Secondary School Students' Cognitive Structures on the Concepts of Good School and Good Teacher

Vural Tünkler

Süleyman Demirel University, Turkey,   https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3536-968X

Özlem Kınacı

Süleyman Demirel University, Graduate School of Educational Sciences, Turkey,

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3701-6922

Abstract: The aim of this research is to reveal the cognitive structures of secondary school students regarding the concepts of "good school" and "good teacher". The survey model was used in this study. The data have been gathered through word association test. The study group of the research consists of 162 secondary school students studying in two different schools (state-private) in Isparta province between 2022 and 2023. According to the research result, it has been observed that students mostly associate the concept of good school with clean, teacher, lesson, student, achievement, environment, and education. On the other hand, the concept of good teacher is associated with the words polite, lesson, love, entertainment, discipline, and information. It was revealed that the students made connections between the concepts of good school and good teacher with the words respect, achievement, discipline, moral, helpful, and student. Finally, when the words associated with the concepts of good school and good teacher are examined by public and private secondary school students, it is understood that the cognitive structures of the students in the two school types are similar.

Keywords: Good School, Good Teacher, Cognitive Structure, Word Association Test, Secondary School Students

Introduction

Schools, with their own distinctive goals, are institutions where children can gain experiences about life and where they can have peaceful and good time. Schools should not be disconnected from life. Life activities should be integrated with school. Instruction can become regular and consistent if this aim is achieved (Dewey, 2019). One of the factors that make up school culture is the school climate. These two notions can be defined as overlapping concepts. The aim to create positive school climate should be prioritized, especially considering its

	International Conference on		
ICRES	Research in Education and Science		**istes** Organization
www.icres.net	May 18-21, 2023	Cappadocia, Turkiye	www.istes.org

huge impact on a student's achievement (MacNeil et al., 2009). Schools have an implicit effect on attitudes of students. These effects are involved within a hidden curriculum itself. Hidden curriculum is an informal program which gives implicit messages in the school culture and which influences the moral structures and attitudes of students (Yüksel, 2004). Implicit messages, which are a part of school culture, have a mission to prepare students for social life as well. Hidden curriculum also affects the quality of instruction activities that are taught at schools. When it has a positive influence on the education process, the attitude of a student towards his school and teachers becomes positive too (Topçu, 2019).

School climate is a set of features that includes physical and social factors that make schools different from other institutions and that affects the psychology of a student and a teacher as well (Grazia & Molinari, 2021). All of these factors that make up school culture play a decisive role in the attitude that a student develops towards his school and teachers as well. There are many variables that are part of the social variables. When all of these variables are made possible, there occurs a positive commitment between a student, a teacher and a school triangle. There is no doubt that everyone who takes part in the education process has a responsibility in building this commitment (Balcı, 1988). In order to be effective, schools set goals that they adopt as a principle. Some of these aims are to increase the level of success, develop applications by considering individual differences of students and to provide a suitable learning environment. The schools that fail to accomplish these goals can be defined as ineffective. Schools should organize both their physical environments and educational practices by taking into account the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills of students. Teachers have responsibilities in organising school and classroom environments. It is the aim and responsibility of a teacher to create harmonious and productive educational environment (Helvacı, & Aydoğan, 2011). An effective teacher should make a classroom environment suitable for learning experiences, involve students in learning process with individual and teamwork, constantly improve herself/himself personally and professionally and should also test students to determine whether their educational activities are efficient enough or not (Seferoğlu, 2004). It should not be assumed that schools and teachers are prepared to develop a single aspect of a student. Providing a multidimensional learning environment in schools also positively affects a student's perception of a school and of a teacher. A good school does not only have a single characteristic. In order for a school to be called good, it must have more than one quality. Being unifying, integrative and not divisive are among the qualities that schools should have. Schools that have contemporary values and that are far from dividing students into groups with stereotypical thoughts as successful or unsuccessful can be defined as good schools that have acquired the right school culture. Good schools are those which are integrated with students, teachers and management (Ball, 1997).

