therefore made for more rigour to infuse policy and planning in this field and in particular more clarity and precision in the application of concepts and use of terminology.

Keywords: Pupil; voice; partners; personalisation; learning

Introduction

This article examines some of the benefits and challenges of approaches to pupil voice, with reference to the literature. It also draws on the experiences of one primary school which has developed its own particular scheme for engaging pupils in the school community. Whilst the role and importance of pupils' voices and perspectives to inform school development seem to be gaining recognition, this article argues for greater critical scrutiny and rigour in terms of some of the rhetoric used and just how it relates to practice.

Literature review

'Voice' is much talked about in schooling as a means of engaging children and young people as important 'influencers' of policy and decision-making with a genuine and legitimate right to be heard.

The development of the concept of pupil consultation and pupil voice stems principally from the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12, which stated that:

"... the child who is capable of forming his or her own views (shall be assured of) the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." (para. 1)

Lansdown (2001) notes that this fundamentally challenges some long-established attitudes based on the idea that children should be "seen and not heard" (p.2). There have been attempts to define the concept of 'pupil voice' and that by Whitty and Wisby (2007) is concise and focused:

"Pupil voice can be understood as pupils having the opportunity to have a say in decisions in school that affect them. It entails pupils playing an active role in their education and schooling as a result of schools becoming more attentive and responsive, in sustained and routine ways, to pupils' views" (p.5).

The focus on pupil voice can be linked to research within the fields of cognitive science and sociology as well as children's rights advocates, promoters of civics and citizenship education and child development experts (Johnson, 2004). Fullan (2001) has drawn attention to the benefits of bringing such insights together:

"We must combine the ideas of cognitive scientists, who are working on the problem of how to engage all learners, with the insights of sociologists, who show how power relations in the school must be altered if we are to make substantial progress on this agenda" (p.153).

Mitra (2006) has pointed to the need for acceptance of the concept of student voice in school decision-making among powerful stakeholders in the school before students themselves can be accepted as key players in school reform, noting that "Student voice advocates must convince others of their views and garner support for their efforts" (p.315). There is a good rationale for this, for as Lansdown (2001) makes clear, listening to children leads to better decisions: "Children have a body of experience and knowledge that is unique to their situation. They have views and ideas as a result of that experience" (p.4).

Rudduck and Flutter (2004) have drawn attention to the importance of adults understanding the pupil perspective and they talked of 'the power of pupil commentary' to inform school improvement:

"Pupil commentaries on teaching and learning in school provide a practical agenda for change that can help fine-tune or, more fundamentally, identify and shape improvement strategies. The insights from their world can help us to 'see' things that we do not normally pay attention to but that matter to them" (p.29).

It is important that pupils' voices are heard because "they are key stakeholders in education, and the key targets of policy changes" (Wood, 2003, p.365). The Central Advisory Council for Education (England) (CACE) 'Plowden Report' said that: "At the heart of the educational process lies the child. No advances in policy, no acquisitions of new equipment have their desired effect unless they are in harmony with the nature of the child, unless they are fundamentally acceptable to him" (p.7).

It is hard to think how this can be achieved without consulting and listening to children's narratives. Furthermore, it can be argued that in a society increasingly ridden with media-driven pressures for young people to be passive consumers of fashion and to need the latest 'must haves', the engagement of young people in decisions which influence their lives is an important means of developing active, informed participation in society as citizens.

Lansdown (2001) reminds us of the incongruity of a concern, which most countries of the world share in common, to raise standards and improve educational opportunities *for* children and yet few take the trouble to find out *from* children what works in terms of developing their strategies for teaching, learning and positive behaviour. This is surely a missed opportunity because: "Evidence indicates that schools involving children and introducing more democratic structures are likely to be more harmonious, have better staff/pupil relationships and a more effective learning environment" (p.5).

As Leren (2006) notes, this makes sense because "Students know which methods and models work for them, what they see as interesting, and what they do not profit from" (p.367). Brighthouse & Woods (1999, p.150) remind us of the importance of pupils' views, as key stakeholders in the success of the school. Pupils' perspectives can provide powerful and important data to inform school self-evaluation. One example from the secondary school sector is George Mitchell High School, a school where students acting as learning consultants are trained to observe lessons and feedback to staff on two fundamental issues: did all class members enjoy the lesson and did learning happen? (Savage & Wood, 2006). Here students contribute to shared knowledge creation about the effectiveness of learning and teaching and how to make learning better. As Savage and Wood (2006, p.3) state:

"Making Learning Better is, largely, a question of demystifying the learning process and excising it from detachment in the adult world. It would be hard to find any student, in any school, of any age, ability or background, who does not hold strong opinions about what makes them want to engage with a lesson and what makes them switch off"(p.3).

Fullan (2001) notes how adults have often thought of students as the beneficiaries of educational change, but rarely as participants in a process of change and organisational life. Fullan sees children's views as an under-utilised resource and yet they are key players with a vital role in developing the knowledge base about what is working and what isn't. Fullan tells us that:

"Unless they have some meaningful (to them) role in the enterprise, most educational change, indeed most education, will fail. I ask the reader not to think of students as running the school, but to entertain the following question: What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered in the introduction and implementation of reform in schools?"(p.151)

Wyness (2000) discusses at some length the lack of control that children have traditionally had over any aspect of their education and life within the school, with the curriculum decided for them and "behaviour, dress and speech codes limit[ing] what pupils can do..." (p.90). As he points out, this can have the effect of stifling children's growing social competence.

Whitty and Whisby (2007) suggest four principal arguments in favour of pupil voice: a 'children's rights' driver, something recently reinforced by the Every Child Matters agenda; an 'active citizenship' driver, through which children gain knowledge and social skills through participation, allowing them to become more effective members of society; a 'school improvement' driver, by which a school may increase attainment levels or gain a strong ethos; and a 'personalisation' driver, which allows schools to demonstrate that they are acting in the interests of each individual child.

Taking the 'personalisation' driver concept further, Hargreaves (2004) considers student voice to be possibly the most powerful of his nine gateways towards the concept of Personalising Learning. As he says:

"For many years, those who have researched student perspectives on school and learning have been astonished at the mature and serious way the vast majority of students, even the most disengaged and alienated, talk about their experience of learning and schooling."(p.9)

Fullan (2001) laments that adults “rarely think of students as participants in a process of change and organizational life” (p.151). In fact he suggests that progress has been slow: “While research of the 1980s began to look at students as active participants in their own education, and it has become clearer what should be done, too little has actually happened to enhance the role of students as members of the school as an organization.” (p.151)

Rather than decisions being made by pupils, traditionally decision-making has been done for them by adults with minimal pupil involvement. This may be linked to views of childhood which have seen children as being incapable. Ruddock and Flutter (2004) suggest that such exclusion from decision-making is based on this kind of outdated view of childhood which “fails to acknowledge young people’s capacity to take initiatives and to reflect on issues affecting their lives” (p.1).

Pupils as Partners in the Scarcroft Primary School Community – A Cameo

The following is offered as a ‘cameo’ to illustrate the experiences of a primary school in the City of York, in England, UK, to encourage children to be active agents of their own learning through its very own ‘Pupils as Partners’ (PaP) scheme. The cameo is used as a device to set out the story of this school’s experience as a means of stimulating thinking relevant to the themes and purposes of this article. The PaP scheme at this school can be seen as an attempt to formulate a framework for bringing together and evaluating the school’s partnership working with its pupils. This scheme has been created by the school itself to demonstrate and account for how well it ‘engages pupils as partners’. The Pupils as Partners scheme is set out in the Pupils as Partners Handbook which has seven sections. Each section identifies the evidence required for PaP recognition. The seven sections deal with health and fitness, self-esteem, enrichment, learning, pupil voice, teamwork and the wider world. The section on learning has three parts: what teachers should do, what pupils should do and curricular targets. Included in these sections, alongside other indicators, are the drawing up of a teacher’s contract (following class discussion this is drawn up by pupils and teacher), a pupils’ contract (again drawn up by pupils and teacher following class discussion) and pupils’ involvement in setting their curricular targets. Each section specifies ways in which the pupils are to be actively involved as partners in their learning whether it is by engaging them in talking about their strengths and talents, selecting their targets from their teacher’s feedback, setting class teamwork targets or taking on responsible roles, to name just some indicators selected from those in the scheme handbook.

Methodology

The cameo is a short case study of a setting which was selected because of its intrinsic interest to this field of study in providing us with an example of a school which is: aiming to bring together a number of pupil voice strategies under the unifying concept of Pupils as Partners and created by the school itself; and planning into this from the outset the standards against which to judge how well these pupil voice strategies are being met. These were the principal reasons for selection of this ‘case’ and the aim was to explore some of the more general issues to do with pupil voice as raised in the literature through an examination of this particular setting. This appears to reflect Denscombe’s (2007) view of case study that:

“The logic behind concentrating efforts on one case rather than many is that there may be insights to be gained from looking at the individual case that can have wider implications and, importantly, that would not have come to light through a research strategy that tried to cover a large number of instances... The aim is to illuminate the general by looking at the particular.” (p.36)

The researcher acknowledges how she is situated ontologically and epistemologically in relation to this study. She is mindful that her commitment to the importance of the pupils' perspectives and her belief that pupils should be listened to and valued as having an important contribution to the construction of our knowledge base about schools and learning.

A qualitative research strategy was designed because the main concern of the investigation was to understand the perspectives of those in this setting of the experience of designing and implementing the Pupils as Partners scheme. According to Bell (1987, p.4) a qualitative perspective reflects more of a concern to explore and understand individuals' perceptions of the world and was therefore the approach best aligned to the purposes of this study. Descriptive data was gathered through visits to the school, which included semi-structured interviews with the headteacher, followed by additional written reflections from the headteacher on particular aspects of the scheme. Semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to allow the respondent to provide flexibility within a structure. As Thomas (2009) notes "The semi-structured interview provides the best of both worlds as far as interviewing is concerned, combining the structure of a list of issues to be covered together with the freedom to follow up points as necessary" (p.164).

The headteacher's written reflections on the scheme were designed to explore in more depth some of the data collected from initial interviews with the headteacher (See Appendix for schedule of questions for written reflections). The data from the written reflections were collected following the first analysis of the interview data as a means of gaining additional insights for further exploration. This was also a means, too, of triangulating the initial data by checking and confirming the accuracy of the interview data and also allowing a more detailed and in-depth understanding to be built up. Data was also collected from observation of a Year 4 (8 – 9 year olds) lesson including some informal discussion with the pupils, and from documentary evidence about Pupils as Partners provided by the school. The lesson was one in which some the principles of the PaP scheme could be observed as the children were involved in setting their own learning targets and also agreeing class targets. This related in particular to the 'Learning' and 'Teamwork' sections of the scheme. Thus a number of data sources were drawn on with the aim of providing methodological triangulation and developing a fuller picture and more accurate understanding of the phenomenon studied. Methodological triangulation is described by Wellington (2000) as using a variety of methods to study the same issue. Denscombe (2007) has suggested that by viewing something from multiple viewpoints a better knowledge can be gained, giving added confidence in the research. The aim of this study is to provide insights rather than generalisations (Thomas 2009). The study is not intended to be able to be generalised and, drawing on ideas discussed by Opie (2004), it is the 'reliability' of the study rather than its generalisability which the researcher sees as important. It is therefore hoped that other primary school settings may recognise aspects of this experience in relation to their own settings and practice and may find value for them in reflection on learning from this study. In terms of how the concept of reliability has been considered, drawing on Scaife (2004) this is thought of as a property of the data-gathering process:

"In a carefully controlled scientific experiment, for instance, conditions are tightly specified so that, in principle, any researcher in the field could replicate a particular data gathering process and expect to obtain the same data as any other researcher." (p.66)

However, this is not the nature of this research study and it is argued that it is neither appropriate nor useful to apply such ideas to the methods used here. In terms of validity, this has been considered in terms of the claims made and the process of data gathering to provide the grounds of these (Scaife, 2004, p.69).

The research design showed regard for ethical considerations and so as part of gaining informed consent to participate in the research, the purposes of the research, confidentiality and the right of the setting to anonymity were explained at the outset. However, the school opted to be identified by name to enable others with an interest in this work and wishing to find out more about Pupils as Partners to do so. The school setting and headteacher are therefore identified with permission having been granted for this in order to enable readers to make contact with the setting if they so wish, to follow-up their interest in the Pupils as Partners work and learn further from this school's experience. Permission for the classroom observation and discussion with the pupils was obtained through the headteacher and no child is identified in this study.

Findings and Discussion

Having collected the data this was analysed for themes that emerged from the ways in which those in the research setting understood, implemented and reflected on the scheme. This involved reading and re-reading all the sources of data collected in order to become thoroughly 'immersed' in the data in order to uncover deeper layers of meaning. This was aided by the use of memos to capture and record the ongoing thoughts and ideas of the researcher about the data during this process. A number of strands emerged and these are discussed below.

The Philosophy and Purposes of the Scheme

Pupils as Partners was a development from the school's involvement in the Investors in Pupils (IiP) award. Motivated by a desire to develop an initiative which it felt could be better adapted to the school and its pupils, the Pupils as Partners scheme was devised because:

"We felt that there were some aspects of IiP that really benefitted us, but it was very prescriptive. We wanted to keep some of the best aspects of the process, but adapt it to suit our school and our pupils. The idea for Pupils as Partners came from our Headteacher and was developed by the Senior Leadership Team. The aim was to create a whole-school approach which brought together the main national initiatives we were engaging with (Every Child Matters; Excellence and Enjoyment; Healthy Schools; Assessment for Learning; Investors in Pupils) and tailor-make one focus..." (Headteacher)

Whilst PaP thus represents an attempt to link to current policy agendas, it is not seen as an exercise in 'ticking the boxes'. It came from a desire to provide some validation and accountability for how well the professed commitment to partnership with pupils was working. Although the school is housed in a traditional Victorian building, the approach is in contrast to the Victorian idea of children being 'seen and not heard'. Rather, it is built on children's agency as learners and important members of the school community. It is important to the school that a scheme to provide a validation of its commitment to pupil partnership should embody its philosophy and values. These stem from a commitment to the school community working as a team.

Partnership and the Development of the School as a Community

The school believes it is stronger for this team approach and that it achieves more through partnership with all stakeholders, including the pupils:

"... this fits with our whole school ethos which places a very strong emphasis on team spirit. Assemblies and training days make frequent reference to 'T.E.A.M.' which stands for 'Together Everyone Achieves More'" (Headteacher).

In order to put TEAM into practice, the staff prioritise the importance of talking to children about 'who does what' in the school community and what each group contributes to the school. Part of the idea behind this is to develop a stronger sense of all partners and their contributions to the school community working together as a team. Partnership is built on engagement within the life of the school and this starts from an awareness of all the partners, their roles and contributions. Pupils as Partners therefore aims to give pupils a voice through engagement in the school community as partners with other stakeholders. The Pupils as Partners Handbook for example requires that 'pupils should demonstrate an understanding of the roles adults play in providing and supporting their learning throughout the school' (Scarcroft Primary School, n.d.).

