



## An Investigation of 21st Century Primary Schools' Functions According to Primary School Teachers' Views \*

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to determine the functions that future primary schools will adopt based on the opinions of primary school teachers. Accordingly, the functions of instruction, socialization, and qualification that schools fulfill were assessed in accordance with the literature and teachers' opinions. Designed in a descriptive survey model, this study employed a parallel mixed design utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments. Two questionnaire forms—one for demographic information and one for teachers' opinions—were used for the quantitative data and semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted for the qualitative data set. As for research findings, teachers think that schools pay more attention to the function of socialization than instruction and qualification and that this function should not be only under their responsibility, rather be completed through cooperation with families. Furthermore, findings also point out that children should be equipped with meaningful daily life information, they should be encouraged to make career plans that will make them happy based on a "self-get to know" process, and they should be prepared for the next educational level.

### Keywords

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### Introduction

Debates concerning the functions of schools almost date back to the establishment of these institutions. Currently, the educational goals of 21st century schools and the effects of these goals on schools themselves, individuals and social lives are still discussed and studied. A closer look into the goals that current schools are trying to attain reveals educational programs predominantly target to improve cognitive, social, motor and emotional skills. Likewise, the educational goals within the Turkish education system have been evolving parallel to these goals for many years. This taxonomy

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categorizes the primary goals of educational systems into three categories, namely, instruction, socialization, and qualification (Adıgüzel, Ergünay, & Tatlı Dalioğlu, 2013).

As for instruction, schools aim to teach children the information that will help them develop a rational view about both their community and the world (Egan, 1997). However, it would be inadequate to define instruction simply as flow of information from the sender to the receiver (Lenoir & Tupin, 2012). Hameline (1994) states that instruction is not mere transformation of information, but rather it is the effort to advance people's thinking skills for their cognitive development and to furnish them with knowledge and skills necessary to gain an overall understanding about the nature and human life that surrounds them (as cited in Lenoir & Tupin, 2012).

With regard to socialization, schools work to teach the dominant norms, rules, and values in a society to children. The influence schools have over socialization has been discussed through functionalist, interactionist, reconstructionist approaches and conflict theory. Although the functionalist and conflict approaches have different perspectives about social change, both underline that education serves as a tool to sustain the social order through schools transferring cultural values and behavior types to next generations (Dinçer, 2003). However, interactionist and reconstructionist approaches place emotional features and social skills that can free people into the heart of the goals schools try to achieve (Tan, 1993; Dinçer, 2003).

Qualification, on the other hand, aims to improve students' individual characteristics and professional skills. This goal is the reflection of the role of the schools in the economic system. On one hand, schools work to help children actualize their potential, and on the other hand they try to equip students with professional skills for their role in the economic system (Eserpek, 1978).

For ages, there have been endless discussions regarding which of these functions—instruction, socialization, and qualification—schools should emphasize more than others. Underpinning the function of instruction, Plato emphasized that schools should provide students with information and skills that will bring out a rational reality for them instead of raising them as successful citizens or guiding them to share their peers' norms and values (Egan, 1997). On the contrary, Durkheim stated that the primary goal of education is to adjust individuals so that they can live in harmony with their society and to teach them social rules and norms, which favors the functions of socialization and qualification over instruction (Filloux, 1993). Durkheim drew attention to the necessity of educating children along with these two functions in developed and developing countries (Filloux, 1993), and considered schools as tools to attain these goals (İnal, 1991). As a byproduct of prioritizing the functions of socialization and qualification, Durkheim underlined the significance of respecting children's autonomy, building educational settings conducive to creativity, and group works. Yet, Kant noted the importance of discipline, acculturation, civilization, and ethics in his definition of educational goals (Adıgüzel, 2013). Çilingir and Küçükali (2004) summarizes Kant's view as: "humans have to be disciplined, otherwise, the animal part in humans jeopardizes the possibility of being a human; humans have to be acculturated, otherwise, they cannot achieve any goals through education; humans have to be civilized, otherwise, they cannot attain the level of intelligence required to comply with the social structure; humans have to have ethics, otherwise, they cannot develop a will approved by the society and cannot determine their goals" (as cited in Adıgüzel, 2013).

All these views emphasize acculturation function of education. Due to this function, education can maintain and sustain the existing culture by transmitting the current norms and values to the next generations and by monitoring those behaviors violating the social order (Eserpek, 1978). In contrast, Apple (1995) highlighted that knowledge is not a construct that transform students into passive assets that are willing to adapt or can adapt to unequal society (as cited in İnal, 2010). In addition to the acculturation function, education encourages both creativity and innovation hoping to formulate new values and to help social development (Eserpek, 1978). Thus, education also has the function of enabling students to self-actualize, to choose and make decisions freely, and to take responsibility (Günay, 2010). Even though these two functions seem to be contradictory to each other, educational systems may easily focus on both.

Following preschools, primary schools are the first level where children acquire their initial experience with formal education settings and where the functions of acculturation and encouraging creativity and innovation are deeply felt. Primary schools play a major role in terms of improving students' emotional characteristics and social skills and equipping students with cognitive skills required to achieve high-level thinking tasks such as understanding, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. In Turkey, too, the responsibility of furnishing young children with basic knowledge, skills, behaviors, and habits belong to the primary schools. Likewise, class teachers shoulder a major responsibility especially for the development of cognitive and social skills in children. Indeed, opinions vary with respect to who has the primary responsibility of teaching social skills to children. To illustrate, Durkheim stated that the primary duty falls on the schools to socialize children (Bolliet & Schmitt, 2008). However, a significant proportion of present teachers do not regard socialization as one of their professional responsibilities, instead they believe that instruction is their core job definition and socialization should be undertaken by families first (Rey, 2012). Families' share in socializing children can better be understood if one admits that the development of children's social, professional, and academic skills is not confined to only formal settings. Children are in a constant contact with social and natural environment when they are not at school (Varış, 1998). Thus, cognitive and social skills are mostly picked up at schools, and other behaviors to initiate and pursue communication with other people are provided especially by families (Eserpek, 1978). A young kid starting primary school joins in the formal education environment with knowledge and skills s/he learned from his/her family and environment. The differences across families' socio-cultural backgrounds and children's experiences may cause some problems in terms of fitting in with other children and the educational environment (Varış, 1998). Primary school teachers' attitudes and behaviors are definitive in eliminating these adaptation problems. Primary school teachers are directly responsible for the education of the students during the four-year primary school period, play an important role in ensuring cooperation, interaction and coherence between school and families (Varış, 1998). Therefore, primary school teachers are as important as families in raising individuals who will take the society to the future.

