

# Teachers' Opinion Concerning Common Exams Administered in Elementary Schools\*

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The common exams that have been administered in elementary school since 2007-2008 academic year are inter-classes mid-term evaluations. With these exams, measuring the teachers' performance as well as revealing the differences among the classes are aimed at. Therefore, evaluating these exams in terms of teachers' opinions is essentially important to realize the aim mentioned above. This study aims to get the teachers' considerations on common exams, if any, to determine the problems and their solutions related with common exams. Case study, one of the qualitative research methods, has been used in this research. The research group is consisted of 60 teachers working in a variety of elementary schools in Ankara province in 2009-2010 academic year. The interview form, prepared by the researcher, was administered to elementary school teachers in research group. The interview form was structured to explore teachers' views on common exams by using five questions. The content analysis was used in order to analyze, sort and quantify the written and verbal data. At the end of the study, it is stated that according to the teachers, the purpose of the common exams is to state the level of classes and the cooperation between classes and to determine whether the objectives of the courses has been achieved. It is concluded difficulties in giving lectures synchronously in school, non-existence of cooperation between teachers and having difficulties during the preparation of the exam questions are the main problems, which teachers faced with. Teachers participated in the interviews emphasized the advantages of the common exams rather than disadvantages of it.

*Keywords:* elementary education, common exams, teacher views

## Introduction

It aims to make some decisions on specific aspects for individuals in assessment and evaluation activities conducted to gather information. Validity of the decisions made for any individual depends on the comprehensiveness, accuracy and quantitiveness of the information obtained (Tekin, 2004). Our decision regarding people mostly focus on how we can understand them.

Kubiszyn and Borich (1993) emphasized that several decisions could be made concerning students and education training process thanks to information obtained during assessment and evaluation activities conducted during education process. These decisions might be concerning education, management, curriculum, grading and determination of students' development levels, interests and skills, selection, training, counseling and guidance of the students. Tests are one kind of the most important mediums to make these decisions stated

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above. A test (examination) was defined as “a systematic method in order to observe and define behaviors of the individuals under standard conditions” (Cansever, 1984). Tests comprised of the same questions for everyone were conducted within specific time period in a specific place (Yıldırım, 1999). Tests were especially used in order to assess the success of the students during one term or a year. Success in the education might be defined as “realization level of the previously determined learning targets by one student or a group of students” (Payne, 1997).

Tests are utilized in school classes in order to meet two elementary purposes. The first one is defined as the observation of learning to determine the deficiencies in learning in the units (in the subjects or activities) make up for these deficiencies before moving on to another unit. The second one is defined as determination of success, which is to assess learning levels of students in the part of the lessons made up of couple of units and reveal their success while taking precautions in order to eliminate foreseeable problems (Özçelik, 1997). Briefly, achievement tests are prepared and implemented in schools by the teachers in order to determine learning deficiencies of the students or to define learning levels of the students within a term of a class.

Achievement tests mostly implemented in assessing cognitive achievements of the students might be administered in variable numbers depending on the scope and weekly course hours. At least two exams are administered for courses with three hours or less, and at least three exams are administered for courses with more than three hours at fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades (MEB (Ministry of National Education), 2003). At least one of the exams is prepared and administered with the cooperation group teachers during one term, excluding those administered for courses, such as visual arts, music, physical training, technology and design, to enable cooperation and mutual assessment of the teachers. Keys to these exams are also prepared by school group teachers and the points to be given for each question is noted in the answers (MEB, 2003).

Common exams, which are a kind of mid-term evaluation between the classes, started to be administered in 2007-2008 academic year. Through these exams, it aims not only to determine the differences between the classes but also to assess the performance of the teachers. Therefore, it is vital to evaluate the common exams, which are administered to realize such important targets within the scope of the opinions of the teachers. This study was carried out in order to reveal the opinions of teachers concerning common exams, determine the problems and find out the recommendations concerning common exams.