Achieving Pupils as Partners status

Pupils as Partners status is achieved when the standards developed by the school have been met. There are key pieces of evidence required to demonstrate the kinds of activity relevant to each aspect of the scheme. Assessment of the effectiveness of the school in engaging pupils as active participants in the school community, and in their own learning, is made on the basis of the data collected. So, for example, pupils' views are canvassed about their attitudes to school, their understanding of roles and responsibilities of pupils and their understanding of those of adults in the school, and a schedule of questions has been developed for this purpose. Data is also gathered from the collection of other evidence such as samples of children's work and classroom visits. Convinced of the benefits of PaP, Scarcroft Primary school is keen to extend these by sharing the initiative with other schools. So far one other York primary school has engaged with the scheme and has been assessed by Scarcroft staff, who spent a whole day at the school to carry out this assessment, before awarding the school PaP status. The hope is that other local schools may also wish to engage with the scheme.

The meaning of 'partnership' with pupils

The concept of 'partnership' is the cornerstone of the PaP scheme and yet how exactly 'partnership' working is interpreted and understood for this age group would perhaps benefit from some further clarification. The term 'partnership' is a 'slippery' and somewhat imprecise concept and, rather like 'community' it could be said to have a strong 'feel good factor'. 'Partnership' might be taken to imply a sharing of power and a way of operating which suggests a certain level of maturity, if engagement in 'full partnership' is meant. It could be argued however that the 'partnership' in this context is not an equal partnership, as adults and children in the school are in a particular power relationship. Vincent (1996) explored issues of partnership in the context of home-school relations and in doing so raised some points which may be relevant in this context too. In exploring how terms such as 'participation', 'partnership', 'community', 'citizenship', and 'empowerment' are used, Vincent said:

"All have positive connotations. Like 'participation', 'partnership' is a diffuse concept. It implies a broad spectrum of ideas embracing equality, consensus, harmony and joint endeavour. 'Community' is a term commonly used to give a positive flavour to other concepts with which it is linked, hence 'community care'..."

Edelman (1964) defines such terms as 'condensation symbols'. They 'condense' specific emotions into a particular word or phrase, so that its usage provokes those emotions. However the exact meaning of these condensation symbols is not clearly defined. Indeed they are often kept vague to attract maximum support. Over time, the words gain assumed meanings which are rarely critically scrutinised. Thus their usage may obscure more than it illuminates (p.3).

There is no suggestion here of deliberate vagueness to avoid scrutiny but what is important is that concepts such as 'partnership' and 'involvement' should be critically scrutinised and deconstructed.

Pupils as Partners is seen by the school as one manifestation of pupil voice and pupil involvement in school life:

We believe that there is an argument for pupil voice, but that in a primary school this is limited – in no way do we feel that we have exhausted all the ways in which pupils can be involved – this is simply one aspect of the PaP work ... (Headteacher).

The school certainly sees a role for pupil involvement in learning and this is an aspect of the PaP work, although perhaps the distinction between 'involvement' within the context of pupil 'partnership' would benefit from closer articulation. 'Pupil Partnership' has something of a progressive ring to it and perhaps a closer definition of partnership and just what type and extent of engagement this model is offering to pupils would be useful.

PaP appears to add another dimension to other aspects of pupil voice strategies at the school such as, for example, the annual Pupil Questionnaire. This is a tool for gathering pupils' views and the data are analysed by the senior leadership team (SLT) and the governors. However, this might be seen more as a means of finding out about issues and concerns the pupils have, such as for example safety concerns or their preferences for topics to be studied, to which the SLT and governors then respond. Pupil partnership though, suggests more than pupils simply feeding back views to which adults then respond, and PaP recognises this to some extent in aiming to give pupils an understanding and sense of 'ownership' of roles and processes within the school community. One example of this is the expectation in the PaP scheme that older pupils will have a basic understanding of the school's total annual budget and some grasp of how this breaks down into different costings and how it is used to provide resources for their learning. An aim here is to help pupils to develop a stronger sense of careful stewardship of the finite resources both from a budgetary and environmental perspective. It can be argued from this example that the scheme strives to engage pupils and to do more than canvas views because it seeks to develop their knowledge and understanding to help inform and develop their involvement. Whether it is 'involvement' or 'partnership' may be something for further debate, but PaP does seek to develop engagement rather than to merely canvas opinion.

Partnership is perhaps best understood in this setting as starting from talking 'with' children rather than 'to' or 'at' them. Partnership with pupils at this school seems to prioritise taking time to explain to pupils and to engage pupils in their learning and more widely in life in and beyond the school. Pupils as Partners means talking about learning together and agreeing targets for the next steps in progress. This was seen in the observed lesson where a small group of pupils worked with the teacher to think and talk together about the purpose of setting targets for learning, how they could decide on what targets to set themselves, how they would know when they had achieved them and collective targets they could agree for themselves together as a class. The teacher engaged the children in a discussion about their views on the purposes of targets to begin with and engaged them in thinking through targets that would be meaningful to them. The children suggested that targets 'help you improve things' and that they are important 'so that we know what we have done. We can see what we have achieved' and 'you set your own target so you can improve things'. The class targets that the children had agreed were also on display for example a target to do with developing teamwork. This provided evidence of some of the key principles of pupils as active participants in their own learning and, by discussing and gathering the children's views on the reasons for targets, the teacher showed respect for the pupils and regard for the importance of a partnership approach to learning. This is similar to one of the principles for transforming learning and teaching set out by MacGilchrist and Buttress (2005) in their discussion of the importance of engaging pupils, parents and teachers in "talk about learning and next steps in learning" (p.185). The Pupils as Partners scheme at Scarcroft primary school could also perhaps make clearer links to how this articulates with the school policy on parental

partnership, thus encouraging PaP to be seen more holistically within its wider policy framework for partnerships with stakeholder groups.

There are many examples at the school of engaging pupils in their learning such as involvement in target-setting which is one aspect of PaP, but also in the ways in which staff take the time to talk to children about the learning they themselves engage in both professionally and for personal pleasure. For example, displays of ballroom dancing and tap dancing have been given to the children by staff taking lessons in these in their leisure time. Also, when returning to school after a staff development training event, teachers will sometimes discuss with children what they have learnt and share with them any new ideas for possible future implementation. This demonstrates by example that one key thing that binds all partners and strengthens the school community is a desire and commitment to learn and therefore one important aspect of PaP is dialogue between partners in learning. It could also be seen as contributing to the Pupils as Partners criterion of 'developing an understanding of life-long learning' (Scarcroft Primary school, n. d.).

Evaluation of Pupils as Partners

The model of evaluation of this work towards 'Pupils as Partners' recognition is an important aspect. If this is seen as having a developmental rather than judgemental role, then it might be useful for a School Improvement Partner, for example, to have an involvement here or an external 'critical friend', in order to provide a validation of the school's own self-review of its progress with PaP. The school has recognised that more rigorous evaluation, supported by systematic collection of evidence would support the development of PaP. According to the Headteacher:

"There is little hard data available, as there are no statistics to gather. Our evaluation has relied on gathering views of staff and pupils in the year after we implemented the scheme. We believe that pupils are still engaging with us in a more proactive way than previously and that this is reflected in the positive learning atmosphere found in lessons around school."

To 'square the circle' the school might now evaluate more systematically how well PaP is achieving its aims and how this can feed into school development.

Reflections

'Personalised learning' is high on the agenda of government policy reforms for education in England and therefore an essential part of government strategy for schools. It is described as central to a system "which fits to the individual rather than the individual having to fit to the system" (DfES 2004, p.3) and according to a more recent Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2008) publication, it involves active engagement of stakeholders in a learning community:

Personalised learning is central to a school improvement agenda which has teaching and learning at its heart. The active engagement of staff and other stakeholders in the school's improvement agenda is equally crucial. In many ways, successful schools are those that have been able to personalise the school improvement process by engaging staff ... and other stakeholders (including governors, parents and children and young people) as part of a learning community. (p.6)

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 'Gilbert Report' (2007) saw personalised learning being built on engagement of pupils (and parents) as partners in learning. Pupils as active 'shapers' was one idea mentioned: "Reflective schools view 'pupil voice' as far more than establishing a pupil council. They are engaging pupils actively in shaping learning and teaching ..." (p.21)

Furthermore, putting pupil voice 'centre stage' is about engaging the pupil as "a partner in learning, not a passive recipient..." (DfES 2004, p.4). As mentioned previously, the terminology tends to be used without much discussion and can be rather imprecise. How are we hoping to 'engage' pupils as 'shapers', 'partners' and 'participants', what do these terms mean and how are they to be understood and interpreted for example in the school context?

In the secondary school context, the Making Learning Better scheme at the George Mitchell High School mentioned above, is rooted firmly in the belief that only by harnessing the views of the learner can truly personalised learning be guaranteed. How else can we personalise the learning if we don't learn from the person at its core? (Savage & Wood, 2006).

How does this relate to the primary school context though? The Pupils as Partners programme might be said to contribute to 'personalised learning' when linked to the concept of "personalisation through participation" (Leadbeater, 2004, p.8) in terms of giving children an opportunity to be consulted and involved in shaping the school policies and approaches to learning. For example, as has been previously mentioned, through the PaP programme it is hoped that children will gain a better understanding of how the budget is allocated, how school works, who is responsible for what and so on. It can be argued that this information and understanding are needed as prerequisite knowledge if children are really to be involved and consulted about how the school works as a community and how it can be developed. Students know what works for them (Leren, 2006, p.367) and therefore their knowledge should be used to inform school reforms.

Whilst this view appears to be gaining currency and becoming more accepted, it is the view of McNeish (1999) cited in Clark and Moss (2006, p.1) that the rhetoric outpaces the practice. What is interesting about PaP at Scarcoft Primary school is that here we have a genuine desire to work out a model and accompanying indicators for how well a school is listening to and engaging its pupils as partners. If the indicators are met, good practice is validated. This has the potential to inform the knowledge about school which is developed not from the views of policy makers or other adults' views but from the unique perspectives of the pupils. As discussed earlier, it also makes profound sense to give pupils, who have a clear stake in school success, more of a real personal connection with the attainment of that goal by drawing on their knowledge and distinctive perspectives grounded in their own experience.

This issue of how we construct the knowledge base from which schools can develop is an important one. There are many different experiences which need to be drawn on to construct this knowledge base and each stakeholder group may have a different perspective to contribute, based on their own understandings. What is important is that children should be allowed to 'speak for themselves' rather than having their views interpreted through the filter of adult experience. We are reminded by MacBeath et al. (1995), that in important ways, school is viewed and experienced differently by different people:

"For teachers the school is their place of work. They have expectations about their working environment and about the attitudes of others towards them as 'teachers'. They have their own places ..."

Pupils use the school's buildings and resources in different ways from their teachers. They have few, if any, places that are theirs... They live much of the day in a different culture – the pupil culture. (p.22)

To draw on MacBeath et al's (1995) metaphor, our knowledge base about school must include a 'worm's eye view': If management and teachers can be said to have a bird's eye view of the school

then pupils have a worm's eye view, and the younger they are the closer to the ground that view is. They see the school from the bottom up.

To return briefly to the Plowden Report (1967), we might argue that if the school is "a community in which children learn to live first and foremost as children and not as future adults" (p.187) then the important and unique contribution from children themselves, based on the value of their experiences and perceptions as key members of the school community, in developing our knowledge and understanding about schools must be acknowledged.

Challenges

However, all this is not without its challenges when seeking out pupil voice. The literature suggests that the challenges facing the pupil voice movement come from at least two factions; there may be those who feel cynical about or threatened by the idea of children gaining more of a voice. Then, on the other hand, there may be those who feel that it is vitally important but have concerns over current practice.

Flutter (2007, p.343) expresses one of the principal worries for many about pupil voice in saying that while there has been official endorsement of the notions that pupils have a right to voice their opinions and should have some involvement in decision-making affecting their lives, the implications of these arguments for day-to-day practice are less clear and sometimes contentious.

So it is often the practical applications of pupil voice that cause concern, leading to cynicism about the value it may offer. Worries over how many pupils actually have their voices heard are significant as pupils' contributions vary tremendously. If a school council is the only outlet for pupil voice this might include a small minority of pupils (May, 2005, p.31). Equally, there may be pupils who prefer not to be involved and keep a low profile and yet if pupil voice is to be meaningful as representing all 'voices', educators should strive to ensure that all children have their opinions heard and that those who are disengaged should be specifically targeted. This means not just the most articulate or those most involved in school life and therefore whose voices are easier to access, but also others who may experience difficulties in articulating their views (Teaching and Learning Research Programme, 2003).

This raises a further challenge of how teachers access the views of children for Wyse (2001) found in his research that children found it difficult to express their opinions honestly for fear of hurting their teachers. Given that relationships in schools are based on the teachers being in positions of authority, how might this curtail the freedom which pupils feel they have to express an opinion frankly and honestly?

Wyse (2001) also observed much that contradicted what he had been told in his interviews in certain schools and so felt a tension regarding how much credence to give to views expressed by some of the children he worked with. Again, this raises a further potential challenge when attempting to access the 'true' voices of children who when asked may offer a particular view but observational evidence may appear to contradict this.

Might it not also be the case that children do not simply want to be invited to give their thoughts on topics that they do not think are important or when they don't think that any action will result from expressing their opinions? Harland et al. (2004) argue that: pupil voice should not be limited to their views on lockers, lunchtime provision and the general social life of schools - important as these are - but about the core of education, namely, teaching and learning and the curriculum as experienced in schools. (p.4)

Another concern that is expressed is that allowing children a voice may “undermine teachers’ authority and [...] fundamentally change the power relationships that exist within schools” (Flutter, 2007, p.350). It is true too that what pupils say may also “clash with dominant discourses about effective practice” (Wood, 2003, p.368).

A further issue raised by Rudduck and Flutter (2004) is that as pupil consultation has risen to prominence, so observable results are expected. Building an effective programme of pupil consultation is likely to be a slow process, which is a concern if the enthusiasm for it wanes in the meantime. As Flutter (2007, p.351) suggests:

the most serious risk for pupil voice is that it could become the latest in a long line of educational chart-toppers - ideas that come into favour for a few years and then fade away as a new hot topic comes along. (p.351)

In conclusion, agreeing with Kellett (2005), when she suggests that “better ways to seek out child perspective and unlock child voice must be sought” (p.2), a concern of this article has been that children and young people are heard in decision-making in schools and the benefits of this for all. The point was made for example that not only is this legitimate in terms of children and young people being important stakeholders in schooling, but also that this will promote more informed decisions by including the student knowledge base. Drawing on MacBeath et al. (1995) we have referred to this as a ‘worms-eye view’, which conveys the idea of the importance of the views of those who are ‘closer to the ground’ and experience school from that perspective. We have examined some of the terminology used in describing approaches to pupil voice, noting that this is sometimes uncritical, rather loose and fuzzy. For example, in our brief examination of a selection of literature the terminology has included children as ‘influencers’, ‘shapers’, ‘agents’, ‘partners’, ‘participants’, who are ‘consulted’, ‘engaged’ ‘involved’ and ‘empowered’. Agreeing with the general point made by Vincent (1996, p.3), these sorts of terms may sound progressive and appealing and thus may gain some measure of support, but the meanings are sometimes assumed and implied rather than rigorously analysed and this can result in the vagueness referred to above.

