# How a School Can Practice an Authentic Curriculum? Theoretical and Practical Implications

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**Abstract.** Popular with many advantages, school-based curriculum practice can be applicable to varied teaching and learning purposes in different educational settings. However, Turkey is still far from such practices due to centralized educational policies. In order both to share a reflective framework and to present a detailed model, this study aims to practice a school-based curriculum with its theoretical and practical implications. The study was conducted in a middle school, located in Turkey, collaboratively with school members. School-based curriculum activities were planned, designed, practiced and evaluated regarding the school's authentic needs. The study followed the principles of the action research. The study resulted in fulfilling academic objectives concerning English speaking skills, and turning negative student behaviors into positive tendencies. Practiced curriculum was evaluated through school members' responses, and they reflected an awareness and willingness for such practices. It was also observed that school members questioned their roles and responsibilities after taking part in the study.

*Keywords: School-based curriculum practice, Extracurricular activities, School improvement, Turkish education system, Elementary education*

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# Introduction

School-based curriculum development is a procedure in which schools autonomously plan, practice and evaluate students' learnings and experiences in a purposeful framework (Bolstad, 2004; Marsh, Day, Hannay and McCutcheon, 1990; Parlar, 2014; Yüksel, 1998). In this sense, schools can plan and practice their local curriculum for variety of purposes such as academic development, social integration, counselling etc. Additionally, by applying such decentralized practices, schools can take different student profiles, socio-economic backgrounds, teacher qualities, schools' existing sources and opportunities into consideration.

School-based curriculum practices can play an important role particularly when centrally determined educational policies and prescriptions are not effective for academic and affective needs of a school environment (Li, 2006; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman, 1995). Differentiation among student-teacher profiles, socio-economic backgrounds, and available school facilities and opportunities may result in school-specific needs; therefore, schools may need to develop and offer alternatives that are not placed in centralized options. In countries such as United States, United Kingdom, China, and Canada, for instance, to fulfil local needs, school-based curriculum practices are commonly applied at local base. Through school-based practices in such countries, significant results as minority groups' integration with school environment (Bahry, 2012), improvement in teacher qualities (Juang, Liu and Chan, 2005; Chun, 1999; Priestly, Minty and Eager, 2014), and improvement in teaching methods were reported.

Turkey, as a developing country, applies central educational policies and practices. Schools mostly stick to national curricula and prescribed teaching-learning techniques, and have a poor tendency to practice authentic curriculum and teaching-learning activities to improve locally. Solely concentrating on nationwide curriculum standards and ignoring school-specific needs may prevent academic and affective developments of schools. Besides, in a local sense, schools may have different achievements in different fields (academic achievement, sports, art, etc.). In order to keep progressing locally, schools can apply authentic activities to increase success in teaching-learning activities, school atmosphere, and social interaction. Relatedly, Turkish policy makers have suggested a model (Ministry of National Education [MONE], 2018), namely "School Improvement Model", allowing schools to meet their own needs within their own sources, opportunities, and practices in a local base. Since it is a pretty new step in the field, most of the schools continue maintaining traditional point of view and disregarding many prominent needs of school members, particularly of students and teachers.

There many research studies on school-based curriculum practices explaining their reasons and effects. It is an incomplete picture that process-based implications of how a school can organize and practice school-based curriculum in Turkey. That is, this study essentially aims to implement a school-based curriculum and exemplify how a school can practice an authentic curriculum to meet a school-based need. Along with this purpose, following research questions were to be answered: (1) What are the reflections of school members' (administrators, teachers, students, and parents) after a school-based curriculum practice? (2) What do school members think about the developed school-based practice? This study primarily aims at contributing to school-based practices, then theoretical and practical implications in the literature.

## Related Studies on School-Based Curriculum and Practices

A curriculum, in the long run, bears the new adaptations, approaches, classroom activities in context. The interpretation of these newly adjustments is also schools' concerns (Eggleston, 2018) so that schools may re-express and/or vary the curriculum according to their authentic teaching-learning

environment. In this sense, school-based curriculum is not a completely new trend in the literature. It is possible to encounter studies on school-based curriculum in different explanations and practices dating back to the 1950s (Skilbeck, 2005; Marsh et al., 1990). Yet, the long-term consensus on the core procedure is indicated as authentic and more detailed planning, designing, practicing, and evaluating strategies addressing students' learnings conducted by a school or an educational institution for a specific purpose (Eggleston, 2018; Elliott, 2005; Bezzina, 1991).

In a school-based curriculum practice, all school members (administrators, teachers, students, parents, personnel) are expected to participate actively. Here, Palmer (2017) draws particular attention to teachers as they are both school members and practitioners. As school members, teachers need to share certain responsibilities in favor of students' academic and affective needs (Ünsal, 2011), participate more actively in school decisions and practices (Chun, 1999). Similarly, as practitioners, they need to update their way of teaching, intellectual characteristics, and academic network (İnal and Kaymak, 2014). Actually, teachers can be initial decision makers (Oberg, 1991) since they have the advantages of knowing students' needs better (Chun, 1999), observing informal relations among students, and getting touch with the parents more often. However, it should not be the teacher-specific task to set out.

