

Secondary School Teachers' Classroom Activities and Their Perceptions on Effectiveness of the Activity

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Abstract

In the present research, effective and ineffective activities that secondary school teachers used and their perceptions on the effectiveness of the activities are investigated. The data were collected from 20 teachers using semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed using open coding and directed content analysis. Research findings showed that the type, cognitive process and ambiguity characteristics of instructional tasks do not differ between effective and ineffective activities. However, findings revealed that effective activities concentrated on cooperative rewards and small group study, whereas ineffective activities occurred in an individualized study and individualistic reward characteristics. Teachers' criteria of activity effectiveness was factors related to implementation process, such as the engagement and students' enjoyment. Teachers associated the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the activities with the contextual features, such as students' characteristics, course material and classroom environment.

Keywords: Classroom activity, task, reward, social group

1. Introduction

In recent years, the manner of teaching and school curriculum has been based on student-centered teaching approach. This approach emphasizes the individual characteristics of the student, suggesting that the role of the student is defined as active participant rather than passive receiver (Acikgoz, 2002). In this direction, learning activities have been settled into the focal point of the learning- teaching process to enable the students to directly interact with the information. Learning activities are expected to enable students to develop their own learning strategies, and also aims students' acquisition of the new knowledge through these activities (Doyle, 1983). Class activities need to activate the prior knowledge of the student, and new information should be organized by these activities (Acikgoz, 2002). Thus, class activities need to be designed and applied appropriately.

When the relevant literature is examined, we can see that there is no conceptual consensus on the class activities. Class activities can be defined as a set of actions arranged to produce a measurable and observable product (Serrano & Pons, 2007). It can be considered that class activities need to be discussed in two separate aspects to make the activities more understandable. The first perspective is the instructional task that is the essence of the activity. The other is the form features that define how student will perform the instructional task. While an activity can be examined with two features (i.e., instructional task and formal structure), the success of the activity is closely related to the context of the class in which the activity is applied. The influence of class activity on the learning of the students arises from the interaction of these three elements.

Instructional tasks can be defined as tasks that teachers give to their students to facilitate their learning (Acikgoz, 2002). These tasks constitute the dimension of the cognitive process and aim to ensure that the learners receive new information, make sense of it and use the new information in a different context. From this point of view, the instructional task consists of one or more learning strategies that are masterly integrated to each other. Doyle (1983) has stated that instructional tasks can be categorized considering the cognitive processes which students should use in order to complete the academic tasks. Doyle (1983) examined instructional tasks in four types: memory, procedural, comprehension, and opinion. Doyle describes these types as follows (Doyle, 1983, pp. 162-163).

1. memory tasks in which students are expected to recognize or reproduce information previously encountered (e.g., memorize a list of spelling words or lines from a poem);
2. procedural or routine tasks in which students are expected to apply a standardized and predictable formula or algorithm to generate answers (e.g., solve a set of subtraction problems);
3. comprehension or understanding tasks in which students are expected to (a) recognize transformed or paraphrased versions of information previously encountered, (b) apply procedures to new problems or decide from among several procedures those which are applicable to a particular problem (e.g., solve "word problems" in mathematics), or (c) draw inferences from previously encountered information or procedures (e.g., make predictions about a chemical reaction or devise an alternative formula for squaring a number);
4. opinion tasks in which students are expected to state a preference for something (e.g., select a favorite short story).

The cognitive processes student use when accomplishing the instructional task is as important as the task

itself. The cognitive processes that students should use to complete a task are defined as cognitive levels of the instructional task. Doyle (1988) stated that instructional tasks could be a low cognitive level or higher levels. While low cognitive level tasks require lower cognitive processes, such as perception, and redefinition of knowledge, higher level cognitive tasks involve decision-making processes about how to use knowledge and skills to solve a particular problem or to obtain a product.