There are many strategies used by schools to engage pupil voice but as has been examined in this article, these are not unproblematic. The Pupils as Partners scheme has been drawn on as an illustration of one school’s attempt to engage pupils in meaningful ways and the originality and benefits of this scheme have been considered. We have also suggested that it may be under-theorised in terms of ‘partnership’ and that as PaP evolves the school might usefully interrogate the concept of ‘partnership’ with pupils further in the context of the range of its partnership activity. One clear issue is how the data from a more rigorous evaluation of PaP might feed more systematically into school self-evaluation. Further clarity about the key ‘drivers’ (Whitty & Whisby, 2007) for this scheme would aid this evaluation, for example whether it is primarily an accountability ‘driver’ in terms of demonstrating and validating its work in this field i.e. ‘proving’ or whether it is more about ‘improving’ what the school does by drawing on the pupil narratives to develop an understanding of what works.

Appendix

Schedule of questions for headteacher's written reflections

Pupils as Partners (PaP) Schedule of Questions and Prompts
Background to the scheme What was 'Investors in Pupils'? How did PaP follow on from this? Were the pupils involved in developing PaP? Have any other schools joined the scheme? What stage of development has PaP reached? How do you see it evolving in the future?
Benefits What are the benefits of PaP: For this school and other schools? For the children?
Issues and critical reflections What issues have been raised by the scheme about pupil partnership and participation? What lessons have been learnt to take forward in the future? Any other critical reflections on the experience of PaP?
Making a difference How is the school using PaP data? How is PaP contributing to school improvement? How do pupils know that PaP is informing school policy and practice? How has PaP been reviewed and evaluated? How well is it working? Is it meeting its aims? How do you know?
Pupil Voice Is PaP a vehicle to bring together pupil voice strategies in the school? Could you explain what the philosophy of PaP is in terms of partnership with pupils? Can pupils be full partners in a primary school? How much power is given to pupils through pupil voice strategies such as PaP?

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Parents' Attitude toward Daughters' Education in Tribal Area of Dera Ghazi Khan (Pakistan)

Muhammad Ayub Buzdar
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur,
Pakistan
ayubbuzdar@gmail.com

Akhtar Ali
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur,
Pakistan
akhtariub@hotmail.com

Abstract

The paper aimed to investigate the parents' attitudes toward their daughters' education in tribal areas of district Dera Ghazi Khan (Pakistan). To achieve the objectives four research questions were established. Focus of the questions was to examine the significance of girls' education for tribal parents. Existing and expected role of tribal parents as well as contribution from government and community for girls' education was also aimed to explore in research questions. Sample comprised thirty parents and five teachers/educational workers. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and was analyzed using content analysis approach. The findings disclosed the parents' positive perceptions toward their daughters' education but at the same time severe scarcity of human and physical infrastructure for girls' education was also presented in the area. The paper recommended several empirical steps to overcome these problems including provision of new school locations and ensuring the availability of school buildings, supporting infrastructure and teachers for already functioning schools in the area. Financial aid for poor students was also proposed in the study.

Keywords: Gender disparity; madrasa education; infrastructure

Introduction

Gender disparity is remained an unsolved issue from decades in Pakistan. Government of Pakistan has signed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and consequently was responsible to eliminate gender disparity in all levels of education by 2015. Pakistan, a country with the people of different social, financial, and ethnical backgrounds, expressed varied results for different targets and indicators of MDGs (Academy of Educational Planning and Management, 2008). Data presented in Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) surveys revealed high gender disparity in the favor of boys in primary and elementary education in tribal districts of the country (Government of Pakistan, 2008 & 2009). Various studies investigate the situation of girls' education in different areas of the country (Aslam, 2007; Lall, 2009; Qureshi, 2007) and conclude the pathetic position of girls' education in rural and tribal areas of the country.

Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) surveys claim low literacy and enrollment rates of girls in Pakistan. Simultaneously, Qureshi (2003) reveals high dropout rate of girls in these areas. Data for the years of 2006-07 reveals the Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.63 with lower Net Enrollment Rate (NER) of girls in all levels of education across the country (Government of Pakistan,

2008a). Gender Parity Index (GPI) is the ratio of girls' enrollment to the boys' enrollment. A GPI of more than one indicates that, in proportion, for every male in the school, there is more than one female. Data for the years 2006-07, although, shows a better trend than previous year i.e. GPI of 0.62 for the year 2004-05 but the situation is worse in tribal based regions of the country. The GPI of 0.42 for Khyber-Pakhtoon-Khaw province and 0.38 for Balochistan province for the years 2006-07 reveals strict position of girls' education in such areas.

Aslam (2007) and Khalid and Mukhtar (2002) conclude that, in Pakistan, poor families prefer to educate sons rather than their daughters due to financial constraints. In another study Aslam (2007a) further elaborates this notion. He argues that parents' preferences also affect school selection for their children (boys and girls). According to him, generally, parents select comparatively better schools, in context of fees, for their sons. Daughters are ignored or enrolled in the schools having lower fees and fewer facilities.

Gender Parity Index (GPI) for primary school enrollment is 0.72 for Punjab, 0.63 for Sindh, 0.42 for Khyber Pakhtoon-Kha, and 0.38 for Balochistan for the years 2006-07 (Government. of Pakistan, 2008a). Lynd (2007) discovers the differences of female primary and elementary NER and literacy rates (youth and adult) between rural and urban areas of the country. According to him the female NER in rural areas is lower than urban areas for primary classes. Lall (2009) finds out that tribal people are more likely to not send their girls in schools. Literacy data of a remote district of Dera Ghazi Khan strengthen this idea. Literacy rate of 10+ age group of district Dera Ghazi Khan is 28% for females with compare to 62% of males for the year 2006-07. Net Enrollment Rate (NER) in primary classes is 48% for girls and 60% for boys for the same period (Government. of Pakistan, 2008). *Tehsil* Tribal area of District Dera Ghazi Khan comprises tribal Baloch population. Though people strictly follows Baloch traditions however the impacts of media and development of Punjab province has changed the tribal behaviors of the people of tribal area of district Dera Ghazi Khan more than other Baloch tribal areas of the country.

Aslam (2007 & 2007a), Hussain, Zakaria, Hassan, Mukhtar and Ali (2003), Khalid and Mukhtar (2002), Lall (2009) and Qureshi (2007) in their recent studies, have explored the issue of girls' education in Pakistan. The studies provide statistical data regarding female literacy rates, girls' enrollments in different level of education, educational infrastructures located for girls, gender disparity indexes and the reasons of gender disparity in different areas of the country. Lall (2009) investigates the shift of educational dynamics in different ethnic groups in Pakistan. As a part of her study, she interviewed the parents of enrolled girls and acquired data regarding their preferences for boys or girls' education from different areas of the country. There is a need to get understanding of perceptions and attitudes of the parents of both enrolled and out of school girls regarding their daughters' education which was the major thirst of the study.

Less enrollment of girls in the country especially in tribal areas demands to investigate different factors which are affecting overall situation of girls' education in these areas. Parents' attitude is central point in these circumstances which can play the role of change agent. Parents' attitudes and behaviors reflect the cultural and social picture of this segment of society. Major purpose of this study is to deeply explore the mind-set of tribal parents toward their daughters' education so that if there are some barriers and weak points, it can be planned to improve them. The study contributes to draw a clear and comprehensive scenario of girls' education in tribal areas of the district Dera Ghazi Khan (Pakistan).

Research Questions

The research purpose of exploring parents' attitudes has vast grounds. It was necessary to focus the study on research objectives and concentrate to get the understanding of parents in this regard. To get the comprehension of attitudes of tribal parents toward their daughters' education, the study attempted to answer the following research questions.

1. How do tribal parents define the significance of girls' education?
2. What type of role, tribal parents wish to contribute for their daughters' education?
3. What type of role, tribal parents are contributing for their daughters' education?
4. What could be possible measures to enhance tribal parents' role for their daughters' education?

Methodology

In previous studies, conducted on the topic of parents' behaviors, researchers used both quantitative and qualitative methods (Aslam 2007, 2007a; Hussain et al., 2003; Lall, 2009; Qureshi, 2007; Qureshi, 2003). Research purpose as well as research questions of the present study demand a deep exploration of parental attitudes either they send their daughters to schools or not. Creswell (2003) and Bernard (2000) recommend qualitative method of inquiry to achieve such type of purposes when the task is to investigate the behaviors rather than count down.

Sample

Tehsil Tribal Area of District Dera Ghazi Khan comprises five union councils (UCs) named UC Tumman Qaisrani, UC Fazla Kachh, UC Barthi, UC Mubarki, and UC Tumman Leghari. In UC Fazla Kachh total two middle and 19 primary schools are on the record for girls. In UC Tumman Qaisrani one middle and 24 primary, in UC Barthi one middle and 27 primary, in UC Mubarki 11 primary and in UC Tumman Leghari four middle and six primary schools are functioning on the record. In this study, equal numbers of parents (six from each UC) and Educational/literacy workers (one from each UC) were included in the sample. Thus the sample comprised five educational/literacy workers and thirty parents.

Data Collection

To enhance the richness and accuracy of the findings, the data was gathered from total five union councils of *Tehsil* Tribal Area of district Dera Ghazi Khan. Boundaries of the data were defined and confined only to search the answers of research questions. Two sources of data including parents, and educational workers of the area were accessed. To create unity in the findings, the data from the area was analyzed in its own (tribal) cultural and educational context. Data was collected in three stages. In first stage data regarding numbers of girls' schools in each UC with their level was gathered from DMO (District Monitoring Officer) Office Dera Ghazi Khan. Previous studies concerning parents' attitudes toward their daughters' education especially in tribal perspective were reviewed in second stage, and the third stage consisted of interviewing of participants. Semi-structured interview technique was used to collect required data. Consent to use audio tape recorder was sought from the participants. It was intended that each interview did not take more than 25 minutes.

Data Analysis

Data gathered through interviews was written in transcripts. Data was analyzed using relational analysis which was a type of content analysis approach. Huckin (2008) suggests relational analysis for

qualitative inquiry to focus on both explicit and implicit concepts available in the data. Different concepts were derived from the data and were analyzed exploring their roots and relationships. Local school teachers and literacy workers were a better source to discuss the findings to maintain reliability. Following this approach, the findings and important points were discussed with local educationists of the area and was crystallized and finalized. It provided opportunity to create association among different opinions and interpret the data according to local context. Conclusions were drawn and verified looking at all previous stages of data collection and analysis. Finally recommendations were provided to better the parents' attitudes as well as girls' education situation in the area.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research trustworthiness of collection and analysis of the data is considered as traditional validity and reliability of the quantitative method of research. Richards (2005) and Silverman (2001) have demonstrated the measures to meet the issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. In present study, different steps were adapted in this regard. Initially formal consent was sought from all participants before interviewing. Confidentiality was assured to all participants and acquired data was only used for research purpose and dealt as confidential document. Use of triangulation is best, according to Patton (2002), to meet trustworthiness, neutrality, credibility, and consistency features of a research. For this regard, multiple data sources were used in the study to draw a single picture. For example numeric data of girls' schools and qualitative data from parents of enrolled and out of school children and educational workers active in the area were used to increase trustworthiness of the study.

It was maintained that the data was appropriate and was appropriately handled. Richards (2005) described two rules to meet this requirement. Firstly, specific way of checking was designed, which checked consistently how the data and handling of the data were supportive to answer the research questions. Secondly, researcher's ability was ensured to account each step of the research properly.

Delimitations of the Study

The major limitation of the study was generalizability of its conclusions. Emerging themes from the research accept the relevancy with only the contexts of tribal areas of district Dera Ghazi Khan. Boundaries of the study were firmed for research, which were limited to the exploration of parents' attitudes toward their daughters' education in the area. Self-selected participants were strong point for the study to get relevant and significant data however to ease the critiques any volunteer participant (If he/she was willing) was welcomed. It was tried to access equally mothers and fathers of girls in the area however due to the constraints of tribal customs and traditions only males could be accessed. Consequently, the study based on only fathers' opinions toward their daughters' education in the area.

Findings

Significance of Daughters' Education

There were no major differences among the opinions of tribal parents regarding the significance of their daughters' education. Education for girls was described as a source of awareness and Islamic knowledge. "Though girls' education has financial benefits but I prefer to educate my daughters only for the sake of knowledge especially Islamic religious knowledge" a tribal man of 40 years age who was running a small Islamic religious school (*Madrasa*) on the tribal area stated. And when he was

asked to opine about the girls' enrollment in non-religious government established girls' school, he revealed his disagreement for this. But at the same time the parents having other financial backgrounds like labor, business, farming, and jobs argue in the favor of both religious and non-religious education. The viewpoints expressed by majority of tribal men lead to a positive trend toward girls' education in the areas.

Expected Role of Tribal Parents for their Daughters' Education

Two major categories of opinions emerged under this question; (a) the parents who want to educate their daughters at any cost. Some of these families migrated to urban areas to make their children (well) educated. The families who did not have resources to migrate are settled in the tribal areas but have desire to educate their children. A tribal person of age 30 who has a small shop in tribal area at 60 kilometers distance from nearest urban city Taunsa Sharif stated that there was a girls primary school in his area but with no proper building and only one female teacher who often remained absent from the duty. The tribal shop keeper showed his commitment for his daughters' education and opined that if the government provided transportation he was agreed to educate her daughters in Taunsa Sharif. Lack of resources is proved reluctance for many parents who had desire of daughters' education but could not educate them due to absence of school buildings, unavailability of teachers and transport facilities. Some parents prefer private schools which exist in the areas in very short numbers but there provided standard of education is also low with high cost, generally, unaffordable for common tribal man.

(b) Category B comprised the parents who proposed only Islamic education for their daughters. These people are dependent on *madrassa* education (education offered by Islamic religious schools comprised from simple Holy Quran recitation skill to Islamic philosophy and Fiqa (Malik, 2008)) for their daughters. Although the data about the numbers and level of *madrassas* (Islamic religious schools) is not available for the areas but during the visit in the areas observed numbers of *madrassas* for girls were very short. In some mosques, boys' religious schools or in some homes there is facility to educate girls only the reciting of Holy Quran without translation. The religious schools offering higher level of Islamic religious education especially for girls are unavailable in the areas. When a tribal father of age 42 years was asked that how the skill of recitation of holy Quran could meet the requirements of religious education and awareness? He replied strictly that it is their tradition and he would not negate his traditions at all. It reveals a connection between cultural and religious thought of some tribal men who, at the moment, are not prepare to adapt modern concepts of education. The majority of religious education schools or study centers which exist in the tribal areas of Dera Ghazi Khan are non-registered. There is no mechanism of students' shift and/or promotion from *madrassa* to mainstream schooling especially for girls. The parents of this category had showed no concern on this issue. For them the only thing which has importance is the traditional religious education for their daughters.

Existing Role of Tribal Parents for their Daughters' Education

There are also two categories in this section; (a) first the parents who have desire to educate their daughters and are striving for their daughters' education. Some of them have resources like tribal chiefs, government servants, businessmen etc. They migrated to urban areas which had adequate education facilities. The people who do not have resources for migration are settled in the tribal areas with a hope for better future of their daughters' education. They have enrolled their daughters in Public schools; the schools without buildings and other facilities like electricity, drinking water, sanitation, boundary walls etc and with insufficient numbers of teachers and their weak management and monitoring system.