The performance of the teachers in the education process has also been a determining factor on the effectiveness of the process. Teachers' doing their job enthusiastically and playing an encouraging role are effective in adapting students to the educational process. An effective teacher, along with academic competence, should be talented, caring, fair, creative and have a good control over a class (Miller, 2012). A teacher, who is one of the main factors of the education system, is a person who not only conveys information but also has problem-solving skills, acts consistently and follows the developments in the contemporary world, has a good command

of the subject area, and prioritizes the learner (Harrison, & Blakemore, 1992, as cited in Yılmaz, & Güven, 2015, p. 56). Making students active in the process of learning is among the other duties that are given to a teacher. A multi-learning environment should be created and multiple learning methods and techniques should be adopted to achieve this. A teacher should not just be a conveyer of information; she/he should also take a duty as an implementer of what she/he teaches (Dewar, 2002). A teacher's sense of belonging to her/his institution reflects on educational process positively. A sense of belonging is directly proportional to the professional satisfaction of a teacher. The high motivation of a teacher, who has reached professional satisfaction, also increases his/her performance in the education process. These characteristics of a teacher, who is highly motivated and who has made his/her profession effective, will also help to create a positive commitment between a teacher and a student (Güler et al., 2020).

When the literature is analysed, it is seen that the concepts of good school and good teacher are included in various studies. In these studies, the adjective 'effective' is used as a synonym of the word 'good'. Although there are studies involving the concepts of school and teacher (Ada, & Baysal, 2010; Balcı, 1988; Can, 2004; Çobanoğlu, 2017; Güler et al., 2020; Güngör, 2018; Kızıltepe, 2002; Karakelle, 2005; Malikow, 2006; Şahin, 2011; Watkins, & Zhang, 2006), there are no studies that have been carried out to examine secondary school students' perceptions of good school and good teachers. The aim of this study is to reveal the cognitive structures of students regarding the concepts of good school and good teacher.

Method

In this study, the cognitive structures of secondary school students regarding the concepts of good school and good teacher were tried to be explained by using the survey model. The survey model is an approach that aims to describe an existing situation as it is (Karasar, 2009).

Participants

The study group of the research consists of 163 students studying in 5 (n=48), 6 (n=35), 7 (n=35) and 8th grades (n=45) in a private and state secondary schools in the city centre of Isparta. Seventy-eight of the participants are female while the other eighty-five are male.

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to reveal the cognitive structures of the students regarding the concepts determined in the research, the study data were collected through the word association test (WAT). In word association tests, students are expected to produce evocative answer words in their minds about key concepts in a certain period of time (Bahar, & Özatlı, 2003). The first page of the word association test includes an instruction along with an example. Key concepts were arranged in a way that would allow each of them to be on a separate single page

