

The Qualified Student Perceptions of Social Studies Teachers in P4C Program

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Abstract

Education is based on a process that attempts to profile individual behavior via learning. Although this process includes formal and informal dimensions, it could be suggested that both dimensions are effective on the behavior of the individual. Several factors affect the educational process. These variables are significant determinants that affect the quality and quantity of the process. One of these determinants is the student. It could be suggested that the student, the input of the education system and considered the most important element, plays a critical role in the analysis of the quality of the process based on the acquisitions of the student in the learning-instruction process. It could be suggested that this role contributes to the development of an objective student profile in education. Thus, the present study aimed to analyze the perceptions of social studies teachers in philosophy for children (P4c) program, which aims to train a qualified student profile in Turkey, and acquisition of philosophical and critical thinking skills at an early age. In the present study, conducted with the qualitative research method, the views of the teachers on the impact of the P4c program on the student qualifications were collected and the findings based on these views on the P4c program were analyzed. The study revealed significant findings.

Keywords: education, P4c program, philosophy, qualitative research method teacher

1. Introduction

The education system is affected by several factors. These variables include teachers, students, the learning environment, parents, instructional tools and materials, etc. The main objective of these educational variables is to improve the quality of the learning-instruction process. The most important indicator of quality education is the individual (student), who is the receiver (learner) in learning-instruction process, with a high concrete, clear, meaningful and permanent learning. It could be suggested that in all current education systems, the learning level of the student is accepted as the most significant indicator of quality education. The analysis of this indicator, which has been scrutinized globally, leads to better comprehension of the impact of the student variable on education. Thus, the main problem is whether every student in the learning environment affects the quality of education at the same level. It could be suggested that this query varies based on the philosophical theory and educational philosophy on which the education system was founded. However, based on the present study conducted in Turkey, it could be suggested that qualified students positively affect the quality of education. Thus, the quality of the student in Turkey is based on the studies on what needs to be done to improve the educational process. The review of previous studies revealed that the student quality was analyzed based on student behavior and activities in the learning environment. However, in the current study, the effects of mental activities (thoughts, ideas) that affect these activities and behaviors on student quality were analyzed with a unique approach to the concept of quality. It could be argued that the said approach was based on the principle of "qualified students could think independently and exhibit their ideas in learning environments." The P4c model is effective on the design of cognitive activities and development of ideas by the students. Because the model was based philosophy instruction. Thus, the present study analyzed the traits of qualified students based on this

model.

2. Literature Review

Humans have had different qualities when compared to other living beings due to their thinking and questioning skills. It could be suggested that this difference led to the development of philosophy and cognitive education. Thus, several activities has been conducted by the leading nations. Although the first studies on philosophy education were initiated by Karl Jaspers in the 1950s, this initiative became a philosophical movement in the early 70s by M. Lipman (Philosophy for Children, P4C) (Letseka & Venter, 2012). Lipman, who designed and developed the model, aimed to contribute to training students who can think independently, generate judgments based on ideas, defend, justify and question the learned topics (Vansieleghem & Kennedy 2011). The P4c model (Philosophy for Children) is an educational program that aims to improve the philosophical and critical thinking skills of the children at an early age. The education program aims to improve creative and other cognitive, social, moral and democratic skills of the children (Ghaedi, 2004; Ghaedi, 2005; Hedayati, 2009). Due to these properties of the model, it raised the interest of philosophers and field experts around the world within a short time and led to several studies on the model. Especially, the introduction of student-centered thinking activities, especially in learning environments in educational institutions, increased the interest in this model (Williams, 2018).

The analysis of the philosophical foundation of P4c would reveal that it was based on the views of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and American philosopher John Dewey. Lipman stated in an interview in 2005 that "philosophy for children was built on the advices of John Dewey and Russian educator Lev Vygotsky" (Naji, 2005). Thus, the review of Vygotsky's views would demonstrate that cognitive processes are initiated by socio-cultural interactions and the actions of the adults are important in the cognitive development of children, emphasizing the significance of philosophy instruction. Furthermore, Lipman also argued that the fact that the individuals (children) question the reasons for a phenomenon indicate philosophical thinking (Lyle, 2000; Philgren, 2008).