(b) Category B was included with the parents who were satisfied by sending their daughters to educate them recitation of holy Quran. Though, this category comprised very few parents but these were the persons who claimed the worth of their traditions showing no concern for modern education and its social and personal benefits for girls and families, as well. In both cases, the victims are tribal girls. The parents are unconvinced (in fewer cases) or education facilities are not available (in large cases), the educational status of tribal girls is painful and far from other parts of the country.

Possible Measures for Improvement

All the parents who were aware of the importance of education were agreed on the demand of educational opportunities for girls including their daughters. When a Secondary School Teacher working in the area was asked about the behaviors of some people who totally denied the girls' general education on the basis of their traditions, he described the ignorance as sole cause of such behaviors. According to him if adequate educational facilities will be provided for girls in the areas than majority parents will start their daughters' education and consequently the behaviors of such people, who were fewer in numbers and opposed girls' education, will be changed. This time, majority tribal parents are unaware of the personal, domestic, social, and financial benefits of girls' education. According to parents' opinions, less numbers of girls' schools, distance of schools from homes, insufficient numbers of female teachers, absence of school buildings, electricity, toilets, boundary walls etc are the problems which demand immediate solutions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It was observed that, generally, tribal parents had soft corner for their daughters' education. They were aware of the significance of daughters' education. But the scarcity of resources has compelled them not to engage their daughters in education. If there were some weak voices against girls' general education, these were based on ignorance of parents. The opponents of general education of girls also supported religious education for girls. The important thing in all scenarios is that people in tribal area of Dera Ghazi Khan want to educate their daughters. The major problem for majority of them is the absence of Schools and school related human and physical infrastructure. The problems of transportation, drinking water, electricity, school buildings and boundary walls are severe in tribal cum rural areas than settled areas. Special efforts are recommended to refine girls' schools infrastructure on priority basis. Quality infrastructure ensures quality education and quality education ensures masses participation in education programs.

Since the population in the tribal area is scattered, the paper recommends wide provision of girls' schools and school related infrastructure in the area. To ensure the attendance of teachers, special administrative and managerial arrangements should be taken. Providing transport facility to female teachers and special incentives for the teachers serving in remote tribal areas can be proved helpful in this regard. Teachers should be assigned task to motivate parents to enroll their daughters in schools especially the parents who are reluctant to do so due to unawareness and ignorance. The parents who focused only on religious education for their daughters also need motivation and inspiration. Up gradation of girls' schools which are functioning, to some extent, better is also recommended. The availability of elementary and secondary schools will not only support the further education of already enrolled girls but work as a motive for many other girls in the areas who wish education.

To reduce the impacts of poverty on daughter' education, giving stipend to enrolled girls is a good solution. The study revealed that the people who have resources are migrated to developed areas for

their children education or personally made alternate arrangements for their children education like personal transportation or enrollment in boarding schools of settled areas. Majority of residents of tribal areas is poor having minimum resources for their living including children education. Stipends and financial assistance will promote their efforts for daughters' education.

Since there is not found any strong barrier in parents' attitudes for their daughters' education, the study promotes the idea of providing a mechanism of quality and easy accessible education for girls in the areas. The steps will helpful to create an educational environment in the areas as well as broaden the mindset of tribal parents.

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Elementary School Students' Perceptions of Technology in their Pictorial Representations

Suzan Duygu Erişti
Anadolu University, Turkey
sdbedir@anadolu.edu.tr

Adile Aşkı Kurt
Anadolu University, Turkey
aakurt@anadolu.edu.tr

Abstract

The current study aimed to reveal elementary school students' perceptions of technology through their pictorial representations and their written expressions based on their pictorial representations. Content analysis based on the qualitative research method along with art-based inquiry was applied. The "coding system for the concepts revealed from the research data" was implemented. Visual language used in pictorial representations produce messages, with its specialized codes. The degree of students to understand and explain their perception on technology composes the visual codes in this research. The study carried out with fifth-grade elementary school students was applied to a class of 28 students. The elementary school students participating in the present study had diverse perceptions of today's technology, and most of their perceptions of technology were based on computer and electronic household appliances. Some students' perceptions of technology were based on the Internet and mobile device technologies. Their perceived future technology was observed as human-computer interaction in the area of computer technology. Findings were discussed followed by relevant implications.

Keywords: Art education; technology perception; pictorial representation

Introduction

Artistic activities and pictorial representations are among the effective factors that help students to express themselves in educational environments. Artistic studies and applications expected to develop children's cognitive as well as affective skills in the educational process are considered to help children freely express themselves in the educational processes. Artistic areas and pictorial representations both constitute a process that supports other teaching areas and provide an environment in which children can freely express themselves (Hudson & Hudson, 2001). Art education supports students' intuitiveness, their creativity, their ability to describe/define an event or a concept and their perceptive determination to establish communication (Arnstine, 1990; Efland 1995; Eisner 1991; Welch & Greene, 1995). Art education is a process that allows students discover, interpret and define their own culture (Clarke, 1996). For children, art is a way of expressing their culture and their knowledge. Art is not only a rich source that helps explain and transfer various cultural images but also a way of raising consciousness of cultural values and cultural identity (Boughton & Mason, 1999).

Pictorial representation is a criterion that helps recognize children in the psycho-pedagogical process. Pictorial representation is also important since it is a representation tool that allows reflecting children's intelligence, personality, qualifications and their inner world (Yavuzer, 1992). The drawing activity that occurs as an indicator of a child's creativity, perception and skills, and creativity is also considered as a determinant factor of affective and social education (Artut, 2002). Human has the ability to understand and interpret the world he or she lives in, and all individuals interpret and

express the world in a different way. A child who can express his or her feelings and thoughts about realities in the world with the help of a common tool for representation may not always express his or her feelings and thoughts about his or her inner world with the help of such language (Kırıçoğlu, 2002). One of the most significant ways for children to interpret and express the world is drawing pictures (İlhan, 1997; Özkaya, 2007). For children, drawing a picture is a process of gathering different experiences in order to create a unique thing (Ersoy & Türkkkan, 2009). Besides children's written expressions regarding their inner world, their pictorial representations of their inner world reflect how they perceive their environment, what their place is in this environment and how they understand the images they get from multiple stimulants. In other words, in their drawings, children organize and interpret their perceptions and observations regarding their environment; thus, they express their perceptions regarding the outer world (Belet & Türkkkan, 2007).

It is seen in related literature that children's pictorial representations were studied in different subject areas. Some of these subjects were children's image of a scientist (Buldu, 2006; Oğuz, 2007; Türkmen, 2008), perception of the concept of health-doctor (Rijey & Van Rooy, 2007; Taş, Aslan & Sayek, 2006), perception of European Union (Belet & Türkkkan, 2007), perception of environment (Barraza, 1999; King, 1995; Matthews, 1985), perception of violence (Yurtal & Artut, 2007), cultural perception (Belet & Erişti, 2010; Erişti & Belet, 2010), technological perception (Moore, 1987; Rennie & Jarvis, 1995), evidence for family lives (Türkkkan, 2004) and family recognition (Doğru, Turcan, Aslı & Doğru, 2006).

Technology, with lexically means "systematic application of information in industrial operations", was defined by Rosh (1978) as a complex and abstract concept. Since complex and abstract concepts are difficult to understand without a certain level of intellectual maturity, children consider technology in different ways (Rennie & Jarvis, 1995). Parallel to the complexity of the concept, children from different age groups are likely to have different perceptions of technology. Determining how elementary school students use technology, how they perceive it and what their perceptions of technology use will be in future could provide directive information for understanding the concept of technology. In this respect, to determine children's perceptions of technology, it would be beneficial to use their pictorial representations that facilitate understanding their linguistic expressions as well as understanding what they fail to express verbally.

Activities including pictorial representations were used in this study since in the process of elementary school education, they are believed to be applications that provide data to better-analyze children's thoughts. Participating children were expected to reflect their pictorial performances and their technology perceptions in their pictorial representations. In their pictorial representations, they were also expected to reflect their thoughts about and attitudes towards future technologies objectively. In this regard, the basic purpose was to reveal elementary school students' perceptions of technology through their pictorial representations and their written expressions based on their pictorial representations. Depending on this purpose, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are elementary school students' perceptions of the concept of technology?
2. What are elementary school students' perceptions of technology use in future?

Methods and Procedures

Research Design

Content analysis based on the qualitative research method and art-based inquiry pattern were applied in the current study. A majority of researchers examine various approaches in educational environments based on scientific data as well as on artistic data (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This allows researchers to examine a different conceptualization regarding how education functions, what it means and for what purpose an activity is carried out in the teaching/learning process (Finley, 2005). In this regard, art-based inquiry – one of the qualitative research pattern – was used in the process of the analysis of the drawings. Art-based inquiry is a pattern that relates art and research in scientific studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Art-based inquiry pattern uses applications as to literacy and visual arts and various methods for these

applications. Being an inter-textual pattern, art-based inquiry relates art and research efforts in scientific studies. The aim is to reveal students' perceptions and perspectives on various situations based on their own impressions and artistic representations. Art based inquiry helps reveal students' views about and perceptions of various situations based on their artistic representations and their own related impressions (Eisner, 2002).

Participants

The availability-sampling method was used to determine the school for the application. The study was carried out with fifth graders attending Ulku Elementary School, where the application was thought to be effectively and objectively carried out by the researchers.

The rationale for conducting the present study with fifth graders was that they tend to reflect their thoughts independently and freely and question realistic issues. In addition, their pictorial representations are more likely to include observation-examination based effects. The present study was carried out with a class of 28 fifth graders. The students' names were changed for confidentiality. The distribution of the students with respect to their gender is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Students with Respect to their Gender

Gender	f	%
Female	17	39.3
Male	11	60.7
Total	28	100

Data Collection

The research data were collected via the participating students' drawings that were expected to reflect their perceptions of today's and tomorrow's technology and via their written idea (documents) about what they depicted in their drawings. The features of the data collection tools and the data collection process could be summarized as follows: in order to determine elementary school students' perceptions of technology in their pictorial representations, first, the students were requested to draw a picture regarding what technology is and what technology would be in future. As the second data collection tool, the students were asked to write down what they wanted to depict in their drawings. Thus, the data collection process included different data collection tools (pictorial representation, written expressions based on pictorial representations); in this way, the reliability of the data collection process was increased. At the end of the application, the data obtained via the students' drawings as well as from their written expressions based on their drawings were analyzed through document analysis. The application was carried out in an environment including the art teacher and the researchers in the course of Fine Art Education in a period of two course-hours (40 minutes each).

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Content analysis was applied for the analysis and interpretation of the interview data. The "coding system for the concepts revealed from the research data" – which is one of the coding methods in qualitative studies - was used (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). The research data were analyzed by examining all the research data and determining the themes in line with the data examined, and then by relating these themes to the research data obtained. Thus, the research data were analyzed in two phases. First, the students' pictorial representations and their written expressions based on their pictorial representations were analysed. Then, depending on the findings obtained, the themes were determined, supported with direct quotations and interpreted. Pictorial representations play a central role in postmodernist scientific researches (Finley, 2005). Visual language used in pictorial representations produce messages, with its specialized codes (Arnheim, 1954). The degree of students to understand and explain their perception on technology composes the visual codes in this research. The visual codes were used for analysing the pictorial representations of the research. Pictorial representations in the research analysed along with three dimensions of visual language; the subject of representation, the functional use of the representation as visual language and the degree

of visual code. The pictorial representations include high degree of visual code through technology in today's world and technology tomorrow are mostly examined and explained data's for qualitative analysis. Visual language and visual codes are better highlighted the perception of the students during the analysis of data's of this research.

For the analysis of the data, a form was developed to examine the elementary school students' pictorial representations and their views about their pictorial representations; and a *researcher comment* part was included in the form and was filled out by the researchers. For the reliability of the study, the researchers and field experts examined the form and determined the items they agreed and disagreed on. The reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used, and the reliability of the study was found as 95 %.

Findings and Interpretations

The findings obtained were gathered in two groups: "Students' perceptions of technology in their pictorial representations" and "Students' perceptions of technology in future". The findings obtained were tabulated as frequency distributions and summarized with the support of direct quotations from the participants' views.

Students' Perceptions of the Concept of Technology

In order to reveal students' perceptions of technology, they were asked to draw a picture depicting what technology was for them. In addition, the students were also requested to reply to a question regarding what they depicted in their drawings. The themes and sub-themes based on the students' pictorial representations of the concept of technology are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of the Concept of Technology in their Pictorial Representations

Perceptions of technology in pictorial representations (N=28)	f
Computer Technology	22
<i>Desktop Computer</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Laptop Computer</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Computer games</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Projector</i>	<i>1</i>
Internet Technology	10
<i>Internet access</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Search engines (Google, Mozilla Firefox)</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Social Networks (Facebook)</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Modem</i>	<i>1</i>
Mobile Device Technology	6
<i>Cell phones</i>	<i>6</i>
Electronic household appliance technology	11
<i>Television (with remote-control, LCD)</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Refrigerator</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Oven</i>	<i>1</i>
Transportation Vehicle Technology	1
<i>Car</i>	<i>1</i>

As shown in Table 2, among all participants, 22 considered technology as '*computer technology*'; 10 of them as '*Internet technology*'; 6 of them as '*Mobile device technology*'; 11 of them '*Electronic household appliance*'; and only one of them considered technology as '*Transportation vehicle technology*'. Table 2 demonstrates that the technology-related perceptions of a majority of the participating students belonged to the themes of '*Computer technology*' and '*Internet technology*'.

Almost all students reported their views about their pictorial representations by relating and comparing the perception of today's technology with future technology.

A11, one of the students, reported her views about technology as '*I wanted to depict today's technological products, so I drew a cell phone. And as technology, I can count television, cell phone, laptop computer, refrigerator, car...*'.

A14, explained his pictorial representation saying '*As today's technology, I drew a computer and a car...*'.

A9 emphasized the sub-themes of '*electronic household appliance technology*' and '*mobile device technology*' saying '*As a current technology, what I like most is television, so I drew a TV set. Also, as technological devices, I like cell phones and ovens because you can cook very delicious meals in an oven...*'.

Another participant, A8, reported her views regarding the sub-theme of '*mobile device technology*' saying '*I drew a cell phone as today's technology. I can't imagine a life without mobile phones. Without my mobile phone, I wouldn't speak to my parents or relatives. What would happen if there weren't any mobile phones?*'. Figure 1 depicts the drawings of the students A9 and A11 about today's technology.

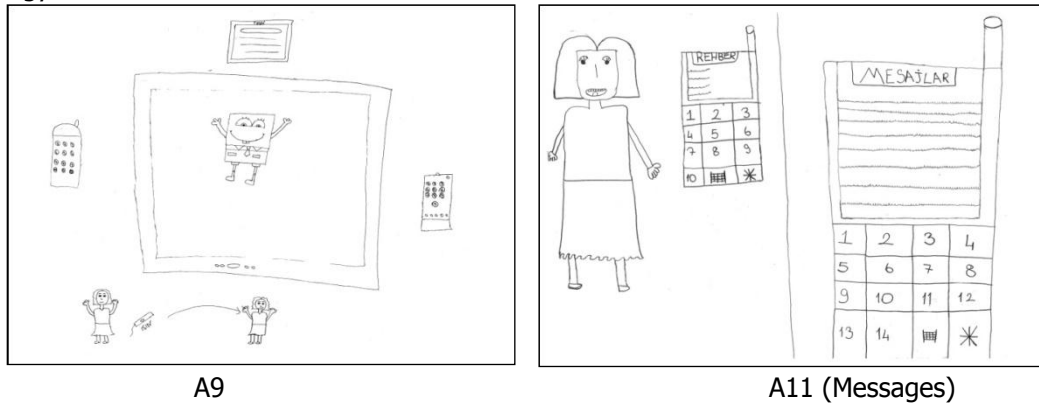


Figure1. Drawings of the students about Today's Technology

It was observed that the elementary school students' perceptions of technology covered the computer, Internet, mobile technologies and electric household appliances, respectively. It could be stated that the students mentioned these technologies as they used them most in their daily lives.

