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Factors Affecting the Implementation of Primary School English Language Teaching Programs in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Due to the influence of globalization and endeavors to meet the demands of the changing world, English has been taught as a foreign language in Turkey for years, and English language teaching programs (ELTP) in Turkey has gone through three major changes with the introduction of the 1997, 2006 and 2013 curriculum changes. In line with this, several evaluation studies investigated the primary school English teaching programs from various aspects including the factors affecting the implementation. Thus, this study aimed at investigating the primary school English language teaching program evaluation studies related to the 1997, 2006 and 2013 ELTPs from the perspective of factors hindering the implementation. As an integrative literature review of 66 studies, findings of this study show that teacher and teacher-related issues were among the main factors as well as course hour, class size and L1 mastery, common to each program change hindering the implementation of ELTPs.

Depending on the education policies of the countries and needs of the society, countries set standards and impose these standards through curriculum and education programs for the purpose of increasing the range and quality of students (Cheung & Wong, 2012). As the needs and requirements of the global world change constantly, curricula of the countries are revised accordingly and thus, education programs go

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through a constant cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation (Dolores, 2007; Harmer, 2003; Kiely and Rea-Dickins, 2005; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009; Topkaya & Küçük, 2010). Having several factors involved in each stage, the elements of curricula are closely interrelated and interactive affecting the other stages rather than being a linear process (Cheung & Wong, 2012).

In the planning stage of curriculum development, based on the needs and requirements of the local and global context, plans at micro and macro level are made and organized (Demirel, 2013) which are then put into practice in the implementation stage in which the learners and teachers experience the planned or intended curriculum (Chaudhary, 2015a). Hence, it is worth noting here that both the teachers and students, as the main agents in the implementation stage of the curriculum, may experience it in a different manner from the planned one; thus, likely differences may arise between the planned and experienced curriculum (Cheung & Wong, 2012; Ellis, 2004).

Among the aforementioned elements of the curriculum cycle, evaluation is an indispensable part of the education process (Musal et al., 2014) fulfilling several functions primarily delineating the merit or worth of an education program (Scriven, 2007; Stufflebeam, 2001) as well as having some other functions, such as valuing the program for accountability, improvement or its quality (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005). In fact, the purposes of program evaluation in education may vary depending on the evaluator's aim of conducting program evaluation; that is, the evaluator may aim to reveal the strengths, weaknesses and effectiveness of an education program (Topkaya & Küçük, 2010) or provide feedback to the stakeholders, such as policy and decision makers, program developers, teachers, administrators- mainly those involved in the development and implementation of the curriculum or education program. Thus, depending on the results of an evaluation, an education program may then be changed or the necessary amendments to develop it further for an effective implementation may be made or the program can be cancelled after which the curriculum cycle commences again (Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2012; Frye & Hemmer, 2012).

Considering an education program from the perspective of language education, it is considered as a set of connected courses offered within a systematic plan under a defined methodology in order to equip learners with a linguistic purpose (Lynch, 1996); that is, a language program is a series of courses designed for language education. When the relation between a curriculum and an education program is considered, curriculum covers the syllabus and the syllabus embraces the language education program between which a direct interactive relation exists since the education program is in the heart of any educational activity (Topkaya & Küçük, 2010). In this context, education programs are the indicators for the success or failure of the curriculum and they, thus, have to be evaluated for the purposes of designating the strong and weak points in the implementation, and display of the discrepancies between the planned and experienced curriculum.

Curriculum implementation, as the stage of putting the curriculum or the education program into practice (Chaudhary, 2015b), is regarded as a complicated issue (Cheung & Wong, 2012; Wang & Cheng, 2009) since factors both internally such as attitudes of teachers or students and externally as the cultural or sociological and even administrative have a significant impact on the effective implementation of a curriculum or education program. As also highlighted by Chauddary (2015), the implementation of a curriculum as planned is dependent on factors, such as "the learners, resource materials and facilities, the teacher, the school environment, culture and ideology, instructional supervision and assessment" (p.984). However, the role of teachers in accepting or resisting the curriculum change is the major element in the effective implementation. In a way, curriculum implementation, thus, is considered as how the planned procedures in the curriculum are turned into reality in the classroom by teachers (Chaudhary, 2015; Wang & Cheng, 2009). Thus, the influence of both internal and external constituents may affect the process of teaching and learning in a significant way by arising a gap between the planned and experienced curriculum.

