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İÇİNDEKİLER / CONTENTS

The Influence of Micro Teaching Applications on Pre-Service Teachers Anxieties Toward Teaching Mathematics
Fatma Kayan FADLELMULA 1-6

An Analysis of Affective Properties of University Students towards English Course
Gizem SAYGILI, Rümeysa PEKTAŞ, Havva Sümeyra PEKTAŞ 7-12

An Overwiew to Educational Functions of Music in Social Structure: XXIst Century Realities
Cenk CELASIN 13-17

Concept of Divorce in Northern Cyprus and Degree of Self-actualization for Women
Asuman BOLKAN 18-24

A Comparative Investigation of the Learning Processes of Undergraduate Teacher Education Students in the U.S. and Turkey
Maide ORÇAN, Ersoy ERDEMİR, Canan Yıldız ÇİÇEKLER, Neriman ARAL 25-31

Study of Roma and Non-Roma Mothers' Communication Skills and Childrearing Attitudes
Maide ORÇAN, Canan Yıldız ÇİÇEKLER, Neriman ARAL 32-39

Müze Drama Uygulamalarında Müzik Kültürüne İlişkin Nesnelerle Yapılan Çalışmalarda Arkeoloji Müzelerinden Yararlanma
Ferda ÖZTÜRK KÖMLEKSİZ 40-45

The Evaluation of the Self-Esteem Scale by Ridit Analysis
Gürol ZIRHLIOĞLU 46-52

The Effects of 8 Weeks Sporting Activities on Academic Self-confidence, Academic Success, Attention and Some Physical Fitness Parameters in Children 9-10 Years of Age
R. Ferudun DORAK, Lale YILDIZ, Civan SORTULLU 53-58

A Survey on the Correlation between Informal Relationships in Schools and Organizational Commitment
Hasan Basri MEMDUHOĞLU, Ahmet SAYLIK 59-67

Finding Similarities and Similarity Rate between Text Files
Uğur ŞİMŞEK, Murat İSKEFİYELİ 68-71

The Relationship between School Principals' Leadership Styles and Teachers' Organizational Commitment
Veysel OKÇU 72-79

Student Teachers' Understandings of Nanotechnology
Murat PEKTAS, Mehmet Altan KURNAZ, Nedim ALEV, Güntaç BAYRAKTAR 80-84

Investigation of Sixth, Seventh, Eighth Grade Students' Problem Solving Skills in Terms of Different Variables
A. Seda SARACALOĞLU, Çiğdem Aldan KARADEMİR, Esra UÇAK 85-90

Science Teacher Candidates' "Bioethics" Views about Biotechnology Practices
Zeynep YUCE, Necati YALCIN 91-102

A New Mobile Learning Framework for Fatih Project in Turkey
Metin ZONTUL, Fatih ŞAHIN 103-108

Faculty Development Preferences: Who Needs What?
Alev ELÇİ, Hüseyin YARATAN 109-114

The Effect of the Science Course Emphasizing Scientific Process Skills on the Scientific Process Skills of 7th Grade Students
Husnuye DURMAZ, Seckin MUTLU 115-122
Pre-Service Mathematics Teachers' Attitudes towards Computer Assisted Mathematics Education
Begüm ÇUBUKÇUOĞLU, Alev ELÇİ 123-128
The Importance of Drama in Terms of Developing Candidate Classroom Teachers' Musical Talent
Ayşen ARSLAN 129-133
The Teaching and Learning Mathematics Through English
Ayşen ÖZEREM, Mukaddes YORGANCIOĞLU 134-144
People's Knowledge Level of Earthquakes, their Preparatory Behaviors and the Need for Geography Education: A Case Study from Istanbul
Fikret TUNA 145-152
Examining the Relationship between Attachment Styles and Parental Attitudes of Adolescents
Nergüz Bulut SERİN 153-157
Improving Elementary 8th Class Students' Thoughts about Nature of Mathematical Knowledge
Cemalettin YILDIZ, Duygu TAŞKIN, Adnan BAKİ 158-163
Some Selected Resources for Using History of Nathematics in the Classroom
Cemalettin YILDIZ, Adnan BAKİ, Resul GÖL 164-169
Reflections of Problem Solving Environment Based on Group Work: Example of Fibonacci Problem
Duygu TAŞKIN, Cemalettin YILDIZ, Oben KANBOLAT, Adnan BAKİ 170-175
Examination of Studies on History of Mathematics in Pre-Service, After Service and Graduate Education
Cemalettin YILDIZ, Adnan BAKİ, Resul GÖL, Duygu TAŞKIN 176-181
The Concept of Museum Education in Enhancing Concert Culture
H. Hakan OKAY 182-188
Historical Problems in the History of Mathematics: Examples for the Classroom
Cemalettin YILDIZ, Adnan BAKİ 189-194
A Research of the Relationship between the Reflective Thinking Skills of the 4th and 5th Grade Students and their Teachers' Frequency of Knowing and Following the Assessment and Evaluation Techniques
Burcu DEMİRBAŞ, Z. Nurdan BAYSAL 195-200
Biology Teachers' Drawings about the Place of the Organs on Human Body: Afghanistan Case
Çiğdem ŞAHİN 201-206
The Effects of Preschool Education on First Graders' School Adjustment
Zeynep TOPCU, Semra ERKAN 207-213
The Effect of Teaching Materials Determined according to the Model 5e in Resolving the Misconceptions: Frictional Electricity
F. Serkan SAY, Yuksel CEKBAS 214-220
Evaluation of Teachers' Views about the Affective Domain of the High School New English Curriculum in Turkey
Veli BATDİ 221-228
An Analysis and Assessment of Teachers' Perceptions of School Climate
Esin ÇAĞLAYAN 229-234
Application of the Digital Module Mein LexiKOSMOS at Marmara University Istanbul
R. Ragıp BAŞBAĞI, Andreas KRAFT, Nikolaos KATSAOUNİS 235-239