When the instructional tasks that constitute the essence of class activities are examined, the characteristics of the product which will appear as a result of the task should also be taken into consideration apart from the cognitive processes. Doyle (1988) stated that instructional tasks can be classified as familiar and novel tasks in the context of the class. While familiar tasks consist of routine and repetitive tasks, novel tasks require students to make decisions about how they produce a product and how to do it. For example, in a science class, writing the names of the organelles on a representative cell image of a worksheet is a familiar task, whereas creating a model that shows the structure of the cell is a novel task.

The instructional task is the most important element of an activity. Instructional task should be consistent with curriculum outputs and should be challenging for students. However, the effectiveness of the activity is considerably affected by the form given for instructional task. We can say that the form structure of class activities consists mainly of three structures as social structure, reward structure, and authority structure. Social structure is concerned with whom the students are doing the instructional task. Students may be doing the task on their own, with or without the help of small groups (Johnson & Johnson, 1974; Slavin, 1980). Social structure can be examined by segmenting as individuals, pairs, teams (3-6), and groups (7+) (Reigeluth & Moore, 1999). Each segment has its own characteristics and influences. The reward structure, which is the second element of the form structure, represents the positive and negative consequences that students will face when they successfully or unsuccessfully complete the instructional task (Serrano & Pons, 2007). The reward structure influences students' motivation and engagement, therefore, the learning outcomes. There are basically three types of reward structure in the literature: cooperation, competition, and individualistic. The cooperative reward structure refers to the fact that the success of students depends on their own performance as well as the success of the other students (positive reward interdependence); the account of competition is that the success of students depends on the failure of others along with their own performance (negative reward interdependence), and individualistic reward structure refers to the fact that the success of a student is not affected by the other students (reward interdependence) (Michaels, 1977; Slavin, 1980). The last element of form structure is the authority structure. Authority structure refers to the self-determination of the student during the class activity (Slavin, 1980; Doyle, 1983). Sometimes when the entire control is in the hands of the teacher and sometimes the students have the chance of choosing the social structure, resources, materials, and even the activity.

The success of the class activities is also related to the context other than characteristics of the activities. The context that affects the implementation of the event is formed by the interaction of many factors, such as content, material, resources, student characteristics (i.e., motivation, learning styles, preferences, and readiness) and teacher's classroom management (Doyle, 1983; Doyle, 1988; Sanford, 1985; Doyle & Sanford, 1985; Gentry, Gable & Rizza, 2002). The appropriateness of this context is the determinative in the implementation of class activity successfully and in the emergence of expected learning outcomes. The same class activity may be very effective in one context, while it can be unbearable and useless for both teachers and students in a different context.

In this study, secondary school teachers' perception about accomplished and effective and ineffective activities were explored. The structure of activities that teachers found effective and ineffective was examined, and the study attempted to determine whether the effective and ineffective activities were structurally different. Also, teachers' perception of about the effectiveness of activity and the factors that determine the effectiveness was sought. The contribution of the present study is that the findings are highly likely to scaffold teachers to determine the educational needs of activity design and implementation.

2. Method

This qualitative research was designed to investigate the structure of the activities teachers used in their lessons and their perceptions to find out the underlying reasons regarding the effectiveness of these activities. The research data were collected through a semi-structured interview form.

2.2 Participants

Participants of this research was secondary school teachers (n=20) working in private schools in Istanbul, who were determined by the maximum diversity method according to their gender, experience and branches. All teachers were having their master degree at a private university in Istanbul. The participants were not enrolled a graduate level course about learning and instruction processes before research. Participants were taught Mathematics (n=4), Social Studies (n=4), Science(n=4), English (ELT) (n=4) and Turkish (n=4) courses, which are compulsory courses in the middle school program.