### **Method**

Case study from qualitative search patterns was implemented in this study. Interview form developed by the researcher in order to collect data was applied to the teachers working in elementary schools to determine the teachers' opinions concerning common exams. Interview form, which was prepared upon taking opinions of two experts in the field, was formed by using five open-ended questions in such a way to reveal teachers' opinions concerning common exams. Questions included in the form were reviewed by five experts in the field in order to test the draft structure and content validity upon being prepared by the researcher. Form was rearranged in terms of both content and form in accordance with the feedback taken. Five questions in the interview form are as follows: (1) Why do you think the common exams are being administered?; (2) What are the problems you have during implementation? On which specific subject or subjects are you having problems?; (3) What do you think are the advantages and the disadvantages of common exams?; (4) How do you think the common exams should be administered?; and (5) What is your recommendation for more beneficial and effective common exams?.

Sixty teachers working in the elementary schools in Ankara city, Keçiören, Mamak, Altındağ and Elmadağ districts and administering the common exams in person during 2009-2010 academic year formed the research group. Thirty two of the teachers are female and 28 are male in this research group, which was formed in accordance with availability sampling method principles.

Answers of the teachers included in the interview form were analyzed through content analysis. Content analysis is a method that arranges the concepts in a logical way upon conceptualization of the data collected and explains the relationship between these concepts (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). First of all, an initial category and code list based on the literature were formed for content analysis. Furthermore, new category and code additions were performed when required during review of the answers. New arrangement was made in order to finalize categories and codes once all answers were reviewed. As a result of the content analysis, concepts were presented in a descriptive way. Direct quotations from the interviews to increase the internal reliability of the study (Silverman, 1993) were included while reporting the results of the research. Code numbers from 1 to 60 which were given to the students were used for the narration of the quotations and they were cited as T1 (teacher 1), T4 (teacher 4). Moreover, frequency and percentage calculations were implemented for the analysis of the answers.

### Findings and Comments

As a result of the content analysis conducted, it was observed that teachers' opinions concerning common exams were grouped under six major categories. These are: (1) purposes; (2) implementation problems; (3) advantages; (4) disadvantages; (5) recommendations on implementation; and (6) other recommendations. Furthermore, there are 63 sub-codes within the scope of six categories. Findings and interpretations obtained from teachers' opinions based on each category and code.

#### Purpose of Common Exams

Participation levels of the teachers in regards to category codes of the common exam purposes are given in figures and percentage in Table 1.

Table 1

#### *Opinions of Elementary School Teachers on the Purpose of the Common Exams*

Purposes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inter-class coordination	17	18.5
Determination of the class level	13	14.1
Determination of whether the attainments are acquired or not	12	13.0
Evaluating the students with the same questions	11	12.0
Determination of the individual level among the classes	10	10.9
Elimination of the variations in the education	8	8.7
Determination of the weak sides of the students	5	5.4
Introducing different question types	4	4.3
Increasing success	4	4.3
Enabling teachers' self-evaluation	3	3.3
Controlling whether the program is implemented or not	3	3.3
Determining teacher success	2	2.2
Total	92	100

As it is seen in Table 1, teachers have the idea that the common exams are administered for the following purposes respectively: to maintain interclass coordination, to determine the class level, and to determine whether the attainments are acquired or not.

Seventeen (18.5%) of the teachers participating in the interview stated that the most important purpose of the administration of the common exams was “to maintain interclass coordination”. Actually, it might be stated that one of the elementary reasons behind implementation of common exams was to provide coordination, in other words, to achieve harmonious interaction and planning of the procedures with each other. Opinions of the teachers participating in the interview are: “Purpose is to maintain the harmony and coordination between the classes (T1)”; “The purpose of the common exams is to maintain simultaneous implementation of curriculum within the different branches of the same grade (T6)”; “Providing uniformity of the subjects between the classes... (T24)”; “Inspection and balance of the coordination between the classes on the branch basis. However, unfortunately this purpose is ignored in our schools... (T36)”; “It is provided that the group teachers instruct the curriculum in a coordinated way (T49)”. The above mentioned opinions of the teachers indicate that common exams lead the group teachers to work together and implement the programs synchronously.

Thirteen (14.1%) of the participant teachers commented that the elementary purpose of the common exams was to “determine class level”. It might be said that this opinion is one of the implementation reasons of common exams. Some of the participant teachers used the same statements for this situation: “It has the purpose of determining the class level (T4)”; “Determining the level at the school scale... (T29)”; “Common exams are administered in order to determine the success of the students at the same level but in different classes (T39)”. These statements show the fact that the teachers have the opinion that the common exams are administered in order to assess the levels of the classes at school.