This research aims to investigate the main goals and primary functions of future primary schools based on primary school teachers' opinions. Accordingly, answers are sought for the following research questions:

1. What are the views of primary school teachers on overall goals of education, the overall goals of primary schools and the roles of families in education?
2. What are the views of primary school teachers on instruction, socialization, and qualification functions of 21st primary schools?

## Method

### *Research Model*

This study was designed in a descriptive survey model. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were employed in the study and a convergent paralel mixed design was used. In convergent parallel mixed designs, qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, the results are combined, and general interpretations are made (Creswell, 2012)

### *Participants*

As for the questionnaire developed for the quantitative aspect of the study, research universe included 2769 primary school teachers working at state and private primary schools located in Eskisehir. Of all the primary school teachers working in the province of Eskisehir, a research sample was formed through use of sampling formula recommended by Cochran for likert-type evaluation tools (Bartlett, Kotrlık, & Higgins, 2001).

$$[n_o = (t)^2 * (\underline{s})^2 / (d)^2]; [n = n_o / (1 + n_o / N)]$$

The formula indicated that at least 120 teachers were necessary for the questionnaire step of the research. In order for the representation of the universe to be larger and the sample size to be reached in case of possible data loss, one of the probability sampling types, simple random sampling was employed to select 300 primary school teachers out of the universe, and these teachers expressed their opinions following the instructions on the questionnaire. During data analysis, 11 of the questionnaires were excluded due to some missing responses. In the end, 289 teachers filled out the questionnaires correctly, and formed the research sample for the quantitative aspect of the study.

The percentages of female and male teachers in the sample are 66 and 34 respectively. The age range of the participants are as follows: 38% between 41 and 50, 36% between 31 and 40, 15% between 26 and 30, 10% 51 or older, and 1% 25 or younger. As for the seniority of the participants, the distribution is as follows: 29% 16-to-20 years of experience, 25% 21 or more years of experience, 22% 11-to-15 years of experience, 17% 6-to-10 years of experience, and 7% 5 or fewer years of experience. With respect to the grades the participants were teaching when questionnaires were administered, the distribution was as follows: 30% 2nd graders, 25% 4th graders, 25% 1st graders, and 20% 3rd graders.

Considering the qualitative step of the research, 4 semi-structured focus group interviews were held at four different primary schools. The number of participants in each focus group interviews was between 6-to-8. Voluntariness and accessibility were two criteria to select the schools and teachers.

### *Developing Data Collection Tools*

Both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were used in the study. Following part includes explanations about the development of both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools respectively.

### *Quantitative Data Collection Tools*

The study was carried out as a part of an international project so the questions in the quantitative data collection tool were developed by the project team of 30 international scholars in the field of education with workshop technique. In workshop technique, field experts come together in both large and small groups, and develop ideas and suggestions on an issue through discussions (Adıgüzel, 2016). During the workshop, the relevant literature and the conceptual framework of the project were considered, and the initial survey items were written by each group. Following the small group discussions, a whole group discussion was organized and the initial survey items written by each group were combined and reorganized. At the end of the workshop, two questionnaire forms - one for the demographic information and one for the teachers' opinions - were developed as the quantitative tools of the study. It was developed in both French and English as these languages were used in the project. The French versions of the questionnaire were translated into Turkish by 2 experts who were associate professors in educational sciences and had high proficiency degree in French language. One of the experts also worked as a project partner in the international project team. Similarly, the English versions

of the questionnaire were translated into Turkish by two experts who were in the project teams and had high proficiency degree in English language independently. In both translation processes, the semantic and conceptual equivalence to the Turkish language were considered by the experts. Following the independent translation procedures, four experts met, shared the translated versions, made discussions and reached consensus on each items on the form. Thus, the finalized Turkish version of the forms was developed preceding the ethical and implementation permission. In terms of the reliability of the form, test – retest method was not carried out since no primary school teacher who had high proficiency in both French and English language could not be reached. This was one of the limitations of the study. Before the data collection, a consent form was signed by the participants, which shows they were volunteers to participate in the study. In order to reduce data loss, nearly all the forms were filled under the guidance of the researchers. However, the researchers avoided intervening with the participants directly.

The aim of demographic information questionnaire was to collect data regarding the characteristics of the participants. This form includes 18 items about personal information, teaching experience, education, seniority, professional development, and the properties of the school environment. Being a 4-pointlikert scale and consisting of 80 items, the teachers' opinions form is of two parts such as the goals of school and learning at school. This first part investigates the schools' functions in terms of instruction socialization, and qualification, and the second part relates to the learning experience at schools and their outcomes.

#### ***Qualitative Data Collection Tools***

Semi-structured interview forms were also developed for use during the focus group interviews to be held in the study. Similar to the procedures in developing the quantitative data collection tools in the study, these interview forms were prepared in accordance with the opinions and contributions of almost 30 experts. The same procedures as in developing the tools for collecting quantitative data were followed in developing the tool for qualitative data collection. Congruous with the research questions, semi-structured interview forms include 10 key questions and sub-questions about the roles of education and families during the education process, the primary goals of schools, immediate problems that schools have to face, and relevant solutions. A guide for interview was prepared in order to enable consistency among the focus group interviews. This guide included the purpose of the interviews, the points to be considered during the interviews, how they would be carried out and recorded, and how much time will be given for each question. A pilot focus group interview was held before the actual interviews in order to clarify the questions and determine the approximate duration of the interview, and eventually the finalized version of the interview form was developed. Following the consent procedure for the interviews, 4 focus group interviews were held personally by the researchers. Each focus group interview lasted either an hour or an hour and a quarter.