Pathways of Pedagogical and Didactic Renewal within the Bologna Process: The Contribution of Gestalt Pedagogy and Education Through Art
Ana Luísa Souto e MELO, Maria Luísa BRANCO 240-245
How Effective Are Classroom Observations in the Development of English Language Teachers?
Aynur YÜREKLİ 246-251
Modern Art Museums as Educational Environments: Tate Modern and Saatchi Gallery Sample
Burcu GÜNAY 252-260
The Importance of Education of Values of Vhildren that Live Out of the Family Environment
Beyza AKINAL, Elif Sultan DEMİRHAN 261-266
Interactive Structure-Multiple Perception Models and Contemporary Art Education
Berna KARAÇALI 267-273
Integration of Poetry with Vocabulary Teaching
Nazife AYDINOĞLU 274-284
The Comparison of the Self Respect and the Perception Of the Family Support of the Children with only One Parent During Primary Education
Beyza AKINAL, Elif Sultan DEMİRHAN 285-290
The Barriers to the Development of Economics and Business Schools in Europe
Sylwester Białowąs, Ewa Mińska-Struzik, Iwona Olejnik, Katarzyna Szarzec 291-296
An Investigation on Candidate Preschool Teachers' Communication Skills and Emotional Intelligence
Saide Özbey 297-305
Combining Forms and their Issues in Writing Education
Nermin Özcan Özer 306-309
Left-Handedness in the Act of Writing
Nermin Özcan ÖZER 310-314
Education in Culture and Education for Culture
Irena Stonkuvienė 315-326
From Science to Classroom Practice. A case of Study: STEM Curriculum based on Research of Local Research Groups
Jorge PASTOR, Sonia VAL, Amaya MARTINEZ, Mirna GRACIA 327-332
Pre-School Teachers' Views Regarding Democracy Education
Betül YANIK, Işıl TAŞ, Oğuz KELEŞ, Seval ÖRDEK 333-336
Effectiveness of the "Kodaly" Method, a Method of Music Education and Instruction, Developed by Hungarian Music Instructor Zoltan Kodaly, on Children's Musical Development and Education
Gulsen G. ERDAL 337-341
Investigation for Reasons of Participation and the Way of Assesment in This Participation of Winter Sports Activities Among Students School of Physical Education and Sports in Atatürk University
Ahmet ŞİRİNKAN, S. Erim ERHAN 342-346
Investigating Factors Determining High-School Students' Level of Exposure to the Van Earthquake
Fuat TANHAN, Ferhat KARDAŞ 347-354
Agent Gender and Frequency Dimension Used in Voicing, and Use of Pedagogical Interface Agents
Betül TONBULOĞLU, Nesrin ÖZDENER 355-359
The Effect of a Psycho-Educational Group Program Directed towards Teaching Healthy Coping Strategies on University Students' Coping with Stress Level Skills 360-368

Hatice ODACI, Özkan ÇİKRIKÇI

Psychological Needs and Self-Identity according to Different Gender Roles
Çiğdem Berber ÇELİK, Hatice ODACI 369-375

The Relationship between Students' Reading Comprehension Achievements and their Multiple Intelligence Groups with Regard to their Representational Systems
İzzettin KÖK 376-383

