Performing of Computer Lessons at Private Elementary Schools in Turkey
(The Sample of South East Region)

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Abstract: The aim of the study is to investigate the computer lessons' being performed at private elementary schools in the South East of Turkey. The study has been performed as qualitative. In this survey, there are totaly 15 questions, three of them is personal data and the others are open-ended questions. The survey has been done by face to face interview method with 24 computer teachers who work in 20 private elementary schools. By means of data reduction for the answers given to open-ended questions, co-answers have been classified and the results have been drawn under titles. This study includes the data which have been obtained from Adiyaman, Batman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Mardin, Siirt, Þanliurfa provinces. According to teachers; managers, students and parents are interested in computer lessons. Computer teachers make use of demonstration and activity, giving projects, expression and sample event methods. Yet, they cannot improve themselves and owing to the financial impossibilities of the school and they do not keep abreast of computer technology and they also display their insufficiency in English as a foreign language.

Key words: Computer lessons, private school, elementary school, teacher, student, manager

INTRODUCTION

Today is called as Information age and use of computer and the internet which are regarded as the most important technologies of this age is inevitable. In order to provide this, computer lesson is performed in elementary schools.

During elementary education, in the countries of European Union, the number of the students per computer is average 20-30. In European Union countries, it could be said that Denmark, Luxemburg and Finland are in good conditions in terms of access to computer and the internet, while in German, Greece and Italy they are in weak conditions with the average number of 50-80 students per computer. In Western Europe, England has been a country that displays a rapid development with 9-10 students per computer. In Turkey, the number of the students per computer is 87 on average. One of the reasons why this average is so high is that the intensity of students on the level of elementary education is high[1]. On the other hand, United States of Amerca could be said to be at the top according to its readiness level to the knowledge age. Moreover, in America on the level of elementary instruction in public schools, while the rate at the subject about access to computer and the internet was 30% in 1994, it increased to 99% in 2002[2]. According to Hawkridge and others[3], many developing countries have not been able to devote themselves to the education and use of computers in their schools so far. Developing countries should make big efforts about this matter. One of these countries is Turkey.

In this context, the aim of the study is to investigate the computer lessons' being performed at private elementary schools in the South East Region of Turkey. Sub-goals of the study are these:

- How do the teachers perform the computer lessons?
- According to impressions of teachers, what are the views of the managers, students and parents related to computer lessons?
- What are the problems of the computer lessons?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study has been performed as qualitative. Surveys consisting of open -ended questions, interviews and observation are some of the qualitative research methods[4, 5]. In the study, Miles and Huberman's[6] three stages-reducing the data by making data coding simple, data presentation and drawing a conclusion/confirmation-have been used. In the survey, there are totaly 15 questions, three of them is personal data and the others are open-ended questions. Three expert ideas have been taken regarding the survey and it has been performed on two pilot computer teachers. The survey has been done by face to face interview method with 24 computer teachers who work in 20 private elementary schools. By means of data reduction for the answers given to open-ended questions, co-answers have been classified and the results have been drawn under titles. This study includes the data which have

been obtained from Adiyaman, Batman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Mardin, Siirt, Þanliurfa provinces.

21 of the teachers attended to the study is male (87.5%) and 3% of them is female (12.5%). 50% of the teachers has service periods between 1-5, 41.67% of them has service periods between 6-10 and 8.33% of them has 11 years and over. On the other hand, 58.33% of the teachers graduated from two-year faculties and 37.50% of them from licence and 4.17 of them graduated from master degrees.

It is a striking finding that when the teachers were asked the question Which branch would you prefer if you were not a teacher?, 19 teachers (83%) replied that they would prefer mathematics. The other teachers thought about Physical Education, History, Electronic Teaching. Other two teachers indicated that they would not prefer any other branch except this one.

FINDINGS RELATED TO PERFORMING OF COMPUTER LESSONS

In the study made, while almost 30% of the computer lessons is performed theoretically, the time passing while making practices before computers is 70%. Programs like Net-supports Pro and Net-Op School are often used. The basic goals of these programs are to make all the students see the practices which their teacher makes on his own computer simultaneously (on-line). Thus, the teacher can use demonstration method the most actively. The teacher have indicated that they demonstration and activity, question-answer, giving projects, expression and sample events methods in the survey done.

Lessons are performed in computer labs. All teachers use computer network in these labs and the data shared. Some of teachers use the board during the lesson. In the laboratories, there is also hardware parts taken from the old computers and these are given to be investigated by the students when it is necessary and it is provided that abstract knowledge is made solid.

According to the study done, almost in half of the schools, there are totally 25 computerss-24 computers and one main computer (server). The whole computer teachers in these schools expressed that they found them sufficient when they were asked Do you think the number of the computers is enough? question. In the other half of the schools, there are computers between 12-14 in number and this figure is not regarded to be sufficient. Although they indicate that they believe presenting is useful and it is necessity to make use of a projection machine, only five teachers determined that there is possibility to utilize cine-vision during lesson. It is seen as a condition by the teachers that the number of the computers should be the

same at least in number with the students, there should be a printer and cd writer in the laboratories and also a continuous internet access perform the lesson effectively; however, there are only nine schools having all these possibilities together. The primary reason for this is regarded the financial impossibilities. But, in addition to this, the problems which result from the managers; protectors' and students' points of view can prevent the schools from being supported.