Students' Perceptions of the Concept of Future Technology

In order to reveal the students' perceptions of future technologies, they were asked to draw a picture regarding how technology would be in future. They were requested to respond to a question regarding what they depicted in their drawings. The themes and sub-themes based on the students' pictorial representations of future technologies are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' Views about Their Perceptions of Future Technology

Students' Perceptions of Future Technology (N=28)	f
Interactive Computer Technology	22
<i>Human computer interaction</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>User computer game interaction</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Teleportation into computer</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Virtual reality</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Three-dimensional Interface</i>	<i>1</i>
Interactive Internet Technology	12
<i>User – internet interaction</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>User – search engines interaction (Google, Mozilla Firefox)</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>User – social networks interaction (Facebook)</i>	<i>1</i>
Interactive Mobile Device Technology	7
<i>Teleportation into cell phone</i>	<i>7</i>
Interactive Electronic Household Appliance Technology	6
<i>Interactive television (Television operating with voice prompt and Brain power controller)</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Interactive refrigerator</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Washing machine</i>	<i>1</i>
Time Machine	1
Transportation Vehicle Technology	1
<i>Car (Cars going in the sky, on the land or in the sea)</i>	<i>1</i>

As shown in Table 3, a majority of the students explained future technology under sub-themes based on the main themes of 'Interactive Computer Technology' and 'Interactive Internet Technology'.

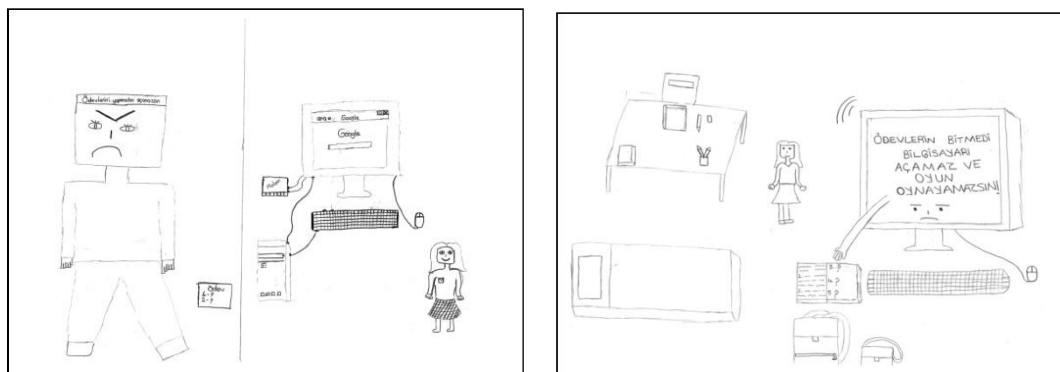
In her views about her pictorial representation, A2 mentioned the opportunity to interact with computers. Her views on the sub-theme of 'Human – computer interaction' were as follows:

'I depicted future computers in my drawing. You cannot turn on this computer if you don't finish your homework first. This computer can talk to you, help with your homework and play with you... This computer is like a robot and can be very sweet when necessary'.

A13 reported her views regarding the sub-theme of 'Human – computer interaction' saying;

'The Computer does not allow children to turn it on before they finish their homework. Thus, with its hands, the computer checks if the child has finished his or her homework. If the homework is finished, then it allows the child to turn it on'.

Figure 2 shows the pictorial representations of the students A2 and A13 about human-computer interaction.



A2
(You can not open without finish your homework) (if you don't finish your homeworks, you can not play game)

Figure 2. Drawings of the students about Human-Computer Interaction

A19, reported her views regarding the sub-theme of 'User – computer game interaction'. Focusing on how computer games and computer – user interaction should be in future, A19 stated 'In future, I would like to enter a computer game in a computer'.

Another student, A20, reported his views regarding the sub-theme of 'User – computer game interaction' saying 'I can enter a computer game if technology advances more. As I can normally enter a computer game while administrating it, other players can administrate the game me too...':

A1 reported her views regarding the sub-theme of 'Teleportation via computer' and 'Three-dimensional computer' saying;

'...the monitors and keyboards of old computers were too small. But, in future, they could be designed bigger. Also, they can allow the person to enter inside the computer game via teleportation. And also, laptop and desktop computers can be touch-operated. Future computers can also be three-dimensional'.

The drawings of the two students about teleportation via computer and tree dimensional computer can be seen in Figure 3.

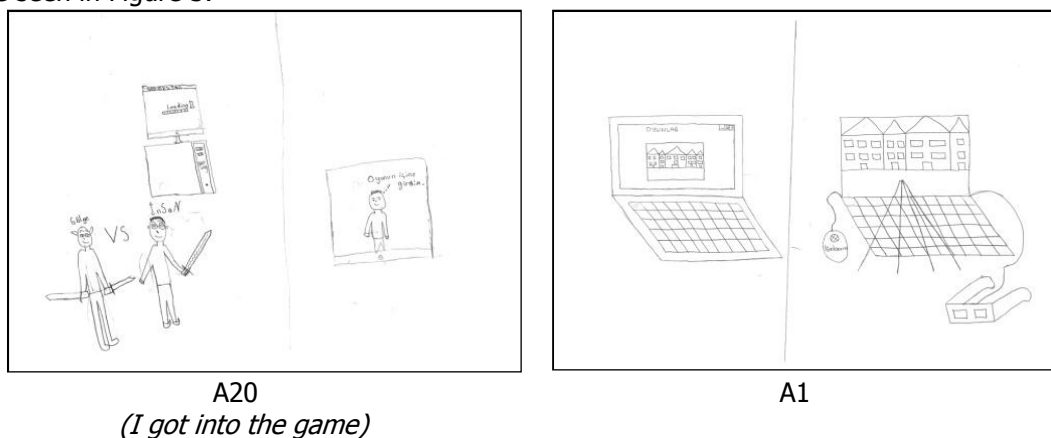


Figure 3. Drawings of the students about Teleportation via Computer and Tree Dimensional Computer

Regarding the sub-theme of 'virtual reality', A10 mentioned a computer technology that could allow users to feel themselves as if they were in real world saying;

'Thanks to computers in future, you can feel as if you are in the game with the help of special glasses. These glasses can be designed in a way to hurt you when you crash into someone else in the game. When you put off the glasses, you will turn to this real world'.

Regarding the sub-themes of 'User – internet interaction' and 'User – search engines interaction', A7 stated;

'Now, we only see the pictures in computers and on the Internet, but in future, we will travel to the places in the pictures; well, this is a kind of teleportation. Teleportation into the pictures, or into the places in the pictures via the search engine of mozilla firefox ...'.

Another student, A23, reported his views regarding the sub-theme of 'user–internet interaction' saying '...you can enter the Internet. You can play and watch games in the internet...'. A5, another student, emphasized the speed of the internet connection saying 'We spend all our lives waiting for something. But in future, we won't wait for anything because the internet connection will be faster...':

The Figure 4 depicts the drawings of the students A10 and A7 about user-Internet interaction.

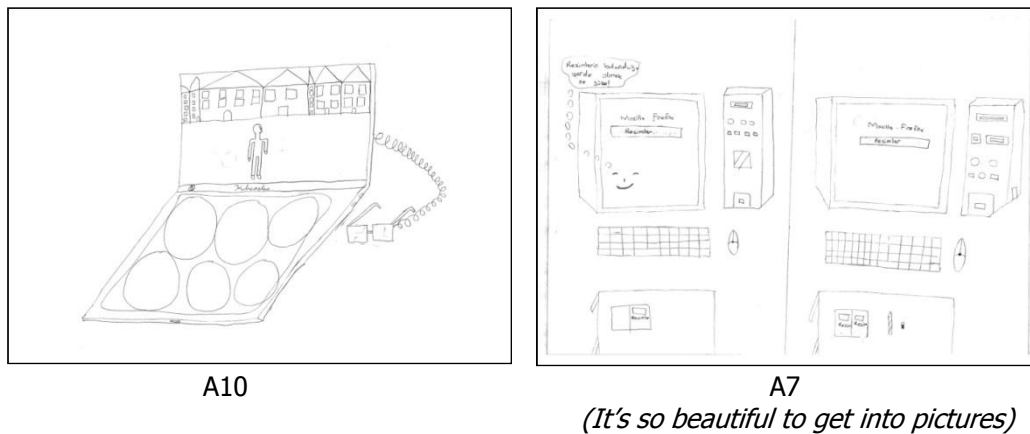


Figure 4. Drawings of the students about User-Internet Interaction

Regarding the theme of 'User – social networks interaction', A18 stated 'In future, computer technology will allow you to enter into Facebook ...'.

A11, reported her views regarding the sub-theme of 'Teleportation via cell phone' under the main theme of 'Interactive mobile device technology' saying 'With advances in technology, when you touch the phone, you will go to where you have touched'.

A27 reported her views regarding the main theme of 'mobile device technology' saying 'Today, mobile phones can send voice, but in future, we will talk to each other via teleportation...'.

A3 reported her views regarding the main theme of 'mobile device technology' saying 'In this drawing, I depicted teleportation by drawing a cell phone that allows sending animated images via teleportation ...'.

The Figure 5 shows the drawings of the students A18 and A27 about user-Internet interaction.

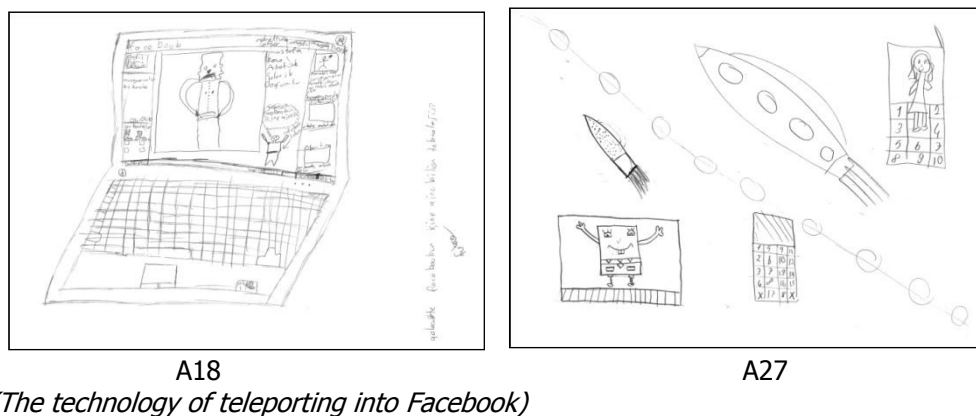


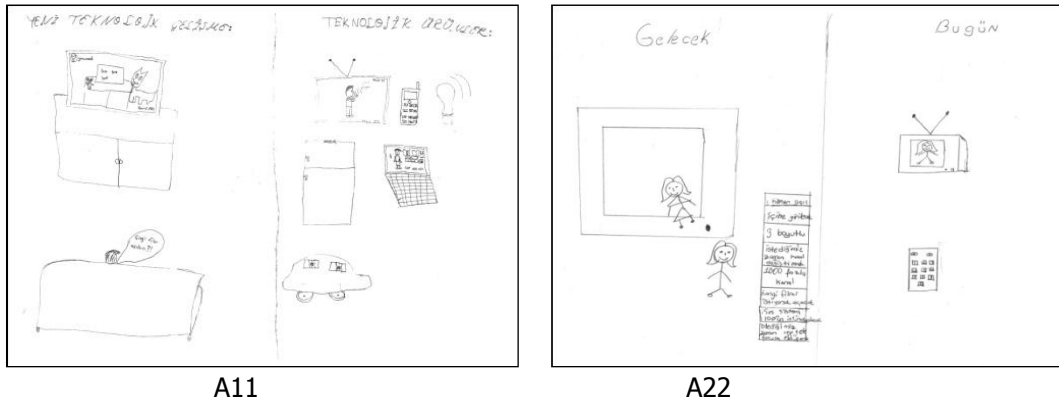
Figure 5. Drawings of the students about Mobile Device Technology

The students' pictorial representations and their related views regarding the theme of 'Interactive electronic household technology' were as follows: One of the students, A11, considered voice-operated television as one of future technologies saying 'I wanted to depict today's technological products, and voice-operated television rather than remote-control television is just an example for a technological development in future...'. A22, another student, reported her views saying:

'As future technology, I drew television that operates on the power of thought. This technology is a television that will operate based on the commands of the brain without using any remote-control unit. It has more than one channel. It has a three-dimensional screen, and you will be able to change the channel whenever you want. You will also be

able to go inside the television and watch whatever movie you like. Also, you will be able to use it as a cell phone whenever you like. And the sound system will be over 100...!

The pictorial representation of the students A11 and A22 about user-Internet interaction can be seen in the Figure 6.



(Open it, teleport into, three dimensional, change channel whenever I Want, channel more than a thousand, open which film I want, sound system, use as mobile-phone...)

Figure 6. Drawings of the students about Interactive Electronic Household Technology

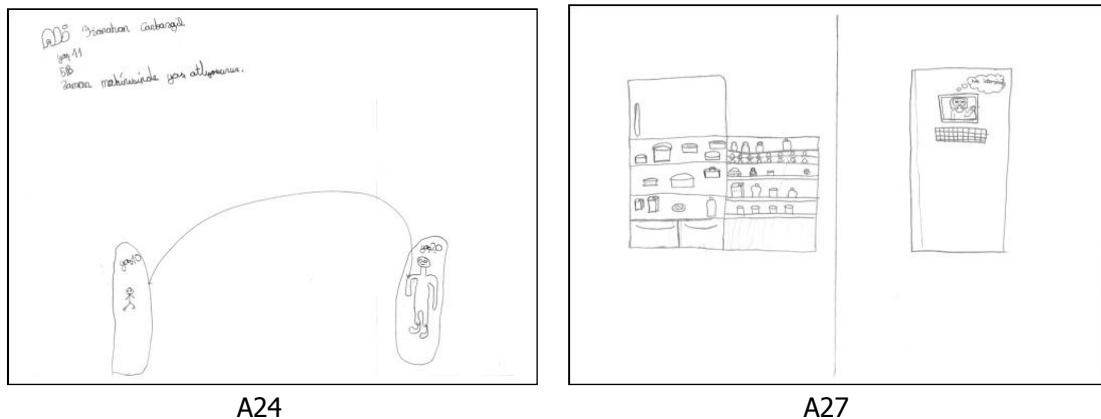
One of the students, A27, considered a refrigerator as future technology that can interact with its user. A27 stated;

'I drew the current and future refrigerators. The refrigerator in my dream will facilitate the work of all people. It will ask "what do you want?". Then the door of the refrigerator will open and one of its shelves will serve us what we have wanted. It will also give us what we want to prepare.'

A24, another student, considers a 'Time Machine' as future technology, which constituted another theme. A24 explained his drawing saying 'We get older for a year or more with the time machine...'