The Practicing Techniques of Viola Parts
Burcu TUNCA 384-389

According to the Teachers' Point of View, the Examination of Primary Schools' Principles' Competency on Change Management and Organizational Innovation
Nezahat GÜÇLÜ, Hatice KILINÇ, Ömür ÇOBAN 390-395

Environmental Education Teaching Self-Efficacy
Büşra TUNCAY 396-401

The Socio-Cultural Contributions of the Local Governments to the Urban Life: Example of Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Orchestra Management Office
Hatice ÇELİKTAŞ, Sezen ÖZEKE 402-409

The Effect of Problem Posing Tasks Used in Mathematics Instruction to Mathematics Academic Achievement and Attitudes Toward Mathematics
Selim GUVERCİN, Viktor VERBOVSKİY 410-416

Erroneous Grograms and Correct Strategies
Osman AY, Nesrin Özdener DÖNMEZ 417-422

Determining the Attainability Level of the Objectives of Primary 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education' Course Curriculum (The Case of Konya Province)
Nadir BAŞTÜRK 423-428

Examination of Six-Year-Old Children's Memory Skills Regarding the Concepts of Numbers and Shapes
Yasemin AYDOĞAN, Zeynep Seda ÇAVUŞ 429-434

Teacher Attrition as a Policy Challenge: A Myth or Reality
Victor J. PITSOE 435-439

The Relationship between Teaching Facilities and Teacher Practice in Science Education in Rural Schools in South Africa: Implications for Learner Achievement
Johannes SEROTO 440-444

The Social Skills and Problem Behaviors Comparison of 6 Year Children Who Go to State and Private Preschool Education Institution
Zarife SEÇER, Hülya GÜLAY, Alev ÖNDER, Cemile KARA 445-453

The Examination of the Relationship between Counseling Students' Academic Motivation Levels and their Personal Factors
İpek MENEVİŞ, Ramadan EYYAM, Nazan DOĞRUER 454-463

The Effect of Language Learning Strategies Training on Language Academic Achievement
Özlem KARAKİŞ 464-469

The Relation between Self-Regulated Learning Strategies and Language Academic Achievement of University Preparatory Class Students
Özlem KARAKIŞ 470-477

Developing Computer Assisted Materials in Teaching Turkish to Foreigners (Basic User A1) and Its Effects on Students' Success
Yusuf SÜLÜKÇÜ 478-484

Usability Test With Eye Tracking Method in Educational Software and Gender Factor
İsmail TONBULOĞLU, Servet BAYRAM 485-490

A Study on Teacher Candidates' Computer Use Purposes and Computer Attitudes
Semra ERKAN, Bilge GÖK 491-496

How to Use Mobile Technology and Augmented Reality to Enhance Collaborative Learning on Cultural and Natural Heritage? An E-Learning Experience
Francesc GONZALEZ, Luis VILLAREJO, Oriol MIRALBELL, Joan Miquel GOMIS 497-502
Intonation Practicing Techniques for Clarinet Students
Gülriz GERMEN 503-507
What is Exactly Multiple Intelligences Theory?
Nida TEMİZ 508-512
Content-Based Foreign Language Education in Higher Education Institutions that Provide Professional Music Education
Sevan NART 513-520
An Investigation of the Hopelessness Levels of Mothers With Mentally Handicapped Children Related to the Different Variables
Erkan EFİLTİ 521-526
Developing an Inquiry-Based Professional Development Workshop and Examining the Views of Pre-Service Chemistry Teachers About It
Eylem BAYİR, Fitnat KOSEOĞLU 527-533
The Effect of Creative Drama Based Micro-Teaching Practices on Pre-Service Science Teachers' Cognitive Maps About Nature of Science
Eylem BAYIR 534-541
The Effects of Nature Training on the Sense of Limitedness of Elementary School Children, Who Experienced an Earthquake
Fuat TANHAN, Gamze MUKBA 542-548
The Use of Children's Literature in English Language Classes
Semra SARAÇOĞLU 549-551
The Effects of History Lesson on Creating Social Awareness in Turkey and in 20th Century: Example of Ziya Gökalp
İrem NAMLI 552-556
Preservice Social Studies Teachers' Understanding of Global Education
Mehmet AÇIKALIN 557-562
The Review of Physical Education Master Teachers' Self-Efficacy Perception Levels and Their Burnout Levels in Terms of Some Variables
Nimet Haşıl KOKMAZ, Ersin ŞAHIN, Şenay KOPARAN 563-567
The Comparison of Physical Education and Sports Master Teacher and Candidates Teachers Preservice the Teachers' Burnout Levels, Teaching Style Preferences in Terms of Some Variables
Ersin ŞAHIN, Şenay KOPARAN, Nimet Haşıl KOKMAZ 568-573
Contemporary Methods Used in Voice Training
Ayhan HELVACI 574-579
Opinions of Violin Students Towards Individual Instrument Violin Courses in Gazi University Gazi Education Faculty Music Education Department
Gamze Elif TANINMIŞ 580-584
Teacher Views Regarding School Administrators' Organizational Crisis Management Skills
Mahmut SAĞIR, Orhan ERCAN, Kazım ŞAHİN 585-590
Teacher Views Regarding School Administrators' Commitment Levels to Universal Values in School Management
Mahmut SAĞIR, Orhan ERCAN, Neytullah KARAKURT 591-596
Determination of the Change that Occurs on Visual Perceptions of Primary School Students Regarding the Concept of "Environmental Pollution" By Means of Images
Hayriye SAYHAN, Sencer SAYHAN, Cagri Ozturk DEMİRBAŞ 597-604
Problem Solving Abilities of Pre-Service Teachers 605-611

