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Impact of External Examinations on High School Curricula: Perceptions of Teachers and Students

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Abstract

Problem Statement: The International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) Exam, Exam for Transition to Higher Education (YGS), and Exams for Placement for Undergraduate Studies (LYS), which are external exams that provide direct admission to higher education institutions abroad, are significant for 17–18-year-old Turkish Cypriot students. The media have expressed discontentment with the low achievement results on the YGS and LYS, which in addition to teacher and student complaints about inconsistency in the alignment of YGS and LYS content with school curricula compelled the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study: This qualitative study was aimed at analyzing teachers' and students' perceptions of the impact of the IGCSE, YGS, and LYS particularly on the 12th-grade science, mathematics, and language curricula in terms of curriculum content, implementation, and teacher-made assessments.

Method: In this study, a qualitative research approach was used to describe and generalize the impact of external examinations on high school curricula in North Cyprus. Using a stratified, purposive sampling method, the researchers interviewed 86 teachers and 120 students of science, mathematics, and language in public high schools and colleges in North Cyprus during the 2011–2012 academic year. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview technique, and a content analysis technique was used for data analysis.

Findings and Results: Results revealed that all college teachers and students perceived consistency between the content of college curricula and the

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IGSCE. Almost all public high school teachers and students perceived inconsistency between the YGS content and the content of 12th-grade curricula, but consistency between the contents of the LYS and the 12th-grade curricula. Moreover, the English language teachers in colleges and public high schools perceived inconsistency between the contents of the IGCSE and LYS5 English language exams and of the English language curricula. Additionally, it was found that these external exams had a wash-back effect on teaching and learning. The results also revealed similarity in the forms and contents of teacher-made tests and of the IGSCE and A-level examinations, whereas in public high schools they were partially different from the YGS and LYS.

Conclusion and Recommendations: It was found that teachers and students perceived a high rate of inconsistency between the content of external examinations and the curricula used in high-schools. Therefore, students put pressure on teachers to provide test-oriented teaching. Therefore, a very prevalent wash-back effect was seen in terms of teachers' content selection, curriculum implementation, and teacher-made tests.

Keywords: external exams, curriculum, teaching and learning, interview, content analysis, wash-back effect.

In the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) exam, Exam for Admission to Higher Education (YGS), and Exam for Placement for Undergraduate Studies (LYS)—external exams that provide direct admission to higher education institutions abroad—are significant for 17–18-year-old Turkish Cypriot students. The IGCSE is important for those seeking higher education in England; the YGS and LYS are vital for those seeking higher education in Turkey. Edexcel IGCSE curricula are used in colleges, and students take Edexcel IGCSE exams. Public high schools use curricula borrowed from the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MEB), and students take the YGS and LYS administered by the Student Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM), which is affiliated with the Board of Higher Education (YÖK) of Turkey.

TRNC media have expressed discontentment with the low level of achievement on the YGS and LYS, and the educational system has been indicted. Kelecioğlu (2002) reported that teachers and students in Turkey complain about inconsistency in the alignment of YGS and LYS content with the content of the curricula implemented at schools. Research by Baykul (1990) and Kelecioğlu (2002) verified that the contents of the matriculation exams (i.e., the YGS and LYS) and the curricula of Grade 12 were inconsistent. Furthermore, the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA) (2004) stated that lack of coordination between MEB and YÖK leads to inconsistency between the skills tested in the university entrance exams and the skills taught in the new curricula (p. 3), which leads to rote learning. *New curricula* refer to the high school curricula that were revised in 2003.

The TRNC educational system was reconstructed in the 2005–2006 academic year. It was divided into three main periods: basic education (play class- Grade 8), high

school education (Grades 9-12), and higher education (Department of Educational Planning and Program Development [DEPPD], 2005, p. 8). In high school education, students can choose from six types of schools: fine arts high schools, colleges, Anatolian high schools, multi-program modern high schools (MPMHSs), modern vocational technical high schools, and apprenticeship education. At the end of the basic education period, students can follow any path they choose (DEPPD, 2005).

MPMHSs offer four programs: science, social studies, foreign languages, and Turkish–mathematics. In colleges, IGCSE A- and AS-level programs are implemented. Seventeen government schools offer MPMHS and college education. This study took place in 16 of these schools as one school did not give permission for the research.