Twelve (13.0%) of the participant teachers commented that the elementary purpose of the common exams was to “determine whether attainments were achieved or not”. It is for sure that the exams administered during the education and training process have such objective. Therefore, it might be said that teachers' related comments on the implementation of common exams are extremely natural. Some of the teachers' statements regarding the issue are: “It is revealed that whether the students at the same level in school comprehend the attainments or not (T7)”; “The objective of the common exams is to determine and make up for the deficient subjects by considering the class levels instead of comparing two classes as good or bad (T16)”. The above mentioned statements of the teachers indicate that common exams are utilized in determining students' comprehension on the attainments.

Additionally, teachers stated the following respectively in regards to the objectives of the common exams: (1) evaluating the students through the same questions; (2) determining the levels of the individual among the classes; (3) eliminating the differences in education and training; (4) determining the weak sides of the students; (5) introducing students to different question types; (6) increasing success; (7) enabling teachers' self-evaluation; (8) inspecting whether the curriculum is implemented or not, and (9) determining teachers' success.

### **Implementation Problems**

Participation levels of the teachers in regards to category codes of the common exam implementation problems are given in figures and percentage in Table 2.

Table 2

*Opinions of Elementary School Teachers on the Implementation Problems of the Common Exams*

Problems	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not being able to give lectures synchronously	20	24.7
Non-existence of cooperation between the teachers	13	16.1
Problems experienced in preparing exam questions	12	14.8
Not being able to determine the difficulty of the exam and level of the questions	10	12.4
Allocation time from the other classes (synchronized application of the exams)	8	9.9
Preparation of the exam by one teacher	7	8.6
Insensitivity of the proctors	5	6.2
Not being able to explain unclear questions	4	4.9
Not being able to administer the exams again	2	2.4
Total	81	100

As it is seen in Table 2, teachers stated that the most common problems concerning the common exam implementations are “not being able to give lectures synchronously; non-existence of cooperation between the teachers and problems experienced in preparing exam questions”.

It is observed that 20 (24.7%) of the teachers participated in the interviews perceived that the most important implementation problem was “not being able to give lectures synchronously” before the exam. If it is considered that the most important reason behind the implementation of common exams was to maintain uniformity of the lectures given in different classes by different teachers, it might be said that “not being able to give lectures synchronously” is a serious problem for common exams. Some of the teachers participated in the interview stated the following for this situation: “The progress levels of the teachers in terms of subjects while implementing common exams might be a problem sometimes while administering common exams. This effects the exam date and sometimes results in postponing the exam for a week. Since teachers who are behind the schedule need to catch the other program in terms of subjects (T46)”; “Failure to maintain full cooperation between the classes and the teachers and inability to implement and follow up the curriculum in the same way by all the teachers are serious problems (T1)”; “Since the progress levels of the teachers while facilitating the subjects differ, the students might face with the questions concerning subjects which have not been facilitated yet (T60)”; and “Inability to maintain the same progress level in each class even though it is facilitated by the same teacher is the most significant problem in this regard (T8)”. Based on the above mentioned opinions of the teachers, it might be said that the failure to give the lectures in a simultaneous way might affect the time of the exam and the questions to be included in the exam.

Thirteen (16.1%) of the teachers commented that another reason in common exam implementations was “non-existence of cooperation between the teachers”. Also it might be said that the most important problem stated by the teachers in common exam implementations, “not being able to give lectures synchronously”, is a result of the problem of “non-existence of cooperation between the teachers”. Some teachers stated the following for this problem which is contradictory in terms of implementation reasons of the common exams: “We are experiencing problems, such as preparing questing and giving lectures synchronously during the common study in the groups... (T22)”; “It is an important problem in the common exams that the teachers in my group do not comply with the limitations given in the curriculum and include subject fields different from

the class level (T36)". As it might be understood from the teachers' statements, "non-existence of cooperation between the teachers" is one of the main reasons for other implementation problems.