Hasan Güner BERKANT, Ismail EREN, Didem REYHANLIOĞLU
The Application of Museum Education with Creative Drama Methods (An Example of Application in Preschool)
Nami Eren BEŞTEPE, Tuba Çay SAĞLAM 612-619
Teachers' Attitudes Towards Grade-Skipping of the Gifted
Lutfu ILGAR, Uzeyir OĞURLU, Yavuz YAMAN, Nihat TOPAC 620-625
Biology Student Teachers' Conceptual Frameworks about "Excretory"
Hakan KURT, Baştürk KAYA, Ali ATEŞ 626-631
Biology Student Teachers' Opinions about the Factors that Affect the Qualification of Undergraduate Education
Hakan KURT, Baştürk KAYA, Ali ATEŞ, Esra MARTİN 632-637
Contributions of Multi Disciplinary Art Education Method to Art Education
Emine TEKER 638-641
Examining Resiliences of Adolescents from some Psychosocial Variables Who Failed in the University Entrance Exam
Vesile OKTAN 642-649
The Effect of Virtual Laboratory Applications for "Electricity in Our Life" Unit on Science Process Skills and Attitudes
Uğur SARI, Şeyma ULUKÖK, Fatma Zehra ÖZDEMİR 650-655
On National Music Education: With the Example of KTMU Conservatory
Ömür Bütev DOLĞUN 656-658
Effect of Educational Open Accessed On-Line Journals on English Language Bachelor Students' Achievement and Attitude
Majid N. Al-AMRI 659-664
The Effects of Class Attendance on Academic Achievement and the Views of Preservice Teachers about Attendance and Absenteeism
Yüksel ÇEKBAŞ, F. Serkan SAY 665-672
A Qualitative Study on Foreign Languages School Prep Class Students' Metacognitive Awareness in the Process of Learning English Language
Betül ALTAY 673-676
Effective Use of Games in Foreign Language Classes
Emrah GÖÇMEN, Nurdan Arslan GÖÇMEN 677-681
Polyphonic Choir Culture from the Past to the Present in Bursa
Gülnihal Gül 682-687
The Teaching of Modern Piano Techniques In Music Teacher Training and the Pre-Evaluation of the Project Application within the Sample Content of Uludağ University
Nilüfer YILMAZ 688-694
Determining Pre-Knowledge and Misconceptions of the Prospective Science Teachers' on Electricity and Magnetism
Sibel AÇIŞLI 695-700
A Comparison of Science Teacher-Preservice Teacher-Grade 9 Students' Alternative Conceptions of 'Physical and Chemical Changes
Ali KOLOMUÇ, Sibel AÇIŞLI 701-705
A Study of the Learning Styles of the would-be Science Teachers and the Relationship between their Attitudes Scala towards Teaching
Sibel AÇIŞLI, Ali KOLOMUÇ 706-712
Teaching English and Students' Learning Styles
Blanka Frydrychova KLIMOVA 713-717
The Study of Primary School Teacher Candidates' Mathematical Literacy, Self-Efficacy And Their Candidate Efficiency
Dilek Çağırgan GÜLTEN 718-722