#### ***Data Analysis***

The quantitative data were collected and analyzed in the study. The analysis procedure for both the quantitative and qualitative data are given below.

#### ***Analysis of Quantitative Data***

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively with a computerized statistical analysis program. Total points of agreement by the teachers for each questionnaire item, the mean and the standart deviation were calculated during the analysis. Moreover, the interpretations were enriched through percentages.

Class ranges utilized for the calculation of means were determined via “Class range=the number of distribution range/likert point”, and the distribution range was found by subtracting the smallest value from the largest one (Alpar, 2012). Class range, on the other hand, was determined to be 0,75 ( $3/4=0,75$ ).

**Table 1.** Class Ranges Employed During Quantitative Analysis

Assigned Point	Choices	Class Ranges
1	Strongly disagree	$1 \leq \bar{x} \leq 1,75$
2	Partially agree	$1,76 \leq \bar{x} \leq 2,50$
3	Mostly agree	$2,51 \leq \bar{x} \leq 3,25$
4	Strongly agree	$3,26 \leq \bar{x} \leq 4,00$

The missing data were examined and it was seen that there were quite a few missing data. The small amount of missing data might be caused by the fact that most of the questionnaires were answered under the monitor of researchers. Therefore, a statistical value substitution method for the missing data was not used and the data were analyzed without any missing data.

#### *Analysis of Qualitative Data*

As for the analysis of focus group interviews, which stands as the core of qualitative aspect of the research, firstly, all the audio records were transcribed and documented on paper. Afterwards, themes were formulated and coded through simultaneous administration of descriptive and content analyses. Subsequently, each researcher re-coded the interviews independently, and the compatibility percentage between the two researchers' codings was calculated via Miles and Huberman (1994) formula. According to this formula, a compatibility percentage higher than 70% suffices. In this study, the compatibility percentage between the two researchers was found to be 95%, which is a convincing figure for the credibility of the codings and compatibility. During the transcription, the codes for participants were clearly indicated and the quotations were arranged accordingly. After assigning codes for each theme and organized according to the expert opinion, the themes detected were interpreted through being supported with quotations. Presenting quotations from the views of different participants was considered during the interpretation.

#### *Limitations*

The limitations of the study are as follow:

- All the participants were limited to the primary school teachers who worked in Eskisehir, Turkey.
- The analyses of the quantitative data were limited to the answers given by the participants in the study to the items in the questionnaire.
- The analyses of the qualitative data were limited to four focus group interviews with the participants.

#### *Ethics*

Before the data collection, an official permission was obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education. After that, the participants' schools were visited, the teachers were informed about the study procedure, and it was emphasized that participation was subject to volunteerism. Consent forms were prepared for the participants and confidentiality of the data were provided. These forms were signed by both the researchers and the participants, and one copy was given to each participant. The views of the participants were recorded during the focus group interviews and their names were replaced by code names in data presentation.



## Findings and Interpretations

**Findings Regarding The Research Question: “What are the views of primary school teachers on overall goals of education, the overall goals of primary schools and the roles of families in education?”**

Table 2 depicts the highest and lowest score items among the quantitative findings concerning how teachers define education.

**Table 2.** Teachers’ Opinions About Education

Items	Frequency	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	
<i>Education at school...</i>	f	X	Sd	
<b>Items with the highest scores</b>				
2	allows each child to achieve self-realization, fulfillment and happiness in a coercion-free context	289	3,45	0,62
3	allows each child to make the investments needed to succeed in life	288	3,26	0,68
12	develops students’ reflective and critical thinking so that they can analyze and denounce social injustices that they observe in their society	289	3,2	0,78
1	makes sure that children learn the behaviors and attitudes needed to integrate into a given environment	288	3,19	0,63
<b>Items with the lowest scores</b>				
14	provides solid instruction to students so that they can assert their autonomy	288	2,07	0,8
11	imposes obedience and respect for established rules to make sure that they smoothly integrate into society	288	2,18	0,91
4	teaches each child to comply with social rules and norms by disciplining them	288	2,29	0,76

As can be clearly seen in Table 2, teachers’ opinions mostly circle around item 2, “allows each child to achieve self-realization, fulfillment and happiness in a coercion-free context” for the question “What is education at schools in your opinion?” ( $X=3,45$ ). Of all the participants, 96% tended to agree with this item, 51% strongly agreeing while 45% mostly agreeing. The second highest agreement rate falls onto the 3rd item, “allows each child to make the investments needed to succeed in life” ( $X=3,26$ ). Similar to the previous item, teachers generally (88%) agreed with this item, 39% strongly agreeing whereas 49% mostly agreeing. Likewise, the third item that teachers agreed in general is the 12th one, “develops students’ reflective and critical thinking so that they can analyze and denounce social injustices that they observe in their society” ( $X=3,20$ ). The percentage of teachers agreeing with this item is 84, and 39% strongly agreed while 45% mostly agreed. These agreement percentages mean that teachers value the qualification function of education more than the other functions.

On the contrary, the items that teachers either partially agreed or strongly disagreed are 14th ( $X=2,06$ ), 11th ( $X=2,17$ ), and 4th ( $X=2,29$ ) items, which are “provides solid instruction to students so that they can assert their autonomy”, “imposes obedience and respect for established rules to make sure that they smoothly integrate into society”, and “teaches each child to comply with social rules and norms by disciplining them” respectively. Disagreement with these items indicates that teachers are opposed to instruction-based education and they do not have positive feelings for socialization through coercion and discipline.

These quantitative results of the research were deeply investigated via focus group interviews, which also revealed themes similar to teachers’ responses to the questionnaire items. Teachers heavily

emphasized the goal of providing opportunities for students to actualize themselves and to be happy during the interviews. Some quotations reflecting this understanding are given below:

*"...I'll be honest and say something mean; this education system expects us to raise stupid generations and individuals who accept everything; blind, deaf, and who never use their 5 senses. As teachers, we want to say 'No, you are the children who can see, smell, taste, and touch'"* (I1P4, 124).