Higher education begins at the age of 18 and is for those intending to obtain a bachelor's degree. Universities in the United Kingdom require a minimum of five IGCSEs, and universities in Turkey require passing scores on the YGS and LYS. The IGCSE is an international qualification for 14–16-year-old students. It was created as the General Certificate of Secondary Education for international use. Like the UK GCSEs, IGCSEs lead directly to the A or AS levels and normally take 2 years to complete, and students take the exams upon completion (Cambridge International Examinations [CIE], 2008). Many opportunities for re-sits are provided to students who want to achieve better results. In Turkey, since 1974, nearly all universities have been accepting students through ÖSYM, which has centralized and administered university entrance exams since 1964. Some changes have been made in the structure and content of these exams up until now, and the last revision was in 2006. Entrance exam grades were used as the criteria for selecting applicants to universities. Since 1982 the exams have been administered in two stages. In 2010 these stages started to be called the YGS and LYS. Both of these exams are administered once a year and may be taken by students only at the end of Grade 12.

Both the IGCSE and the YGS are criterion-referenced tests (CRTs). CRTs are intended to measure how well a person has learned a specific body of knowledge and skills (Oliva, 2005; Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatric, 1997). Because over 1 million students simultaneously take the YGS, there is a cut-off score set by a committee of experts. In recent years, this cut-off score has been set at 140 for the YGS. Those students that score 140 or above can take the LYS and those that score lower than 140 fail and may try again only the following year.

On the other hand, the LYS is a norm-referenced test. Tests that set goals for students based on the average student's performance are norm referenced and are intended to compare the performance of all students taking the same test (Oliva, 2005). The students are ranked according to their performance on the test, and they are placed in universities and departments according to the quotas set by the YÖK.

Because these exams are important, they affect various elements of curriculum. They may be accepted as indicators of school or college performance (Golstein & Thomas, 1996) or of teacher professionalism (Runté, 1998). They may have an impact on content and methodology, teacher-designed assessments, and teachers' attitudes (Wall, 2005); learning and school priorities (Bishop, 1995); and curriculum development (De Luca, 1994).

University entrance exams are not just important to students and teachers; they are also important to the majority of Turkish society (Ekici, 2005). This is why there are numerous research studies about university entrance exams, including studies on student perceptions of examinations and their impact on learning (Kelecioğlu, 2003)--which is related to this one, student attitudes toward ÖSS (Ekici, 2005), factors affecting student achievements (Arslan & Öztürk, 2001; Şirin, 2000), the relationship between the items on the examination and student achievement (Çepni & Kaya, 2002), and item analysis of ÖSS questions (Doymuş, Canpolat, Pınarbaşı, & Bayrakçeken, 2000).

Research studies related to A-level GCE and GCSE examination systems have considered the perceptions of teachers, parents, students, and the general public of the relevance of the information tested on the examinations, the qualifications of the examiners, the confidence in the implementation and regulation of the examinations, awareness and attitudes of the general public and teachers about the examination systems, the accuracy and quality of assessment systems, and teacher confidence about the accuracy of the results (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007, pp. 2–3). Yet, due to the confidence in the content alignment of tests and curriculum, there was no research authorised by the QCA in this regard.

Generally studies examining the washback effect focused on language tests. Two studies focused on International English Language Testing System (IELTS) were Hayes and Reed (2004), and Saville and Hawkey (2004). The former study focused on the washback effect on the students, and the later on teaching materials. In the former study, it was found that instruction was mainly teacher-oriented, materials were test-oriented and students were receiving instructions about effective test strategies. In the later study, it was found that materials and textbooks reflecting the format and the skills being tested were mostly preferred by the teachers and the learners.

External exams are significant indicators of success. The TRNC media publish YGS and LYS results for each Turkish Cypriot school and compare them with the results of schools in Turkey. The media blame the educational system for the perceived low achievement results. This discontentment and the complaints from teachers and students about inconsistency in the alignment of YGS and LYS content with school curricula have compelled a need for this study.

The main purpose of this study was to determine teachers' and students' perceptions of the effects of the IGCSE, YGS, and LYS on science, mathematics, and language curricula for the 11th and 12th grades in terms of curriculum content, implementation, and teacher-made assessments. The following research questions were set for this purpose:

1. How do teachers and students perceive the consistency between external exams and the content of 11th- and 12th-grade curricula?
2. How do teachers and students perceive the effect of external exams on the curriculum implementation and teacher-made assessment procedures in the 11th and 12th grades?

Method

Research Design

In this study, qualitative research methods were used to select samples, develop data collection tools, and create the data analysis process. The data obtained were only used to reveal and generalize the phenomena that exist in the TRNC.