Students of Management of Tourism and Their Writing Needs
Blanka Frydrychova KLIMOVA 723-727
Expected Roles of School Principals by Primary School Teachers and Determining the Expectation Levels (Fatih County Case)
Vakur ÇİFTÇİLİ 728-733
Misconceptions about Periodicity in Secondary Chemistry Education: The Case of Kazakhstan
Yılmaz SATILMIŞ 734-740
The Evaluation of Social Exchange Theory in Online Social Networking Sites
Zehra Altınay GAZI, Fahriye Altınay AKSAL 741-744
Self-Perception Styles of Music Teacher Candidates
Yıldırım Orhan ŞEBNEM 745-751
Opinions of School Administrators about the Application of E-Okul System
Yaşar YAVUZ, Hatice Ibil SENGUL 752-755
The Profile of Turkey within the Articles Indexed in SSCI in the Field of Education: The Case of Chemistry Education
Burcu Umut ZAN, Nuray ZAN 756-761
An Analysis of Learning Strategies of Students Studying at the Department of Social Work and the Nursing Department
Rumeysa AKGUN 762-766
A Framework for Conscious Leadership in Education
EJ Van NIEKERK 767-773
Current Educational Policies and Trends in Teaching English to Young Learners around the Globe
Sibel YOLERİ, Esra ERDOĞAN 774-779
A Qualitative Study about Performance Based Assessment Methods Used in Information Technologies Lesson
Gökhan DAĞHAN, Buket AKKOYUNLU 780-785
The Reflections of the Migration Phenomenon on the Child Paintings
Serap BUYURGAN, Münire Meral YAĞÇI, Nur Cemelelioğlu ALTIN 786-794
The Analysis of the Fourth and Fifth Grade Primary School Students' Perceptual Learning Styles According to some Variables
Dilek Çağırgan GÜLTEN, Ekrem ÖZKAN 795-799
A Study into Communication Skills of Preschoolers in Terms of Parent Attitudes and Some Other Variables
Oğuz Serdar KESİCİOĞLU, Ümit DENİZ 800-806
Teachers' Opinion about How Human Rights and Citizenship Education Should Be Taught at Schools in Turkey
Mehmet ÜLGER, Selma YEL 807-812
Investigating the Relationship between Test Anxiety and Math Anxiety in Primary 7th Grade Students
Cengiz POYRAZ, Saadeddin BOZKURT 813-819
Teachers' Views Regarding the Use of Technological Materials in Pre-School Educational Institutions
Nezih ÖNAL, Oğuz KELEŞ 820-824
Student Evaluation of Distance Learning in Turkey: Reasons of more than Half Repetition
Ayşen BAKİOĞLU, Ertuğ CAN 825-830
An Analysis of the Play Behaviours of Female and Male Children in Nursery Classes
Işıl TAŞ, Oğuz KELEŞ, Betül YANIK 831-836
An Analysis of Study Skills Adopted by "Special Education", "Psychological

Counselling and Guidance", "R*eligion Culture* **a**nd Moral Knowledge" Teacher Candidates in Terms of Certain Variables
Dilek Çağırgan GÜLTEN, Cengiz POYRAZ, Yasemin DERİNGÖL 837-841

Multiple Intelligence Profiles of Technical Education Faculty Students
Şengül BÜYÜKBOYACI, Mehmet KUMARTAŞLI 842-851

Effective Project Group Formation In Education: Non-Dominated Sorting Genetic Algorithm-II (NSGA-II)
Umut TEKGÜÇ 852-858

The Importance of Pleasure Training in Music Education of Children and Teenagers
Mustafa USLU 859-864

Concept Cartoon Samples Integrated to PBL Scenario towards Matter and Heat Unit
Ali Günay BALIM, Suat TURKOGUZ, Erkan ÖZCAN, Ertug EVREKLİ, Huriye Deniş ÇELİKER, Didem İNEL, Sevinç KAÇAR 865-873

Self-Efficacy of Elementary School Teachers in Developing Students' Problem Solving Skills in Social Studies Lessons
Kader ARKAN, Z. Nurdan BAYSAL 874-880

A Survey on Behaviors of Primary School Administrators and Teachers as an Indicative Factor of School Climate according to Certain Variables
Hasan Basri MEMDUHOĞLU, Ahmet Cemil KARADAĞ 881-890

Using Video-Modelled Social Stories to Teach Social Skills to a Child with Autism
Hasan AVCIOĞLU 891-896

The Influence of History of Science Cases on Student Science Teachers' Views of Nature of Science
Serkan SEVIM 897-905

A Life Saving Step for Young Children: First-Aid
Neslihan KOCER 906-911

A Child Rights-Based Approach to Managing Learner Pregnancy
Susan COETZEE 912-917

Prospective Teachers' Educational Internet Usage Self-Efficacy Beliefs
Ahmet ADALIER 918-925

The Effect of the Computer-Aided 7e Teaching Model on Students' Science Process Skills
Harun ÇELİK, Gamze ÖZBEK, Tuğba KARTAL 926-932

Education Investments and Evaluation in Formal Education Planning Processes
Yaşar YAVUZ, Mahmut YEŞİL 933-937