Twelve (14.8%) of the participant teachers stated that another frequent problem experienced in common exam implementations was "problems in preparing questions". It might be said that the "problems experienced in preparing questions" is because of the fact that the teachers have different experiences and thoughts in asking questions, and have deficiencies in asking questions and standards of judgments. The following are the opinions of the teachers concerning the problem: "Since the subjects emphasized by the teachers differ, it results in difficulties concerning preparing questions (T20)"; "I have difficulty in preparing multiple choice questions in placement test (T32)"; "While one teacher wants to ask a question, the other does not. While some teachers would like to ask questions in accordance with the method of giving the lecture, the others do not. For instance, 'test' or 'fill in the blanks...' Compiling and selecting the questions take time. It exceeds 6-7 hours (T40)"; and "Preparing questions takes so much time (T57)". Teachers' opinions given above indicate that they experience important difficulties in preparing questions for the common exams.

Moreover, teachers thought the following respectively in terms of implementation of the common exams; "inability to adjust difficulty and question levels of the exam; allocation of time from other classes (implementation of the exam at the same time); preparation of the questions by one teacher; insensitivity of the proctors; inability to explain unclear questions and inability to administer the exams again".

#### **Advantages of the Common Exams**

Participation levels of the teachers in regards to category codes of the common exam advantages are given in figures and percentage in Table 3.

Table 3

#### *Opinions of Elementary School Teachers on the Advantages of the Common Exams*

Advantages	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Determination of the levels of the classes	19	22.1
Providing cooperation between the groups	10	11.6
Encouraging students and teachers to be successful at school	9	10.4
Preparing for general exams	8	9.3
Introducing different question types	7	8.1
Providing more objective evaluation	6	7.0
Increasing communication within the school	6	7.0
Easiness of preparing questions	4	4.7
Yielding teacher self-evaluation ability	4	4.7
Indication of weak sides	3	3.5
Giving synchronized lectures	3	3.5
Decreasing differences between the classes	3	3.5
Saving time	2	2.3
Providing equal opportunity	2	2.3
Total	86	100

As it is seen in Table 3, teachers had the opinions concerning the advantages of common exams as

“determination of inter-class levels; providing cooperation between the groups; encouraging the teachers and the students to be successful at school”.

Nineteen (22.1%) of the teachers participated commented that the most important advantage of the common exams was “to determine the inter-class level”. When it is considered that one of the most important purposes of the common exams is to indicate the inter-class level, it might be interpreted that teachers' comments on the use of common exams to indicate inter-class levels as an advantage point out that the common exams are used proper to its objectives and are understood correctly by the teachers. Opinions of the teachers stating that the common exams have the advantage of determining class levels are as “Advantage is to require giving simultaneous lecture within the different branches of the same class in terms of curriculum and teachers' ability to evaluate their classes by comparing to others (T6)”; “Common exams administered by different teachers is an advantage in evaluating the students within the general (T8)”; “Determination of our class levels on the basis of other classes. To make up for deficiencies if any (T42)”; and “I believe the advantage is the placement. The level of each class is determined (T49)”. Statements given above might be comprehended that teachers use common exams to determine the class levels and perceive this situation as an advantage for common exams.

Ten (11.6%) of the teachers thought that common exams have the advantage of “providing cooperation between the groups”. Common exam implementations bring the teachers together for procedures, such as question preparation and giving simultaneous lectures. Therefore, it might be said that teachers coming together accordingly increases the communication and leads them to have further cooperation. Statement of a teacher is: “Teachers become aware of each other. They discuss the techniques followed. They learn which one is more beneficial (T40)”. Another comment is: “This mutual study maintains the cooperation of the teachers (T56)”, supporting the idea that the common exams are significantly effective in maintaining cooperation between the groups.

Nine (10.4%) of the participant teachers have the idea that common exams have the advantage of “encouraging the students and the teachers to be successful at school”. Common exams provide that the teachers and the students assess themselves at the same time through the same medium, therefore, it might result in objective perception of teachers and the students of their situation. This situation might lead to the competition between the teachers and the students. At the same time, teachers and students might enter into smooth competition in order to be successful. One teacher's statement is: “Teachers might seek for teaching better lessons as a result of the feeling of competition (T35)”, and another comment is “Students become aggressive and take effort to be the best. They compete with each other (T47)”. It indicates that common exams encourage students and teachers to be successful and teachers perceive this situation as an advantage.