School-based curriculum may be practiced for different reasons since schools have different functions besides academic training. The reasons can vary from reinforcing a single subject to an intervention module, fixed-term training program, cultural orientation, intentional extracurricular activities (Dewey, 2013) which are integrated with a school function. From an institutional point of view, schools are not only responsible for academic achievements, but also for affective developments and social interaction. Eisner (2017) marks that schools have the responsibility of providing competencies for students to make "good" things in life, therefore; they need to widen their horizon about curriculum practices and score-based achievements. Relating to the hidden curriculum, schools are also informal learning environments (school canteen, library, labs, break times etc.) in which members are affected by certain relations and interactions (Bloom, 2016; Fidan, 2012; Yüksel, 1998). Additionally, Rogers and Freiberg (1994) emphasize that a school environment with autonomous practices targeting students' emotions and social development satisfies students with personal needs and expectations. In this way, school-based curriculum activities can envision the school as an institution and advance specific educational outcomes and commitment.

From a sociological point of view, on the other hand, schools are mediators between students and the society (Celkan, 2018). Accordingly, schools are expected to disregard social inequalities, and provide equal opportunities for all school members. Equally important, schools are small communities concerning changes and developments occurring in the society. Motives as adapting new values and competencies (Ornstein, 2016; Aydın, 2015), supporting global citizenship, establishing a friendly and interactive atmosphere away from bullying, violence etc. (Drake and Roe, 1994), improving sources and opportunities can be regarded as schools' social dimensions (Alexander, 2003). Supporting the national curricula, school-based curriculum practices can include contemporary changes for students' progress in life and work as an active form.

Researchers likewise highlight school-based curriculum practices within intentional extracurricular activities because curricula enable schools to have a standard and easy path to follow throughout the year with a relatively little work load. Consequently, the school-based extracurricular activities can be practiced for students' specific school experiences in different fields (Dewey, 2013), internalizing moral values (Fretwell, 1931), academic success (Eccles and Barber, 1999; Jordan and Nettles, 1999), diversifying school activities (Marsh, 1988; Straub, 1994), and earning reputation (Rombokas, 1995). Furthermore, these activities can be practiced for resolving peer bullying (Farrell and Meyer, 1997), introducing new technologies and/or changes (Treagust and Rennie, 1993),

contributing to professional development (Wu, 2001), and teaching human rights (Schweisfurth, 2006).

Summing up, research findings in the literature emphasize that school-based curriculum practice can be interpreted as planning, organizing, applying and evaluating the set of activities by a school, concentrating on school-specific needs. The needs of the school can be determined by the school members' participation. School-based curriculum practice does not have to be a new curriculum. Rather, schools can organize extracurricular activities which aim to improve students' academic success, social relations, school culture and teaching qualities. Inspired by the literature, this study concentrates on school-based extracurricular activities since Turkey implements centralized curriculum. In order to benefit from school-based extracurricular activities, school-specific needs were regarded and given priority.

**School-Based Curriculum Trend in Turkey: A Brief Overview**

Curriculum studies in Turkey prominently date back to the 1900s (Varış, 1994). These studies rely on centrally given decisions, systematic and bureaucratic fundamentals and implications; unfortunately, schools, educationalists, and curriculum specialists are not actively involved (Akpınar, 2012). As time progressed, curriculum studies have been freshened with the 21st century outcomes and a growing worldwide pressure on educational reforms, then re-design and re-organization procedures in curricula have been initiated accordingly. Moreover, global reform movements in education, technology-enhanced learning environments, multiculturalism, and multi teaching-learning ways have led to an educational transformation regarding neo-liberal policies and global change. In this transformation, Ministry of National Education (MONE, 2018) highlights "School Improvement Model" that allows schools to apply local resolutions for their specific needs via local sources and opportunities when necessary. This model, in other words, gives schools a break to organize their own path to success, adapt the curricula regarding their needs and competencies, and advance as a unique community. OECD reports show that schools in Turkey have institutional restrictions stating as:

> *"…The capacity of school leaders and teachers to respond to school needs can be limited by weak initial education and training and teachers' lack of experience, as well as by the lack of flexibility accorded to schools within the governance structure… Schools have little autonomy and limited capacity to respond to their needs…"*

Teachers and administrators can also be the reasons for limitation in school-based practices in addition to structural limitations (Kahramanoğlu, 2017). Most of the teachers as both practitioners and administrative staff are not volunteer to take more responsibility or extra work load unless given by the ministry (Yüksel, 1998). The prescribed curricula with suggested teaching techniques are much easier to follow for many. Therefore, it is possible to ignore individual or communal needs experienced at schools.