Research Sample

The population of this study comprised teachers and students from the science, mathematics, and language branches of 11th and 12th grades in the public high schools and colleges in the TRNC. Private schools, Fine Arts High School, Anatolian High School, and modern vocational technical high schools were not included in the population. The research sample was selected using a stratified purposive sampling method in order to select the same proportion from each school (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Participating teachers were required to teach 11th and 12th grades and be familiar with the content of YGS, LYS, and IGCSEs, and participating students were required to study at 11th and 12th grades and have already taken some IGSCEs or took the trial examinations of the YGS, and LYS. As the population of teachers and students varied in schools, in terms of schools to be represented on an equal basis, about 35% of teachers and 7% of students were selected purposefully for the samples.

The study was conducted from October to May in the 2011–2012 academic year at 16 schools in Northern Cyprus. One hundred teachers were selected for the sample, but only 86 could be interviewed, resulting in a return rate of 86%. One hundred and twenty-eight students were selected for the sample, but only 120 took part in the interviews, yielding a return rate of 94%.

Research Instruments and Procedure

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview technique (Stewart and Cash 1985). Six semi-structured, open-ended questions for teachers and seven semi-structured, open-ended questions for students were prepared by the researchers using interview question guidance by Woods (2006). Moreover, two questions from Russel's (2005) and Mesler's (2008) studies were modified and used to collect information about the participants' perceptions of the effect of external exams on curricula.

During the design phase, the interview questions were piloted with 7 teachers and 7 students from two different schools in two different regions. The interviewees' responses were transcribed and analyzed. Then the questions were modified to ensure consistency in responses for reliability (Sanders, 1994, p. 153). Moreover, three field experts were consulted with about the content validity of the questions (Sanders, 1994, p.145).

The consent forms given to participants in this study described the aim of the study, research questions, and information about the researchers. Data were collected during one-on-one interviews at a time appropriate to the participants. Interview appointments were made one or two days in advance. The participants' responses

were recorded using a voice recorder. The use of an audio-recording device eliminated the possibility of misunderstanding or loss of data. Interviews were carried out in the respondents' mother tongue, which is Turkish.

Data Analysis

A conventional content analysis technique was used to analyze the data collected (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). During the design phase, the first priory codes were derived from the semi-structured open-ended questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). When 100% inter-coder reliability was obtained, the codes were then used to analyze the transcripts. In addition, the researchers swept through the transcripts to derive more inductive codes from the participants' responses. These codes were also compared to identify differences. Then the codes were modified to ensure reliability for subsequent analysis (Sanders, 1994, p. 153). The common codes that served the purpose of the study were selected and then applied to the analysis of the rest of the transcripts. During the second cycle of coding, emerging concepts and themes were written to categorize the coded data by considering similarities, differences, frequencies, and causation (Hatch, 2002, p. 155).

Teacher and student responses from interviews were frequently quoted in the research findings. The names of the interviewees were not used in the direct quotations. Instead code names were used for teachers, such as T1, T2, T3, and so on; for students, such as S1, S2, S3, and so on; and for schools, such as C for colleges and P for public high schools. In addition, the frequency with which teachers and students repeated comments and the percentage of teachers and students making the same comment were calculated and expressed as frequencies and percentages in the data analysis.

Results

In this section, the analyses of interview data are presented in accordance with Miles and Huberman's (1994, p. 127) category-based data display approach.

Consistency in the Alignment with the Content of Curricula

In order to answer the first research question, the researchers performed content analysis of the teacher and student responses related to alignment of the exams' content with the content of the curriculum used in the 11th and 12th grades. All participants perceived the content of the books as the source of curricular content for the 11th and 12th grades. Hence, in this study, the content of the books was accepted as the curricular content.

In colleges, all science and mathematics teachers stated that the content of the IGCSE examinations is consistent with the content of the science and mathematics books used in classrooms. TC31 said,

IGCSE and A levels are completely consistent with the biology curricula we teach.

Similarly, regarding the IGCSE science and mathematics content, all college science students stated that the content of their science books was consistent with the content of the science exams they have taken. SC78 said,

What we are tested on is completely the same as what we learn at school. Of course there are slight differences, but they are not a big deal.

All mathematics, biology, and chemistry teachers (100%) and 96% of physics teachers in public high schools claimed that the YGS content was fully consistent with the content of the 9th- and 10th-grade mathematics, biology, physics, and chemistry books; partially consistent with the content of 11th-grade books in these subjects; and totally inconsistent with the content of 12th-grade books in these four subjects. Furthermore, these teachers perceived that the LYS content was fully consistent with the content of 12th-grade books in the same subjects. The following transcript excerpts are examples of these thoughts.