Additionally, teachers thought that common exams have the following advantages respectively: “(1) preparing for general exams; (2) introducing students different question types; (3) providing more objective evaluation; (4) increasing communication in the school; (5) easiness of preparing questions; (6) yielding teacher self-evaluation ability; (7) indicating of the weak sides; (8) giving lectures synchronously; (9) decrease the differences between the classes; and (10) saving time and offering equal opportunities”.

### **Disadvantages of the Common Exams**

Participation levels of the teachers in regards to category codes of the common exam disadvantages are given in figures and percentage in Table 4.

Table 4

*Opinions of Elementary School Teachers on the Disadvantages of the Common Exams*

Disadvantages	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Incompliance with different question types	5	17.9
Inability to adjust difficulty levels of the questions	5	17.9
Interruption in giving lectures	4	14.3
Performance-success anxiety in the teachers and students	3	10.7
Competition between the teachers	3	10.7
Neglecting individual differences	3	10.7
Instant indicators of being successful or unsuccessful	2	7.1
Difference between the teachers in terms of giving importance to the acquisitions	2	7.1
Preventing students from learning different things	1	3.6
Total	28	100

As it is seen in Table 4, teachers thought that common exams have disadvantages mostly as: “incompliance with different question types and inability to adjust difficulty levels of the questions”.

Five (17.9%) of the teachers participated in the interview thought that “inability to adjust difficulty levels of the questions” is one of the most important disadvantages of the common exams. The comment by one teacher stating “I believe that the most important disadvantage of the common exams is that the students are familiar with the styles of asking questions of their own teachers and they are surprised by the questions prepared by the different teachers and fail to be successful... (T39)” and another comment “When we consider the situation from a student’s perspective, he/she might face with questions which are not appropriate for his/her teacher’s lecture style (T41)” might be comprehended as the teachers think that the students’ inability to comply with the question types in the common exams, are prepared by different teachers as a problem.

Similarly, five (17.9%) of the teachers stated that “inability to adjust difficulty levels of the questions” is one of the most important disadvantages of the exams. Some of the teachers think that “inability to adjust difficulty levels of the questions” in common exams, is one of the most important problems experienced in the implementation. Some teachers commented on the situation as, “Some questions are extremely difficult (T3)”. Another teacher said, “Questions are directly downloaded from the internet and sometimes they are difficult accordingly. Questions do not assess the levels of the students effectively (T43)”, and stated that they could not adjust the difficulty levels which stemmed from downloading the questions directly from the internet. Furthermore, teachers think that this situation is not effective in assessing the students’ levels.

In accordance with these disadvantages, teachers think the following concerning common exams respectively: “(1) interruption in giving lectures; (2) performance-success anxiety in the teachers and students; (3) competition among the teachers; (4) neglecting individual differences; (5) instant indicators of being successful or unsuccessful; (6) difference between the teachers in terms of giving importance to the acquisitions; and (7) preventing students from learning new things”.

### **Suggestions on the Implementation of Common Exams**

Participation levels of the teachers in regards to category codes of the common exam implementation are given in figures and percentage in Table 5.



Table 5

*Opinions of Elementary School Teachers on the Recommendations Concerning Common Exam Implementations*

Suggestions on the implementation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questions should be prepared by the group teachers in cooperation with each other	14	16.7
Common exams should be implemented by the ministry country-wide or at city-town level	11	13.2
Teachers should not be proctors in their own classes	9	10.7
Appropriate questions should be prepared in accordance with the level	8	9.5
Cooperation between the teachers should be further increased	7	8.3
All students should take the exam simultaneously in the same venue	7	8.3
More comprehensive exams should be implemented	7	8.3
Reliability and validity of the questions should be taken into consideration	6	7.1
Evaluations should be conducted together	4	4.8
Different test types should be used	4	4.8
Question pool should be performed	3	3.6
Assistance should be received from the experts in terms of question preparation	2	2.3
It should only be conducted for teacher evaluation purposes	1	1.2
Results should not be disclosed in a confidential manner	1	1.2
Total	84	100

As it is seen in Table 5, the most common recommendations of teachers concerning implementation of the common exams are as the following respectively: “Questions should be prepared by the group teachers in cooperation with each other; common exams should be implemented by the ministry country-wide or at city-town level and teachers should not be proctors in their own classes”.