2.2. Data Collection

At the beginning of the research, relevant literature was reviewed, expert opinions were consulted for the interview questions, and to enhance the validity of the findings, pilot studies were conducted with the participation of four teachers. According to expert opinion and pilot study results, semi-structured interview form was modified. In the last interview form, firstly teachers were asked to explain an activity which they think effective and an activity they think ineffective. Teachers were provided with prompts during the interview. For example, if the teacher stated that students work in small groups, then, the interviewer asked some questions which allowed teachers to express how many people there were in a group or how the groups were formed. After the teacher had described the activities, the following questions were asked to the teachers about activities.

1. How did you decide that this activity was effective/ineffective?
2. What was the main feature that made this activity effective/ineffective?
3. What if you were able to go back the course you applied, what would you change?

Interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes and recorded with the teachers' consent who took part in the present research.

2.3 Data Analysis

The voice recordings were transcribed and interview data were analyzed using content analysis. In line with the research questions, the transcribed texts were repeatedly read line by line and coded.

In order to be able to examine the perceptions of teachers about the effectiveness of the activities, open coding was used. Following Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.12), open coding consisted of the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data. On the basis of these codes, the themes were created, description and interpretation of findings were made (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

To determine the main characteristics of activities, directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used. In directed content analyses, theoretical structure previously revealed or the concepts and variables were defined by the research used as coding categories were made. According to the explanations of teachers, these activities were coded by classified according to task features (i.e., type, cognitive level, and product) and formal features (i.e., social structure, reward structure and authority structure). When deciding whether the task was familiar or novel, product ambiguity was taken as a criterion in the product dimension from the task characteristics. The research data were examined and coded by two different experts. The inter-rater reliability was found to be 81% as calculated by the Miles and Huberman (1994) formula. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the coefficient should be close to 80.

Coding of the obtained categories was handled by calculating frequency (f) and percentage. The interpretations obtained from the analyses related to the success of the activities of the teachers were presented in the context of supporting examples. These examples were provided as direct quotations of the data collected from the teachers.

3. Findings

In this section, findings were presented in three subsections, including instructional task characteristics of activities, form structure of activities and perceptions of teachers about effectiveness and in effectiveness activities.

3.1. Instructional task characteristics of class activities

Following Doyle (1983), instructional tasks in effective and ineffective activities were coded according to classification and were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Instructional task type

	Effective Activities		Non-effective Activities		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Memory	5	25	4	20	9	22.5
Procedural	3	15	4	20	7	17.5
Comprehension	12	60	12	60	24	60
Opinion	-	-	-	-	-	-

When the teachers' activities were examined, it was seen that instructional tasks in the effective and ineffective activities consisted of 60% comprehension task (f=26), 22.5% memory and 17.5% procedural task. Opinion task was not found among the tasks teachers described. It has been observed that there were no significant differences in the distribution of effective and ineffective activities in terms of task types.

When the teachers' descriptions were examined (see Table 2), the instructional tasks consisted of 20% low cognitive processes task and 80% higher cognitive processes task. No differences were found between the effective and ineffective activities in terms of the cognitive processes level that should be used by students.

Table 2. Level of cognitive processes and ambiguity of task

Learning Activities	Low versus Higher Cognitive Processes				Familiar versus Novel Tasks			
	Low		Higher		Familiar		Novel	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Effective	4	20	16	80	7	35	13	65
Non effective	4	20	16	80	6	30	14	70
Total	8	20	32	80	13	32.5	27	67.5

When the tasks teachers proposed were examined regarding familiarity or novelty, which was determined according to product ambiguity characteristics, the findings showed that there was no significant differences between effective and ineffective activities, and 32.5% of proposed tasks were familiar and 67.5 % were novel task. All in all, activities teachers reported were comprehension type, high level cognitive processes and novel tasks. There were no significant differences among efficient and inefficient activities in terms of the task characteristics.