The fact that explicit or hidden obstacles and challenges, most of which were not foreseen during the planning stage of the curriculum development, arose with the practice of the implementing the curriculum attracted the attention of the scholars into the significance of the implementation process and factors affecting the effective implementation. It was noted that especially before implemented in the classroom, a curriculum initiation would be just a fiction creating an illusion (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977; Hall & Loucks, 1975; Kanter, 1983; Kennedy et al., 1984; McLaughlin, 1998; Sarason, 1971, as cited in Cheung & Wong, 2012). Although there are growing number of studies on curriculum implementation in language education, it is seen that most evaluation studies conducted in Turkey related to curriculum reforms focused on program design issues in the form of curriculum aims, outcomes, methodology and assessment (Alkan & Arslan, 2014; Arıbaş & Tok, 2004; Aslan, 2016; Aybek, 2015; Bayraktar, 2014; Bozavlı, 2015; Bulut & Atabey, 2016; Büge, 2005; Büyükduman,2005; Çelik & Kasapoğlu, 2014; Dinçer, 2016; Ekuş & Babayiğit, 2013; Er, 2006; Erarslan, 2016; Erdoğan, 2005; Harman, 1999; İğrek, 2001; İyitoğlu & Alcı, 2015; Kandemir, 2016; Koydemir, 2001; Kurt; 2017; Küçüktepe, Küçüktepe & Baykın, 2014; Mersinligil, 2002; Merter, Şekerci, & Bozkurt, 2014; Mirici, 2000; Nasman, 2003; Orhan, 2001; Özüdoğru & Adıgüzel, 2015; Tok, 2003; Tok & Kandemir, 2015; Tosuncuk, 2016; Yanık, 2007; Yeni-Palabıyık & Daloğlu, 2016, Yıldıran & Tanrıseven, 2015; Yüksel, 2001; Zincir, 2006). Thus, this study aimed at investigating the program evaluation studies conducted on primary school English language teaching programs (henceforth ELTP) in Turkey from the angle of factors affecting the implementation of the 1997, 2006 and 2013 ELTPs in terms of classroom procedures, teacher factor, class size, class hour and L1 factor.

2. Primary School English Language Teaching Programs in Turkey and Evaluation Studies

With the aim of fulfilling the needs and requirements of the globalized world, countries have initiated major curriculum reforms and imposed standards to increase the quality of education and equipping learners with the necessary life skills. In Turkey, three major curriculum reforms have taken place since the introduction of the first curriculum innovation in 1997. After the 1997 curriculum change, two other major changes in Turkish education system took place as the first launched in 2006 and the last in 2013. With the launch of each curriculum renovation, English language teaching programs together with other school subjects received substantial alterations and novelties from methodology to starting age to learn English are made.

The first comprehensive curriculum innovation in Turkey was initiated with the introduction of the 1997 curriculum throughout the country with which the compulsory education increased to 8 years with an ultimate aim of increasing the exposure to primary education on the part of the students (Güven, 2008). Altering the whole education system other than the tertiary education, the 1997 curriculum adapted behaviorism as the approach to education and created considerable changes in terms of foreign language education, too (Topkaya & Küçük, 2010). English language teaching, offered in secondary schools prior to 1997 ELTP, was lowered to 4th grade in primary education aiming to keep up with the standards of EU in foreign language education and to create global citizens communicating in English other than the mother tongue(Kırkgöz, 2009). Thus, the 1997 ELTP emphasized the significance of language skills for communicative purposes and adopted classroom techniques and principles, such as memorization, drills or question and answer sessions as well as repetition based on behaviorism (Küçük, 2008). However, the 1997 ELTP was implemented till 2006 when the second curriculum change took place due to the barriers and obstacles causing the failure of the 1997 curriculum.

The second of the curriculum innovations in Turkish education system was launched in 2006 to compensate the failures of the previous system in fulfilling the educational needs of the country. Unlike the 1997 curriculum change, the 2006 ELTP was based upon the constructivist theory and aimed at equipping the learners with the necessary skills to communicate in English to keep abreast the

developments of the global world (Küçük, 2008; Örmeci, 2009; Özbay, 2009). Emphasizing the principles of the constructivism, the 2006 ELTP highlighted and introduced the key features of student-centered learning, autonomy and classroom procedures and activities, such as group work, problem-solving and projects specific to this theory of learning (Topkaya & Küçük, 2010). Taking the process rather than the product into account, the 2006 ELTP switched to process-oriented syllabus and all these also brought about a change, naturally, in the assessment of students in language learning, such as use of portfolios or peer and self-assessment (Cihan & Gürlen, 2009). The 2006 curriculum ended with the introduction of 2013 curriculum also known as 4+4+4 education system.