Directors' Opinions about Usage of Information and Communication Technologies in Educational Environments
Süleyman GÖKSOY 938-941

Professional Self-Esteem with Professional Attitude on the Relationship between Teaching Profession
Süleyman GÖKSOY, Murat ALTINÖZ, Türkan ARGON 942-945

Assessment of Professional Ethics Perception's Primary School Teachers
Mehmet Cafer ŞAKAR 946-951

The Reliability and Validity of Biostatistics Attitude Scale
Gürol ZIRHLIOĞLU 952-957

Difficulties and Constraints in Foreign Language Writing
Blanka Frydrychova KLIMOVA 958-963

The Correlation Between Childrens Perception of Cartoon Characters and Socio-Demographic Variables
Serpil PEKDOĞAN, Gülay YILMAZEL 964-968

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Teachers' Opinion about How Human Rights and Citizenship Education Should Be Taught at Schools in Turkey

Mehmet ÜLGER[*], Selma YEL[*]

Abstract: As an outgrowth of centralized administration in Turkey, decisions are taken centrally; it is expected from teachers to perform these decisions one-to-one. As a practitioner of these decisions teachers have difficulty in conveying their thoughts about teaching styles of lessons or course schedules so studies done for receiving teachers' opinions gain importance. By this research, rationales of which approaches related to human rights and citizenship education (CHRE) are adopted by teachers are presented. It is found that most of the teachers think that CHRE should be taught by using both cross-curricular and separate stand-alone subject approaches in all grades.

Keywords: Human right and citizenship education, primary school teachers' opinion.

Human type desired to be created in a country in general affects pedagogy, in special affects lessons being taught at schools. Due to compulsory primary school education, knowledge, skills and values being acquired by a citizen until the end of primary and lower secondary school are being tried to give students by means of the lessons taught at schools. In this sense, in Turkey contents related to citizenship education have been taught with different names since the early years of republic period. Citizenship lesson has been addressed sometimes as a separate stand-alone subject and sometimes as a natural component of social studies lesson throughout republic history (Ülger, 2012). In Turkey human rights started to be taught as a lesson in schools in 1995 with declaration of United Nations General Assembly: "United Nations Human Rights Education Decade (in the years 1995-2004)" (National Committee of Human Rights Education Decade, 2001). Citizenship education is closely related to historical and political conditions of country in which it is implemented whereas human rights education have taken universality, multiculturalism, international declarations and conventions as a center (Davies, 2000); even though nowadays these two subjects are mostly handled together (Duerr, Vrkas and Martins, 2000; Brander, 2002). In parallel with this general approach "Human rights" and "citizenship and democracy education" concepts are addressed together.

In Turkey, after 1st-8th Grades Curriculum was accepted in 2004, citizenship and human rights education (CHRE) became one of the 8 cross-curricular subjects and it was located in curriculum of 13 lessons (i.e. Life Sciences, social studies, science and technology, math, Turkish, religious culture and moral knowledge, music, physical education, visual arts, art activities, Turkish republic revolution history and Kemalism, chess and sports activities lessons) at a primary education level (http://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/). With the same understanding responsibility of teaching knowledge, skill and attitudes related to CHRE is burdened on all teachers and lessons. Therefore content of this subject is spreaded in more than one lesson. This implementation serves as a respond to a criticism related that human rights education should not be limited with one lesson instead it should be spreaded in all curriculums (Çayır, 2003). This approach includes significant similarities with the citizenship

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education approach of British Primary schools for 5-11 ages (Key Stage 1-2) (QCDA [Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency], 2007).

Implementation of cross-curricular subject including CHRE is started in Turkey in 2004. Before 2004, in some times subjects related to CHRE were addressed in life sciences and social studies lessons, but citizenship and human rights concepts are addressed in a wide range of lesson curriculum and in a wide range of different levels (1st -8th grades). Current educational attainments of cross-curricular subjects substantially related to course attainments. However it is available in instruction parts of curriculum how math course (for example) attainments are associated with CHRE intermediate discipline attainments by making a special effort.

In European countries there are three basic approaches relevant to CHRE: cross-curricular, integrated into one or more other subjects (such as history or geography) and separate stand-alone subject (Eurydice, 2005:17).

One of the most important issues related to citizenship and human rights education is how it is named and its weekly course hours in other countries. In which countries citizenship education is taught at primary school level, terminology used in this lesson and teaching/curriculum approaches are presented in Table I.