The view of the participant above is compatible with the questionnaire item "allowing each child to achieve self-realization, fulfillment and happiness in a coercion-free context", which had the highest score by the teachers. One participant teacher stressed in the interview that the students should be free from the authoritarian education and lead to become self – actualizers instead of being submissive to all instructions without thinking critically.

*"the goal of primary schools is to raise individuals who know and love themselves, who work for the happiness of him/herself, their families, and the society, and shortly who are self-sustained "* (I3P3, 401).

Another opinion commonly underlined during the focus group interviews is that the goal of education is to help students develop attitudes and behaviors necessary to adapt to their environment. Following are some of the opinions stated by the teachers:

*"The goal of primary school is to develop students' skills; in other words, to furnish them with behaviors rather than teaching them some courses. Efforts should be directed for education....I mean children should learn how to live together, how to share, love, respect, and tolerate one another"* (I3P4, 395-397).

*"to help children pick up role model behaviors that we, as a society, can correctly do"* (I3P6, 537).

Integrating qualitative and quantitative findings regarding the definition of education in this research, one can conclude that teachers generally underpin the socialization function of education. Besides, teachers also referred to the qualification function by stating that students should make plans in order to be successful in the future.

Table 3 presents the quantitative findings of the highest and lowest score items concerning teachers' opinions about the overall goals of primary schools.

**Table 3.** Teachers' Opinions About the Main Goals of Primary Schools

Items	Frequency	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	
<i>In your point of view, the main goal of primary school is....</i>	<b>f</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Sd</b>	
<b>Items with the highest scores</b>				
4	To ensure students' social integration	286	3,20	0,71
13	To ensure learning of social life based on the students' progressive and smooth social inclusion	287	3,08	0,73
12	To provide teaching focused on developing students' reflexive and critical thought	288	3,03	0,82
<b>Items with the lowest scores</b>				
1	To legitimate (justify) the prevailing culture in our society	281	1,84	0,89
6	To substitute parents that are physically absent	287	1,89	0,79
7	To substitute parents that do not have the required parental competencies	287	2,14	0,89



A closer look at Table 3 shows that item 4, *“the main goal of primary schools is to ensure students’ social integration”* is the most frequently agreed one in the questionnaire ( $X=3,20$ ). Of all the agreeing participants, 36% strongly agree while 51% mostly agree with this item, reaching up to 87% agreement percentage across the entire sample. The second most frequently agreed item in the questionnaire is the 13<sup>th</sup> one, *“the main goal of primary schools is to ensure learning of social life based on the students’ progressive and smooth social inclusion”* ( $X=3,08$ ). For this item, 28% of the participants stated that they strongly agreed whereas 56% expressed that they mostly agreed, summing a total of 84% agreement rate across the research sample. Item 12, *“the main goal of primary schools is to provide teaching focused on developing students’ reflexive and critical thought”* is the third most frequently agreed one in the questionnaire ( $X=3,03$ ). The percentages of strongly agreeing and mostly agreeing teachers are 31 and 46 respectively, reaching a total of 77% agreement across the sample.

Briefly, the most frequently agreed items regarding the main goal of primary schools point to socialization function. Another noteworthy aspect among teachers’ opinions is that primary schools should provide an education focusing on improving students’ reflective and critical thinking skills.

On the other hand, the items that participating teachers agreed the least are item 1, *“the main goal of primary schools is to legitimate (justify) the prevailing culture in our society”* ( $X=1,84$ ), item 6, *“the main goal of primary schools is to substitute parents that are physically absent”* ( $X=1,89$ ), and item 7, *“the main goal of primary schools is to substitute parents that do not have the required parental competencies”* ( $X=2,14$ ).

Interestingly, the items that teachers agreed the least in terms of the main goals of primary schools again refer to the socialization function of schools. However, research results yield that teachers perceive the socialization function as improving and considering individual differences rather than imposing the dominant culture onto the students. Furthermore, low percentage of agreement on items 6 and 7 may mean that teachers think that schools should not replace the roles that families are supposed to bear.

Findings obtained through focus group interviews draw attention onto teachers’ opinions reflecting that the main goal of primary schools is to ensure progressive and smooth inclusion of students into the society (gradual socialization). Following are two quotations exemplifying this:

*“To me, the first condition is not teaching but introducing. We first tell the rules before we start playing a game; that is also instructing. For socialization, the first thing to do is to inform. Children keep being informed during socialization, and they combine the new information with what they already know, and reach a holistic opinion”* (I2P5, 263).

*“Though very simple, we encourage our kids to say good morning or good evening when we see each other or when they see the principal, not only their friends, or when they see an old man or woman in the bazaar. This is a first step, there are lots of people passing by indifferently without saying anything. Or we do it, but we can’t get a reply from say the market owner; very small, true, but significant I guess. Making eye contact, starting a verbal communication...these are the start of socialization for me”* (I2P2, 304).

Regarding the functions of schools, teachers emphasized that schools should spare more time on both individual and collective learning activities during the focus group interviews. Two relevant quotations are presented below:

*"...I believe what matters is to make them become individuals, to help them get hold of life as individuals ... .. consider it with ... the goal of primary school is to equip them with basic skills and to help them attain a certain social and cultural level with these basic skills" (I2P2, 217).*

*"socialization and interaction among children help them learn better, the mom or the teacher can't do it that way. When something is unclear for a kid, you just take a more successful student next to that kid, and I don't know how, maybe they talk the same language, but they do it more effectively" (I2P1, 300).*

Another function underlined during the interviews regards the undertaking of responsibility from the parents who do not have parental competencies. Some relevant statements are as follows:

*"Parents are products of the old system. I mean they come from a system where information mattered more than behaviors. We always tell the parents, during the PTA meetings, that a lot has changed in the system, we mainly focus on education rather than instruction, at least for the first 4 grades. I mean we all do this. Parents extend this to other parents as they see the change and improvement in their children" (I1P3, 66).*