Fourteen (16.7%) of the teachers participated in the interviews concerning how the common exams should be implemented commented that “Questions should be prepared by the group teachers in cooperation with each other”. Therefore, as the first recommendation teachers stated that common exams to be implemented should be prepared by the group teachers in cooperation with each other. Some of the teachers participated in the interview stated their opinions on the subject as: “Questions should be prepared upon mutual decision of all groups by considering levels of the students. Curriculum should consider the students’ levels rather than the subjects (T4)”; “Common exams should be prepared by all group teachers working in the county town (T19)”; “Each teacher should prepare equal number of questions and check whether the questions prepared by the others are proper for their own classes (T39)”; and “Each teacher should recommend equal number of questions. Then selection should be made among all questions or question should be improved (T56)”. It might be said that preparation of questions in cooperation with the groups not only can eliminate the question preparation problems but also might contribute to cooperation between the teachers.

Eleven (13.2%) teachers commented the following concerning how common exams should be implemented: “Common exams should be implemented by the ministry country-wide or at city-town level”. Since the exams conducted by the ministry country-wide or at city-town level will have all the necessary qualities required for assessment and evaluation process, common exams conducted this way will enable more realistic evaluation of teachers and students. The following are some of the opinions of teachers: “We might determine the level of our students according to country-wide level (T3)”; “I believe that placement exams

should be implemented on the ministry level, it might also at the city level (T10)”; “Common exams should be implemented in the town and city and accordingly, students should be enabled for more objective evaluation. (T11)”; “I believe that common exams might be implemented for situations that require country-wide student selection. For instance, student selection exam or placement exam... (T35)”; and “I have worked abroad before. There is a country-wide common exam in Belgium. In Turkey, at least regional exams might be implemented in order to provide uniformity in education (T42)”. Based on teachers’ opinions above, it might be said that teachers think that common exams should be implemented more professionally.

Nine (10.7%) of the participant teachers noted the following on the implementation of the common exams “Teachers should not be proctors in their own classes”. Teachers’ being the proctors in their own class during the common exam implementation might prevent the objectivity of the common exams and defeat the purpose. In this context, it is certain that teachers should not be proctors in their own classes in order to perform a more objective evaluation for both teachers and students and the common exams serve to their purposes. Some teachers stated the following for this situation and indicated similar opinions: “Teachers should switch classes in order to be proctors (T31)”; “Teachers should be proctors in different classes, not in their own classes... (T49)”.

Furthermore, in addition to the recommendations given above, teachers provided the following recommendations on how common exams should be implemented: “(1) Questions proper to the levels should be prepared; (2) Cooperation between the teachers should be further increased; (3) All students should be tested at the same time in the same venue; (4) More comprehensive exam plan should be prepared; (5) Reliability and validity of the questions should be taken into consideration; (6) Evaluations should be conducted together; (7) Different type of tests should be utilized, question pool should be formed, assistance should be received from the experts; and (8) While preparing the questions, it should only be conducted for teacher evaluation purposes and the results should be disclosed confidentially”.

### Other Recommendations

Participation levels of the teachers in regards to category codes of other recommendations are given in figures and percentage in Table 6.

Table 6

#### *Opinions of Elementary School Teachers on Other Recommendations*

Other recommendations	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Readiness levels should be determined in the beginning of each semester	6	37.4
It should be used as an indicator for determining scholastic aptitude of the students	3	18.8
Exams should be implemented in a common way	3	18.8
Teachers should be trained in terms of assessment and evaluation and question preparation	2	12.5
Classes should be formed homogenously	2	12.5
Total	16	100

As it is seen in Table 6, elementary school teachers provided other recommendations concerning common questions. Six (37.4%) teachers thought that “Readiness levels of the students should be determined in the beginning of each semester”. It is for sure that assessment of the readiness levels will result in better evaluation of the teachers and the students. Success or failure displayed by the classes within the process, and readiness level of which was assessed might be revealed more clearly. Some teachers stated the following on determining readiness levels in the beginning of the term in order to utilize common exams better, “Readiness levels of the

classes enable the principals and the teachers to realize the progress made (T5)"; and "Levels of each class should be carefully analyzed in the beginning... (T7)".

Additionally, other recommendations of the teachers concerning common exams are: "It should be used as an indicator for determining scholastic aptitude of the students; exams should be implemented in a common way; teachers should be trained in terms of assessment and evaluation, question preparation, and classes should be formed homogenously".