Table I
Citizenship Education Approaches in Weekly Course Schedules of Some Countries

Country name	Current terminology	Curriculum approach
Albania	Citizenship education	Separate stand-alone subject
England	Citizenship education	Cross-curricular/ separate stand-alone subject
Croatia	Human rights and citizenship education	Separate stand-alone subject
Czech Republic	Citizenship education	Separate stand-alone subject
Germany	Citizenship education	Separate stand-alone subject
Greece	Social studies and Citizenship	Separate stand-alone subject
Italy	Social studies / Citizenship education	Integrated into one or more other subjects
Romania	Citizenship education	Separate stand-alone subject
Israel	Social studies and Citizenship education	Separate stand-alone subject
Indonesia	Social studies	Integrated into one or more other subjects
Japan	Social studies	Integrated into one or more other subjects
Turkey	Human rights and citizenship education	Cross-curricular/separate stand-alone subject/integrated into one or more other subjects

(Eurydice, 2005; Bîrzea, 2000, Kerr:2000; Ülger, 2012;UNESCO-International Bureau of Education)

It is impossible to mention only one approach for the entire world related to how citizenship education should be done. Citizenship education is implemented in some countries as a separate stand-alone subject, in some countries as a cross-curricular subject and in some countries as an integrated into one or more other subjects. In different periods or in same period these approaches have been implemented in Turkey. By the year 2011 all of these approaches are practiced in our country. Issues related to citizenship are integrated into 13 lessons like life sciences and social studies including similar issues in 2004 and by this way it is implemented as a cross-curricular subject. Moreover "Democracy and Citizenship Education" lesson is added on primary schools weekly course schedule as a separate stand-alone subject in 2010 (The decision of board of education. No:2010/75). In 2012 this separate stand-alone compulsory lesson has been taught in 4th grades and its weekly course hour is increased from one hour to two (The decision of board of education. No:2012/69).

Methodology

The aim of this research is to determine the tendencies of Turkish primary school teachers about how human rights and citizenship education should be taught. 520 teachers working in primary and lower secondary schools in Kırıkkale from 9 fields of study related to human rights and citizenship education took part in this research. One multiple choice question with five options was asked to the teachers and requested them to write their rationales for these options. Obtained qualitative and quantitative data were interpreted via computation of frequency, percentage and mean values.

Findings and Discussions

Results of this study are as follows:

Table II

Teachers' Opinions Related to the Question "How Human Rights and Citizenship Education Should Be Done?"

	Class. Teach.		Soc. Stud.		Sci.		Math.		Turkish		Music		Phy. Educ.		Vis. Arts		Rel. Mor.		Mean	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Separate stand-alone and cross-curricular	93	50	24	33	22	47	18	37	37	54	5	42	10	45	15	58	13	35	237	46
Integrated into other lessons	16	9	8	11	7	15	8	16	5	7	1	8	1	5	1	4	5	14	52	10
Cross-curricular	52	28	19	26	12	26	5	10	18	26	1	8	5	23	8	31	11	30	131	25
Separate stand-alone	23	12	22	30	6	13	18	37	8	12	5	42	6	27	2	8	7	19	97	19
Other	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	0
Total (f - %)	186	100	73	100	47	100	49	100	68	100	12	100	22	100	26	100	37	100	520	100

Approximately 46 % of teachers stated that CHRE should be taught together both as a separate stand-alone subject and as a cross-curricular subject. Ratio of teachers who think that CHRE should be given only as cross-curricular subject is 25% and who think that CHRE should be taught as a separate discipline field at the second level of primary school is 19%. Moreover 10% of teachers emphasized that CHRE should be taught as integrated into one or more subjects (such as history and social studies). Except math and music teachers, most of the branch teachers think that CHRE should be taught both as a separate stand-alone and as a cross-curricular subject (Table 2).

Primary school teachers who respond to the question "How CHRE should be taught?" stated their rationales clearly. Rational distribution of these rationales is presented in Table III.

Table III

Rationales and Rational Distribution of Teachers Preferring the Statement "CHRE Should Be Taught as a Separate Stand-Alone Subject as in Before 2005"

Focus of statement	f	%
If different period of time is spared for CHRE, subjects in this lesson will be taught in more detailed and thus students could learn subjects quickly and become more successful.	21	50
Being taught this lesson as a separate stand-alone subject is a requirement to take note of this lesson.	7	17
Students feel this lesson is important when its name is involved in weekly course schedule.	5	12
CHRE is a distinctive separate subject so it should be taught by domain expert teachers in different period of time.	5	12
Other	4	9
Total	42	100

It is understood that rationales of the teachers who stated that CHRE should be taught as a separate stand-alone subject is that when CHRE become separate stand-alone subject, subjects in this lesson are taught in more detailed, thus learning ratio of students could be increased. Moreover according to some teachers if CHRE become a separate stand-alone subject, this will be an indication of the importance of this lesson and thus students realize its importance. Some of the teachers emphasized that CHRE is a separate subject area so it should be taught by domain expert teachers.