*"especially right before the summer break, parents ask questions about what they can do for their children during the holiday, if they should do any summer projects. I never assign summer projects, I just tell them to read and read. Some ask if it would be okay to engage in some sports like swimming or other. This is like one in three, but they are an example for the others. I noticed this 4 years later. As mentioned by my friend, we can do this, it is under our control. I'll consider us successful if we can gain 1 or 2 students every year" (I2P7, 240).*

During focus group interviews, teachers noted that what they think about the qualification function is different from what is generally accepted by the society. Some relevant quotations are given below:

*"Unfortunately, what they perceive as a successful career is for example computer engineering at Bilkent University. They don't care if the children are raised properly there. What matters is the diploma. Otherwise, it doesn't mean much if students are trained as good computer engineers or not" (I3P3, 458).*

*"This is what the system requires. When I look at Turkey, I see that families' biggest concern is about labor and unemployment. And because this is the biggest concern ... .. getting a job with a decent salary is considered as success, or getting into a school that will provide such a job is success" (I3P7, 464).*

Upon integrating both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the main goals and functions of primary schools, socialization function seems to be valued more than instruction and qualification functions. According to research results, teachers believe that schools should undertake a major role in integrating children with the society, and that they should fulfill this function through a flexible and transparent education system where students' individual characteristics are acknowledged and improved. Furthermore, participants also think that schools should direct children for both individual and collective learning experiences and complete the incompetency displayed by families. Although teachers do not consider primary school as a preparation step for professional life, they are aware of such an insight in the society, and this understanding causes pressure on them.

**Findings Regarding The Research Question: “What are the views of primary school teachers on instruction, socialization, and qualification functions of 21th primary schools?”**

Table 4 presents the striking outcomes concerning instruction, socialization and qualification functions after a deeper analysis of teachers’ opinions about the goals of schools.

**Table 4.** Teachers’ opinions regarding instruction, socialization, and qualification functions of schools

	<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Socialization</b>	<b>Qualification</b>
	IM13.should focus primarily on the development of attitudes aiming at a democratic sense, sharing, cooperation, etc. (X=3,53).	M5.should foster in students the development of attitudes that enable them to become good students (X=3,31).	QLM5.is primarily to prepare students to live a successful life (X=3,54).
<b>Items with the highest scores</b>	IM7.should focus primarily on the development of practical uses of knowledge in everyday life (X=3,36).	M8.should focus primarily on emotional support and on students’ psychological health (X=3,28).	QLM6.is primarily to prepare students to be autonomous and responsible (X=3,54).
	IM2.should focus primarily on the development of critical thinking among students (X=3,29).	M4.should inculcate behaviors in students enabling them to be good students (X=3,22).	QLM4.is primarily to prepare students to succeed in life (X=3,48).
	IM6.should focus primarily on the development of prevailing social norms and rules of conduct (X=2,12).	SM1.should focus on issues related to the organizational management of the class (X=2,58).	QL17.is not a concern for me (X=1,08).
<b>Items with the lowest scores</b>	IM1.should focus primarily on the transmission of educational subjects that are in the curriculum (X=2,40).	SM2.should focus on the relationship between students and the teacher (X=2,90).	QL15.is primarily to pass all students (X=1,97).
	IM4.should focus primarily on preparing students for a job (X=2,51).	SM3.should focus on psycho-affective (emotional) ties between teacher and students (X=2,94).	QL11.is primarily to prepare students to enter the labor market (X=2,17).

Table 4 reveals that teachers most frequently agreed on the 13<sup>th</sup> item concerning the instruction function of schools, “instruction should focus primarily on the development of attitudes aiming at a democratic sense, sharing, cooperation, etc” (X=3,53). The percentages of teachers strongly and mostly agreeing with the item are 56 and 40 respectively, which equals to 96% among all the participants. The second item in terms of frequency of agreement among the participants stands as the 7<sup>th</sup> one, “instruction should focus primarily on the development of practical uses of knowledge in everyday life” (X=3,36). Of all the agreeing remarks, 43% belong to ‘strongly agree’ and 53% belong to ‘mostly agree’, reaching upto 93% agreement in general. Item 2, “instruction should focus primarily on the development of critical thinking among students”, is the third mostly agreed item among others (X=3,29). The percentages of participants strongly and mostly agreeing with this item are 37 and 54 respectively, which equals to 91% agreement in general.

Analysis of items that teachers agree on in terms of the instruction function of schools shows that the participants underlined the need to encourage the attitudes conducive to increasing socialization (cooperation, sharing, etc) among students and to teach practical information that students can use in their daily lives. Another item that participating teachers consistently agreed upon is the one stating that instruction should focus on the development of critical thinking skills among students.

Following are the items that participants in this research agreed the least: item 6, "instruction should focus primarily on the development of prevailing social norms and rules of conduct" (X=2,12); item 1, "instruction should focus primarily on the transmission of educational subjects that are in the curriculum" (X=2,40); and item 4, "instruction should focus primarily on preparing students for a job" (X=2,51).

Deeper analysis of the items that teachers agreed the least indicates that teachers believe that instruction should not aim to teach the dominant norms and rules in a society, compatible with the other findings of the research. Moreover, teachers mostly disagree with the idea that instruction at schools should be limited to only transmission of information. Another point underpinned by the teachers is that instruction should prepare students for their future professional careers. This finding is also consistent with what has been determined with the other research question about the main goals of schools.