FINDINGS IN VIEWPOINTS RELATED TO COMPUTER LESSONS

Managers' viewpoints: In general meaning, all the teachers have indicated that private school managers are interested in/concerned about the computer lesson. Computer lab has been indicated to be considered as the school's shop window, to be mentioned in the school introduction catalogues and to be none of the first places for the visitors to be shown. But, the teachers who have expressed that they have difficulties affording their needs as the technology education is costly also have determined that this is a bit in connection with the ability to convince about the need. Few teachers have indicated that the support of the managers are limited with the knowledge and needs. Computer teachers expect the managers to consider themselves as an educator more than a manager and not to make the teacher deal with technical works except from the lessons.

Viewpoints of the students: It has been determined that computer lesson is regarded as a game lesson and the computer itself as a toy by the students who attend private elementary schools, especially the first grade classes. To avoid this consideration, there are two basic strategies the teachers use. The first is to motivate the students about the necessity of the lesson and the second is to lead them to educational games. A teacher named Hakan Aydin determined that in association with the problem:

Students are more interested in computers more than the lesson. It is essential to prepare the lesson subjects according to their interests. For instance, if I make them write on word program, I want the students who sit next to each other to chat in the word environment. Thus, They are not only talking to each other quietly, at the same time, they use word and they become happy to as thinking they are chatting as well.

On the second grade classes of the elementary schools, especially in the eighth class, the teacher who explain the study tempo for High School Entrance Exam reduce the interests of the students in the lesson have

also focused that sometimes the lessons are not performed as they are taken in order to make an experimentation exam.

Parents' viewpoints: Most of the teachers have told that, in terms of points of view in relation to computer lesson, parents are proportional to the closeness levels of education, culture and technology. It has been explained that one of the reasons why the parents prefer private schools by paying high costs is the computer lesson and that the possibilities for this subject is a cause to choose for the parents. While some teachers have problems with their parents in making them buy computer notebook, most of the teachers have expressed that computer lesson calls less attention than the main lessons such as Science and Mathematics and more attention than the lessons like Art and Work-Technique.

PROBLEMS RELATED TO COMPUTER LESSONS

Lack of cooperation: There is not enough cooperation with the teachers of other lessons. Especially, in private elementary schools reciprocal cooperational relationships are weak because there are many retired teachers and these teachers are away from the computer technology. Young teachers have been reported to want help from the computer teachers when they prepare plans, get printings and make use of cine-vision.

The teacher's not being able to improve himself: The teachers, who support the idea that the available knowledge of a computer teacher could suffice him only two years, should improve themselves continuously. But, for the curriculum, the subjects lectured during the computer lessons avoid the teachers from forcing themselves and consequently being motivated to improve. This makes it difficult from them to adopt new technologies. Furthermore, many expectations of the other branch teachers and managers from computer teachers make their programs intense and it has been emphasized that they have difficulties dealty with the problems like making a web-page and presence of unexpected errors in the computers in the lab.

Lack of the technical possibilities: Technical possibilities could be insufficient due to the reasons like technological development's not being given place at wanted rate in the private school budgets, technology education's and equipments' being very expensive, the rapid development of computer technology and available technical infrastructure's being outdated soon.

Problem of foreign language: Nowadays, with the English, which is now the language of the whole world, using its influence on the computer programs developed and all computer technologies, there occurs to be a foreign language problem for the educators studying on this mather.

Other findings: When looked at the other findings of the study, it's been that the most attractive side of computer lessons is to make the students active and it is providing to play games, use internet, address to more than one sense organs and help the learning of other lessons. When asked whether to make the internet for the open use by both students and the teachers, it is observed that many teachers either do not allow or allow only when they themselves are in the laboratory as both they don't want to come face to face with the problems that could be resulted from faulty uses of computer and internet and they avoid the illegal uses.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the study is to investigate the performance of computer lessons at private elementary schools in the South East Region of Turkey. That 53.33% of the teachers here at private elementary schools is graduated from two-year faculties suggests that computer teachers who studied four-year education are not sufficient in number.

According to teachers; managers, students and parents are interested in computer lessons. Computer teachers make use of demonstration and activity, giving projects, expression and sample event methods. Yet, they cannot improve themselves and owing to the financial impossibilities of the school, they do not keep abreast of computer technology and they display their insufficiency in English as a foreign language.

On the other hand, as the students study for High School Entrance Exam intensively, computer lessons call less attention than Science and Mathematics lessons. In this contest, many researchers emphasized instructing the teachers of Science, Mathematics about computer during the integration of computers into education and teaching[7-9]. So computer teachers should instruct not only the students but the other teachers in the school as well. As Davis[10] proposes, computer should be added to content of each lesson and shouldn't be used only in computer lessons.

In other words, the computer is a tool, not a subject. They must be put in all classrooms[11]. In a condition like this Gates Grant's behaviour is interesting: "Though the Gates Grant requires a certain percentage (80%) of

instructional time be spent using the computers, she is very focused on making sure that that time is well spent and pedagogically grounded.[12]. Learning how to use computer technology is a matter that needs to be concentrated on by the classroom teachers[13].

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