Introduced under fierce debates and arguments causing political conflicts in the society, the 2013 curriculum was planned, introduced and put into implementation in a considerably short period of time (Gün and Başkan, 2014). The remarkable change that appeared together with the 2013 curriculum is the organization of primary, secondary and high school education, each of which was divided into 3 equal segments having 4 years of projection. This curriculum innovation also increased the compulsory education into 12 years from 8 years to increase the overall quality of education and participation to education in all levels (Çelik & Kasapoglu, 2014). In terms of 2013 ELTP, the most significant change was seen in the starting age of learning English on the part of the students. In the previous curriculum, English was offered from Grade 4 onwards; however, the recent ELTP has lowered this into Grade 2 where students are around the age of six (Bayyurt, 2012). Bringing some salient features in language teaching, the 2013 ELTP stressed on the communication and developing communication skills. Thus, the second grade ELTP solely depended on improving students' listening and speaking skills with an ultimate aim of creating positive affective conditions for them. The other prominent feature of the 2013 ELTP is that it made use of the descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages also known as CEFR (Çelik & Kasapoglu, 2014).

Taking the studies evaluating the 1997, 2006 and 2013 ELTPs into account, it is possible to say that a growing number studies focused on the curricula of English from different perspectives as program design issues in the form of aims, outcomes, materials, testing and assessment as well as classroom implementation. In this context, the studies evaluating the 1997 primary school ELTP (Arıbaş & Tok, 2004; Büge, 2005; Büyükduman, 2005; Er, 2006; Erdoğan, 2005; Harman, 1999; İğrek, 2001; Koydemir, 2001; Mersinligil, 2002; Mirici, 2000; Nasman, 2003; Orhan, 2001; Tok, 2003; Yanık, 2007; Yüksel, 2001; Zincir, 2006) found that the 1997 ELTP had a number of major deficiencies both in program design and implementation. After the introduction of the 2006 ELTP, the studies conducted evaluating the primary school English curriculum (Arı, 2014; Cihan & Gürlen, 2009; Çelen, 2011; Demirel, Gümüştekin & Yazgünoğlu, 2010; Demirlier, 2010; Erkan, 2009; Erkan, 2015; Gökler, 2012; Gökler, Aypay & Arı, 2012; Güneş, 2007; Güneş, 2009; İnam, 2009; Kalkan, 2010; Küçük , 2008; Ocak, Kızılkaya & Boyraz, 2013; Orakcı, 2012; Örmeci, 2009; Özbay, 2009; Özel, 2011; Sak, 2008; Seçkin, 2010; Seçkin, 2011; Şad, 2011; Topkaya & Küçük, 2010; Yaman, 2010; Yörü, 2012) found also that similar to the 1997 ELTP, the 2006 ELTP had drawbacks in program design and the curriculum could not be implemented as specified resulting in failures in teaching English. Finally, it is worth noting first here that the studies which evaluated the 2013 ELTP solely focused on the second grade program and the findings in these studies (Alkan & Arslan, 2014; Aslan, 2016; Aybek, 2015; Bayraktar, 2014; Bulut & Atabey, 2016; Çelik & Kasapoğlu, 2014; Bozavlı, 2015; Dinçer, 2016; Ekuş & Babayiğit, 2013; Erarslan, 2016; İyitoğlu & Alcı, 2015; Kandemir, 2016; Küçüktepe, Küçüktepe & Baykın, 2014; Merter, Şekerci, & Bozkurt, 2014; Özüdoğru & Adıgüzel, 2015; Tok & Kandemir, 2015; Tosuncuk, 2016; Yeni-Palabıyık & Daloğlu, 2016; Yıldıran & Tanrıseven, 2015) indicate that similar deficiencies also exist in the new curriculum, yet it is clear that this is the ELTP which was favoured most having more strengths as the findings suggest.

Considering the significance of the evaluation studies in determining the strengths and drawbacks of the teaching programs, giving feedback to main stakeholders related to efficiency and

effectiveness of them, a study integrating the findings of all the available studies to draw more comprehensive picture from the policy to program design and implementation may help the academicians, researchers, decision makers, and other related stakeholders in the core of an educational activity, such as teachers, families and administrators. When the literature is considered, an integrative literature review study related to the implementation of the primary school English language teaching programs launched by the 1997, 2006 and 2013 curricula is missing. Additionally, it is common fact that although students are offered English courses from primary school to university, they lack communication skills in English (Paker, 2012). Thus, factors which hinder the effective teaching and learning process in terms of English courses need a careful consideration. To this end, this study aims to investigate the findings of the studies evaluating the primary school ELTPS between 1997 and 2018 to find out the factors hindering the implementation of the primary school ELTPs in Turkey.

Thus, this integrative study tries to answer the following research question:

1) What are the factors affecting the effective implementation of the primary school English language teaching programs considering the 1997, 2006 and 2013 curricula changes?