In brief, Turkish curriculum studies have not benefited from school-based curriculum practices yet; although there is an opportunity to do so. Teachers are not highly motivated to take more responsibility, establish authentic teaching-learning environment, re-organize school atmosphere and culture. Within the major scope of this research, school members, particularly teachers, were encouraged to take an active decision-making in school-based practices.

# Method

Before any procedure, this research had official ethical approval obtained by the Human Studies Department of the university with the protocol number 180187 on 07.02.2019. Ethically approved research was conducted as an action research. In order to develop a responsive school-based curriculum to a specific need, real teaching-learning environment was studied; therefore, certain assumptions of action research were put forward (Johnson, 2005; Schmuck, 2005). First of all, the needs/problems were identified, possible procedures were outlined, data collection techniques were settled, data analysis were performed and interpreted, then action plans were developed. These action plans were integrated with the school-based curriculum development procedure. Details were explained in the following sections.

## Before the Study

School-based curriculum practice, as a new trend in Turkey, is not very common. To make this trend more popular and make schools be aware of school-based practices, researchers visited the schools in the city center. Before the visits took place, official permissions were taken. Official permissions restricted researchers to work with middle school teachers and students only due to national exams and teachers' work load in other school levels. In the province, there were 9 (nine) middle schools that could be cooperated with. Researchers held personal pre-interviews with the school administrators of these middle schools to inform them of the topic. As a result of the meetings, one middle school administrator decided to take part in the study to practice school-based curriculum. Following their decision to cooperate, administrators held a meeting to introduce researchers and teachers at school. In this meeting, researchers briefly explained the theoretical framework and procedure of the study. At the end of the meeting, volunteer teachers to participate in the study were noted. Additionally, school board wished to practice extracurricular activities since they have concerns about national standards and time management. These two main requests from the school were prioritized in the study:

 ➢ The school wanted to experience extracurricular activities.
 ➢ Extracurricular activities would be conducted by one of the English language teachers.

After setting the priorities, researchers, volunteer teachers and administrators came together in the third meeting to finalize the basic information about the study:

 i. The school-based extracurricular activities should not be organized particularly for academic success in English language. However, school members should be interviewed about the English language course in the school. Related needs should be noted.
 ii. School commitment should be improved by these activities so that all the school members should be interviewed about needs, concerning school environment and atmosphere.
 iii. Extracurricular activities should be addressed to 6$^{th}$ graders since upper levels (7$^{th}$ and 8$^{th}$) were busy with national exam preparations for high school.
 iv. The study should include volunteer participants from all school members

## Study Group

After the framework of the study was created, researchers initiated need analysis/problem identification. For the need analysis/problem identification, the study group was formed with school administrators ($n$=2), one representative teacher from each subject area (mathematics, social sciences, etc.) ($n$=12), all English language teachers ($n$=4), 6$^{th}$ grade students ($n$=32), and parents ($n$=17). All

participants took part in curriculum evaluation process as well. In designing and developing the curriculum, administrators and some of the participant teachers took responsibility. The school-based curriculum was practiced with a single English language teacher and the participant students. All participants voluntarily engaged in the process after filling consent forms.

**Data Collection**

There were different data collection tools utilized for the research. For the need analysis, individual and the focus group interviews were preferred. For these interviews, different questions were prepared with the help of literature, and the collaboration of curriculum specialists and English teachers. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Secondly, self-evaluation forms for both the English teacher as a practitioner and participant students were used to provide feedback after each curriculum activity (action plan). These forms were designed as a reflection of practiced activity to evaluate gains and new needs.

The last data collection tool was prepared and implemented for the research questions. To collect opinions of school members who took responsibility in the procedure, individual and focus group interviews were conducted. Interview questions were developed by the researchers and recorded, then transcribed. Related data were utilized both for the answer research questions and the evaluation of school-based curriculum practice and its effects.

**Procedure**

The research procedure was sectioned according to the process. The sections are as: initial preparations, need analysis, design, practice, and evaluation. Relevant explanations were presented below.

*Initial Preparations*

Any curriculum planning needs an organizational preparation. As a starting point, researchers had meetings in different schools to inform participants of the procedure. Having consensus with a volunteer school, a committee was formed to plan the whole path. The committee as the main body included researchers as curriculum specialists, school administrators, and teachers. These committee members were responsible for the whole process.

The first step of the committee was to make initial decisions. These decisions presented an emergent need for English language practice as an academic concern. As a focus, developing speaking skills of students in English language was centered on need analysis procedure. Highlights of the committee meetings also emphasized the time management problems teachers had in delivering national curricula. Settled English course hours, according to English teachers, were not enough to develop speaking skills since the content was so grammar-based. Therefore, ignored speaking skills were integrated in extracurricular activities.