In learning-instruction conducted in educational institutions, the individual who strengthens the bond between thought and language with the P4c model (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980; Direk, 2011; Boyacı, Karadağ & Gülenç, 2018) actively participates in the learning process and permanent learning activities by doing and experiencing, leading to learning (D'agnese, 2017). Through the model, the individual could develop creative and critical thinking skills by questioning the discussed ideas via curiosity. These skills not only contribute to a more active individual in the learning-instruction process (Motlaq & Noushadi, 2016), but also develop the perspective and imagination of the child (Fisher, 2006). Furthermore, it could be suggested that this contribution is consistent with the principal of "school and education process are not a preparation for life, but life itself", which constituted J. Dewey's contemporary approach to education (D'Agnese, 2017). The individual who acquires these skills in the educational process could indirectly ensure positive self-perceptions. The P4c model can be actively used especially in courses that support critical thinking. One of these courses is social studies. Social studies is a course that aims to raise active citizens who can produce solutions to the problems they encounter in social life, who think critically and question. When the curriculum of the relevant course is examined, it is seen that it supports the p4c model. It is undoubtedly important that the curriculum of the course has content that will support the P4c model. However, it is not enough on its own. Because the basic element of education is the teacher (Ponce, García-Grau, Giménez-Beut & López-Luján, 2024). In this context, teachers' views on the p4c model are important.

The present study, which aimed to analyzed the perceptions of social studies teachers employed in various public schools in Turkey about qualified students based on the P4c model, was based on the following research problem: "What are the perceptions of social studies teachers about the qualified students in the P4c program?"

3. Method

Qualitative research method was adopted in the present study to analyze student qualifications based on teacher views and the P4c model. The methodological process adopted in the study is presented in Figure 1.

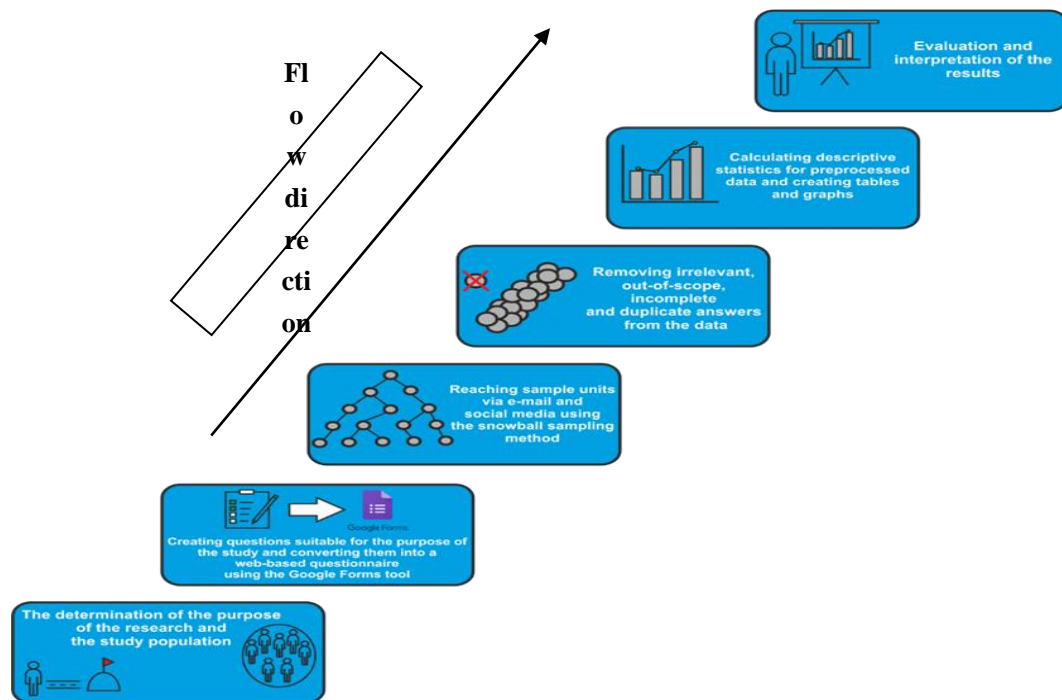


Figure 1. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The current study was designed with the phenomenological approach, a qualitative research method. Qualitative research inquire about the study problem, interpret and attempt to understand the type of the problem in the natural environment (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Klenke, 2016; Baltacı, 2019), and several techniques (observation, interview, document analysis, etc.) are used to collect the study data. It could also be defined as a method to reflect the views, perceptions and events associated with the topic of the study with an inclusive approach in the current natural environment. The phenomenological approach, on the other hand, aims to investigate the known phenomena in depth (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In the study, this model was preferred to determine to the perceptions of the teachers about student qualifications in the P4c program and to collect in-depth data.