TP43: The YGS is consistent . . . consistent . . . exactly . . . I mean . . . exactly corresponds to Grade[s] 9, 10, and 11. LYS [corresponds] with [Grade] 12.

TP21: The YGS completely overlaps with the curriculum; there is no problem with the curriculum. I am talking about the biology course, of course. The curriculum is completely consistent with the exams.

Yet, 4% of physics teachers claimed that the YGS content was consistent only with the content of the 9th-grade physics book and was inconsistent with the content of the 11th- and 12th-grade physics books. TP23 said,

The YGS overlaps with the topics of 9th grade but not with the topics of 11th and 12th.

All students (100%) studying in the science program stated that the YGS and LYS content was consistent with the content of the science and mathematics books they had studied since 9th grade. About 86% of students studying in the Turkish–mathematics program said that the content of the LYS exam was totally consistent with the content of the 11th- and 12th-grade science and mathematics books. Nearly 4% of these students expressed no opinion, and 16% said that the content of the LYS exam and the content of their books were partially consistent. The following interview excerpts are examples of such thoughts.

SP10: The topics are the same, but in terms of information given under those topics, they are not identical.

SP32: We are in the last year. [The content] does not [match] for the YGS, but for the LYS [it does]. The topics we have seen recently are a little related to the LYS and YGS to 9th- and 10th-grades. Meanwhile, there is a timeout in between the 9th-grade and YGS exam causing us to forget what we've learned. I think the topics we study now are for [the] LYS exam.

About 98% of English language teachers perceived inconsistency between the LYS5 English Language exam content and the content of language books used in

public high schools. The remaining 2% of English teachers expressed no opinion. The interview excerpts below are the samples of such views.

TP19: First of all, our books are completely different from the exams. Namely, they do not coincide with the LYS. Our books are from England, so they do not match the exam in Turkey. They are totally different.

TP32: To tell you the truth, I have no idea about the content of the LYS language exam.

Some teachers stated that there were vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and translation questions on the LYS5, but the books used in public high schools were similar in form and content with the IGCSE language exams. Therefore, the content of English language books and the content of the LYS5 English language exam were inconsistent. TP26 said,

They are totally different. We have listening [and] speaking sections in the book. We do them sometimes, but in the LYS5 there is none. [There is] no listening [and] speaking in LYS5.

Similarly, all the English language teachers at colleges said that the English language books used in colleges were for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the content of the books was inconsistent with the content of the IGCSE English language exams. Therefore, students took the IELTS exam instead of the IGCSE language exams. TC63 said,

We use the book Ready for IELTS and it prepares [students] for the IELTS exam. The book is chosen by the Ministry of Education. We recommend that students take the IELTS exam, not the IGCSE or A-level language exams.

All foreign language program students (100%) in public high schools said that the content of their language books was inconsistent with the content of the LYS English language exam. Moreover, according to them, the content of the YGS and the LYS was inconsistent with the content and topics of all the course books they used. Therefore, their teachers compiled supplementary materials in order to prepare them for these exams. They said that their books prepared them for the IGCSE examinations, but they were not studying for these exams. Their aim was to take the YGS and LYS instead of the IGCSE exams. They also said that they were attending cram schools to get private lessons for YGS. SP12 and SP15 said,

If we as a foreign language class sat for the exam now, we would all fail. Certainly we need to attend cram schools; otherwise we will not be successful . . . Teachers give us supplementary materials . . . Our books are for the IGCSE exams, not for the YGS or LYS.

SP15: All our topics and books are totally different from the contents of the YGS and LYS.

Effects of External Exams on Curriculum Implementation

In order to answer the second research question, the content analysis was implemented for participants' responses about the content selection and the way teaching and learning are affected by external exams. About 92% of science and mathematics teachers and 80% of students in public high schools claimed that lesson content was

selected in accordance with the content of the YGS and LYS. About 8% of science and mathematics teachers said that they were following the order of the topics given in the books. Similarly, all science and mathematics teachers in colleges said that they followed the order of the topics in the books, as the books prepare the students for the IGCSE exams. The following interview excerpts are examples of such opinions.

TP16: I consider the YGS and LYS exams directly. For example, the topics that are likely to be asked and the ones that are unlikely to be asked, I eliminate the topics accordingly . . . So I can say that exams determine what we will teach.