ICRES

**International Conference on
Research in Education and Science**

www.icres.net   May 18-21, 2023   Cappadocia, Turkiye   www.istes.org

istes
Organization

and written ten times one under the other. The students were given 45 seconds for each concept and expected to write down the words that they associate with these concepts. At the end of the time, the students were asked to move on to the next page (Bahar et al., 2008). After having applied the word association tests, concept networks were created in line/in accordance with the frequencies that emerged and cut-off points were determined. Each range of the cut-off points were shown by a separate concept network and symbolized with different colors. The concepts that were in the range of the cut-off points meant that they were repeated as many times as the number of students in that range (Bahar et al., 2008).
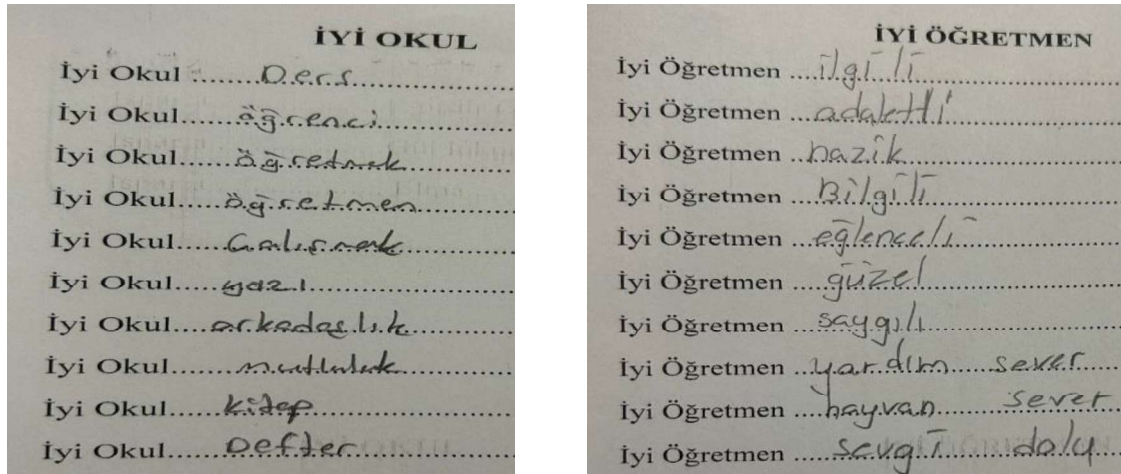

Figure 27. Response sheet of one of the participants

Results

The results collected in the research are presented with concept networks and figures. The frequencies of the words that emerged in relation to? to the concepts of 'good school' and 'good teacher' are given in Table 1 and cut-off range is shown with the concept networks. The words that the students of private and public schools associated with key concepts are shown in Figure 1-4.

Tablo 1. Frequencies of words produced related to key concepts

Response words	Key words	
	Good school	Good teacher
Clean	74	3
Teacher	64	-
Lesson	41	51
Student	34	9
Achievement	29	14
Environment	23	-

Education	23	6
Entertainment	21	35
Discipline	19	21
Respect	9	17
Polite	9	52
Food	6	-
Information	5	20
Helpful	5	15
Love	4	50
Interest	3	7
Justice	3	9
Special	1	-
Security	1	-
Moral	1	3
Note	-	1

The words that the students associated with key concepts the most are given in Table 1. The key concept of 'good school' was mostly associated with words 'clean' (74), 'teacher' (64), 'lesson' (41), 'student' (34) and 'achievement' (29); The key concept of 'good teacher' was associated with the words 'polite' (52), 'lesson' (51), 'love' (50), 'entertainment' (35) and 'information' (20). According to the frequencies in Table 1, four ranges were determined for the cut-off points. These ranges are shown by the concept networks below.

Figure 2. Concept network structured for cut-off point 30 and above

Figure 1 was created for concepts with a cut-off point of 30 and above. As seen in the figure, only a word for the concept of 'good school' was produced by the students. At this stage, no words were produced regarding the concept of 'good teacher'.
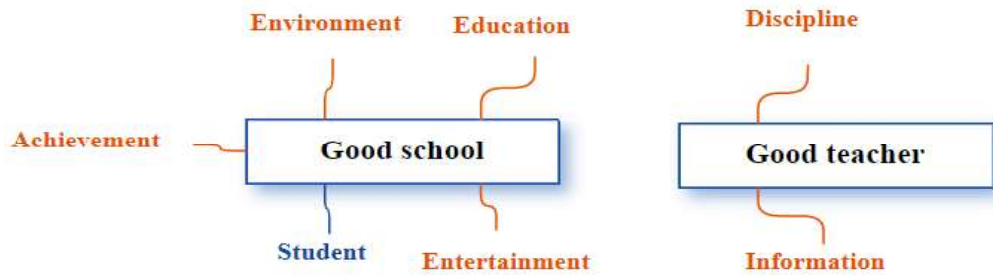
Figure 3. Concept network structured for cut-off point 20 and 29 range