Committee meeting reports also revealed that school environment was distracted by different dynamics. In order for deeper understanding, researchers collected information on the school's background. Registered documents, informal talks with school members and neighborhood underlined that students came from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Teachers made a connection between socio-economic background and students' negative behaviors such as indiscipline, offensive talks,

violence etc. They added that there were many things to deal with besides teaching. The conclusion led curriculum design to consider behavioral needs of the school as well.

Outlining general problems of the school, the next step was to determine the time and school sources necessary for the curriculum practice. Volunteer and available teachers were included in the procedure. These teachers had different subject backgrounds for multi-disciplinary tasks in curriculum activities. A volunteer and available English teacher as a curriculum practitioner was assigned. In order not to derange present mechanism, school board arranged a tentative schedule for curriculum practice. After meetings with students and parents, the schedule was confirmed. The schedule was arranged to practice the curriculum activities twice a week (Wednesday-Thursday) for two hours each. Activities were planned for a four-week period. Then need analysis procedure was initiated.

### Need Analysis

School needs, as the center of the practice, had the priority. Enhancing speaking skills and positive student behaviors mentioned in the initial decisions were the main topics. Therefore, for clarification, interview questions were prepared to collect comprehensive data from school members. The list of questions was elaborated according to each school member group (administrators, teachers, students, parents) regarding their experiences and point of views.

Recorded data were transcribed by the researchers and sorted out. The data was attentively examined to unveil underlying reasons for the main needs. Based on the responses of school members, schemata were formed to reflect main categories of the presented reasons (see Figure 1 and 2).
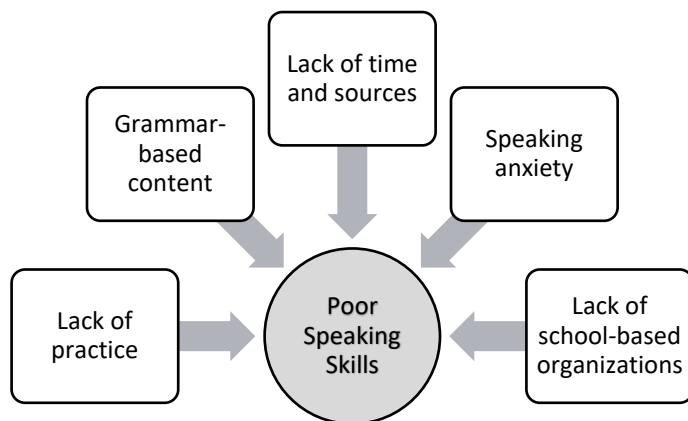


Figure 1. Reason categories of poor speaking skills

As presented above, the responses highlighted five main points affecting students speaking skills. All school members agreed on lack of practice for speaking skills and emphasized the situation as:

> *"…Teacher mostly teaches grammar. While doing the exercises, time flies. We cannot practice the speaking activities..." (Student 11)*
> *"…I need to ignore speaking exercises since the content is very comprehensive..." (English teacher 2)*
> *"…Children cannot have any time or extra place or activity to practice the language itself. However, they need to communicate in the target language, but my child cannot utter a word…" (Parent 2)*
> *"…The biggest problem, in my opinion, there is no alternative time or place for practice. Teachers rush to catch up with the national curriculum so that they have to ignore some of the skills. Unfortunately, it is the speaking skills most of the time…" (Administrator 2)*

Actually, reasons for lack of practice could be linked with reasons for lack of time and sources, lack of school-based organizations and grammar-based comprehensive content to follow. Teachers did not have extra time to help students to practice speaking skills. They also drew attention to limited resources for speaking activities. They mentioned that there was no authentic material guiding to practice the language culturally and communicatively. Books mainly included grammar focus exercises and following reading texts and comprehension questions. Even interactive materials were matched with grammar points and did not cover speaking exercises.

On the other hand, the school did not organize any activity in which students could use the target language and improve their speaking skills. Though there were many alternative methods such as school plays, speaking clubs, drama sessions etc., the school seemed a bit inattentive to organizing extracurricular activities addressing academic needs.

Speaking anxiety among students might be considered as a result of insufficient practice. Fluency and accuracy concerns, as well as, incorrect pronunciation might be the main factors decreasing students' self-confidence. So, the results support the idea that practice makes perfect.

The second implication on the mentioned needs was students' disruptive behaviors. A deeper analysis was done to understand what kinds of behaviors school members experience in school environment. Recorded responses presented most prominent behaviors that bother school members.
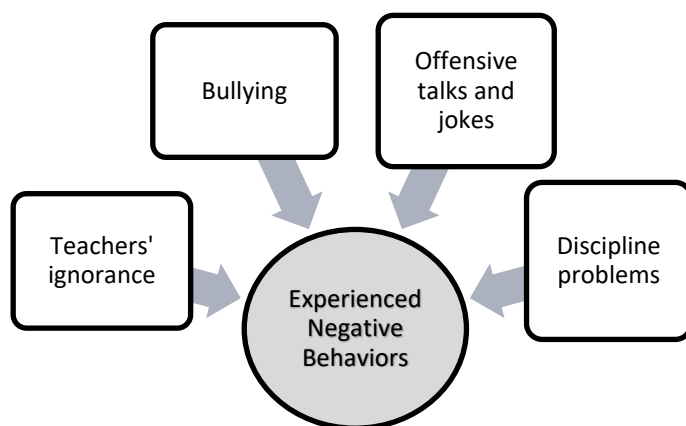