### **Conclusions and Recommendation**

As a result of the research based on the opinions of the elementary school teachers, it is determined that the elementary objectives of the implementation of common exams are: (1) inter-class coordination; (2) determination of class levels; and (3) determining whether the attainments are achieved or not. Actually, these three results might be regarded as the elementary implementation reasons of the common exams. Maintaining the cooperation between the teachers, planning and conducting the programs together are extremely important to provide uniformity in education and training. Furthermore, determination of class levels especially enables teachers' self-evaluation. Students might clearly see their levels among all the students in the class. Teachers included in the research group think that common exams are conducted in order to evaluate students with the same questions, determine the placement of the individual at inter-class level, and eliminate of differences in education and training. All these points of view comply with the reasons why common exams are implemented in elementary schools.

It is determined that the following are the most common problems of the teachers concerning implementation of the common exams in schools: (1) inability to give lectures synchronously; (2) non-existence of cooperation among the teachers; and (3) problems experienced in preparing questions. Opinions of the teachers participated in the interviews concerning inability to adjust the difficulty and question levels of the exams indicate that they have deficiencies in question preparation, assessment and evaluation. Some teachers think that allocating time from other classes during implementation of common exams in order to conduct the exam at the same time is a problem. Moreover it is determined that the teachers participated in the interview stated the implementation problems as: (1) preparation of the questions by just one teacher; (2) insensitivity of the proctors during the exam; (3) inability to explain the unclear questions to the students by the teacher instructing the class; and (4) inability to administer the exam again when required.

It is determined that the teachers participated in the interview emphasized the advantages of the common exams rather than the disadvantages. In this context, it might be said that teachers have positive opinions concerning common exams and accordingly, this implementation has positive results. It is determined that teachers mostly think the common exams have the advantages of determining inter-class levels, providing cooperation between the groups, encouraging teachers and students to be successful at the school level. In addition to abovementioned advantages, common exams also have the following advantages: (1) preparation for general exams (such as placement exams); (2) introducing students to different question types, more objective evaluation; (3) increasing communication in the school; (4) easiness of preparing questions; (5) teachers' self-evaluation; (6) determination of the weak sides; (7) giving lectures synchronously; (8) decreasing the differences between the classes; and (9) saving time and offer equal opportunity.

In addition to the advantages given above, it is determined that teachers considered the following as the most important disadvantages of the common exams: (1) inability to adjust difficulty levels of the question; (2) inability to adjust difficulty levels of the questions in common exams; and (3) interruption in giving lectures.

Furthermore, few teachers think that common exams: (1) result in performance-success anxiety in teachers and students; (2) increase competition among the teachers; (3) neglect individual differences; (4) display instant indicators of being successful or unsuccessful; and (5) prevent students from learning new things.

Teachers' thoughts concerning how common exams should be implemented mostly emphasized that the questions should be prepared with the coordination of the groups, common exams should be implemented by the ministry country-wide or at city-town level and teachers should not be proctors in their own classes.

Additionally, it is determined that the teachers have implementation recommendations as the following: (1) questions proper to the levels should be prepared; (2) cooperation between the teachers should be further increased; (3) all the students should be tested at the same time in the same venue; (4) more comprehensive exam plan should be prepared; (5) reliability and validity of the questions should be taken into consideration; (6) evaluations should be conducted together; (7) different types of tests should be utilized; (8) question pools should be formed; and (9) assistance should be received from the experts while preparing the questions, it should only be conducted for teachers' evaluation purposes and the results should be disclosed confidentially.

In relation with the abovementioned results of the research, the following recommendations should be realized in order to conduct common exams in a healthier way in accordance with the objectives determined and obtain the desired results. First of all, problems experienced by the teachers in common exam implementations should be eliminated and the issues regarded as disadvantages by the teachers should be prevented. Feasible recommendations made by the teachers in terms of the implementation of the common exams should be taken into consideration specifically, and new standard should be maintained by conducting necessary arrangements. Also, teachers should be informed concerning the implementation objective and administration of the common exams and should receive in-service training concerning assessment and evaluation, question preparation, developing and implementing reliable, valid and feasible assessment tools. Fulfilling these recommendations will result in implementation of common exams to serve their purposes and contribute to better evaluations of the students, teachers and education-training process.

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