Figure 2 was created for concepts with a cut-off point between 20 and 29. In this concept network, the words 'achievement', 'environment', 'education', 'entertainment' emerged for the concept of 'good school'; the words 'discipline' and 'information' were produced for the concept of 'good teacher'. There is no common word that students associate both with the concepts of 'good school' and 'good teacher'.
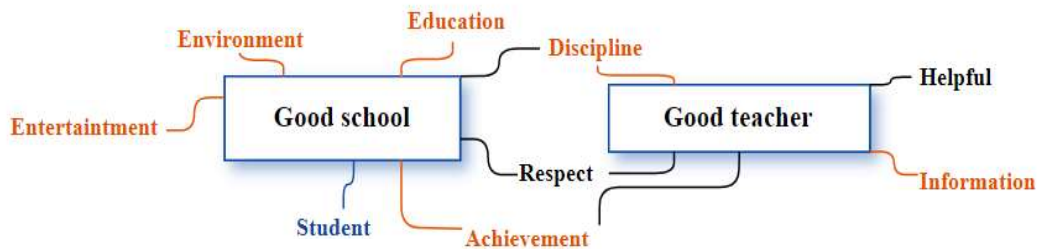

Figure. 4 Concept network structured for cut-off point 10 and 19 range

Figure 3 was created for concepts with a cut-off point between 10 and 19. In this concept network, the word 'helpful' emerged for the concept of 'good teacher'. It is seen that the association between key concepts starts at this stage. As a matter of fact, the association between the key concepts of 'good school' and 'good teacher' is established with the words 'discipline', 'respect' and 'achievement'.
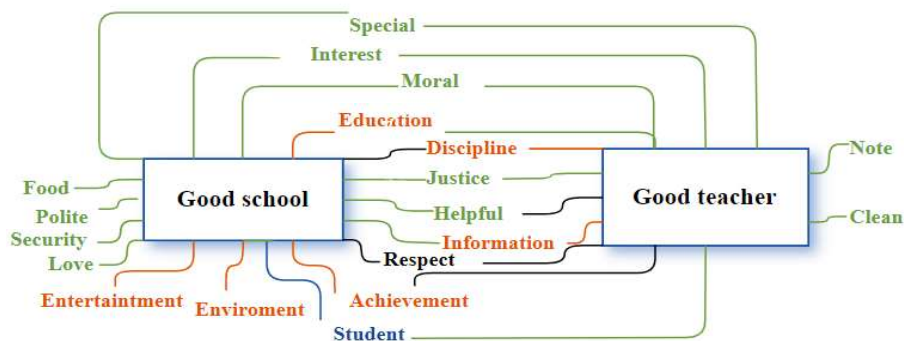

Figure 4. Concept network structured for cut-off point 9 and below

Figure 4 was created for concepts with a cut-off point of 9 and below. The words 'food', 'polite', 'security', 'love' emerged for the concept of 'good school' while the words 'note', 'clean' emerged for the concept of 'good teacher'. At this stage, the words 'special', 'interest', 'moral', 'justice', which were associated with both of the concepts emerged. At this stage, the words 'education' and 'student', which had previously emerged in relation to the concept of 'good school', were also associated with the concept of 'good teacher'. In addition, the word 'information' that had emerged in relation to the concept of 'good teacher' was associated with the concept of 'good teacher' at this stage.
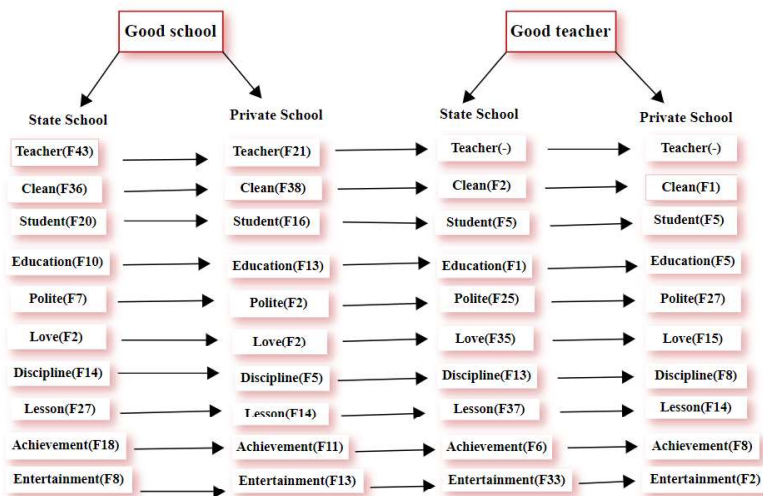