Figure 2. Categories of experienced negative behaviors

According to responses, students and parents commonly complained about bullying and offensive talks and jokes. They shared their experiences as:

> "…Students in my class always mock. It is very disturbing…" (Student 3)
> "…Students' language is very dirty. They do not hesitate to use bad words while talking…" (Student 9)
> "…Sometimes they do not include me while playing. They discard me and I do not know why…" (Student 14)
> "…Children push and shove each other in classroom, canteen line. They can easily hurt me and my friends..." (Student 21)
> "…My child is always complaining about other children at school. They offend and physically hurt each other. I am very disturbed and school cannot solve this problem…" (Parent 4)
> "…Some of the children mock my child and I have reported the situation to school board many times. They mostly avoid me…" (Parent 7)

Responses coming from students and parents also reflected the general ignorance to the experienced negative behaviors. So, teachers' ignorance was considered as another disturbing behavior. From teachers and administrators' point of view, on the contrary, the major problem was

discipline. They explained that students had difficulty in obeying the school rules, following the given instructions, taking responsibilities and being respectful.

To sum up, detailed need analysis procedure delivered many underlying reasons affecting the school's academic and affective development. Considering the limited time and sources, the reasons triggering the apparent needs were filtered. Finally, the school-based curriculum practice was linked to dealing with enhancing positive tendencies in students' behaviors towards each other by designing speaking-based extracurricular activities. The committee agreed on the final decision and the relevant procedure was initiated.

### *Design and practice*

Finalizing the focus needs, design procedure for the school-based curriculum was initiated. In the first step, main objectives of the curriculum were settled and listed as follow:

➢ To improve school-based extracurricular activities supporting students' affective development,
➢ To improve school sources and practices to enhance English language,
➢ To raise the awareness of teachers and students in using English language for communication.

These objectives were used as a guide for the following curriculum activities. According to the determined schedule, draft action plans were designed with specific curriculum activity outcomes. Here, it was noted that learning outcomes could be tentative since each activity could deliver a new problem to address in the next one.

Although the learning outcomes were considered tentative, each activity plan was designed with pre-determined ones. While determining, Bloom's taxonomy was put into force to follow a cognitive and affective sequence. Additionally, students' language levels were marked. Academic records and teachers' mention set the language level as A1. This level in the CEFR is justified as a beginning level for all skills. Accordingly, particularly in speaking competency, students were expected to greet, introduce themselves, ask simple questions, know simple objects around, identify relationships at home and school in the target language.

The content of the curriculum was next to design. Researchers and English language teachers had meetings to plan the content which was also in harmony with the national curriculum. The major points in the curriculum design were unity and widespread impact. In doing so, it was agreed that a school play and chorus were the curriculum product at the end of practice. These products had a main theme as "Kindness" and each activity was designed relatively.

Content of the curriculum was sectioned as vocabulary, listening, reading, and speaking. While presenting the content, alternative and contemporary teaching methods and techniques were adopted. Summary of the detailed content was shared below (see Table 1).

Different subject teachers collaborated on designing the content and procedure. Here, teachers from subject areas of arts, Turkish language, information technologies, school counselling service, and English language, nicely cooperated and shared information and experience. For instance, school play scenarios were prepared by the Turkish language teacher; students' drawn pictures were commented by the arts teacher and hung at school walls by the counselling service.

The English language teacher practiced the curriculum according to the schedule. When the practice was over, participant students presented their plays in front of all school members. Parents were also invited. The Kindness theme was highlighted and practiced by many teachers during their elective courses as well.

**Evaluation**

There were two types of evaluation in the process. First one was to evaluate each activity with self-evaluation forms collected from the practitioner teacher and the participant students. The other was to evaluate the whole curriculum with school members.

Self-evaluation forms helped to understand whether the activity objectives were achieved. Students' self-evaluation forms reflected what they learnt during the activity and what the activity changed in their lives. The forms also delivered new problems or gaps experienced in the activities. Students explained in which part(s) of the activity they had difficulties and why. Therefore, following activities were improved to decrease or eliminate the previously experienced problems.

In addition to the students' forms, practitioner teacher' self-evaluation presented inner and external experiences. In inner reflections, the teacher shared what s/he noticed about her/his way of teaching and students' capabilities in language learning. In external reflections, on the other hand, the teacher indicated experienced problems and difficulties students had been through the activities.