Another student, A14, reported his views regarding the theme of 'Transportation vehicles technology' saying;

'With the developments in technology, cars will go in the sky, on the land and in the sea. With advances in technology, there will be a dual washing machine: one of them will wash the clothes and the other will dry them...'



(Age older-younger with time machine)

Figure 7. Drawings of the students about Transportation Vehicles Technology

The Figure 7 depicts the pictorial representation of the students A24 and A27 about the transportation vehicles technology.

Among the elementary school students' views about their perceptions of the concept of future technology, those about interactive computers and Internet technologies took the first place. The students' views about human – computer – human interactions were determined.

Conclusion and Discussion

The elementary school students participating in the present study had diverse perceptions of today's technology, and most of their perceptions of technology were based on computer and electronic household appliances. Some students' perceptions of technology were based on the Internet and mobile device technologies. Similarly, in a study carried out by Rennie and Jarvis (1995), it was found out that in their drawings, younger students depicted their perceptions of technology by drawing mostly computer and electrical devices. The students' diverse perceptions revealed in the study were found to result from the fact that the students perceived the most-frequently used technological devices as technology. In other words, it could be stated that the students' perceptions of technology were related with the concepts which interested them most in their daily lives and which were most popular in their social environments. This finding obtained in the study is similar to the results of another study carried out by Erişti (2010) on popular cultural themes in elementary school students' pictorial representations. The students participating in the study conducted by Erişti (2010) emphasized mostly the 'desktop computer' and 'laptop computer' in their pictorial representations among the popular cultural themes prominent in their daily lives. The output of our perceptions reflected in our lives constitutes our life styles; therefore, based on this result, it could be said that the devices used by students in their daily lives shape their perceptions of technology. In addition, the finding that the students considered Internet technology as Internet access and research engines is parallel to the finding of another study carried out by Ersoy and Türkkkan (2009) who reported that children depicted their perceptions of Internet as a source of information in their drawings. In the study conducted by Ersoy and Türkkkan (2009), the Internet, which children used as a source of necessary information, was reflected in their drawings as "search=Google". Today, television, computer and Internet technology constitute the basis of a student's interaction with others and with their environment. Children are intensely and effectively interested in contents including the themes of Internet and computer technologies. This fact leads to the creation of the areas of digital interest, digital culture and digital competencies. Especially the games, interactions and applications in virtual environments are quickly adopted, consumed and renewed by the new generation. The developing technology, cheaper computers and the spread of computers directly influence the spread of the digital culture (Binark et al., 2009; Erişti, 2010).

The findings that related computer and Internet technologies with computer games are quite striking regarding the students' perceptions of the current and future technologies in the study. Alver and Gül (2005), in their study carried out with a thousand of students, reported that there was a serious change in children's thoughts of game. Today, most children prefer playing games on computer to playing games designed with social interactions.

In the study, it was found out that most of the students' perceived future technology as human-computer interaction in the area of computer technology. The students' views about their pictorial representations regarding the theme of human-computer interaction revealed that computers in future will not allow users to operate it if they have not finished their homework yet. This result could be said to be due to the fact that in our country, parents generally allow their children to use their computer after they finish their homework. Considering the fact that students at this age allocate most of their computer-use time to games (Orhan & Akkoyunlu, 2004; Ersoy & Yaşar, 2003; Giacquinta, Bauer & Ellsworth, 1993), it is inevitable for families to ask their children first to finish their homework before they use their computers. This situation was depicted by the children in their drawings as '*without first doing my homework, my parents do not allow me to use my computer*'. Students playing games on computers reported that similar to real life, they wanted to join the game and to feel the game as they did in real world. In other words, regarding the sub-themes of user-computer game interaction and virtual reality, the students mentioned technologies that would allow users to feel themselves as if

they were in a real world. Virtual reality is a simulation model which allows its participants to feel as if it were real and which allows interacting with a dynamic environment created by computers (Bayraktar & Kaleli, 2007). Today, virtual reality applications mostly used for entertainment purposes are also used in education. However, it was striking that although students at this age had not met virtual reality applications at school yet, they were able to express their feelings about it.

It was also striking that students at this age use social network sites – the number of which is increasing day by day though such sites have newly become a part of our lives – and that interaction in these sites should be increased. In addition, students' knowledge about such scientific issues as teleportation, time machine, human-technology interaction, virtual reality and power of thought could be considered as an indicator of the fact that they are aware of their environment as opposed to popular belief. Furthermore, the students mentioned such problems as heavy Internet traffic and slow Internet connection they experienced in real life and pointed out that technology should find a solution to such problems.

Considering the fact that students' perception qualities are formed mostly by the concepts they face, it could be stated that their selective perception is formed in line with their interests. The research finding pointing out the importance of technological interaction is similar to the findings of the research study carried out by Moore (1987). In his research Moore (1987) asked primary school students technology perception by draw a technologist at work and he found that these children placed emphasis on design, invention and making things, as well as using computers. In addition, children are intensely influenced by their environment. While interacting with their peers, they obtain information about well-known images in their environment more easily and do not have difficulty reflecting this information. Depending on the findings obtained in the study, it could be stated that students identify today's technology with well-known and interesting concepts found in their environment. As for future technology, students reflect well-known and interesting concepts - found in their environment – in their pictorial representations within the context of creative approaches. Artistic activities allow students to reveal their creative abilities and to express themselves as well as use their imagination. In addition, artistic activities refer to the transfer of observations, images, feelings and thoughts in the form of objective reality. In their drawings, children reflect what they see, know, learn and experience. Children's drawings allow concretizing their inner-worlds, their communication with the outer world and their problems or expectations (Hague, 2001). While it is impossible to learn about children's inner world in some circumstances, it is possible to learn about their inner world with the help of their pictorial representations (Cox, 1992). In this respect, in studies carried out with especially elementary school students, determining students' views via art provides researchers with the opportunity to obtain a convenient finding. The reason is that students can more concretely present pictorial representations and their views about their pictorial representations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Eisner, 2002; Finley, 2005).

Following suggestions emerge in line with the findings:

- Comparative studies on the technology perceptions of students from different cultures could be carried out.
- Studies based on participatory observations in a longer process could be conducted to determine how students use technology and how this process changes their perceptions.
- Qualitative studies could be carried out to examine students' perceptions of technology more deeply.
- Qualitative studies could be designed depending on art-based inquiry, which allows elementary school students to express their thoughts concretely.

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The Effects of Post-Observational Reflective Feedback Modes on Teaching Beliefs: Peer vs. Teacher-Mediated Feedback

İlknur Yüksel
Anadolu University, Turkey
iyuksel79@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate whether the pre-service teachers' language teaching beliefs changed as a result of two different post-observational reflective feedback modes; teacher mediated and peer feedback, during their teaching practice. For each post-observational feedback mode, two groups of eight Turkish pre-service language teachers attending to the final year at English Language Teaching Department at Anadolu University, totally 16 pre-service teachers participated in the study. The qualitative and quantitative data was collected at the beginning and end of the different feedback treatments from each group. The results indicated that the feedback modes on pre-service teachers' teaching practice could influence their beliefs about teaching. Peer feedback had a potential to change the teachers' beliefs through critical reflection skills that were fostered as a result of collaboration within the peer group.

Keywords: Peer-feedback; reflective feedback; teacher training

Introduction

In recent years, teachers' thought processes; cognition, has become a major research area in teacher education. Particularly, the research on the effects of teachers' beliefs on their pedagogical practice has been mostly focused on the teacher effectiveness. Several researchers have drawn attention to the role of the teachers' beliefs to help teachers integrate their experiential and theoretical knowledge and orient them to teaching practice. Thus the concept of teaching beliefs has become significant for the teacher education programs to help pre-service teachers develop their thinking skills and classroom practice (Doyle, 1997; Andrews, 2003). In that sense, the most crucial phase that embodies pre-service teachers' teaching beliefs can be accepted as the teaching practice, besides the methodology courses at university. Teaching practice, in which pre-service teachers are required to have work-experience at school settings, allows pre-service teachers to try teaching and learning strategies and experience first-hand teaching in the real-life classroom context. Thus, during teaching practice, pre-service teachers are assigned to a university supervisor, who supervises on lesson plan preparation and other teaching stages, observes their teaching practice and gives feedback (Cook, et al. 2001). In this process, the observation of pre-service teachers in their classrooms is an essential component of teacher preparation and evaluation.

In these practices, pre-service teachers spend their time observing the school and class environment, besides experiencing a model before their own teaching (Kari, 2000). Smith and Lev-Ari (2005)

highlighted the significance of the teaching practice that learning about teaching is possible in the theoretical courses but the knowledge of teaching, professional content knowledge can only be acquired by active engagement in teaching.

After teaching practice at schools, pre-service teachers receive feedback from university supervisors on their lesson plans, teaching practice and other components of teaching profession in post-observation sessions. The role of feedback and interaction with the supervisors in these post-observation sessions are also crucial for pre-service teachers' development (Hyland & Lo, 2006). However, in these post-observation sessions, the university supervisor is usually a dominant figure while pre-service teachers are the passive listeners. Instead of reflecting on their own teaching or the feedback they get, they just listen and agree on the supervisors' opinions (Kari, 2000; Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999).

Nonetheless, it has been widely agreed in literature that the feedback, which the pre-service teachers receive during the observation and in the post-observation sessions about their practices in the classroom, should be reflective in nature that could promote auto-assessment, self-regulation and reflective practice that can be used throughout their careers (Pajares, 1992; Peacock, 2001). The reflective practice is defined as "the cognitive processes and an open perspective that involves deliberate pause to examine beliefs, goals and practices in order to gain new or deeper understanding that leads action to improve the lives of students" (Orland-Barak, 2005; p.27). Thus, reflection serves as bridge between theory and practice, with aim to integrate beliefs and images, theoretical knowledge and classroom experience, on both personal and collective level. By analyzing existing constructions, negotiating conflicting perspectives and resolving conflicts into new, better constructions are the processes of reflection. As Yost et al (2000) stated that the teacher education programs have a commitment to developing reflection, namely critical reflection skills. In this way, the beliefs that pre-service teachers bring with them to the teacher education program could be addressed and developed.

Considering the role of reflection in teaching practice in terms of its effects on pre-service teachers' beliefs and hence practices, it could be posited that reflection is an effective way to change the teachers' beliefs positively. Any blocking beliefs or contradictions between beliefs and practices could be removed through effective reflection on their actions. (Richards & Lockhart, 1996)

Particularly, to trigger reflection in teacher education, especially during teaching practice, the post-observation feedback sessions given by either peers or supervisors could be intensified. Feedback during teaching practice is a term used to describe the external information given to the pre-service teachers after a teaching session has been observed. Feedback is generally intended to either confirm or change the pre-service teachers' knowledge, skill and beliefs. Reflection on the other hand is "internal feedback quest for information" (Butler & Winne, 1995). In this context, reflective feedback is a kind of feedback which promotes internal questioning on pre-service teachers' practices and which encourages them to reconstruct their beliefs in accordance with their practices and suggestions (Orland-Barak, 2005; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; McEnemy et al (1997). Moreover, it promotes reflection as a part of dialogue between the giver, either supervisor or peer, and the receiver of feedback. Both parties involve in observing, thinking, reporting, and responding. In that sense, reflective feedback is descriptive rather than judgmental. It should be emphasized that reflective feedback requires a supportive, confidential relationship built on trust, honesty.

As one of the parties in this feedback process, supervisors are the teachers in the university, who observes the pre-service teachers' practices and organizes post-observation sessions to give feedback to the pre-service teachers. In detail, the supervisor's role is defined as helping pre-service teachers to

probe and discover their awareness and understanding of what activities are effective for specific topics and for specific groups of learners. (Hyland & Lo, 2006)

The supervisors are considered very strong and effective figure in the pathways of pre-service teachers to become a teacher. As Sinclair et. al. (2005) emphasized many pre-service teachers imitate their supervising teachers' attitudes and teaching practices, rather than critically reflecting on their observations and experiences at schools. Moreover, there is a consensus that supervisors should be able to create functional learning and teaching environments to allow pre-service teachers to relate relevant educational theory to actual practice so that pre-service teachers are to be prepared for the complexities of teaching. To attain this, supervisors should discuss teaching practices and dilemmas with pre-service teachers in meaningful and non-threatening ways. When these environments and conditions are provided, pre-service teachers could develop repertoire of effective teaching practices. (Sanders et al, 2005; Hyland & Lo, 2006)

The findings of Hyland and Lo's (2006) study also confirmed the impact of supervisor's feedback on the pre-service teachers. In their study, the post-observation interaction between six ESL (English as a Second Language) pre-service teachers and their supervisors were examined. It was concluded that the supervisor's approaches to giving feedback were influenced by a number of factors including their beliefs about the aim of feedback, their perceptions of the roles as supervisors as well as attitudes toward the students. About the pre-service teachers' views on their experience, it was strikingly obtained that they were aware of and accepted their supervisor's dominant role in the feedback process, but they felt they benefited more from discussions in which they had chance to explain their views and perceptions of their teaching. The participants preferred the supervisor's to be constructive and reflective in a supportive and non-threatening way.

Thus, the one of the main aims of teacher education programs and the supervisors should be to promote reflective thinking among pre-service teachers, rather than dictating or criticizing, particularly in the feedback session on the students' teaching practices. In that context, the supervisor's guidance to the pre-service teacher such as giving feedback and observation should be based on reflection.

At first glance, peer feedback might seem paradoxical since feedback in teaching practice is normally associated with the relationship between pre-service teachers and the university supervisor or mentors at schools. However, there has been a recent shift in the literature to reconceptualize mentoring as much more of collaborative or collegial relationship rather than the supervisor or mentor feedback. (Cornu, 2005) As the application of such feedback types, professional communities, in which teachers provide support and challenge for one another to learn new practices and to change old assumptions, beliefs and practices.

For pre-service teachers, the classroom experience and a day to day interaction with colleagues has the potential to particular relationships among beliefs and principles. (Richards et. al., 2001) The peer feedback, interaction with colleagues, serves to provide participating teachers with a sense of support and companionship as well as the opportunity to give and receive technical feedback. The reciprocal nature of peer feedback fosters communication and trust, serving to alleviate isolation and burnout (Forbes, 2004; p. 221)

Forbes (2004) investigated the effectiveness of a reflective model of peer feedback in the professional growth of teachers. The results underlined the fact that peer feedback is a strong support mechanism through which they developed confidence in risk taking and experienced professional growth. As Cornu (2005) denoted on the contrary of authority and dominant role of supervisors in traditional

feedback type, the peer feedback has an advantage of providing a collaborative relationship based on partnership where neither of the participants holds a position of power over others.