TC55: [IGCSE exams are] 100% effective in determining what we teach. We are preparing the students for higher education; therefore we depend on [books], depend 100% on them.

SP18: Yes, these exams determine the topics because [on] the YGS and LYS they ask [about] these topics. Teachers cover only those ones in the classes.

Another finding about science lessons was that laboratory activities related to these lessons have been abolished. About 94% of public high school science teachers, 93% of public high school science students, all college science teachers (100%), and all college science students (100%) stated that stated that there was not enough time to cover all the topics in the books. Therefore, instead of skipping some of the topics, teachers decided to remove laboratory activities from their weekly schedules. In regards to the IGCSE, students took only the theory section and not the practice section of the exam; therefore they skipped the laboratory activities. Only about 6% of public high school science teachers and 7% of public high school science students claimed that they participated in laboratory activities; however they did not participate in these activities more than twice in an academic year. The interview excerpts below illustrate these opinions.

TP55: When you consider physics, for example, we don't do the lab practice. There should be the lab work, but we give the theory. We do 5 hours of theory in class. There is not enough time to cover all the topics.

SC67: We don't do lab practice, but we do the lessons in [the] lab. We just learn the theory. We take the theory section [on] the IGCSE.

SP6: We did [the] biology lab last week. It was interesting. I wish there were more, but we just do one or two labs in a whole year. It should be more.

About 97% of teachers of all subjects in public high schools stated that student learning was negatively affected because these exams and multiple questions led the students to rote learning. About 3% of teachers expressed no opinion. All teachers in colleges perceived positive effects of exams on students' learning. The interview excerpts below show their opinions.

TP53: You try to teach the students something, but they don't care. They always think about these exams. They memorize everything. It's rote learning.

TP56: I don't know. I am not interested in these exams.

TC72: Studying for IGCSE exams affects students' learning positively because they don't memorize.

Yet, about 93% of students stated that their learning was affected positively. According to them, because of these exams, they started to study and regularly attend the courses offered by cram schools, and they solved problems and tests systematically. They said that they had improved their study methods, stopped memorizing, started to do more practice and review, and tried to learn the subjects by heart. About 7% of students in the 11th grade did not express an opinion. The following interview excerpts are examples of such thoughts.

SC3: It affected me positively. I was studying just to pass the exams, but now I try to learn. I study more than ever.

SP4: Because I must remember all those 9th- and 10th-grade topics, I reviewed them as well. It improved my knowledge and exam skills. I also go to cram schools, solve thousands of questions. I have to be successful. No other way.

Effects on Teacher-Made Tests

In order to answer the second research question about how teachers and students perceive the effects of external exams on teacher-made tests, content analysis was conducted for their responses. About 96% of public high school teachers and 100% of college teachers said that they used past YGS, LYS, and IGCSE exam questions as supplementary materials and on their exams in order to familiarize their students with the question types and content of the exams. The following interview excerpts present such thoughts.

TP28: Of course, we show students samples of past exams to raise awareness, to motivate them more, to show them the aim of learning on the one hand, and to make learning more relevant in terms of preparing them for these exams. And I think, in this regard, this is effective.

TC30: After each topic, if I give them 20 questions, five or six of them are from past exams. In my tests I use questions similar to IGCSE exam questions and content.

TP15: Equally, yes, but of course not the same questions. At the same level, I find equally appropriate questions.

All college teachers and students said that the form and content of teacher-made tests were similar to those of the IGCSE exams. In public high schools, the teachers and students said the form and content of teacher-made tests were partially similar to the content and form of the YGS and LYS. TC46 said, "Our exams are similar in content and form to the IGCSE exams. Why should we ask something different?" TP21 said,

Measurement and evaluation are different. The exams we do include 50% classical-type, open-ended questions and 50% multiple choices in Grade 12. For other grades we cannot ask multiple choices. Our books also do not include multiple-choice questions. So there is no similarity. These students are unfamiliar with multiple-choice exams. Therefore, they attend private lessons in cram schools.

All students in public high schools and colleges (100%) want past exam questions to be used in the lessons so that they can familiarize themselves with the question types and the content of these exams. The following are interview excerpts that show such feelings.

SC10: I think they should use them in class particularly. This will help us see the question types.

SP92: If they use the similar question types in exams, then we will get used to them. I want them to use multiple-choice questions, not open-ended ones.