3.2 Participants

In the present study, where teacher perceptions about qualified students were analyzed in the P4c program, the study group included 40 social studies teachers employed in junior high schools in various provinces in Turkey (Malatya, Diyarbakır, Aydın, Kastamonu, Konya, Mersin and Istanbul) during the 2021-2022 academic year. The study group members, who contributed to the study with their views, answered the study questions after the P4c model content was instructed online by the authors. The participant demographics are presented in Table 1. The study group members were assigned with the simple random sampling method. In the simple random sampling method, all population members have an equal and independent chance to be assigned to the sample. Random sampling methods are stronger when compared to other sampling methods in the representation of the population (Özen & Gül, 2007).

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Teacher	Gender	Education Level	Seniority	Age
1	Male	Undergraduate	16 years or higher	36-54
2	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	35 or younger
3	Female	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
4	Male	Graduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
5	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	35 or younger
6	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	35 or younger
7	Female	Undergraduate	6-10 years	35 or younger
8	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
9	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
10	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	35 or younger
11	Female	Graduate	11-16 years	36-54
12	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	35 or younger
13	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	35 or younger
14	Male	Undergraduate	16 years or higher	36-54
15	Male	Undergraduate	11-16 years	36-54
16	Female	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
17	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
18	Male	Undergraduate	11-16 years	36-54
19	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	35 or younger
20	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
21	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	36-54
22	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	35 or younger
23	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	36-54
24	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	36-54
25	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
26	Female	Undergraduate	6-10 years	35 or younger
27	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	36-54
28	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
29	Female	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
30	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	36-54
31	Female	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
32	Male	Undergraduate	11-16 years	35 or younger
33	Female	Undergraduate	1-5 years	36-54
34	Female	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
35	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	36-54
36	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	36-54
37	Female	Undergraduate	11-16 years	35 or younger
38	Female	Undergraduate	1-5 years	35 or younger
39	Male	Undergraduate	1-5 years	36-54
40	Male	Undergraduate	16 years or higher	35 or younger

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview form developed by the authors was used to collect the study data on the perceptions of social studies teachers employed in junior high schools in various provincial centers in Turkey (Malatya, Diyarbakır, Aydın, Kastamonu, Konya, Mersin and Istanbul) about the qualified students in the P4c program. During the development of the semi-structured interview form, initially the questions about the topic of the research were determined. Easy-to-understand, open-ended, focused questions that avoid guidance and multidimensionality were determined and organized rationally (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011; Koçoğlu & Egüz, 2019). To ensure the content validity of the interview form, measurement and evaluation experts employed at Gazi University, Faculty of Education were consulted. Based on the views and suggestions of these experts, the semi-structured interview form was finalized. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the participants answered the

questions verbally on the Google meet app. The responses were recorded and analyzed by the authors.

3.4 Data Analysis

In the online interviews, the participant responses to the semi-structured interview questions were recorded by the authors and analyzed with the content analysis technique. Data analysis findings and associated sub-themes are presented with computer generated figures. The study data were grouped in categories based on the prominent features, and causalities were analyzed to determine the summarized data adequate for the comprehension of the reader. The owner of views is mentioned after the direct quotes (For example, the code T1 is included to represent the teacher 1). The demographic data for the social studies teachers, whose views are quoted, are presented in the "Study Group" table (Table 1).

4. Results

The findings of the present study, which aimed to determine social studies teacher perceptions about qualified students in the P4C model, are presented in 4 sections.

4.1 Prominent Qualified Student Traits Based on Teacher Views

The responses of the social studies teachers included in the study group to the semi-structured interview question "What are the prominent traits of qualified students in the P4c model?" are presented in Figure 2 based on the content analysis.