3. Method

Making use of document analysis in the form of journal articles, masters and doctoral theses, this integrative literature review study is a descriptive one adopting qualitative research design. Through the integrative literature reviews, an objective critique and drawing conclusions about the subject matter can be made in a systematic way with the help of the analysis of the previously conducted research studies (Christmals & Gross, 2017).

In obtaining the documents to get the required data, an online search process was conducted in 3 years from 2013 to 2018 in three periods collecting the evaluation studies related to primary school ELTPs in Turkey. While searching for the documents as journal articles, masters and doctoral theses, online platforms as Google, scholar web sites, such as university databases and Thesis Center of Turkish Higher Education Council, DergiPark as well as research based web sites such as academia.edu and Research Gate were used with key words both in English and Turkish having "primary education + English +curriculum", "primary education + English + program", "primary education + English + curriculum + evaluation", evaluation + primary school + English" and "primary + education + English + program/curricula/curriculum" in their titles and abstracts. The documents other than articles and theses, like book reviews related to English, were not taken into consideration and a total of 63 studies evaluating the primary school English curricula were available published between 1997 and 2016. Although these studies evaluated the primary school ELTPs from different angles, this study focused on the issues related to implementation and tried to shed light on the actual process of language teaching in primary schools in Turkey based on curriculum changes. As a result of the search for the studies to include in this current study, a total of 66 studies were accessed as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Evaluation of Studies Based on Three Different ELTP Reforms (N=63)

Primary School ELTPs	Evaluation Studies	Number of Studies
1997 ELTP	Arıbaş & Tok, 2004; Büge, 2005; Büyükduman, 2005; Er, 2006; Erdoğan, 2005; Harman, 1999; İğrek, 2001; Koydemir, 2001; Mersinligil, 2002; Mirici, 2000; Nasman, 2003; Orhan, 2001; Tok, 2002; Yanık, 2007; Yüksel, 2001; Zincir, 2006	17
2006 ELTP	Arı, 2014; Gökler, Aypay & Arı, 2012; Cihan & Gürlen, 2009; Çelen, 2011; Demirlier, 2010; Erkan, 2009; Erkan, 2015; Demirel, Gümüştekin & Yazgünoğlu, 2010; Güneş, 2007; Güneş, 2009; İnam (Çelik), 2009; Kalkan, 2010; Küçük, 2008; Ocak, Kızılkaya & Boyraz, 2013; Orakcı, 2012; Örmeci, 2009; Özbay, 2009; Özel, 2011; Sak, 2008; Seçkin, 2010; Seçkin, 2011; Şad, 2011; Topkaya & Küçük, 2010; Üner, 2010; Yaman, 2010; Yörü, 2012	27
2013 ELTP	Alkan & Arslan, 2014; Aslan, 2016; Aybek, 2015; Bayraktar, 2014; Bozavlı, 2015; Bulut & Atabey, 2016; Çelik & Kasapoğlu, 2014; Dinçer, 2016; Ekuş & Babayiğit, 2013; Erarslan, 2016; İyitoğlu & Alcı, 2015; Kandemir, 2016; Karaagac Tuna, 2018; Kaya & Ok, 2016; Kurt, 2017; Küçüktepe & Baykın, 2014; Merter, Şekerci & Bozkurt, 2014; Özüdoğru & Adıgüzel, 2015; Tok & Kandemir, 2015; Tosuncuk, 2016; Yeni-Palabıyık & Daloğlu, 2016; Yıldıran & Tanrıseven, 2015	22

3.1. Analysis of the data

Content analysis was used in analyzing the data collected from the review of the studies. While analyzing the data, the findings of the studies related to implementation issues were initially found and common themes and categories were formed. In the next stage, an expert as a researcher also checked the analysis while applying the same procedure so as to set the possible differences in the analysis apart. After reaching agreement for reliability (k=0,63), the themes and categories were presented qualitatively.

4. Findings

The main concern of this study was related to what affected the effective implementation of the English language teaching problems from the initiation of the first curriculum change to the last known as 4+4+4 education system. Thus, the findings for the research question posed here are displayed in themes and categories based on analysis of the studies evaluating each curriculum change initiated in Turkey.