Document analysis of the 2010, 2011, and 2012 YGS, LYS1, LYS2, and LYS5 exams and the mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, and English language textbooks by Fırat (2013, p.157) revealed the following results in Table 1:

Table 1

Inconsistency Between the Contents of the Tests and the Textbooks

Tests (2010, 2011, 2012)	***Textbooks***	***% of inconsistency between the contents***
YGS mathematics	Grade 12 mathematics	98-99
YGS mathematics	Grade 11 mathematics	89-93
YGS physics-tests	Grade 12 physics	69-86
YGS physics-tests	Grade 11 physics	67-82
YGS chemistry-tests	Grade 12 chemistry	92-94
YGS chemistry-tests	Grade 11 chemistry	92-94
YGS biology-tests	Grade 12 biology	80-83
YGS biology-tests	Grade 11 biology	80-83
LYS1 mathematics	Grade 12 mathematics	77-87
LYS1 mathematics	Grade 11 mathematics	76-78
LYS2 physics	Grade 12 physics	72-82
LYS2 physics	Grade 11 physics	55-73
LYS2 chemistry	Grade 12 chemistry	79-91
LYS2 chemistry	Grade 11 chemistry	32-61
LYS2 biology	Grade 12 biology	89-91
LYS2 biology	Grade 11 biology	67-73
LYS5 English	Grade 12 English	33-36
LYS5 English	Grade 11 English	33-36

As evidenced in Table 1, the perceived inconsistencies by the teachers and students were present in high percentages between the contents of the tests and the textbooks. Yet, the total inconsistency perceived by the language teachers did not correlate to the findings by Fırat (2013), which was 33%-36%. Moreover, 33%–67% inconsistency was found between the writing section of the college language textbooks and the writing content of the GCE Turkish Ordinary Level and Edexcel London Examination for IGCSE English as a Second Language tests from 2010, 2011, and 2012 (Fırat, 2013).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was aimed at analyzing teachers' and students' perceptions of the impact of the IGCSE, YGS, and LYS particularly on the 12th-grade science, mathematics, and language curricula in terms of curriculum content, implementation, and teacher-made assessments. The study revealed that both teachers and students perceived extensive inconsistencies between the contents of YGS and 12th-grade mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology textbooks. In regards to the perceptions of the students, this finding correlates with Kelecioğlu's (2002) finding. Kelecioğlu (2002) compared the judgments of the students of 11-th and 12-th grades. On the contrary, this study revealed both teachers' and students' perceptions and found similarity in their judgments about the contents.

Moreover, extensive inconsistency between the contents of LYS5 and 12th grade English language curriculum was perceived by English language teachers. English language teachers in colleges perceived similar inconsistency between the content of Edexcel London Examination for IGCSE English as a Second Language tests and the English language textbooks used for Grades 11 and 12. Therefore, teachers stated that they changed the curricula contents to ensure content alignment. IGCSE test specifications were aligned to learning outcomes of the courses; therefore, there was a confidence in the content-alignment and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) that regulates the education in schools and colleges in UK authorized no research in this regard. The problem in North Cyprus colleges was that the test was Edexcel London Examination for IGCSE English as a Second Language test, but the book in use was toward IELTS. The problem in the high schools was that the books were for IGCSE English as a Second Language test, but the LYS5 was not for that. Therefore, there was a drive among teachers to orient teaching and learning toward tests/examinations (Alderson and Wall, 1993).

Studies by Hayes and Reed (2004) and Saville and Hawkey (2004) addressed the connection between testing and learning by refering to wash-back effect. In this study, the perceptions of teachers and students of curriculum implementation in colleges and public high schools revealed that external exams had a wash-back effect on teaching and learning. Teachers asserted that it is necessary to familiarize students with the tests; therefore the use of past YGS, LYS, and IGCSE test questions in instruction and assessment is prevalent among teachers. It was also found that the form and content of teacher-made tests in colleges are similar to the form and content

of the IGCSE exams; however in public high schools the form and content of teacher-made tests are partially different from the content and form of the YGS and LYS. The findings of this study totally correlate with the studies of Hayes and Reed (2004) and Saville and Hawkey (2004) in terms of the washback effect of tests on teaching and learning and on teacher-made tests. It was found that the instruction was mainly teacher-oriented, materials were test-oriented, and the format of the materials and teacher-made tests reflceted the format of the external tests. In this study, the students stated that they attended cram schools to receive instructions about effective test strategies, which was different from Hayes and Reed's (2004) and Saville and Hawkey' (2004) findings.