3.2. Form structure for the class activities

The form structure of class activities was examined as a social structure, reward structure and authority structure. Findings related to the social structure of class activities were presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Social structure of the activity

	Effective Activities		Non effective Activities		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Individual	4	20	13	65	17	42.5
Pairs	2	10	1	5	3	7.5
Team	14	70	6	30	20	50

When the social structure was examined, the findings showed that successful learning activities were performed as 20% individual (f=4), 10% pairs (f=4), and 70 small group % (f=14). 65% of activities expressed as ineffective were performed individually (f=13), 5% in pairs (f=1) and 30% small group works (f=6).

It was also asked teachers, who designed their activities as small group or pairs exercises, that how they formed the groups. Teachers reported that in nine effective and four ineffective activities, groups were determined randomly While the teachers created the groups randomly, teachers stated that these were performed with rhymes, numbers or colour cards. Teacher 14 explained how the grouping was handled: "They chose small cards in different colours. The students who selected the same coloured card created the group." Two teachers stated that they made grouping using software (Class Dojo) recommended by school management. In three effective activities, students made group with the closest students to their seats. Teacher 17 stated that: "Grouping was made. I made the groups as three or four students who were sitting close to each other." In four effective and three ineffective activities, groups are made by students. Teacher 16 reported: "They worked as pairs with a friend who they chose." On the other hand, Teacher 11, who did one of the ineffective activities, said that: "They wanted to create their own group, this brought about some time problem." These findings indicated that groups were heterogeneous in that they were not based on skills and similar variables.

When the reward structure of the activities was examined (see Table 4), it was determined that 70% of the ineffective activities and 20% of the effective activities showed individualistic reward structure characteristics. These rewards were identified as explicit and implicit. Teacher 1 expressed that: "There were no rewards or punishments. But, of course, I checked whether they write correctly or not." Teacher 6 reported about the strategy she used: "I said that at the end of the course I would collect and evaluate the worksheets."

Table 4. Reward structure of the activity

	Effective Activities		Non effective Activities		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Cooperative	11	55	2	10	13	32.5
Competitive	5	25	4	20	9	22.5
Individualistic	4	20	14	70	18	45

25% of the effective activities and 20% of the effective activities came as a competition. Teacher 20 said: "We chose three most highly rated posters as whole class, and hung them to class panels." Teacher 8 shared a different approach he used: "Students got a score for every correct question they wrote. I gave priority to students who got more than half of the points for choosing book." It was determined that 55% of the effective activities and 10% of the ineffective activities were performed in the context of cooperation.

When decision-making opportunities were presented to the students during the activities were examined (see Table 5), the findings showed that in 40% of the effective activities and 85% of the ineffective activities were not provided with decision-making opportunities. In a part of the group activities, the selection of group

members was left to the students (f=4) during the formation of groups. Teachers proposed some choices to the students as content of task (f=2) which they stated like (T5): “They had the right to choose the organ they would like to work with”, task process (f=3) T8 “They decided how to make the model on their own. Actually, they chose one of the two ways”, material (f=2), (T15)“They decided which type of paint they would work with. Even one group made it through cut/paste.” and product (f=1) (T7)“Some has prepared posters and some has prepared models.” In general, the tendency was that teachers were more authoritarian in the ineffective activities, but there were not enough options for students in the effective activities.

Table 5. Students’ choices

	Effective Activities		Non- Effective Activities		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
None	8	40	17	85	25	62.5
Social group	4	20	3	15	7	17.5
Content of task	2	10			2	5
Process	3	15			3	7.5
Material	2	10			2	5
Product	1	5			1	2.5

As a result, it was seen that the activities expressed as effective by the teachers were mostly performed in small groups, reward structure was cooperative learning, and options were offered for students even if they were inadequate. Most of the ineffective activities were reward independent, where students performed individually, and activities in which the teacher had the entire authority.