Findings obtained during the four focus group interviews yield that instruction should focus on practical information that can be integrated with daily life. Following are some relevant quotations:

*"We have assessment and evaluation scales in math class. There is a question there, saying, where can you use the information you learn here, I saw it this year, and I liked that. I mean, it questions why the student is learning what s/he is learning. Where can s/he use it? It is important to be aware of that. Some students noticed how they could use the information in their daily lives. That's also something we teach I guess, knowing how to make use of the information in real life." (I1P1, 119).*

*"What should be done is that the kid has to be able to apply what s/he learns. Yet, unfortunately, there is nothing like applying what we learn in our education system. Everybody knows the traffic rules but no one obeys them. In our classes, we sometimes check how prepared we are for an earthquake. But, when the real earthquake hits, no one can do what we practiced. Briefly our education system is mostly based on instruction not practice" (I3P2, 475).*

Another opinion repeated during the interviews is that some technical knowledge and skills about daily life should also be incorporated into instruction:

*"it should focus on making the children stronger, outstanding, more social, and more self aware in real life, it should be free from clichés, and include more practical information " (I2P3, 278).*

*"knowledge and skills necessary to be self-sufficient individuals should be taught. For example, how*

*to write a letter, a petition, and how to live in a society " (I3P3, 535).*

Analysis of focus group interviews conducted within the qualitative part of the study yields that knowledge regarding social functions should be taught at schools.:

*"They need to express themselves, they should be able to express their feelings and opinions. They should gain some confidence at schools " (I1P2, 115).*

*"I care about respecting others' rights, sharing, and so on because these are very important to me; honesty and righteousness should be inoculated because they are desperately necessary these days." (I2P4,221).*

Teachers also noted the priority of information required for mental development during these interviews:

*"Claiming your right. Now, the Ministry of National Education considers placing this into the curriculum as a course. This is really important. Children should know when to say yes and when to say no. They should be taught how they are going to draw their lines, how far they should say yes and how far they should say no" (I2P5, 309).*

Moreover, these interviews also include statements underlying the significance of teaching career related information at schools:

*"Then, what should we do? Then, each child must have equal opportunities without any kind of discrimination. There is some difficulty in speaking in front of a group, and this is true for every country. It is a major problem. They should be assigned to duties that entail being in front of a crowd, either small or big, doesn't matter; and the kid should witness that s/he is accepted and liked" (I2P5, 307).*

A combined examination of the research's qualitative and quantitative data sets indicates that teachers think that the instruction function of schools should be fulfilled via using information supportive of socialization. Furthermore, the need to make these pieces of information useful in practice and daily life was also mentioned more than often in both questionnaires and interviews. This may mean that teachers care about the functionality of information they provide.

As depicted in Table 4, item 5, "socialization should foster in students the development of attitudes that enable them to become good students", stands as the most frequently agreed one in terms of socialization function of schools. ( $X=3,31$ ). Of all the participants, 41% strongly agreed while 51% mostly agreed with the item, reaching upto 92% agreement among all the teachers. Similarly, the second one that teachers agreed in general is the 8<sup>th</sup> item, "socialization should focus primarily on emotional support and on students' psychological health" ( $X=3,28$ ). The percentages of teachers strongly and mostly agreeing with this item are 40 and 49 respectively, which equals 89% overall agreement. Item 4, "socialization should inculcate behaviors in students enabling them to be good students", is the third most frequently agreed one in the questionnaire ( $X=3,22$ ). The percentage of overall agreement among all the participating teachers is 87, with 36% 'strongly agree' and 51% 'mostly agree'.

Teachers' opinions concerning the socialization function of schools reveal that they consider socialization as teaching attitudes and behaviors that will make children better students. Besides, the participants believe that providing social support should also be classified within the social functions of schools.

The items that participating teachers agreed the least are as follows: item 1, "socialization should focus on issues related to the organizational management of the class" ( $X=2,58$ ); item 2, "socialization should focus on the relationship between students and the teacher" ( $X=2,90$ ); and item 3, "socialization should focus on psycho-affective (emotional) ties between teacher and students" ( $X=2,94$ ). Among the participants, 1% stated strong disagreement and 24% noted partial agreement with this item.

Even though teachers agree less with these items as opposed to the other items, the general tendency seems to be in 'mostly agree' direction. Thus, it may be concluded that socialization function of schools, as for teachers, regards maintaining class management and organizing student-student and student-teacher interactions.

Accordingly, some quotations pointing that teachers consider the socialization function of schools as efforts to provide class management and regulate student-teacher interactions are given below:

*"I also care much about rules, I mean they should improve their self-confidence within a frame of discipline; I don't like them being idle. When they are idle or there is chaos, not much can be done..." (I2P4, 283).*

*"Though very simple, I tell my students to greet us and the principal when we come across each other, not only their friends, we should greet each other" (I2P2, 304).*

However, the interview logs show that teachers do not think the socialization function should be confined within the borders of school. Following are some example quotations:

*"socialization at school or in the class also involves parents.....when parents come to join several activities at the school, they also become a part of us, and when they hear a compliment like 'your kid was awesome in the drama', then everybody will socialize. But, we don't have anything like this. I mean there isn't a group of parents taking pride in the successful performance of their children on stage in a drama" (I3P4, 496).*

*"children learn best when they are involved and when they experience; I think families should also be trained to learn how to be consistent. Because you do something here at school, yet it disappears or gets distorted at home. I mean, what you teach here and what the children live at their homes is not identical. Take television as an example, what you say here doesn't mean much if the kids are exposed to violence on TV; what children see and experience in the streets is not similar to what happens at school " (I4P1, 625).*

During the focus group interviews, teachers emphasized that socialization function matters more than instruction. Besides, they also noted that socialization function should facilitate the acceptance of cultural and ethnic diversity in the society.

*"I think socialization is a prerequisite, I believe an anti-social child who doesn't like school and who is not happy at school will not be enthusiastic to learn either" (I2P1, 256).*

*"I guess they should learn how to be a human, how to respect others' rights, how to defend their own, and how to question all these. They should be able to discern and respect the differences; we should be able to teach this. This is our real thing" (I3P7, 539).*

*"The class should be full of happy students, people coming from different districts should be able to gather under one roof and experience their own culture.... I believe, respecting, loving, and tolerating others are more important. These are what make us human " (I4P4, 623).*

Furthermore, the need to organize activities outside class was also stated to increase socialization:

*"children should be encouraged to do social activities. Drama or other performances may be good for this... I think the whole curriculum should be modified to include lots and lots of social activities" (I1P4, 97).*

*"cinema and drama are first to name off the top of my head. Instead of talking about it, we can go to the movies as part of school expedition. Children should be taught how to act at a movie theater. Informing is always the first thing to do, then the kids will learn through experience; this is socialization I believe" (I2P5, 298).*



Considering the qualitative and quantitative data sets regarding the socialization function of schools, one can see that teachers' opinions gather around the idea that students should pick up decent behaviors at school. Moreover, teachers also underlined student-teacher interaction and class management as part of socialization function during the data collection process. However, the participating teachers stated that socialization function of schools should not be limited with schools. This is compatible with what teachers stated earlier with respect to the goals of schools, 'they should not replace parents' roles.' In other words, participants believe that it is not only schools but also other partners who should be responsible for the socialization process. Two other items the teachers agreed with a high percentage underpin that socialization function of schools should be concerned with cultural aspects. This means that teachers care about cultural characteristics and variety within socialization function.