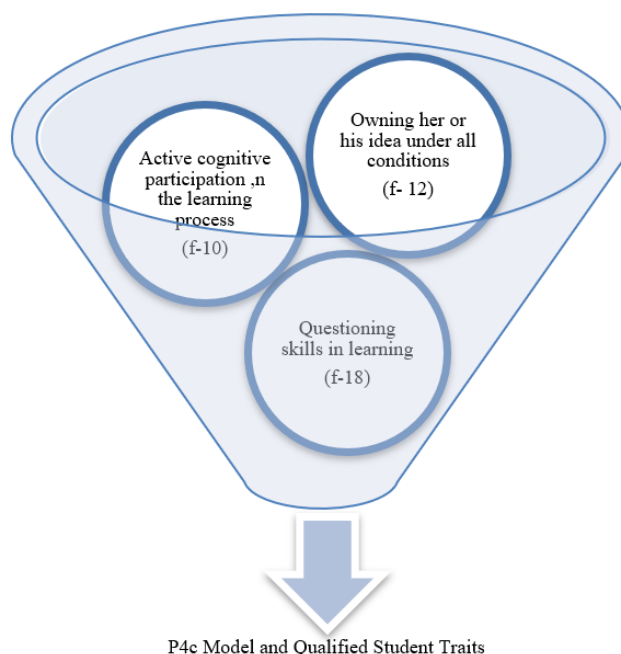


Figure 2. The study group views on qualified student traits

As seen in Figure 2 the social studies teachers adopted diverse perceptions about the prominent qualified student traits in the P4c model. This could be due to the differences between the professional knowledge and proficiency levels of the teachers included in the study group. In the P4c model, considering that the qualified student traits are determined with the measurement and evaluation activities (Metin & Özmen, 2010) conducted to determine the goal achievement levels and the expected behaviors in educational activities in Turkey, the findings presented in Figure 1 introduced a novel perspective on qualified student perceptions in the education process. Certain direct quotes that reflect the views of the social studies teachers in the study group are presented below.

"I was happy to participate in this study, to examine the P4c model, and to raise my awareness on the model. I can say that the question you asked me helped me to reconstruct my previous perception about qualified students. In the context of the P4c model, a qualified student does not only listen to the instruction in the class, but also has learning by questioning skills." (T7)

"I can say that after listening to your presentation on the P4c model, my answer to your question about the prominent qualified student traits did not change. Because I have 10 years of professional experience. I do not believe that any model is more effective than experience. In my opinion, the most important qualified student

trait is the students' ability to express and own their thoughts and ideas on any topic, event or phenomenon in the learning environment. These traits are the most important evidence of students' self-confidence levels." (T20)

4.2 The Impact of the P4C Model on Qualified Student Perception in Turkey

The responses of the teachers to the question "Do you think the P4c model changed or can change the perceptions about qualified students in Turkey, why?" were significant. The responses were analyzed by the authors with the content analysis technique, and the findings were categorized under 2 themes ("yes" and "no") and presented in Figure 3. As seen in Figure 3, most study group members stated that the P4c model could have positive effects on qualified student perceptions.

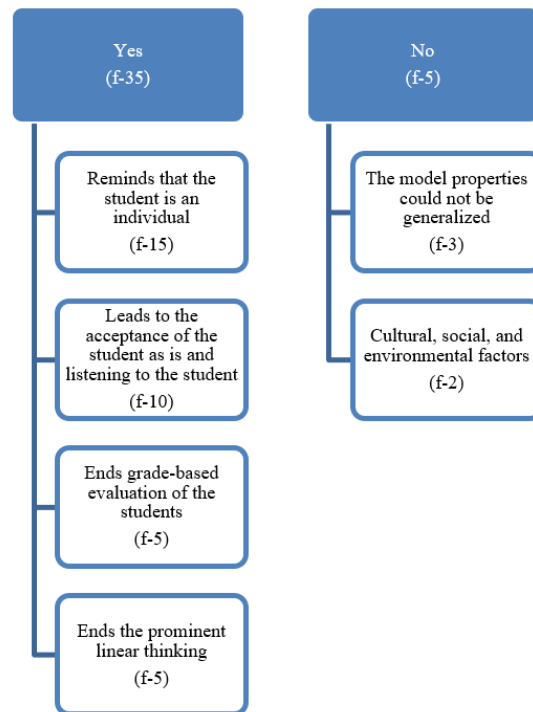


Figure 3. The teacher views on the impact of the P4C model on qualified student perceptions

The analysis of the views of the participating social studies teachers presented in Figure 3 demonstrated that the qualified student perception in Turkey was mostly determined by the level of student achievements. The current perceptions could be explained by the cultural approach to education. Certain direct quotes that reflect the views of the social studies teachers in the study group are presented below.