3.3. Teachers’ Perceptions about effective and ineffective activities

While investigating teachers’ perceptions regarding effective and ineffective activities, firstly, the criteria to determine the effectiveness / ineffective of an activity, perceptions about the source of the effectiveness of the activity and the perceptions regarding the arrangements that could be made in the activities were examined. The criteria that teachers used when deciding the effectiveness of activity were presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Teachers’ criteria regarding the effectiveness of the activity

	Effective Activities	Non- effective Activities
	f	f
Engagement /disengagement	15	9
Enjoyment/boredom	9	11
The quality of the products	4	-
Answers to the teachers’ questions	2	1
Noise	-	6
Negative comments of students	-	1
Total	30	28

When teachers were asked how they decided whether their activities were effective, their explanations were as follows: with student engagement (f=15), enjoyment (f=9), the quality of the products (f=4) and given answers (f=2) to the questions teacher asked during and after activities. Teachers explained the underlying reason why some activities were ineffective with the following accounts: disengagement (f=9), boredom among students (f=11), noise students make (f=6), students’ comments that they do not understand (f=1) and students’ answers to the questions that teachers asked after the activity (f=1).

Table 7. Teachers’ perceptions regarding factors determining the effectiveness of the activity

	Effective Activities	Non- effective Activities
	f	f
Students’ autonomy	8	-
Enjoyment/ boredom of task	10	4
Interest to task	5	4
Appropriateness of material	4	2
Social structure	3	2
Directions	1	1
Time management	-	1
Task difficulty	-	3
Noise	-	4
Readiness of student	-	5
Total	31	26

When the basic essentials that made the activities effective/ ineffective were asked to teachers, teachers reported that the main factor was the enjoyment or boredom of task for students (see Table 7). While enjoyment for students was seen as the main reason of the success of an activity, Teacher 18 stated: "It was seen like a word game to them. They had fun." According to teachers, the boredom of task (f=4) for students was the reason why the activity was ineffective. Teacher 4 said: "There were too many repetitions. They were bored." In effective activities, teachers also stated that providing students with decision-making opportunities was the main reason for the success of implementation (f=8). Being interesting task was seen as the reason of both effective (f=5) and ineffective (f=4) activities. Teacher 5 discussed that: "Children find it interesting to design three-dimensional things." whereas to Teacher 3: "Tasks on worksheets do not draw their attention."

The effectiveness of the implementation was also associated with appropriate (f=4) and inappropriate (f=4) material. While Teacher 10 expressed that: "Children like colourful things." Teacher 3 said: "I had to support with a concrete material." Another factor that affected the success of activity was seen as social structure. Teachers doing the activity with team work (f=3) defined this as a positive feature of the activity. While Teacher 12 expressed this as: "It was difficult at first to act as a group, but then they have enjoyed this communication." Teacher 19 had a different view: "Because they know they will be evaluated as a group, they motivated each other." It is notable that individual work was seen as the reason of ineffective activities (f=2). Teacher 4 reported: "Working alone is bothering children after a while. They do not go till the end."

The suitability of directions was shown as the reason for both effective (f=1) and ineffective (f=1) activities. While teacher 9 expressed that as: "[...] it was accomplished because they understood the applied activity. What they were going to do was written step by step on their cards." Teacher 15 highlighted that: "I consider that I could not express exactly what I expected. I think I should have explained much more."

As for reasons why activities were ineffective, four teachers focused on the noise in the classroom. Teacher 20 stated that: "There was too much noise and buzzing. And they were distracted." Teacher 11 explained through providing an experience from the classroom: "While some groups were acting their scripts, the other ones continued to working and speaking as a group. A noisy classroom environment emerged." According to the teachers, another reason for the ineffectiveness of the activity was the difficulty of task (f=3). It was bound to difficulty or simplicity of the task. To Teacher 3, "It failed because it was above the level of the children." whereas Teacher 10 said: "It was very easy for them. They were absolutely bored."

While describing the reasons of ineffectiveness of the activity, the readiness of student (f=5) was also emphasized. Teacher 18 expressed this directly: "Their readiness was not enough.", while teacher 6 highlighted the lack of prerequisite concepts: "I should have checked the concepts before the activity. They were confused." T 7 who made small group work highlighted the lack of social skills : "I had an unsuccessful experience because I did not consider students' shortcomings in social skills." Teacher 11 showed the time problem as the reason of ineffectiveness and stated that: "Time problem emerged. It could not be completed."