4.1. Category of Teacher-Related Issues

Findings in this study related to the factors affecting the implementation of the ELTPs indicate the significance of the teachers in the process of the language teaching especially for the failures of the previous ELTPs as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Teacher and Teacher-Related Issues

	Themes & Categories	19997 ELTP	2006 ELTP	2013 ELTP
Teacher Related Issues	***Teacher Factor***			
	Lack of Curriculum Knowledge	No reading about curriculum	No reading about curriculum	No reading about curriculum
	In-service Training	Lack of in-service Training	Lack of In-service Training	Lack of In-service Training
	Teacher Competence	Lack of Teacher Competence	Lack of Teacher Competence	Lack of Teacher Competence

Findings about the 1997 ELTP point out that one of the main reasons for the poor attainment of the specified aims in the curriculum is related to teacher factor. As findings pointed out, teachers did not have enough awareness about the curriculum knowledge and perceived the yearly plans, unit plans and course books as their curriculum (Mersinligil, 2002). They had challenges in preparing their lesson plans and activities using curriculum objectives and they are reported to follow course book only (Zincir, 2006). On the other hand, the reason why they lack of curriculum knowledge stemmed from lack of in-service training (Büyükduman, 2005; Koydemir, 2001; Mirici, 2000; Yüksel, 2001) but administrators complain about teachers' low level of interest into receiving training (Mersinligil, 2002). Interestingly, it is also found that not English teachers but classroom teachers taught English (Arıbaş & Tok, 2004; Büyükduman, 2005; Yanık, 2007; Yüksel, 2001) and the English teachers were mostly quite inexperienced in teaching the language (Yüksel, 2001).

Issues regarding teachers in the 2006 ELTPs were almost similar to those of the 1997 ELTP because it appears that teachers were not informed well enough about the 2006 curriculum English program and did not read the program booklet (Güneş, 2009; Örmeci; 2009; Özel,2011; Küçük, 2008; Seçkin, 2011; Yaman, 2010). Additionally, in spite of the launch of a comprehensive curriculum reform switching from behaviorism to constructivism with major changes in English teaching in primary school, teachers were found lack of in-service training and seminar attendance (Erkan, 2009; İnam, 2009; Küçük, 2008; Özbay, 2009; Özel, 2011; Seçkin, 2010; Topkaya & Küçük, 2010; Yaman, 2010). For this reason, it is reported that English teachers faced difficulties and had the feeling of inadequacy in the application of constructivist approach (Özel, 2011), but education-faculty-graduate teachers had more positive attitudes toward teaching English lessons (Örmeci, 2009; Şad, 2011; Yörü, 2012).

It is also apparent in the 2013 ELTP that since teachers had to teach English to students who are around 6 and 6,5 years of age, they had challenges in teaching to children indicating a deficiency in teacher competence (Bozavlı, 2015; Çelik & Kasapoğlu, 2014; Küçüktepe, Küçüktepe & Baykın, 2014) and the reason for this challenge in teaching English to children takes its roots from lack of enough guidance to teachers about the program (Alkan & Arslan, 2014; Bayraktar, 2014; Dinçer, 2016) and lack of in-service training (Alkan & Arslan, 2014; Bulut & Atabey, 2016; Erarslan, 2016; Küçüktepe, Küçüktepe & Baykın, 2014; Özüdoğru & Adıgüzel, 2015; Tosuncuk, 2016; Yıldıran & Tanrıseven, 2015).

Teachers in the implementation of each ELTP launched in 1997, 2006 and 2013 seem to have challenges in teaching English as specified in the program booklets causing significant gaps between the

intended and implemented curriculum. Initially, it is clear that in each curriculum change, English teachers do not examine or read the program booklet and when this is combined with lack of guidance and in-service training, they are stuck in traditional teaching rather than applying contemporary methods. Additionally, due to the shortages in the required number of English teachers, classroom teachers had to offer English courses especially after the introduction of the 1997 ELTP which contributed to failures in teaching English appearing as another factor in the implementation.

4.2. Category of teaching and learning process

The findings related to factors affecting the implementation of the primary school ELTPs were first analyzed under the category of teaching and learning process as shown in Table 3 below.

When the themes related to teaching and learning process are considered, it is seen that teacher centeredness was the driving source in teaching the language both in 1997 and 2006 ELTPs (see Table 3 below). Findings related to the 1997 ELTP show that teachers were the major source of knowledge and applied traditional grammar teaching rather than focusing on communication (Arıbaş & Tok, 2004; Büyükduman, 2005; Er, 2006; Erdoğan, 2005; Harman, 1999; İğrek, 2001; Mersinligil; 2002; Mirici, 2000; Tok, 2003). Additionally, it is clear that learner-centered tasks, such as games, role-plays, communicative exercises were hardly ever implemented in teaching the language (Mersinligil, 2002) as they were, especially games, used as time fillers not as tools in teaching English (Erdoğan, 2005). Since traditional lecture and question-answer were not addressing the communicative aspects of the language, it was reported that the techniques and methods used would not be utilized to attain the goals (Er, 2006).