Recommendations

As indicated by Posner (2004) teachers experienced the dilemma of the coverage or the mastery of the contents. In this study, during the implementations the teachers stated that they mostly sacrificed mastery to the coverage of the content. Moreover, due to the emphasis on the content coverage, and the multiple choice test type in the YGS and LYS, it was found that more emphasis was placed on "knowing that" instead of "knowing how" (Ryle, 1949). Therefore, it is highly recommended to the teachers to put more emphasis on the later by considering the courses' learning objectives rather than the topics to be covered.

Moreover, it is highly recommended to the ÖSYM, as suggested in TÜBA report (2004) to collaborate with the MEB to sustain more alignment between the examinations and the curriculum. Moreover, an accumulation on certain topics in distribution of the exam questions on the YGS and LYS was noticed (see Table 1 above). This could urge the tendency in the teachers and learners of the inclusion and exclusion of the content parallel to test contents. Therefore, similar to the GCE A and AS levels, modularization in the contents was suggested.

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Dış Sınavların Lise Müfredatına Etkisi:

Öğretmen ve Öğrenci Görüşleri

Atıf:

Fırat, H.B., & Yaratan, H. (2013). Impact of external examinations on high school curricula: Perceptions of teachers and students. *Egitim Arastirmalari-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research,* 53/A, 1-18.

Özet

Problem Durumu: Ortaöğretim Uluslararası Genel Sertifika Sınavı, Yükseköğretime Geçiş Sınavı ve Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavları; lise ve kolejlerin 12. sınıflarında okuyan ve yurt dışında yüksek öğrenim görmek isteyen 17-18 yaşındaki Kıbrıslı Türk öğrenciler için oldukça önemlidir. Her yıl Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti basınında Kıbrıslı Türk öğrencilerin Yükseköğretime Geçiş Sınav ve Lisans Yerleştirme Sınav sonuçları yayınlanmakta ve bu basın yayınlarında; Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki liselerde öğrenim gören Kıbrıslı Türk öğrencilerin sınav sonuçları ile Türkiye'deki liselerde öğrenim gören Türkiyeli öğrencilerin sınav sonuçları karşılaştırılmaktadır. Basın yayınlarında, ayrıca, Kıbrıslı Türk öğrencilerin Türkiyeli öğrencilere kıyasla sınavlarda aldıkları sonuçların oldukça düşük olduğu ileri sürülmekte, ve bu duruma sebep olarak da Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde uygulanmakta olan eğitim sistemi gösterilmektedir. Diğer yandan Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'ndeki liselerde görev alan öğ-

retmenler ve öğrenim gören öğrenciler ise basında yer alan ve genel olarak toplum tarafından da oldukça düşük olarak algılanan sınav sonuçlarının aslında Yükseköğretime Geçiş Sınavı ve Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavları içerikleri ile liselerde uygulanan müfredatların içerikleri arasındaki tutarsızlıktan kaynaklandığını ileri sürmektedirler. Diğer yandan Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'ndeki devlet kolejlerinde görev alan öğretmenler ve öğrenim gören öğrenciler ise kolejlerin 9., 10., 11., ve 12. sınıflarında uygulanan müfredatların içeriği ile bu sınıflara yönelik uygulanan Ortaöğretim Uluslararası Genel Sertifika Sınavlarının içerikleri arasında bire bir örtüşme olduğunu ileri sürmektedirler. Ancak şimdiye kadar Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde, gerek lise öğretmen ve öğrencilerinin gerekse kolej öğretmen ve öğrencilerinin bu görüşlerini destekleyici herhangi bir bilimsel araştırma yapılmadığı tesbit edildiğinden dolayı böyle bir çalışmanın gerekliliği ortaya çıkmıştır.

Araştırmanın amacı: Bu araştırma niteliksel bir çalışmadır. Çalışmada; Ortaöğretim Uluslararası Genel Sertifika Sınavı, Yükseköğretime Geçiş Sınavı ve Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavları gibi dış sınavların; Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'ndeki devlet liseleri ve kolejlerinin 12. sınıflarında uygulanan matematik, fizik, kimya, biyoloji, ve İngilizce müfredatlarının içeriğine, öğretim ve öğrenim gibi müfredat uygulamalarına ve öğretmenlerin hazırladıkları sınavlara etkisini öğretmen ve öğrenci görüşleri açısından değerlendirmek ve ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır.