"I strongly believe that the P4c model will not change the qualified student perceptions in Turkey. Because you told us that this model did not originate in this land. If it did not originate in this land, this model cannot change the qualified student perceptions of the Turkish people who live and nurtured by these lands." (T32)

"In Turkey, a qualified student means an individual with good grades and good discipline. In short, the dominant understanding requires a student like a lamb in the class and like a lion in the exam. Thus, I think that the P4c model could change this stereotype and can or will teach us that the student is an individual independent of age. Therefore, I think that the model can change the qualified student perceptions." (T14)

4.3 The Teacher and Parent Responsibilities in the P4C Model

The responses of the social studies teachers in the study group to the question "What are the responsibilities of the teachers and parents in the P4c model?" were analyzed with content analysis. The analysis results are presented in Figure 4.

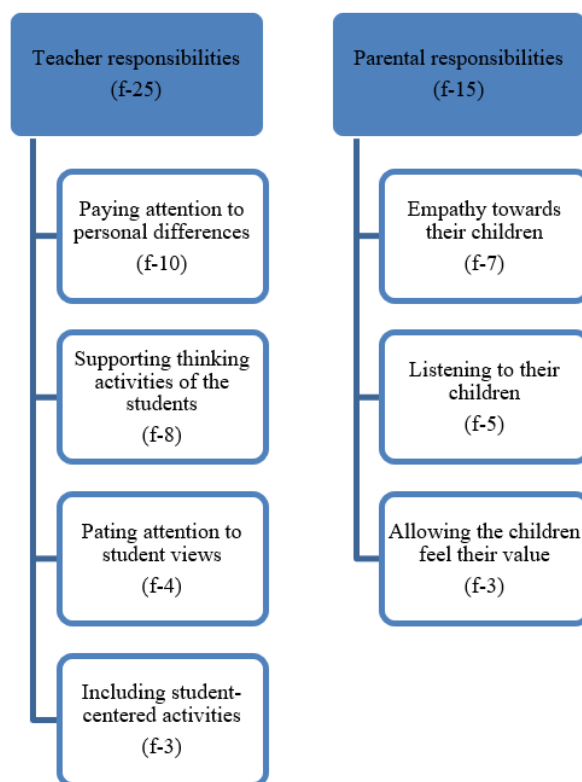


Figure 4. The teacher views on teacher and parent responsibilities in the P4C model

The study findings presented in Figure 4 revealed that the social studies teachers in the study group expressed significant views on teacher and parent responsibilities in the development of a qualified student profile with the P4c model. These findings revealed the awareness of teachers and parents about the model features. Due to the current family structure in Turkey, the concerns and problems of the children about going beyond the limits determined by their parents and expressing their ideas freely on any topic in the family environment affected the implementation of the model by educational actors (student, parent, teacher, etc.). Because the model is based on the development of the process based on the needs and developmental attributes of the learner, individual differences in the education, and student-centered activities. Only when it is implemented as mentioned above, it would lead to a qualified student profile. Thus, it could be suggested that it introduces new responsibilities for the teachers and parents. Certain direct quotes that reflect the views of the social studies teachers in the study group are presented below.

“I must say that I had no idea about the P4c model. However, based on the information you provided; I can say the following. The model emphasizes that the teacher should not only act as a guide and provide clues and help students reflect their feelings, thoughts and ideas on any topic, but also attach importance to their views, thoughts and ideas.” (T5)

“I think that this model introduces certain responsibilities to parents as well as new duties to the teachers about the qualified student perception. I think that the fulfillment of these responsibilities by the parents would make our job easier in learning environments. I think that the first thing parents should do is to make the child feel valued.” (T37)

4.4 Suggestions about the P4c Model Qualified Student Criteria in Turkey

The responses of the social studies teachers in the study group to the question “What do you suggest about the P4c model qualified student criteria in Turkey?” in the semi-structured interview form were analyzed with content analysis, and the findings are presented in Figure 5. As seen in Figure 5, social studies teachers presented significant suggestions. The diversity of these suggestions emphasized the necessity of conducting a study to determine the professional, general culture and field content competencies of teachers. Because these competencies are based on the employment of various strategies, methods and techniques during implementation

based on the temporal, national and international standards and the changing needs and developmental attributes of the individual. Thus, self-improvement of the teachers who control the learning environment could raise their awareness about P4c and other original models. Furthermore, the findings associated with this question emphasized the necessity for re-analysis of concepts such as teacher competency, the role of the student in the learning environment, teacher gestures and mimics, language and quality.