Table 3
Factors related to teaching and learning process

	Themes & Categories	1997 ELTP	2006 ELTP	2013 ELTP
Teaching and Learning Process	***Teaching Methods & Techniques***			
	Classroom Implementation	Teacher Centered & Traditional Teaching	Teacher Centered & Traditional Teaching	Student-Centered
	Use of Activities	time-filler, not learning tools	No use of varied activities	Use of varied activities
	Effectiveness-Efficiency	Not effective & efficient	Not effective & efficient	Effective & efficient

In terms of the 2006 ELTP, findings show that teachers as in the previous curriculum did not apply contemporary teaching methods and techniques in the classroom preferring traditional teaching. Regarding this, most frequently applied classroom activities were grammar activities, translation and question-answer while the suggested activities by the program, such as brainstorming, communication based games or problem solving activities were the least frequently used ones (Arı, 2014; Özel, 2010; Şad, 2011). As stated by Şad (2011), learner-centered implementation of English affected students in a positive way in affection. Additionally, although the 2006 ELTP claimed to be student-centered rather than teacher-centered, the implementation in the classroom was almost teacher-centered and the teaching and

learning process was found not in accordance with the students' linguistic levels (Arı, 2014; Örmeci, 2009) and not applicable in crowded classes (İnam, 2009; Orakçı, 2012; Örmeci, 2009; Yaman, 2010;).

As for the 2013 ELTP, findings show that unlike the previous ELTPs, the new program creates enthusiasm and desire towards learning English on the part of the students because of the activities used, such as games, songs, poems while teaching English (Alkan & Arslan, 2014; Bayraktar, 2014; Bozavlı, 2015; Bulut & Atabey, 2016; İyitoğlu & Alcı, 2015; Küçüktepe, Küçüktepe & Baykın, 2014; Merter, Şekerci & Bozkurt, 2014; Özüdoğru & Adıgüzel, 2015). Believed to create student-centered and an enjoyable classroom atmosphere (Alkan & Arslan, 2014; Aybek, 2015; Bozavlı, 2015; Bulut & Atabey, 2016; Merter, Şekerci & Bozkurt, 2014), teaching methods and techniques applied in the implementation of the 2013 ELTP are considered as appropriate to improve students' communicative skills, such as listening and speaking (Dinçer, 2016; Erarslan, 2016) except for arts and crafts or cut and fold activities (Erarslan, 2016).

When combined altogether, it is clear that one of the factors affecting the effective implementation of the ELTPs in Turkey is the use of appropriate teaching methods and principles in teaching the language. Especially, findings clearly indicate that the atmosphere created in the class especially with the first two curricula changes, namely, the 1997 and 2006 ELTPs, caused boredom among the students and included mainly traditional grammar teaching rather than communicative activities (Arı, 2014; Özel, 2010; Şad, 2011). However, with the introduction of the 2013 ELTP, a shift to student centeredness and use of communicative activities creating willingness to use English on students is clear giving way to effective implementation of the new ELTP.

4.3. Category of Complementary Miscellaneous Factors

Findings clearly unveil that other than major factors, such as teachers and their way of teaching the language by making use of varied and appropriate teaching methods, some other constituents also affect the implementation of the primary school ELTPs. Themes related to this were grouped under three major constituents as time restraint, class size and influence of mother tongue as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Miscellaneous factors in the implementation of the ELTPs

	Themes & Categories	19997 ELTP	2006 ELTP	2013 ELTP
Complementary Miscellaneous Factors	***Miscellaneous Factors***			
	Time Restraint	Limited Class Hour	Limited Class Hour	Limited Class Hour
	Class Size	Crowded Classes	Crowded Classes	Crowded Classes
	Ll factor	Lack of Mastery in L1	Lack of Mastery in L1	Lack of Mastery in L1

The findings related to the 1997, 2006 and 2013 ELTPs, in fact, indicate similar issues in that time allocated for English courses in primary schools was considered as limited to cover the specified content causing obstacles on two major grounds-making teachers to miss some of the content to catch up with the syllabus and causing problems on students in remembering the previous lesson (Arıbaş & Tok, 2004; Er, 2006; Erdoğan, 2005; İğrek, 2001; Mersinligil, 2002; Mirici, 2000; Yanık, 2007; Yüksel, 2001). Another significant finding points out to concerns about the physical infrastructure. It is seen that one major issue found as a

negative factor influencing the teaching of English in the 1997 ELTP was the class size. Crowded classes were reported to be an obstacle hindering effective implementation causing applying varied activities in class quite limited. Additionally, crowded classes also made addressing each student in the class nearly impossible when needed (Harman, 1999; İğrek, 2001; Mirici, 2000; Yanık, 2007; Yüksel, 2001). The other miscellaneous factor interfering with the implementation of the 1997 ELTP was found as the influence of L1 especially lack of mastery in L1. Findings related to this indicate the importance of mastery in L1 since most students in Turkey had poor proficiency in Turkish language and thus foreign language teaching is regarded inefficient unless the students master their mother language (Erdoğan, 2005; Yanık, 2007).