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Araştırmada, problem ve genel amaç ile tutarlı olan nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. 2011-2012 akademik yılında, sistematik ve amaçlı örneklem yöntemleri kullanılarak; Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'ndeki devlet lise ve kolejlerinde fen, türkçe-matematik, ve yabancı dil programlarında öğrenim gören 120 öğrenci ve 86 öğretmen ile bire bir görüşme yapılmıştır. Veriler yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği ile toplanmış ve veri analizinde içerik çözümlemesi tekniği kullanılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Öğretmen ve öğrenci cevaplarında içerik çözümlemesi tekniği uygulanmış ve sonucunda şu bulgulara ulaşılmıştır: Devlet liselerindeki öğretmen ve öğrenci görüşlerine göre Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavlarının içerikleri; devlet liselerinin 12. sınıflarında uygulanan matematik, fizik, kimya, ve biyoloji müfredat içerikleriyle tutarlılık göstermektedir. Benzer biçimde, devlet kolejlerindeki öğretmen ve öğrenci görüşlerine göre de Ortaöğretim Uluslararası Genel Sertifika sınavlarının içerikleri devlet kolejlerinde uygulanan matematik, fizik, kimya, ve biyoloji müfredat içerikleriyle tutarlılık göstermektedir. Ancak, öğretmen ve öğrenciler devlet liselerinde 12. sınıflara uygulanan matematik, fizik, kimya, ve biyoloji müfredat içeriklerinin Yükseköğretime Geçiş Sınavı içeriği ile tutarsız olduğunu belirtmektedirler. Buna ek olarak, öğretmen ve öğrenciler tarafından hem Ortaöğretim Uluslararası Genel Sertifika İngilizce sınav içeriğinin hem de Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavı İngilizce testi (LYS5) içeriğinin devlet lise ve kolej dil müfredatlarının içerikleri ile tutarsız olduğu ileri sürülmektedir. Bundan dolayı, devlet lise ve kolejlerinde müfredat uygulamalarının sınav-odaklı öğretim ve öğrenime dönüştüğü bulgusuna varılmıştır. Ayrıca, kolejlerde öğretmenlerin hazırladıkları sınavların biçim ve içerik açısından Ortaöğretim Uluslararası Genel Sertifika sınav biçim ve içeriği ile bire bir benzeştiği, ancak devlet liselerinde öğretmenlerin hazırladıkları sınavların biçim ve içerik açısından Yükseköğre-

time Geçiş Sınavı ve Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavlarının biçim ve içeriği ile kısmi benzerlikler gösterdiği bulgularına da ulaşılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Öneriler: Çalışmaya katılan devlet liselerindeki öğretmen ve öğrenciler Yükseköğretime Geçiş Sınavı ve Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavları gibi dış sınavların içerikleri ile devlet lislerinde uygulanmakta olan matematik, fizik, kimya ve dil müfredatlarının içerikleri arasında büyük oranda tutarsızlık olduğunu vurgulamaktadırlar. Bu tutarsızlıktan dolayı öğretmenler, özellikle 12. sınıflarda uygulanan matematik, fizik, kimya, biyoloji ve İngilizce derslerinin içeriklerinde düzenlemeler yapmakta ve yaptıkları düzenlemelere; konuların sırasını değiştirmek, bir veya birkaç konuyu çıkarmak, ya da kitaplarda yer alan konulara ekleme yapmak örneklerini vermektedirler. Öğretmenler; hem öğrencilerin uyguladığı baskı hem de yetiştirdikleri öğrencilerin sınavlarda başarılı olmalarını istemelerinden dolayı müfredat içeriğinde seçme, artırma veya daraltma yoluna gittiklerini belitmekte ayrıca, kendi hazırladıkları sınavları da bu sınavların içerik ve soru biçimlerine benzetmeye çalıştıklarını ve sınav-odaklı eğitim verdiklerini dile getirmektedirler. Bu durum; dış sınavların müfredat içeriğini, uygulamalarını, öğretmen ölçme ve değerlendirmelerini olumsuz yönde etkilediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuç olarak, özellikle Yükseköğretime Geçiş Sınavı'nın 10. sınıf sonunda verilmesi, ayrıca hem Yükseköğretime Geçiş Sınavındaki hem de Lisans Yerleştirme Sınavlarının konularının lise müfredatıyla bire bir örtüşmesini sağlamak amacıyla sınavların konu yelpazesinin daha geniş tutulması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dış sınavlar, müfredat, içerik analizi, öğretme ve öğrenme, görüşme, sınav-odaklı eğitim.