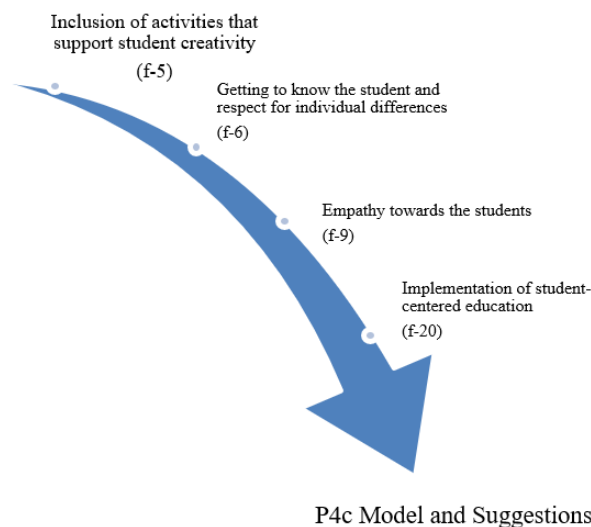


Figure 5. Teacher views on the P4C model student criteria

The findings presented in Figure 5 demonstrated that the study group member teachers experienced certain communication and interaction problems with the students in the education process. The most important consequence of these problems was the neglect of the student in the learning environment. Based on the P4c model, which is based on student approach to events with various ideas and perspectives in the educational process, the instruction by ignoring the student reduced student quality. Certain direct quotes that reflect the views of the social studies teachers in the study group are presented below.

“I would like to answer your question based on the information you provided on the P4c model and further research I conducted. Unfortunately, as teachers, we continue to implement 40 years old methods in learning environments. We write student-centered education in the curricula, but none of us practice it. As far as I know about this model, I think that it should be applied in environments where student-centered education is practiced.” (T11)

“The teacher who cannot empathize with a student, who does not understand and cannot tolerate the student. I think that such a teacher cannot implement any model, especially the P4c model.” (T40)

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Radical changes have been experienced in education in the 20th century. Thus, the political, social, cultural and economic factors altered the qualified citizen perception. Today, a citizen who can self-improve due to the rapidly changing knowledge with critical thinking and questioning skills is considered qualified. The attributes of a qualified citizen emphasized the importance of philosophical thinking, which is a type of critical thinking that emphasizes the active use of cognitive processes when accessing data and effective use of the data. Philosophical thinking represents the individual efforts for self-recognition and to understand the world, has been considered important in accessing knowledge. This importance led to the requirement for the instruction of the foundations of philosophical thinking to the citizens starting from the first stages of education. The leading countries included philosophy education in formal education. This is conducted with P4c (Philosophy for Children) programs, which aims to improve the philosophical and critical thinking skills of the children at an early age. In the present study, the perceptions of social studies teachers about qualified students were analyzed in the P4c model.

Present study findings demonstrated that teachers considered P4c model effective on the active cognitive participation of the students in the learning process, owning their ideas and thoughts, and the improvement of questioning skills. It was observed that the teacher responses did not emphasize academic achievements, accepted as the most basic qualified student criterion in Turkey, but emphasized the critical thinking, questioning

and data access skills and cognitive activities of the students. This was based on the fact that the P4c program was built on searching for knowledge rather than possession of knowledge. In other words, it could be attributed to Jaspers's (2003) idea that "philosophy is homelessness, it is a relentless nomadism. Philosophy could never reach home. Philosophy is just seeking; it entails seeking, knowing that you would never find what you are looking for. Philosophy cannot reach the truth; it is always destined to be incomplete. The above-mentioned finding suggested that the implementation of the P4c program in Turkey would contribute to the reconstruction of the qualified student concept. In a study conducted by Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan (1980), it was argued that P4c would contribute to the children's ability to perceive life as a whole, their critical and creative thinking skills, and in depth questioning of the events. The findings reported by the study conducted by Gasparatou and Maria's (2012) with Kampeza kindergarten students indicated that the P4c program improved critical thinking and questioning skills of the students.