As clearly seen in Table 4, item 5, 'socialization is primarily to prepare students to live a successful life', and item 6, 'socialization is primarily to prepare students to be autonomous and responsible' are the two statements that the participants most frequently agreed on with respect to the qualification function of schools ( $X=3,54$ ). As for item 5, 58% strongly agrees and 38% mostly agrees, reaching a total of 96% overall agreement. Furthermore, no teacher stated a strong disagreement with this item. Likewise, the percentages of participants strongly agreeing and mostly agreeing with item 6 are 58 and 39 respectively, which equals to 97% agreement on the whole. There is only one teacher expressing a strong disagreement with this item. The third frequently agreed one is item 4, 'socialization is primarily to prepare students to succeed in life' ( $X=3,48$ ). Of all the participants, 54% strongly agreed and 41% mostly agreed with this item, summing up a total of 95% agreement percentage in general. Again, only one teacher noted strong disagreement with this item.

A close look at the participants' opinions regarding the qualification function of schools displays that teachers consider this function as part of students' personal development and as a help for them to lead a happy life. They believe students are prepared to be successful in life.

Compared to the other items, items 17, 'qualification is not a concern for me' ( $X=1,08$ ), 15, 'qualification is primarily to pass all students' ( $X=1,97$ ), and 11, 'qualification is primarily to prepare students to enter the labor market' ( $X=2,17$ ) are those that the participating teachers agreed the least.

When we consider the agreement percentages on the items regarding qualification function of schools, we can conclude that teachers take this function as a way to enhance students autonomy and responsibility which will help them pursue a happy life. In addition, it is possible to state that teachers do not regard qualification function as a tool to prepare students for the economic life.

Opinions expressed during two focus group interviews indicate that teachers perceive the function of qualification as a way to prepare students for the next educational level. Following are some quotations exemplifying this perception:

*"Previously, there were some files about students at schools; I believe that was the best way for qualification. Those files had information as to the likes and dislikes of students, their skills and interests. Those files used to be sent to the secondary education institution as the children graduated from primary school. Then, teachers at the secondary school used to analyze the file and learn what primary school teacher thought about the students" (I2P5, 311)*

*" it should be equal, but preparing for academic institutions outweighs the others due to the system requirements. I mean, we can't practice what we believe due to social pressure and family demands" (I3P1,446).*

Some teachers said that the qualification function does not concern them; following are two related quotations:

*"Since we work at a primary school, I don't think qualification concerns us much. I mean our responsibility is to teach the basics; the child will decide which direction to go based on his/her skills later in the future... We should provide some practical information that children can make use of for the rest of their lives; choosing a profession should take place at older ages. We can only supply the basics during these four years" (I2P1, 313).*

*"I think primary school is too early for the qualification function. I mean let children be children. Preparing for a profession is too soon for primary schools " (I4P3, 631).*

Another point expressed by the participants during the focus group interviews is that qualification function should primarily focus on helping children live a happy life:

*"They should notice these during the second grade, having an athletic body, exercising, or music; all depend on their skills, and we should discover their skills, and record and report to the necessary places. And those people should contact the family before it is too late" (I4P4, 643).*

*"We should let children get to know themselves. We should help them explore and improve their interests, which will guide them when choosing a profession" (I3P3, 512).*

The qualitative and quantitative findings obtained within the scope of this research with respect to the qualification function mean that this function is generally perceived as preparation for next educational level and living a happy life through knowing oneself. However, some participants stated that this function stands odd at primary education level. Yet, a closer examination of these teachers' statements reveals that it is too early to prepare and guide students for a profession, but it is the right time to help them know themselves, and learn how to be happy and successful. This explains why a very small number of participating teachers ticked "it doesn't concern me" on the questionnaire.

## Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

Conducted with a mixed design employing both qualitative and quantitative methods simultaneously, this research has determined what primary school teachers think about the main goals of primary schools, the concept of education, learning experience at schools, and functions of primary schools such as instruction, socialization, and qualification. A combined analysis of qualitative and quantitative data sets shows that teachers care about the socialization function of schools more than instruction and qualification. In this sense, teachers believe that schools should play a major role in helping children gain behaviors necessary to comply with the rules of social life. In their study, Shuayb and O'Donnell (2008) examined and compared the goals and values of primary schools across five European countries chronologically through document analysis, and they concluded that goals of primary schools should focus on preparing students for their future economic roles in the society based on their individual characteristics. In other words, schools should adopt success-oriented economic and social goals. Findings obtained by Shuayb and O'Donnell (2008) are somewhat different from those of this research. Participating teachers didn't include preparing children for their economic life within the goals of primary schools. During the focus group interviews, participants expressed that such an understanding prevalent in the society causes pressure on them. Same was also noted by Taylor (2002), who concluded that complying with social and economic conditions was inevitable for primary schools, and that teachers, therefore, value cognitive goals more than affective ones. However, Taylor also underlined that individual development of students should never be ignored. This finding is compatible with participating teachers' complaints regarding success-orientation and the pressure to provide education focusing on how to adapt to economic conditions.

According to the findings of the present study, teachers believe that the basic goal of education is mainly to teach and improve reflective and creative thinking skills. In a study analyzing the instructional programs of primary schools in Australia, Ewing (2012) determined that cognitive skills, academic success, and exams were the priority of these programs, and suggested to develop more flexible programs based on creativity and imagination. The author also underpinned the need to expand students' thinking and creative thinking skills through such programs. This view is similar to the highlight of the present research that education should be conducive to reflective and critical thinking. Likewise, Janesick (2003) emphasized the significance of creative and critical thinking skills when listing the aspects of future instructional programs.