Thus, the effects of reflective feedback modes in teaching practice on pre-service teachers' beliefs need further investigation. Post-observational feedback modes, namely teacher-mediated and peer feedback are widely accepted as contributory factor in teacher development (Andrews, 2003). Particularly, it has been largely agreed that the post-observational feedback modes influence the teacher's beliefs (Doyle, 1997; Andrews, 2003). Considering the fact that teacher's beliefs are the predictors of their further teacher practice in the classroom and teachers' beliefs are the central constructs that could inform about how teachers conceptualize their work and how they integrate theoretical knowledge into teaching practices (e.g. Richards, et al. 2001), it should be claimed that the post-observational feedback modes have crucial role in teacher development, and it needs further investigation from different perspectives in order to grasp its significance and contributions to teacher development.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate whether the pre-service teachers' language teaching beliefs changed as a result of two post-observational feedback modes; reflective teacher mediated and peer feedback in their teaching practice. Applying teacher-mediated and peer feedback, which are reflective in nature, this study aimed to determine how the pre-service teachers' beliefs change and how the pre-service teachers reflect on these feedback modes. On this purpose, the following research questions were addressed;

1. What kind of beliefs about language teaching do Turkish ELT pre-service teachers have at the beginning study?
2. Do language teaching beliefs change within and between different reflective feedback groups; teacher-mediated and peer feedback?
3. How do the pre-service teachers perceive these different reflective feedback modes?

Method

Research Design

In this study, a triangulation mixed method was adapted combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. In detail, triangulation mixed method design is to combine the advantages of each form of data; that is, quantitative data provides for generalizability while qualitative data offers information about the context and setting (Creswell, 2005). In this sense, with this design, it is possible to collect different but complementary data on the same topic (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007) to gain better insights of the research topic.

In this context, for quantitative data of the study, language teaching belief inventory was conducted at the beginning and end of the study in order to detect the participants' perceptions on the two-mode feedback treatments and change in their belief systems. Then, to gain deeper insight of the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants as for qualitative data.

Participants

In this study, for each post-observational reflective feedback mode, two feedback groups; namely teacher mediated feedback group and peer feedback group, were formed with eight pre-service

teachers at each. Totally 16 pre-service teachers attending to the final year at English Language Teaching Department at Anadolu University, participated in the study.

Beside the pre-service teachers, the author also participated to the study with the role of participative researcher since she carried out the treatments in the teacher-mediated feedback group. She worked as a research assistant she was study doctorate education at the same department of the participants. She carried out different teaching practices courses for three years. During the study, for the sake of objectivity and trustworthiness of the data, she tried not to influence the participants for the favor of the study, yet she observed the context and process of the study carefully during the treatments.

Post-observation Feedback Sessions: Teacher-mediated vs. Peer Feedback

During teaching practice, the pre-service teachers at the English Language Teaching Department, at Faculty of Education, Anadolu University have methodology courses on teaching language skills at the last year of their education in addition to the methodology courses they got throughout their education. Then, they are assigned to the state schools as student teachers for the requirement of compulsory teaching practice, they are required to observe teachers at schools and then do micro teaching for 20 minutes firstly; then macro-teaching for full-time class hour. Before their teaching practice, they prepare lesson plan and after reviewing them with their university supervisors, they perform their pre-planned lessons. The supervisors regularly observe the pre-service teachers' teaching practice and discuss their performances at post-observation feedback sessions.

In this study, the selected participants were involved in the same teaching practice process. However, different treatments were applied for the post-observational session as teacher-mediated and peer feedback treatments. These different feedback treatments lasted for eight weeks in the spring term of 2006-2007 academic year. In detail, the participants in teacher-mediated feedback group received feedback from the supervisor. The feedback was given through reflective techniques. In these reflective feedback sessions, the supervisor used questions to probe pre-service teachers' teaching practices, asking them to think aloud and analyze strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. It was considered that through such treatment, the supervisor could evaluate the teachers' beliefs, thinking and decision-making processes in relation to what has been observed (Cook et al., 2001) Thus, the researcher, as a supervisor, applied teacher-mediated reflective supervisions in pre and post-observation sessions. Each session was videotaped.

On the other hand, the participants in peer feedback group received feedback from their friends, who observed their teaching practices in the classroom. After introduction phase, the participants were asked to meet each week for feedback session. The researcher did not participate in these sessions as supervisor, but each feedback session was again videotaped for data analysis. Before peer feedback treatments, the participants were trained on how to give reflective feedback to their peers and how to reflect on their own teaching practice at introduction phases at the first week. Then, in the following weeks, the researcher did not interrupt the peer feedback sessions.

Instruments

The participants were given the Beliefs about Foreign Language Education Instrument (BAFLEI) (Baldini, 2003) to determine their language teaching beliefs. This instrument contained 15 statements oriented to reflect beliefs about content knowledge, teacher curricular activities, and learner activities. The participants were asked to state their agreement to the statement on a five point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1) on this scale. Before adapting the scale in the present study, the scale was reviewed by three field experts for its construct validity for Turkish

context, in addition to the reliability and validity studies conducted by Baldini (2003) during the development of the scale, which reported it as reliable and valid. Once the experts agreed on the scale, it was administered to the participants as pre and post test in the study in order to determine any changes in the students' beliefs in language teaching occurred as a result of teaching practices and different feedback modes on their practices.

Then, in-depth interviews were conducted with all participants at the end of the study to support and probe the obtained findings also address the participants' perception on the different feedback modes.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data of the study collected from the pre and post applications of the Beliefs about Foreign Language Education Instrument. To find out and discuss the participants' language teaching beliefs, descriptive statistics involving mean, standard deviation values and percentages were obtained. For between and within group comparisons, paired and independent t-test was employed as parametric to detect any change in these beliefs as a result of feedback treatments.

Furthermore, the qualitative data gathered through interviews were analyzed with content analysis method within Mayring's framework (2000) as the researcher and an expert assigned code after examining the whole transcripts independently to determine the participants' foregrounded perceptions regarding the treatments and feedback modes. Then these codes were gathered under categories. Then, the determined codes and categories were compared. The number of agreements and disagreements between the raters was identified and the inter reliability of the data of this study was calculated as .91 using Miles and Huberman's formula ($\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{total number of agreements} + \text{disagreements}}$). (1994; p.64). Thus, the analysis could be accepted as reliable.

Results

After the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, the findings were presented in this section with reference to the research questions respectively. Thus, firstly the findings of the teaching belief inventory (BAFLEI) are presented for each group to discuss the participants' language teaching beliefs and any changes in these beliefs as effects of feedback treatments, then, the findings of qualitative analysis of interview data were presented to reveal the participants' perceptions on these feedback modes.

The Teaching Beliefs of the Pre-service Teachers at Different Feedback Groups

In order to define the participants' teaching beliefs and determine whether the different feedback modes changed the participants' teaching beliefs or not, the teaching belief instrument was applied to two different feedback groups as pre and post tests. Then, the collected data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and the obtained findings were presented in the following:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Teaching Beliefs

Teaching Beliefs		Peer Feedback Group (n=8)	Teacher-mediated Feedback Group (n=8)
Pre-test	Mean	2.57	2.62
	SD	.55	1.06
Post-test	Mean	2.16	2.87
	SD	.24	.48

As Table 1 indicates, the peer feedback group got 2.57 mean value for pre-test while the teacher-mediated feedback group had 2.62. In other words, it can be stated that before the different feedback treatments, the two feedback groups had more or less the same teaching beliefs; notwithstanding the teacher mediated feedback group seemed to have more teaching beliefs than the peer feedback group as they agreed with more statements on the scale. They agreed on more than half of the statements on language teaching in the instrument. The standard values for the teacher-mediated feedback group for the pre-test yet showed that there were many individual differences in the responses to the statements in the test.

After the treatment, when the teaching belief test was repeated as a post test, it was found that there were differences in the mean scores of the feedback groups. In detail, the peer feedback group's mean value got decreased to 2.16 while the teacher-mediated feedback group's mean increased to 2.87. This can be interpreted that the pre-service teachers in the teacher-mediated feedback group agreed more statements in the belief inventory while the peer feedback group believed in less statements. When the difference between the pre and post test results of the peer feedback group was examined through paired t-test, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference since $t=2.39$, $df=7$ and $P=.048<.05$. So, it could be claimed that the peer feedback group's beliefs about teaching language changed as a result of their feedback type they got during the study. On the other hand, when the teacher-mediated feedback group's results of pre and post teaching belief inventory were detected through paired t-test again for any statistical significance, it was obtained for teacher-mediated group, there was no significant difference between the pre and post tests since $P=.52>.05$. In other words, it could be claimed that the feedback type, namely teacher-mediated feedback, did not change the participants' teaching beliefs while peer feedback got influence on their teaching beliefs.

Moreover, the results indicating the differences and change in the peer feedback groups' teaching beliefs while no change in teacher-mediated groups' beliefs, lead to in depth analyses to investigate whether there was any significant difference between two groups in terms of teaching beliefs. In other words, to find out whether feedback type caused the changes or not, two groups' pre and post tests were compared employing independent t-test.

Table 2. Difference between Peer and Teacher-mediated Feedback Group in terms of Teaching Beliefs

Teaching Beliefs	Mean	SD	Independent t-test			
			T	df	p	
Pre test	Peer Group	2.16	.24	-3.65	14	.90
	Teacher Group	2.87	.48			
Post test	Peer Group	2.57	.55	-.11	14	.003*
	Teacher Group	2.62	.10			

Firstly, for the pre test, the analyses indicated that there was no significant difference between two feedback groups at the beginning of the study, since $P=.90>.05$. Thus, it could be claimed that the two groups were comparable at the beginning of the study. Their beliefs about teaching a language were more or less similar. On the other hand when the post tests results of two groups were compared, it was found that there was a significant difference between groups about their teaching beliefs at the end of the study. Since $P=.003<.05$ so the teacher-mediated and peer feedback groups' teaching beliefs were different at the post test. When Tukey HSD post hoc test was applied to detect which group caused this difference it was obtained that the peer feedback group caused this difference. The participants in the peer group changed their beliefs about teaching a language as a result of their teaching practice and feedback mode they received at the post observation feedback sessions; that is, peer feedback.

As different from the categorization of the original scale, which are content knowledge, teacher curricular activities, and learner activities, the items in the teaching belief inventory were analyzed under four main categories for each group; namely grammar teaching, production, practice and students' errors to cover the scope of the study better. Through such categorization, it was aimed to have better understanding of the difference between the teacher-mediated and peer feedback group. New categorization was conducted by the researcher considering the explanations in the original scale and language teaching stages. After two experts in the field of language teaching reviewed the categorization, the items in each category were reanalyzed concerning both feedback groups' results at the pre and post tests. To exemplify the distribution, one item for each category was presented.

The figures in the Table 3 below and overall analysis of the items at each category showed that the feedback types did influence the participants' beliefs about language teaching. The most striking result was about grammar teaching, at the beginning of the study most of the students in each group believed in the necessity of grammar teaching, however, at the end of the study it seemed that they did not insist on pure grammar teaching so much. In detail; while 75 percentages of the pre-service teachers agreed on the item related to precise grammar teaching in the pre-test, this percentage decreased to 37,5%. Likewise, the decrease in the agreement ratios of the pre-service teachers in the peer feedback group was also observed. Their beliefs in the precise direct grammar teaching changed as a result of the different feedback treatments, while 62,5 of the pre-service teachers agreed on the item, at the end of the study, only 42% of them agreed. Moreover, it can be interpreted that the pre-service teachers started to believe that grammar teaching is a means rather than as an end to language learning and teaching. In other words, direct teaching with presentations and grammar rules was not appreciated so much at the end of the treatments, instead; grammar teaching is seen as a means to integrate all language skills.

Table 3. Examples of the Frequencies for Some Items Regarding to the Different Feedback Groups in Pre and Post Tests

Category	Peer Feedback Group		Teacher-Mediated Feedback Group	
	Pretest "Agree" (%)	Posttest "Agree" (%)	Pretest "Agree" (%)	Posttest "Agree" (%)
Grammar Teaching				
Item 11: "It is important to provide clear, frequent, precise presentations of grammatical structures during English language instruction."	75	37,5	62,5	42
Production				
Item 15 "It is not necessary to actually teach students how to speak English, they usually begin English on their own"	37,5	25,0	25,0	30,1
Practice				
Item 12 "Language can be described as a set of behaviors which are mastered through lots of drill and practice with the language patters of native speakers"	75,0	37,5	62,5	37,5
Students' Errors				
Item 13 "When students make oral errors, it is best to ignore them as long as you can understand what they are saying"	12,5	25	50,0	37,5

In a similar vein, the changes in the pre-service teachers' beliefs were observed for the items that were categorized under production and practice, there was apparent decrease in the frequencies of "agree" it seemed that they revised their beliefs as a result of the treatments. This decrease in the percentages could be interpreted as positive, as exemplified in the table above, the pre-service teachers' ideas about the items that defended more teacher-centered or less communicative methods as in item 11 for grammar teaching changed towards more student-centered and communicative methods and their agreement levels to such items decreased. Similarly, the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the practice with the native speakers' language patterns changed in both groups, they did not so much believe that language learning means only practice and drills. The items foregrounding the communication were favored by the pre-service teachers more.

However, it should be emphasized that to interpret that only feedback type was a determinant factor for the changes in the pre-service teachers beliefs could be misleading because the students went for teaching practice during the study and it was the first time that they taught in a class, so these results reflected the changes of beliefs due to their teaching practice as well as feedback types they received at the post-observation sessions.

Thus, to reveal the effect of different feedback modes on the pre-service teachers' beliefs and support these quantitative findings, the qualitative data collected from the in-depth interviews with four participants were analyzed.

The Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions on their Teaching Beliefs and Different Feedback Modes

The pre-service teachers to be interviewed were selected according to their scores in the teaching belief inventory. From each group; the ones who changed their beliefs and who did not change at all were selected, thus totally two pre-service teachers from each group were selected. Instead of using the names of the participants, they were labeled as S1, S2, S3 and S4 to ensure the anonymity of the results.

The interview questions were designed considering the items in teaching belief inventory, so it is aimed to reveal in-depth the participants' beliefs about the role of grammar teaching, practice, production skills and their opinions about the students' errors; in brief their beliefs on the language teaching stages, as well as their beliefs about the foreign language and language learning.

After the recorded interviews were transcribed, they were analyzed through content analysis. Once the transcripts were examined overall, codes were assigned by two raters independently, and the emerged codes were gathered under main categories involving the sub-categories. The main four categories determined in the analysis were; namely *Nature of Language*; *Learning a Language*; *Teaching language*; and *Language Learner*. Some categories contained subcategories, for instance the category of *teaching a language* consisted of four subcategories, including the aim of teaching, teaching procedure, grammar teaching and dealing with the students' errors. The researcher and another rater conducted coding independently, then the determined codes were compared, as a result, the inter-rater reliability was obtained as 95% through Miles and Huberman's formula (1994).

In the following table, the broad categories and including codes were presented.

Table 4. The Emerged Categories about the Participants' Teaching Beliefs

Categories	Codes
Nature of Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool for Communication • Expressing ones' opinions
Learning a Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability • Willingness (Love)
Teaching a Language	
Aim of Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To let students speak • To gain communicative competence Native-like speaking Fluency
The Role of Grammar and Grammar Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to make sentences • Important to succeed in exams
Teaching Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a Context • To use of Pictures, Realia and Authentic Materials • Speaking in English (minimum L1 use) • Communicative Activities Information-gap Activities Use of Cue Cards Role-plays
Students' Errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance to Errors while speaking • Need to correct written errors Fossilization
Learning a Lerner	
"Good" Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating • Motivated
"Poor" students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxious • Making errors

The overall results of the qualitative analysis of the interviews indicated that the participants favored the communicative teaching and meaning-focused activities, regardless of the feedback groups. For instance; in the interviews, the participants pinpointed the significance of communicative activities such as information-gap activities, role plays to improve students' communicative competence. Likewise, the use of visual materials and effective context in the lessons was highlighted as important components of communicative teaching. Although, some of them emphasized the significance of the grammar to make appropriate sentence while speaking or writing, to improve communicative competence was suggested as the best way for teaching English. In that sense, they mostly argued that instead of L1, teachers should use L2 (English in that context) to reinforce communication in the class.