Identical to miscellaneous factors as explained regarding the 1997 ELTP, findings indicate that although the 2006 ELTP was redesigned due to failures of the previous ELTP, time restraint was still a prominent challenge to implement the 2006 ELTP effectively (Arı, 2014; Cihan & Gürlen, 2009; Erkan, 2009; Güneş, 2009; İnam, 2009; Ocak, Kızılkaya & Boyraz, 2013; Orakçı, 2012; Örmeci, 2009; Seçkin, 2011; Topkaya & Küçük, 2010; Yaman, 2010; Yörü, 2012). Similarly, the high number of students in classes was regarded as a weakness that affected the implementation (Erkan, 2009; Ocak, Kızılkaya & Boyraz, 2013; Örmeci, 2009; Seçkin, 2011; Topkaya & Küçük, 2010). It is reported that teachers faced difficulties in making communication-based activities in crowded classes, especially like speaking activities (Ocak, Kızılkaya & Boyraz, 2013) and asked for a transition to international standards in terms of class size (Erkan, 2015). It is also clear that mastery of L1 still appeared as a complementary factor as an obstacle in the implementation of the 2006 ELTP (Arı, 2014).

It is evident from the findings that in each of the ELTPs, the class hour was reported to be limited and had to be increased to deliver English courses satisfactorily. Like previous ELTPs, class hour in primary schools was poorly allocated and was not enough for an effective teaching in terms of English courses (Alkan & Arslan, 2014; Aybek, 2015; Dinçer, 2016; Erarslan, 2016; İyitoğlu & Alcı, 2015; Kandemir, 2016; Tok and Kandemir, 2015; Yıldıran & Tanrıseven, 2015;). Additionally, crowded classes as in previous ELTPs were reported to be a problem especially for game-based or communication-based activities (Bulut & Atabey, 2016; Dinçer, 2016; İyitoğlu & Alcı, 2015; Kandemir, 2016; Merter, Şekerci & Bozkurt, 2014; Yıldıran & Tanrıseven, 2015). On the other hand, it also came out that multigrade classes, where students from more than one grade study together because of lack of sources, teachers or enough number of students, experienced challenges in the implementation of the 2013 ELTP (Tosuncuk, 2016). Finally, students' poor knowledge in Turkish language negatively affected their process of foreign language learning in the 2013 ELTP (Çelik & Kasapoğlu, 2014; Tosuncuk, 2016); thus, findings related to the 1997, 2006 and 2013 ELTPs all pointed out the influence of proficiency in L1 on the implementation of English programs.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

When the findings of this study are considered, it is clear that although Turkish education has witnessed three major curriculum reforms so far, similar problems have been recurrent and almost identical to previous ones. Initially, teachers as the actual implementers of the curriculum reforms or innovations are not informed well enough about the newly launched teaching programs. As the main factor putting the planned curriculum into practice (Chaudhary, 2015a), teachers' attitudes and reactions towards the curriculum innovation, their understanding of the details of the curriculum, or support or resistance towards the curriculum reforms inevitably determine the success and failure as well as the future of the curriculum (Chaudhary, 2015; Cheung & Wong, 2012). Thus, findings of this study indicate that especially the first two curriculum reforms in terms of the ELTPs were not a success and teacher-related issues were among the prominent causes of the failures regarding the poor implementation of English language teaching programs. Especially, limited knowledge related to curriculum combined with insufficient in-

service training created obstacles in creating the desired learning atmosphere in the classroom with varied activities. It came out from the findings that teachers mainly followed the course book rather than the program booklet due to not reading it. In fact, as stated previously, what teachers perceived as the curriculum is the course book (Mersinligil, 2002). As Levin (2007) states, educations systems have to support teachers to acquire the necessary knowledge and pedagogy the curriculum imposed requires. The case is that in each of the curriculum innovations failed to support English teachers in providing them with the pedagogical knowledge on how to implement the ELTPs effectively. It is true that one of the reasons for the teachers' being poorly informed about the content of the teaching programs and not receiving in-service training may come from the top-down policies of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and lack of proper planning of in-service training in Turkey (Uysal, 2012). Besides, it is seen that reforms in education fail to yield the desired results because teachers are not involved in the curriculum development stage (Özüdoğru, 2016). Additionally, teachers' being stuck to traditional teaching methods and dependent on grammar teaching, which was specifically seen in both the 1997 ELTP and 2006 ELTP, may indicate that pedagogy training during university education and the teacher education policies in Turkey apparently fail to equip teachers with the contemporary teaching methods in application. Supporting this, according to findings, teachers in the implementation of the 2006 ELTP had the feeling of inadequacy in applying the constructivist theory in class due to lack of knowledge and poor pre-and in-service training resulting in failures and teachers' insisting on traditional teaching (Özbay, 2009; Özel, 2011). Thus, teachers' lack of curriculum knowledge, poor in-service planning and seminar attendance and top-down policies of the MoNE result in poor implementation of the ELTPs in Turkey with resistance to applying contemporary teaching methods and activities in the classroom causing boredom and lack of interest towards learning English on the part of the students.