Table IV

Rationales and Rational Distribution of Teachers Preferring the Statement "CHRE Should Be Taught as a Cross-Curricular Subject as in After 2005"

Focus of statement	f	%
CHRE is related to all areas of life, hence it is connected with other disciplines; thus students should encounter with subjects of this lesson at any time.	37	39
Being taught CHRE to students gradually from early ages causes effective and permanent learning.	20	21
To achieve the objective of CHRE, its training should be started at early ages.	19	20
When CHRE is spreaded into all lessons and in a large period of time, students could learn without boring.	8	8
All teachers should be responsible for CHRE.	5	5
Different teachers can provide different scopes for subjects of CHRE.	3	3
Other	4	4
Total	96	100

It is seen that rationales of teachers who stated that CHRE should be taught as a cross-curricular subject are substantially intertwined. The summary of rationales of teachers CHRE should be taught as a cross-curricular subject is as following: CHRE is related to all areas of life so it should not be constricted at a certain period of time and its training should be started at an early age. If this training is practiced with this approach, teachers in different branches will contribute CHRE with their different viewpoints.

Table V

Rationales and Rational Distribution of Teachers Preferring the Statement "CHRE Should Be Taught as an Integrated into Other Lessons"

Focus of statement	f	%
It will be more efficient.	11	39
Contents of CHRE subjects are closely related to subjects of history and social studies.	7	25
Because of extensive curriculums, intermediate discipline attainments are not taught actively and effectively during other lessons.	5	18
Other	5	18
Total	28	100

Majority of teachers who stated that CHRE should be taught as unit(s) in other lessons presented more general justification like "efficiency". Some of the teachers think that CHRE is closely related to history and social studies so it should be handled into these lessons.

Table VI

Rationales and Rational Distribution of Teachers Preferring the Statement "CHRE Should Be Taught Both as a Separate Stand-Alone Subject and as a Cross-Curricular Subject as in After 2005"

Focus of statement	f	%
Being taught CHRE both as a separate stand-alone subject and as a cross-curricular subject reinforce each other and thus more effective and efficient learning occur.	48	40
Content of CHRE is more intensive and related to many areas so these contents are discussed in different times and during different lessons.	35	28
If weekly course hours of social studies and Turkish republic revolution history and Kemalism lessons are not increased, contents of these lessons will be more intensive so some contents should be handled in CHRE as a cross-curricular subject.	10	8
CHRE should be a separate stand-alone subject because attainments of CHRE are overshadowed by the attainments of other lessons. When they are integrated, they are not sufficiently taught.	6	5

Students should learn the subjects of CHRE from the moment they arrive at school.	5	4
Schools exist because of CHRE so the subjects of CHRE are handled in other lessons.	3	3
Being taught CHRE as a cross-curricular subject resolve time problem.	4	3
Being taught CHRE as a separate stand-alone subject provide significant contribution to teach concepts based on some terminologies.	3	3
What happened in society necessitates an effective CHRE.	2	2
Human rights and citizenship education will be taken up more holistically.	2	2
Being emphasized these subjects in other lessons increase sensitivity to human rights.	1	1
Other	1	1
Total	120	100

Majority of teachers think that being taught CHRE both as a separate stand-alone subject and as a cross-curricular subject stimulate learning and increase efficiency. According to most of the teachers, due to intensive content of CHRE, it should be handled in different times into the different lessons. Some of the teachers, especially social studies teachers, think that weekly course hour of social studies lesson is not enough to integrate CHRE into this lesson so it is continued to be taught CHRE as a cross-curricular subject and some subjects of CHRE should be expanded into other lessons.

Conclusion

Current implementations of ministry of national education are in accord with the expectations of Turkish teachers. Majority of Turkish primary school teachers think that CHRE should be taught both as a separate stand-alone subject and as a cross-curricular subject in charge of all teachers with holistic understanding. The biggest problem with CHRE in Turkey is to not add / remove CHRE from separate stand-alone subject category or to integrate it into other lessons like social studies or to practice it as a cross-curricular subject. The main problem is to not form established tradition of CHRE. In this regard, there is a need to create qualified tradition of CHRE. Another important problem is that when one or several approaches related to CHRE are chosen, no justification is made. Moreover, during the process of implementing no impact analysis is made about such preferences or the reasons for the removal of an application are not presented. In this respect, there is a need to create well-founded justifications.

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