While defining the nature of language, there was a consensus among the participants that language is a tool for communication and essential to express their ideas. For foreign language, it was defined as the privilege to get in touch with more people all over the world. As well as communicative nature of language, the participants associated the learning a language as ability. For instance; one of the pre-service teachers expressed that

"...Knowing a language is the ability to communicate with the native speakers. ... since a language is a means of communication and if you can use it in a communication, conversation...it means that you know that language"(S1).

In this respect, S3 explained that

"...For example me, I chose this department (English Language Teaching) because my teachers told I have an ability to learn a language....thus, learning a language is a matter of ability...If you have ability you can learn..."

Furthermore, motivation and willingness to learn a language was underlined for learning a language, thus S2 stated that

"...some of our students in our class...I mean...in my teaching practice...are really poor, they cannot learn English because they do not want...most of them ask why I should learn...English is not useful for me...I will not use it...as teachers we should change it"

Considering their definitions of language, particularly foreign language and explanations about learning a language, they were asked to analyze the case for all language learners. In this sense, the participants complained about how the communicative nature of language is usually ignored at schools while grammar rules and other mechanical practices are overemphasized. Regarding this, while S1 explained that

"The students (in the schools) think that they know language because they know grammar...in fact they are tested on the grammar, so they assume that if they know grammar they can do everything about language..", S4 added that "Learning a language is not natural for us, in our country English is a language taught with rules...However speaking is much more important, I want to speak fluently...like a native speaker."

On the other hand, some pre-service teachers also underlined the role of grammar for successful communication and success in exams. For instance; S2 claimed that

"...Knowing a language means ..to me...is grammar to make appropriate sentences...rather than speaking....in fact we have trained so.....in schools...there is a traditional approach to teaching...they follow book and they focus on forms, grammar..."

Moreover, S2 drew attention the significance of grammar for the success at the exams, particularly the general language proficiency exams or other exams at schools, as

"...while teaching if we want success...I mean good scores in the exams like foreign language proficiency examination for state employees or other exams...we should focus on grammar, forms...but if we want to make our students speak we should focus on use, language use...production..."

This quote explains the dilemma that the pre-service teachers usually encounter. They have trained with focus on grammar and they were motivated to succeed in the exams at schools until now, however they were also trained and realized that language is for communication in their teacher education program. Thus, in their teaching, they are in an attempt to integrate these two contradictory beliefs.

On the other hand, it was observed that some of the participants internalized the idea of communicative language teaching criticizing the traditional approach. For instance; S1 stated that

"...at schools, students learn...structure, grammar, at the schools in Turkey, communication is not focused....However, I realize that...I saw at the school that I go for the teaching practice, it has began to change... Usually the focus is on grammar, did shows the use of past tense, will for future tense. In fact in my opinion this information is not useful, for the students, or for us, for communication. Of course grammar is important but this should be taught in more real life context...which means use this structure for this function in such context will be more permanent and better..."

In addition to the idea of creating context, one of the students emphasized the integration of language into the students' everyday lives as the best way of teaching; S3 expressed that

"...the best way of teaching English is to integrate teaching with their lives out of school and to create context for language, and language use ...because at home when the students close their notebooks, language should not be out of their lives, they should use language every time..."

In addition, the participants agreed that to adopt the significance of communication to the students, the teachers should use foreign language very fluently and the use of mother tongue should be at the minimum level; S4 stated that

"For best teaching, ...if we could communicate with native speakers, we could speak fluently, without considering the rules, being afraid of making errors...maybe as teacher if we could be native-like teachers, ...it would be best way to teach English."

Moreover, the use of pictures and communicative activities were some other suggestions for best way of teaching a language.

In general, it seemed that the participants in the interview agreed on the communicative approach to language teaching and they believed that the students should be involved in the lesson. For instance; their discrimination between "good" and "bad" student was also based on participation, if the student participated in the lesson, it was a good student, according to them (S1-S3). On the other hand, "making errors" was a discriminator to define a student as a poor student. The pre-service teachers all agreed that if the student did not have any motivation to learn a language and he continues making errors in spite of teachers' attempts to correct, such a student is a poor student (S3-S2).

The Effect of Feedback modes on their Language Teaching Beliefs

As in line with the aim of the study, in the interviews, it was also questioned the effect of feedback modes on their teaching beliefs, thus the students were asked to evaluate the process during the study. As a result of the content analysis of the pre-service teachers' responses about the different feedback modes at the post-observational feedback sessions, the following categories were emerged:

Table 5. The Emerged Categories about the Effects of Feedback Modes on the Participants' Language Teaching Beliefs

Teacher-mediated Feedback Group	Peer Feedback Group
<p>Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grade • guiding <p>Emotional Reactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nervous • support <p>Post-observation Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • systematic • regular • planned 	<p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion • help <p>Emotional Reactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comfortable • support <p>Post-observation Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unsystematic • regular • casual

Accordingly, the pre-service teachers associated their feedback modes with different concepts; that is, the pre-service teachers from teacher-mediated feedback group emphasized the sense of authority while the peer feedback pre-service teachers preferred the concept of collaboration to define the characteristic of their feedback mode.

For teacher-mediated feedback, the authority of supervisor was the common point. Although they did not complain about this authority they emphasized that they revised and even changed their practices and knowledge according to her comments in the feedback sessions. Thus, the supervisor was the dominant figure for teacher-mediated feedback group. In that sense, S3 stated that *"...Our supervisor was not so challenging, she wanted us to realize our mistakes...I revised my lesson plans and teaching according to her critics..."*. Although they reported that they negotiated with their teachers on their lesson plans or teaching practices, her reactions were important for them. On the other hand, they were aware of the fact that the feedback that they got from their supervisors was different from the traditional supervisory sessions. In this respect, S4 stated that

"Our teacher asked us to tell the good and bad points of our teaching...It was challenging...at first I did not know what to say...later on I got used to it, I evaluated my teaching objectively.....I heard that my friends in other class did not do that it was really good".

The pre-service teachers' answers highlighted that in spite of authority figure in the teacher-mediated feedback mode, the reflective skills were emphasized during the teacher-mediated feedback treatment and the pre-service teachers were encouraged to engage in the feedback procedure.

On the other hand, the pre-service teachers at peer feedback group pinpointed that thanks to collaboration within the group they corrected their many practical mistakes. For instance, S2 stated that

"My friends' comments were very effective ...since they are not my teachers and there will no grade ...I know that their comments are sincere...I paid attention to apply their ideas..." In a similar vein, S1 expressed that *"...I know I inspired my friends....in fact I used their ideas too...they work...some of us could analyze better..."*.

Thus, the pre-service teachers at peer feedback group underlined the advantage of discussion with their peers and getting and providing help during the collaborative feedback sessions with peers.

When the pre-service teachers were interviewed about their feelings during these different feedback treatments, they defined the emotional reactions in line with their definitions on the nature of feedback modes. That is, the pre-service teachers from teacher-mediated feedback group described the process with adjective of "nervous". For instance; S4 stated that *"...when my lesson was bad...I was nervous in the feedback sessions..."*. The reason for such anxiety was explained with grades. In spite of encouraging mood of the teacher and/or reflective and supportive atmosphere during post-observational feedback sessions, the pre-service teachers still felt nervous about the grade they would get at the end of the teaching practice course.

On contrary, the pre-service teachers at the peer feedback group explained that they felt very comfortable during the sessions as they could express their ideas and critics easily without worrying about being evaluated with grade. In this respect, one of the pre-service teachers explained that *"...there was not a boring, nervous atmosphere..it was like we were sitting and discussing...thus I felt free to tell my ideas and I did not get worried when I heard critics..."*(S2).

Although the interview data seemed to favor the peer feedback group due to the pre-service teachers' positive emotional reactions, the pre-service teachers' some comments about the organization of the post-observational sessions revealed that the teacher-mediated feedback sessions were more systematic, regular and planned while the peer feedback sessions were more casual and unplanned in spite of regular meetings. The reason for this was explained that

"...teacher was like an orchestrate chef...at every session, the teacher determined what to discuss and she guided us.."(S3). Additionally, S4 stated that *"..we met every week and all of us should talk... she encouraged us, she asked questions, just to make us talk..."*.

On the other hand, S1 confessed that the lack of teacher authority at the peer feedback group caused some chaos during the discussions. For example, S1 expressed that *"...certain friends talked all the time, they tried to be leader of the group. I did not like this..."*. Moreover, S2 explained that *"in spite of some organizational problems, it was all good..."*.

The pre-service teachers from both feedback groups agreed that these feedback treatments were different from traditional feedback sessions, in which the university supervisor is the only authority listing and grading their good and bad points and not allowing pre-service teachers to reflect on their performances. Thus, these post-observational feedback sessions, under investigation in this study, were found as very supportive and challenging the reflective skills during teaching practice. Moreover, these findings revealed the potential for reflective teacher-mediated feedback as well as for peer feedback to improve the participants' teaching practices by changing the "detrimental" beliefs, which can harm their positive attitudes and their further practices.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted to determine the effects of feedback types the students received about their teaching practices in the post-observational sessions on their beliefs about teaching and learning a foreign language. The motivation for this study was the assumption that beliefs are the contributory factor of the pre-service teachers' future practices. (Borg, 2001) As Peacock (2001) underlined teachers acquire their teaching beliefs mostly on methodology courses and during their teaching experience. In the same way, Andrews (2006) found that the teachers acquired beliefs during their education program did not so much change over the years. Therefore, this study focused on the pre-service teachers' language teaching beliefs, particularly to address the gap about the connection between the effects of feedback types to the teaching practices and the teachers' beliefs. In order to

obtain more in-depth results, semi-structured interviews were carried out along with the language teaching belief inventory. The results revealed that the students' beliefs about language teaching changed during the study, regarding to the feedback type they received. Particularly, peer feedback group revised their beliefs.

The findings of the interviews indicated that the participants favored communicative approach to language teaching, based on their belief that language is for communication and the students should acquire skills of speaking to communicate effectively. The best way of teaching was defined as the way that could integrate language into the students' lives and let them use language fluently. Thus, as the major characteristic of language teacher was reported as native-like speaking, thus most of them defined their weakness as the problems in the pronunciation and fluency while speaking in English. They explained that they reflected these beliefs on communicative teaching to their teaching practices by using the realia, pictures and authentic material that could engage students in the lesson and applying communicative activities such as information-gap, role-plays. Although they underscored the assumption that language is a matter of ability, they reported that through communicative activities students could be involved in the lesson and motivated to learn a language.

Considering the findings and the differences in the beliefs of peer group over the period, it could be interpreted that peer feedback enabled the participants to revise their beliefs and change any different or "detrimental" beliefs according to their peers' comments. As Forbes (2004) pinpointed the peer feedback triggers critical reflection skills within the group, and these skills enabled the pre-service teachers to reflect on their practices and beliefs, comparing with others'. For this study, it was possible to assume that the interaction within groups and the opportunities to observe and criticize others as well as being observed and criticized helped learners reconsider their beliefs. In fact, in the follow-up interview, the participants from the peer feedback group emphasized that they were inspired from their friends' ideas and since they were not worried about the grade, they internalized the feedback much more effectively.

On the other hand, the changes of beliefs of teacher-mediated feedback group were not statistically significant. Certainly, it does not mean that teacher-mediated feedback is useless or ineffective, but it could be claimed that the participants in this group could not change their beliefs. Gebhard and Oprandy (1999) explained such context that the supervisors usually dictate the theoretical knowledge of methodology and their own beliefs in the post-observational sessions. In many supervisory sessions, the pre-service teachers are passive recipients and they accept whatever the supervisors say without questioning it (Cornu, 2005). Although in this study, the supervisor tried to provide reflective feedback to the students, which could foster reflective thinking on their beliefs and practices, it could be assumed that due to the authoritarian role of the supervisor, being a powerful figure, in the eye of the pre-service teachers, the participants could not reflect on their beliefs and teaching as effective as peer feedback group, they had anxiety to be appreciated by a teacher. In the interviews, it was emphasized by the participants that they were anxious in the feedback sessions if their lessons were not so effective. They were afraid of being criticized by the supervisor. Consequently it could be interpreted that teacher-mediated feedback could not benefit from the reflective nature of teacher feedback due to their beliefs about supervisors, their anxiety about success and failure, that is grade, and thus self-efficacy.

These findings were consistent with Hyland and Lo's (2006) study that the pre-service teachers accepted the dominant role of supervisors in the feedback process due to their assessor's roles. Thus, they mostly preferred to accept their supervisors' comments rather than disagree and negotiate with them. This could hinder the reflective skills or this could slow down the changes of "detrimental" beliefs about teaching because the pre-service teacher would just imitate whatever their supervisor

suggested without reflecting on their practices and beliefs, like in this study. On the other hand, it should be stated that reflective feedback in supervisory sessions are quite new to the pre-service teachers-in the study. Although reflection and reflective practice have been popular very recently (e.g. Nissila, 2005) the effects of teacher-mediated reflective feedback should be assessed in a longer term that could help learners change their beliefs, prejudices about the authoritarian supervisor and to negotiate and reflect on their experiences with the supervisor.

To sum up, the results revealed that the feedback types; peer or teacher mediated, have potential to change the teachers' beliefs, particularly "detrimental" beliefs. The contributory factor for this change is the reflective nature of feedback. In the peer feedback group, it was obvious that the participants had more opportunities to reflect on their practices by collaborating with their friends. On the other hand, for teacher-mediated group, the participants could not benefit from the reflective feedback they received due to their prejudice about the supervisor as a powerful figure.

The results of this study could shed some lights on the effectiveness of feedback in the pre-service teachers' beliefs and thus their teaching practices. Particularly, potential of peer feedback, learning communities was obvious according to the results. These findings could inspire the experts and instructors in the teacher education programs to revise the programs and to construct learning communities applying peer feedback to trigger reflection and collaboration among students. Furthermore, the potential of reflective feedback for teacher-mediated supervisory sessions was also revealed, thus considering the results, it could be suggested the post-observational sessions could be redesigned, integrating reflective feedback rather than dictation of the supervisors.

In addition to such contributions of this study, it should be stated that there were some limitations in the study. Firstly, individual differences were the most important intervening variables that could not be omitted. Conducting the same study with different groups, the reliability of the results could be ensured. Moreover, as emphasized so far, this study lasted only for a month, thus the results were very limited to determine the long lasting effects of feedback types. Particularly, as mentioned, teacher-mediated group needed more time to get accustomed to the reflective feedback from the supervisor, as different from their traditional supervisory sessions. Thus, in a longer period, the results could be more explanatory about the effects of the feedback types. Finally, since the study was conducted with an intact class that was available, the size of participants was few to generalize the results, yet the number of participants should be increased in other further studies to have more generalizable results.

In the further studies, the students' teaching practices could be observed and taken into account to determine the effects of the feedback types. Although the connection between beliefs and teaching practices were explained in detail referring to the literature in this study, this aspect could be investigated.

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