Self-evaluation forms generally reported that students were satisfied with the content and practices during activities. Students responded that they learnt many positive dynamics in relationships and they would be more careful. The teacher also emphasized that it was possible to apply different teaching methods and techniques for vocabulary teaching and speaking activities. S/he also remarked that students had capabilities to speak accurately and fluently. Reactions in the forms can be exemplified as:

> *"…I was generally successful at performing the activities., but I had some difficulties in pronunciation…" (Student 5 – Activity 1)*
> *"…I noticed that we should always be nice and kind to everyone, even to those who are not to us…" (Student 13 – Activity 2)*
> *"…I will not make ballyrag since it may be disturbing…" (Student 17 – Activity 2)*
> *"…I liked the song, but I had problems in understanding some words…" (Student 23 – Activity 3)*
> *"…I noticed that students were really eager to speak and be part of something. I should be more aware…" (Teacher – Activity 1)*
> *"…I regret not to use technology-enhanced activities before. Actually I also realized that I need help in technology use…" (Teacher – Activity 3)*

Summative evaluation of the school-based curriculum by school members also reflected one of the research questions so that the detailed explanations were presented in the results section.

Table 1.
Curriculum content

| Activity Theme | Addressed Learning Outcomes (shortened) | Addressed Vocabulary | Listening | Reading | Speaking | Teaching Materials | Adopted Methods and Techniques (shortened) | Duration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Kindness is the Key** | End of the activity students will be able to: ➢ Recognize positive and negative behaviors ➢ Draw a picture reflecting an experience with addressed behaviors ➢ Interpret the reading text ➢ Communicate in the target language | polite, rude, respectful, disrespectful, friend, bully | A song: **My penguin is not polite!** | A reading text: **Who is the Bully** (originated by the English teacher) | Find the Bully | ➢ Lyrics ➢ Reading text ➢ Identity cards (for speaking activity) ➢ Smartboard | ➢ Matching ➢ Dual coding ➢ Task-based activity | 4 hours (two days practice of the week) |
| **Kindness is the Best Answer** | End of the activity students will be able to: ➢ Pronounce the addressed words correctly ➢ React to negative behaviors ➢ Sing in the target language ➢ Act as assigned character | polite, rude, respectful, disrespectful, friend, bully | A song: **My badger is a bully!** | Scenarios of the play (originated by Turkish and English language teachers) | Act-out | ➢ Lyrics ➢ Scenarios ➢ Smartboard | ➢ Act-out | 4 hours (two days practice of the week) |
| **Act Quick** | End of the activity students will be able to: ➢ Pronounce the addressed words correctly ➢ React when experience a negative behavior ➢ Sing in the target language ➢ Act as assigned character | polite, rude, respectful, disrespectful, friend, bully | A song: **My penguin is not polite!** A song: **My badger is a bully!** | Scenarios of the play (originated by Turkish and English language teachers) | Act-out | ➢ Lyrics ➢ Scenarios ➢ Smartboard | ➢ Act-out | 4 hours (two days practice of the week) |
| **Share Your Kindness** | End of the activity students will be able to: ➢ Differentiate negative –positive behaviors ➢ Have positive tendencies in their behaviors ➢ Sing in the target language ➢ Act as assigned character | polite, rude, respectful, disrespectful, friend, bully | A song: **My penguin is not polite!** A song: **My badger is a bully!** | Scenarios of the play (originated by Turkish and English language teachers) | Act-out | ➢ Lyrics ➢ Scenarios ➢ Smartboard | ➢ Act-out | 4 hours (two days practice of the week) |

# Findings

This section reflects the results in addressing research questions to implicate on school-based curriculum practice.

**School Members' Roles and Responsibilities on School-Based Curriculum Practice: Present and Future Implications**

Interview results showed that all school members (administrators, teachers, students, parents) agreed that school-based curriculum approach should be applicable for many reasons regarding school needs in every field. Academic, psychological, social and continuing dynamics resulting in a problem in school environment should be the main concern of the approach. The recorded answers are as follows:

> *"…Practices as we did can overcome our deficiencies. For example, we had the chance improve our speaking skills in English language, and I loved it…" (Student 25)*
> *"…Concentrating on problems at school was very clever of the practice. It is and should be sustainable…" (Math teacher)*
> *"…School-based curriculum is very practical when concentrated on needs of school, students' in particular…" (Administrator 1)*
> *"…I appreciated the school-based curriculum practiced for school needs. It is more than necessary; I think…" (Parent 2)*

School members' implications varied in their present and future roles and responsibilities. Administrators, first of all, insistently remarked their roles and responsibilities as decision makers and providers. They thought whenever there was an attempt for a such practice, they could do their best to support to provide necessary sources and official permissions and procedures. Teachers, on the other hand, assigned their present and future roles and responsibilities differently. They mentioned that they used to be more ignorant and unwilling to participate in such practices. Moreover, they were forced to practice field-related activities due to national policies. Now, they indicated that they could take more responsibility in such practices since it was not that difficult to be organized. Their roles as teachers should be more than teaching and they needed to be active members. Teachers underlined the connection between the school-based curriculum practices and their subject areas, too. They leaned to collaborate with teachers to organize multi-disciplinary activities for academic and social purposes. These results were understood from the statements as:

> *"…Whenever a student or a teacher comes with an idea for a purposeful activity, we share all sources and opportunities we have as school board. It was always like this, and it will be, too…" (Administrator 2)*
> *"…I am more interested in transferring my content into real life practices through school-based organizations…" (Social sciences teacher)*
> *"…I want to practice some activities that I cannot do during class hours. This school-based practice is a good idea…" (Science teacher)*
> *"…As did, improving school-based practices according to students psychological and social development with teachers' collaboration…" (School counselling service)*
> *"…Technology-enhanced activities take time during class hours, but with school-based organizations we can apply technology more and better…" (English language teacher)*

Students, not surprisingly for the case, mentioned that they had never been a part of such procedure. They stated that they participated in prepared activities during class hours. They added that their opinions had not been consulted before. From now on, they would like to take part in school-

based organizations both as decision makers to explain their needs and problems and as practitioners. Besides, parents were satisfied with the school-based curriculum outcomes. They showed their gratitude when they saw their children on stage performing and speaking in English language. They also mentioned that they were seen as visitors rather than school members. Therefore, they could not get engaged in school-based practices actively to share their opinions or experiences. They emphasized their willingness to be a real member of the school to take necessary responsibility in future practices. These implications were retrieved from the statements as:

> "…We do not know the content of the activities. Teachers instruct, we follow…" (Student 19)
>
> "…There should be a council where we can share our problems, needs, wishes. Teachers and school board should plan accordingly…" (Student 23)
>
> "…Why does school board calls or invites us to school? They either ask for something – it is usually money- or they complain about our children…" (Parent 3)
>
> "…Can anyone know my child and his/her situation better than me? So, why the school is not interested in my opinions and experiences? We, as parents, should be more involved in school organizations…" (Parent 7)

To conclude, it is possible to state that school-based curriculum has raised members' awareness in terms of taking more active roles and responsibilities for school-based practices. School-based curriculum, in this sense, increased collaboration among school members, drew attention to school needs, positively affected school environment, and made a fresh start for upcoming school-based organizations and practices. It is also possible to say that students apart from the participant group were also eager to participate in such practices for the following periods.

**Reflections of School Members on School-Based Curriculum Practice**

School members evaluated the school-based curriculum based on their experiences and observations. Although the opinions of school members reflected different point of views, the common highlight was on positive effects. Students, at first, stated that the school-based curriculum contributed positively to their speaking skills, promoted positive tendencies in behaviors, raised awareness on bullying, increased motivation, self-confidence, and courage, and reinforced the friendship. Main contributions students stated were retrieved from the responses as:

> "…Thanks to these activities, I started to pronounce the words better…" (Student 5)
>
> "…We had never practiced speaking activities before. I started to speak now…" (Student 19)
>
> "…We have learnt to behave kindly and respectfully to our friends, teachers, everyone…" (Student 10)
>
> "…We behave more kindly; we are more careful. We warn each other when someone is not kind…" (Student 23)
>
> "…There were activities teaching us not to be bully and rude. They were so good that some spoiled children started to sit more silently…" (Student 17)
>
> "…I used to think that English language was difficult to learn, but now, I do not think so. I can do it…" (Student 8)

Specifically, English language teachers had more to add to students' development in terms of curriculum objectives. They mentioned that students' interest, willingness, and motivation in the target language increased; sense of responsibility and self-confidence improved; academic development was reinforced; and behaviors were calmer and more positive (in terms of discipline). The reflections were as:

*"…I was very concerned at the beginning actually. I had doubts about whether the students could perform the instructions, but now I see that they very enthusiastic about speaking English…" (Practitioner teacher)*

*"…The participant students are more enthusiastic in main courses. It seems as they like English more..." (Teacher 2)*

*"…Participant students are more self-confident in main course activities. They are more active…" (Teacher 3)*

*"…I noticed improvements in pronunciation of participant students. For example, in reading activities they raise their hands more and read the text with better pronunciation…" (Teacher 4)*

*"…I observed positive tendencies in behaviours as well. There are two male students continuously making offensive jokes in my class. They are more calm now during class hours…" (Teacher 2)*

*"…One of the best thing I liked about the effects of the activities is the word bully. Whenever someone behaves impolitely, students, participants in particular, respond as 'Don't be a bully!' I really loved it…" (Teacher 3)*

In addition to the external observations, English teachers shared some of their insights. They had some remarks on their way of teaching and perception as:

*"…As you know, we have a time problem to catch up with the national curriculum. It prevents us from doing different things in class hours. Now, I came to a realization that needs and wishes of the students (should) have the priority. We should concentrate on their learning and practice more. Technology should be practiced more…" (Practitioner teacher)*