When the perceptions about the arrangements that could be done to make the activities more effective were examined as shown in Table 8, teachers expressed that they would not make any changes in a part of effective activities (f=10). Teacher 2 expressed this as: "I do not make any changes" and teacher 16 said that: "If I gave the same lesson again, I would not change anything." Teachers also expressed that they would not implement the mentioned activity again for a part of ineffective activities (f=5). Teacher 8 expressed this as: "I will not use it again. Because I do not think that it serves purposefully. I do not implement it again." teacher 19 said that: "I will not do this again. Because class really loses its attention."

Teachers expressed that they would think about changing the material for a part of effective (f=5) and ineffective (f=3) activities. For an effective activity, while Teacher 8 stated that: "I would get the numbers (number cards were used) printed in bigger fonts and different colours." For an ineffective activity, Teacher 19 said that: "I could have prepared the worksheet more visually. It could be more colourful and attractive."

Table 8. Teachers' perceptions about the arrangements of the activities

	Effective Activities	Non- effective Activities
	f	f
Time arrangement	3	-
Modifying task	1	1
Changing social structure	2	3
Changing the material	5	3
Reorganize team work	1	3
Checking readiness	-	3
Not change/not imply	10	5
Adjusting directions	-	2

For both effective (f=2) and effective (f=3) activities, some of the teachers who designed activities as individual work expressed that social structure of the activity should have been changed. For an effective activity,

teacher 1 expressed that: "I try to do it in small groups." For an ineffective activity, teacher 13 said that: "Students' interaction with each other has worked. I think it should have been a team work." For both effective ($f=1$) and in effective activities ($f=3$), some of the teachers who designed and implemented their activities as a team work indicated that they would make arrangements to improve the quality of team work. For an effective activity, while teacher 10 expressed that: "Not everyone has joined. I would do something for that. I would give a card to each member of the group as a difference. So everyone could participate better." For an ineffective activity, teacher 14 said that: "I would organize a more planned team work. Although the task to be done and content of the lesson were very interesting for the children, it was not efficient due to irregular and poorly organized team work." For some of effective ($f=3$) activities, teachers thought that they should be given more time. Teacher 2 expressed this as: "It would be better if there were more time." whereas one another (T15) indicated that: "It could be sustained more as everything was so well. But the lesson had come to an end."

For some of the ineffective activities ($f=3$), teachers indicated that they should have checked the readiness of the student. Teacher 18: "I think the beginning of the year was not appropriate. It was complex for children. I needed to know them better." Teacher 13 reported as follows: "Perhaps it would be better if I made a revision at first because it was so obvious that they forgot." For some of the ineffective activities ($f=2$), teachers expressed that directions should be given more clearly. Teacher 5 shared her: "I wish would give the directions in written." Teacher 15 recommended using a rubric: "It would be better to clarify the directions and give a rubric. I think we need to explain better what they will do."

For both effective ($f=1$) and ineffective ($f=1$) activities, teachers stated that making changes in the instructional task would have a positive effect. For the effective activity Teacher 14 said: "I would request them to do acting at the end of the activity." Regarding ineffective activity Teacher 10 had a critical eye and stated: "Writing a story was a time-consuming process. Through changing this, I can organize an activity like making sentences with those words."

As a result, while the teachers were deciding about the effectiveness of an activity, they took two variables as basic criteria: students' engagement and enjoyment/boredom. For both effective and in effective activities, teachers focused classroom processes as main criteria of effectiveness. They did not give enough attention products or learning outcomes as they should do. Teachers, on the other hand, explained the effectiveness and effectiveness of the activities to contextual features, such as characteristics of the students, material and classroom environment. However, teachers bring the enjoyment, being interesting and difficulty of the instructional task into the forefront in the characteristics related to students, very few teachers offered suggestions to emphasize this when it was necessary to reorganize the activity. Teachers of who thought that the activity could be organized brought suggestions about the organization of the social structure, the arrangement of the materials, the control of student readiness, management of the time and the regulation of directions.