It was observed that the responses of the teachers about whether the P4c model would change the qualified student perceptions in Turkey were based on the dominance of the behaviorist approach. The teachers who stated that the P4c program would change the qualified student perception argued that the program would contribute to the emphasis of the individuality of the student, the acceptance of the student as they are, end the grade-oriented approach and the dominant linear thinking. The cases prosited by the teachers were also revealed in a study conducted by Fisher (2006). It should be noted that these findings were due to the predominance of the behaviorist approach in the Turkish education system.

However, this approach was replaced by the constructivist approach after the curricular changes adopted in 2004 in Turkey. However, the teacher responses were not consistent with this change. However, the P4c program can only be implemented in education systems where constructivist approach is adopted. The teachers who stated that the P4c program would not change the qualified student perceptions in Turkey argued that the model could not be generalized, and the cultural, social and environmental ethics would prevent the implementation. However, Anatolia has hosted various civilizations and world-famous philosophers since ancient times. Aristotle, Heraclitus and Thales lived on the Aegean coast of Anatolia. Thus, it could not be suggested that the Turkish social and cultural structure is a disadvantage for the implementation of the P4c program.

In the study, the teachers were also asked about the responsibilities of the teachers and parents in the P4c model. The teacher responses were based on the constructivist approach and the conventional Turkish family structure. The teachers stated that P4c would impose responsibilities on teachers and parents such as recognition of the individual student differences, support of cognitive student activities, emphasis on student views, and inclusion of student-centered activities. Responsibilities stated by the teachers are already expected from the teacher in constructivist education. Thus, it could be suggested that there are problems in the implementation of the constructivist education approach. The responsibilities of the parents that P4c included empathizing with the child, listening to the child, and allowing the child to feel valued. The significance of these responsibilities could only be recognized with the analysis of the general properties of the Turkish family structure. It could be argued that the Turkish family structure is patriarchal. Although it was reported that industrialization and urbanization weakened this orientation, it would be wrong to claim that it was eliminated. The family structure is hierarchical and the father plays a dominant role in the family. In this family structure, it is not very common to consult the ideas of children. Thus, P4c may lead to certain changes in the traditional Turkish family structure. Furthermore, the Turkish family structure could play a key role in the success of P4c. The study conducted by D'Addelfio & Vinciguerra (2021) reported that it was important in philosophy education for the children to express their feelings and ideas easily in the family.

In the study, the teachers were also asked about their suggestions about the P4c model qualified student criteria in Turkey. Teachers stated that activities that support student creativity should be included, individual student differences should be respected, the teacher should empathize with the students and implement student-centered education. The teacher responses could be analyzed based on the significance of the development of their professional, general culture and content knowledge competencies. In other words, teachers who would implement the program are an important factor in the achievement of the P4c program goals.

In conclusion, it could be suggested that P4c developed by Lipman for philosophy education to young children has certain advantages. These advantages are ameliorated by the new educational paradigm formed by science and technology. It would not be possible to distance this new paradigm that includes the approach where students access knowledge by themselves and via reasoning methods, and should not lose their interest in lifelong learning, from philosophy education. There is a general belief that the program would have significant effects on the qualified student perceptions in Turkey. However, due to the professional qualifications of teachers in Turkey, the dominant educational approach in the Turkish education system, and the properties of the Turkish family

structure, it is obvious that there would be certain difficulties. It is important to spend efforts about these issues before the implementation of this program in Turkey. In other words, it is necessary to develop a lebensraum for the P4c program. However, the fact that Anatolia has hosted several civilizations and philosophers and its role in the development of philosophy as a field of science should not be ignored. The implementation of the P4c program in Turkey could be considered as the return of philosophy to its home, to its children.

Recommendations

- ✓ Philosophy education for children should be expanded in Turkey to ensure the sustainability of cognitive achievements.
- ✓ Philosophy education for children should be included in teacher training.
- ✓ The implementation of the constructivist education approach in the Turkish education system should be enforced.
- ✓ Seminars on the significance of allowing children to express their emotions and ideas should be organized for the parents to raise awareness.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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