*"…I think we forgot why we teach English. It is for communication. We remember now…" (Teacher 4)*

*Teachers from other subject areas could comment only behavioural reflections since they did not have chance and competency for development in speaking skills. They said that participant students were more motivated and positive in behaviours. Moreover, students had tendencies towards transferring the skills that they gained in this course (game and technology based ones) to other courses as well. Teachers exemplified the situation by stating as:*

*"…Participant students seem more motivated in class activities…" (Science teacher)*

*"…In my elective course, participant students made pictures reflecting helpfulness and friendship for example. I loved it…" (Arts teacher)*

*"…We have discipline problems as we mentioned before. However, students, particularly participant ones, are more well-behaved…" (Turkish language teacher)*

Administrators, on the contrary, could not share personal experience reflecting any implication of the school-based curriculum. They stated that they did not have any relevant observation since they were so busy in their offices. As final contribution, parents reflected their "homemade" observations. They shared that students were willing to speak in English. They also appreciated the practice and wished for the continuity.

Overall, the school-based curriculum practice helped to improve students' academic and affective needs. School members were satisfied with the procedure and the results. The main objectives and activities' learning outcomes were mostly achieved. Along with the specific objectives, it is possible to say that the practice made a realization for school members in a professional, institutional, and individual sense.

## Discussion, Results and Suggestions

The present research exemplified a school-based curriculum practice with school members' integration. It is seen that schools can be more active communities when they collaborate as a unity. Though the literature offers many definitions (Marsh, et al., 1990; Parlar, 2014; Yüksel, 1998), every school can track its own way to practice. Specific to this research, school-based curriculum practice

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can be defined as organizing and evaluating authentic educational planning through different activities concerning school needs in collaboration. As mentioned by Bolstad (2004), it does not have to be a completely new curriculum planning process.

Additionally, research practice revealed an awareness for school members. Specifically, teachers showed a willingness to take more responsibility for school needs and organizations. The sense of changing and/or reinforcing students' behaviors in a positive manner through school-based practices was approved by teachers in different subject areas. It is a very important outcome for the research considering reform movements and hindering problems in Turkish education. Along with teachers, students and parents' observed eagerness to actively engage in school-based practices is considered significant in the research.

Practiced activities, as part of academic development, support the idea that teaching is not limited to class instructions and activities. They can be applied in various formats in different contexts. Besides academic concerns, affective needs can be satisfied as long as school members want to deal.

Implications on results indicate that consulting students and parents' opinions and experiences in the procedure create a positive and supporting effect. It helps to develop connection among school members (Rogers and Freiberg, 1994), and improve commitment. Students can also benefit from opportunities sourced by the school without seeking costly external alternatives.

Though the study focused on basic student outcomes regarding need analysis, it is likely to talk on additional outcomes that were not listed. First of all, students' self-concept on academic achievement, self-confidence, motivation, and interests in English language enhanced. Additionally, internal and external observations and experiences remarked that students were not the same. It may, of course, result from many dynamics. However, it can be commented that applying different teaching methods, giving priority to what students like, reflecting positive attitudes, and not mentioning any measurement criteria may help students to be more active participants.

Secondly, teachers as practitioners also criticized their way of teaching and present roles and responsibilities at school. Teachers had tendency to move from being a traditional teacher to an expert one (Inal and Kaymak, 2014) who is more enthusiastic, collaborative and caring for students' needs and wishes. They also reconsidered their attitudes and perceptions towards students and their competencies. Since students came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, teachers had prejudices and certain justifications on students' negative behaviors. However, at the end of the practice, socio-economic background was not experienced as a handicap to improve and excluded from stereotype list (Schunk, 2014).

Alexander (2003) emphasizes five components of schools: time, space, people, thoughts and values, outside contacts. These components all together make a sense. Considering school members' time spent together, schools are more than an academic environment. These people develop thoughts and values in a certain time at schools. Therefore, it is critical for them to work together to establish a humanistic environment and build on it. School-based practices are effective opportunities to do so.

In spite of satisfactory results, the research some limitations. The research practices are limited to a single school and its subject specific needs. The procedure is also outlined with certain decisions and steps by the adopted methodology. The results are not claimed to be generalized for all school-based practices, yet; they contribute to the literature and future researches. Similar practices can be applied in different contexts and environments. School improvement policies can be arranged accordingly. Pre- and in- service teacher training programs can be enriched with school-based practices and responsibilities.

To conclude, emphasized at the very beginning, the research aimed to practice a school-based curriculum with authentic activities addressing school-specific needs. As a consequence, there have been many academic and affective contributions in a limited time and sources. The highlights now suggest that advantages of school-based curriculum can be practiced in many areas. School members and policy makers who have not experienced such practices yet, are to be encouraged by the research implications. As final words, it is hoped that the school-based curriculum practice can take its place in the literature both as a theoretical procedure and with practical outcomes.

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