4. Discussion and Implications

In this study, the characteristics of school activities that the teachers have applied, whether these characteristics determine effectiveness of the activities and also teachers' perceptions regarding the success of activities are investigated. When the instructional task characteristics of teachers' class activities were examined, teachers mostly applied to the comprehension tasks and, surprisingly, there was no difference between effective and ineffective activities regarding the task type. The relevance of chosen task to the curriculum output is significant for the implementation of the curriculum. However, in this study, no examination has been done in this regard, which is a limitation of this research but future research could provide valuable insights into this. It has also been seen that teacher activities require high-level cognitive processes and novel as suggested by literature. (Doyle & Sanford, 1985; Doyle, 1988; Sanford 1985)

When the form structure of implemented activities of the present research is examined, the results related to social structure and reward structure support the literature. The findings showed that a significant part of teachers' effective implementation took place in small groups and a cooperative context. It is known that cooperation and social interaction among students have positive effects on both cognitive and affective learning products (Johnson & Johnson, 1974; Niehoff & Mesch, 1991; Acikgoz, 2002; Brewer, & Klein, 2006; Hurley, Allen & Boykin, 2009). However, most of the ineffective activities arose when students performed the activity individually. Individualistic study does not motivate students for tasks. Particularly, classrooms where complex instructional tasks are implemented it. Individualistic study caused various problems. For example, students feel alone, face with difficulty to receive adequate support, so they give up quickly (Slavin, 1980; Webb, 1991). The results showed that the authority was the teacher in classroom activities and students had small decision-making space. However, research shows that supporting students' self-determination affects their autonomous motivation and active participation in a positive way (Benware & Deci, 1984; Filak & Shaeldon, 2008; Sierens, et al., 2009; Guvenc, 2015).

Teachers focus on the process while evaluating whether the activities are effective or not. They consider student participation and the enjoyment/boredom of the students. Learning activities in which students do not

participate are not likely to be effective. Also, teachers have also expressed that noise is a criterion of ineffectiveness. This finding suggests that teachers focus on process while deciding the effect of activities they applied.

Teachers emphasize that an activity should have some characteristics to apply an activity successfully: Instructional task needs to be interesting, and students should have opportunities to make a decision and choice. Teachers' opinions regarding the characteristics of an effective activity are consistent with the relevant literature (Gentry, Gable & Rizza, 2002; Yang, Gentry & Choi, 2012). The readiness of students is also defined as a factor determining the success of the activity. Students' shortcomings in their prerequisite learning or social skill also affect learning outcomes in the classroom implementations. In line with the literature, teachers stated that problems associated with task difficulty, properties of materials, social structure and classroom management, such as time management, noise, affect the success of the activity (Gentry, Gable & Rizza, 2002; McLeod, Fisher & Hoover, 2003).

Interestingly, although teachers associated the effectiveness of activities mostly with students' motivation in the event of re-organizing classroom activities, instead of recommendations to motivate learners, teachers tended to focus on suggestions, such as course materials, giving directions, social structure and designing instructional task. Therefore, we can deduce that teachers should be trained regarding the activities and implementations that affect the students' autonomous motivation. Cooperation-based small group tasks should be focus of teacher training curriculum. Training activities about class management skills, such as giving directions and reducing noise, may also be useful for teachers (McLeod, Fisher & Hoover, 2003).

In this study, when the characteristics of class activities are examined, their consistency with the curriculum has not been addressed. Future studies may examine the consistency of activities with the curriculum. There is a discussion in the literature that in-depth studies about the thinking process of the teachers' activity planning could also make a significant contribution.

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