The relation between families and school was another component of the research. Quantitative data shows that teachers are reluctant to shoulder extra responsibilities in order to replace the roles ignored by families. Negative perceptions considering this were also noted during focus group interviews. Teachers feel forced to embrace the roles neglected by families. This may be attributed to the corrective function of schools determined in Musgrove's study (2012) on classification of opinions concerning the roles of schools. Musgrove (2012) concluded that families were aware of their incompetence in terms of education and they regarded schools as the sole remedy for this problem. The peeve stated by the teachers during the research may be the reflection of the idea that families conceive schools as a remedy.

Comparison of the research findings with those of other national studies produces both similar and different results. The finding that participants extra-emphasized the socialization function of schools is compatible with those of Esen (2005). In that study, researchers identified that teachers related education to behavior modification/inoculation, and that they defined the goal of education as "transmission of social and ethical values" and "raising honest people of virtue." In their study examining school administrators' opinions about education and goals of education, Küçük and Polat (2013) reached similar results. Research findings indicated that school administrators perceived the goal of education as "furnishing students with necessary behaviors in life", "matching the behaviors students develop with the goals of society", "raising individuals with love for their country and nation", and "teaching desired behaviors." In a study by Semerci, Demiralp, Koç, and Kerimgil (2009) on the opinions of both novice and senior class teachers about the profession of teaching, participants

underlined that schools should prepare students for life and that students should be raised as honest and good individuals who know how to love and respect, who love their country and nation, and who care about others' rights. Therefore, it is possible to note that the findings of the present study are compatible with those of Semerci et al. (2009).

Both quantitative and qualitative data sets concerning the instruction function of schools show that teachers care about practical use of information. In a series of studies administered by Doğan (2004) and Güven (2010) based on teachers' opinions, class teachers were determined to complain about the impracticality of information included in coursebooks, which is compatible with the findings of the present research.

Analysis of teachers' opinions about the socialization function of primary schools reveals that teachers pay more attention to socialization than instruction. This particular finding is different from what Özpolat (2013) concluded in a study examining the rank of socialization among teachers' priorities. In that study, Özpolat (2013) presented teachers some cases that could possibly happen at schools, and analyzed their opinions. In this sense, 53.5% of participating teachers stated that academic success should be favored over social success among the criteria to choose the honorary student of the term.

Another noteworthy finding of the research is that teachers regard socialization function as a process not limited to only schools or only families. Teachers believe that socialization function should be fulfilled through cooperation with families, which is compatible with the findings of some other studies such as Argon and Kıyıcı (2012), Çelenk (2003), and Gökçe (2000). In these studies, teachers underpinned the importance of cooperation and collaboration between parents and teachers, too.

With respect to teachers' opinions about the qualification function of schools, findings yield that teachers regard this function as helping children get to know themselves, preparing them for the next level in their education, and guiding them towards a happy life. However, there are also some other teachers who stated that this function does not concern them at primary education level.

In conclusion, teachers' opinions about future primary schools have been determined in this research. Studies to be conducted with other stakeholders rather than teachers on the development of primary school educational programs will make it possible to analyze these findings more deeply and to compare them with each other, which will significantly contribute to the establishment of future primary schools. Referring to the research results, discussions on a broader universe may be initiated with a stratified sampling taken across Turkey. Including stakeholders other than teachers, namely, central and local directors, school directors, parents, non-governmental organizations, policy makers and scholars may lead to deeper analyses and results in further studies.

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## Appendix 1. A Sample Guide for the Focus Group Interviews

### Opening question

*Question 1-* We are going to take a few minutes to briefly present ourselves. Please tell us your first and last name, the school where you teach, the grade that you teach, as well as the number of years you have been teaching.

### Introductory Questions

*Question 2-* Generally speaking, how would you spontaneously describe the purpose of school? What are its aims?

*Question 3-* In your view, in the environment where you live or work (city, neighbourhood, village), do people share your opinion about the aims of the school? What about other teachers?

### Transition Question

*Question 4-* One generally attributes three main functions (missions, roles) to the school: to teach knowledge (to instruct, to educate), to ensure learning related to life in society (to socialize) and to qualify the students.

### Key Questions

*Question 5-* In your opinion, what does the function (mission, role) of teaching of knowledge (instruction) mean? Please justify your answer.

*Question 6-* In your opinion, what does the function (mission, role) of ensuring learning related to life in society (socialization) mean? Please justify your answer.

*Question 7-* In your opinion, what does the function (mission, role) of qualification mean? Please justify your answer.

*Question 8-* In your view, what is the priority today in terms of the knowledge that students must learn?

### Closing Questions

*Question 9-* In your view, what are the challenges (or issues or problems) that the school must address today? Why, in your opinion, is this the case?

*Question 10-* In your opinion, is your point of view shared by most primary school teachers?

- Do some agree? Who and why?

- Do some disagree? Who and why?

### Appendix 2. Sample Questionnaire Items

	<i>In your opinion, the main aim of school is...</i>	Completely Disagree	Agree A Little	Mostly Agree	Completely Agree
1	To legitimate (justify) the prevailing culture in our society				
2	To transmit the culture of the past				
3	To maintain itself as an educative system				
4	To ensure students' social integration				
5	To prepare students for an occupation				
6	To substitute parents that are physically absent				
7	To substitute parents that do not have the required parental competencies				
8	To focus on individual learning				
9	To focus on collective (team) learning				
10	To provide a flexible and open education focused on the development of students				
11	To provide education focused on developing the students' sense of discipline and obedience to rules				
12	To provide teaching focused on developing students' reflexive and critical thought				
13	To ensure learning of social life based on the students' progressive and smooth social inclusion				
14	To provide education based on the respect and the acquisition of knowledge required by the curriculum				
15	To ensure learning of life in society, based on the inculcation of prevailing values, norms and rules				