The other factor that came out in this study was related to course hour allocated for teaching English in primary schools. Teachers mostly complained that weekly course hour was quite limited to cover the syllabus and caused students to forget the content easily because of the insufficient exposure to English in class. It is clear that this finding was true for each of the curriculum changes in Turkey and English had limited course hours (2 hours currently) and with the loaded content teachers had to skip most parts in the syllabus. As Levin (2007) states, when the curriculum is loaded and time is insufficient, this may result in teachers' feeling under pressure to cover the content which, however, does not meet the demands in education. Thus, for the primary school ELPTs to be a success, duration of the English courses has to be increased together with high investment on English teachers, especially to make them gain the necessary pedagogical knowledge in teaching English to young learners.

In spite of the changes in ELTPs in 20 years from 1997 ELTP to 2018, among the problems encountered repeatedly in each ELTP change is the physical infrastructures of the classrooms. The classroom environment is quite influential in the implementation and in literature most studies as well as this current one report the problem of overcrowded classroom where classroom management, applying group and pair works, conducting varied activities such as listening and speaking activities become quite demanding and difficult (Bulut & Atabey, 2016; Dinçer, 2016; Dogancay-Aktuna, 1998; İyitoğlu & Alcı, 2015; Kandemir, 2016; Merter, Şekerci & Bozkurt, 2014; Mirici, 2000; Ocak, Kızılkaya & Boyraz, 2013; Topkaya & Küçük, 2010; Yıldıran & Tanrıseven, 2015). Thus, it is so important for an effective implementation that the class size has to be reduced. The existence of language classes where students in parts receive English classes out of their regular classes may be a solution to overcome this problem.

Among the factors which findings point out as a hindrance regarding the effective implementation of the English curricula is the lack of mastery in Turkish language. It is seen that students' poor knowledge of Turkish causes obstacles in their learning English and according to 2016 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) survey report conducted by OECD, Turkish students, indeed, struggle with the deficiency in their knowledge of Turkish language and fail to comprehend the

written texts in Turkish. As stated in the literature, proficiency in mother tongue affects the process of second or foreign language learning positively (Kaushanskaya, Yoo & Marian, 2012; Zhanming, 2014). Thus, the poor proficiency levels of Turkish students in their mother tongue has a negative effect on their learning of English and this also indicates the significance of Turkish language teaching programs in primary schools.

Curricula changes in Turkey related to primary school English language teaching programs fall short of meeting the demands of the country and global world in terms of equipping learners with the necessary communicative skills in English beginning from primary education due to some common obstacles which appear repeatedly in each curriculum change indicating that these problems were not taken into consideration during the planning stage of curriculum development. One of the major challenges affecting the implementation of the ELTPs in Turkey is clearly the factor of teachers since they are not informed about the teaching programs through seminars and pre- or in-service training. Furthermore, it is clear that they also do not read the program booklet; in place of this, they prefer to follow the course book and continue traditional teaching in class. The next, class hours are limited for teachers to cover the program content causing a pressure on the part of the teachers. Combined with these, the high number of students in classes limits teachers' use of varied activities. Finally, lack of mastery in Turkish slows and challenges the process of foreign language education on the part of the learners. For the curriculum innovations to be a success, the factors which hamper the process of language teaching and learning in a negative way have to be handled and addressed carefully by those as the decision makers, program developers and other agents such as education planners. As a final remark, if Turkish education system is to embark on recovering the situation of incompetent users of English beginning from primary education, it needs to eliminate these issues hindering the effective language teaching in schools.

6. Limitations of the Study

This study which aimed at understanding the issues effecting the implementation of the primary school ELTPs in Turkey made use of studies in the form of journal articles, master and doctoral studies mainly. Since three major ELTP changes took place in Turkey which were conducted in 1997, 2006 and 2013, it was assumed that the evaluation studies investigating various aspects of these changes would best illuminate the overall picture in the implementation process and how these changes were effective compared to previous ones. Thus, this study limited to the articles and thesis studies included considering the availability of likely other published studies.

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