Figure 5. Students' answers to key concepts by school type

In Figure 5, the 10 most frequently repeated answer words related to the key concepts of 'good school' and 'good teacher' gore? the school type are compared and presented. When the cognitive structures of the students for the concepts of 'good school' and 'good teacher' are examined according to the school type, it is noticed that the students studying in public and private secondary schools have similar cognitive structures.

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

In this study, the cognitive structures of secondary school students regarding the concepts of good school and good teacher were examined. As a result of the research, it was found out that the students associated the concept of 'good school' with answer words such as 'clean', 'teacher', 'lesson', 'student', 'achievement', 'environment', 'education', and the key concept of 'good teacher' with answer words such as 'clean', 'lesson', 'student', 'achievement', 'education', 'entertainment' and 'discipline'. The results of the research have shown that the answer words that students associate with the concepts of 'good school' and 'good teacher' are generally positive. This case shows parallelism with the literature. Kuyumcu and Özsarı, (2016) in their metaphor study, in which they evaluated the perceptions of 5th and 6th grade students in relation to the concepts of 'teacher' and 'school', revealed that the general perceptions of the students regarding these concepts were

positive. Students' associating the key concept of good school with the word success is in line with the study carried out by Gökçe and Kahraman (2010). Balcı (1988) emphasized the concepts of success, education, teacher and student while stating the variables that the effective school is associated with.

It has shown that the words discipline, respect, achievement, education, information, student, helpful, justice, morale, interest, special are common investigating the words associated with the key concepts of good school and good teacher. The concept of discipline for the student can also be perceived as the student's behavior in accordance with the school order and taking precautions for all kinds of negative situations (Sarpkaya, 2007). The fact that students see school administrators and teachers as elements reflecting power and authority may have evoked the concept of respect and discipline for students. Increasing success is among the main goals of schools and teachers. It is important to ensure the necessary cooperation between the school administration and the teachers to create a suitable educational climate for the students and make the students feel that they stand by in a possible problem that the student may occur (Döş, 2013). The activities organized to increase school success played a significant role in the emergence of the concept of effective school. Variables of these activities are school administrators, teachers, students and school climate (Ada, & Akan, 2007). In this study, with the students' point of view concepts such as discipline, morale, achievement and respect as the qualities of a good school and a good teacher was supported by studies in the literature. Building a system of values and setting norms at school contribute to the moral and cultural attainment of schools. Success appears as an inevitable product in schools that has a system based on discipline (Şişman, 1997). The fact that school administrators and teachers, who are a part of effective school culture, are sensitive to students' problems, have problem-solving skills and empathize with students, will carry both the school and the teacher to a respectable position in the students' eyes (Yagız, 2016). This study demonstrates that students associate the concepts of good school and good teacher with the concepts of helpful and interest, as they see school administrators and teachers as supporters in problem solving when they need it in school and in the classroom.

Furthermore, the associations with words such as respect, interest, justice, helpful and moral show that students correlate school and teachers not only in cognitive but also affective sense. It has been proved that studies on students' school and teacher perceptions also support this idea. Schools and teachers are not only interested in the cognitive aspect of the student, they want to develop the student in all aspects with a holistic development understanding. The teacher's sense of self, goodness and justice are the affective factors that affect the student (Balcı, 2014). The words they associate with the key concepts of good school and good teacher also reflect the expectations of the students from the school and the teacher. These expectations also constitute the ideal school and teacher model in the minds of students. The emergence of words such as helpful, interest, respect in the study showed that students need school and teachers not only academically but also emotionally. A good teacher is someone who is sensitive to students' social and emotional expectations, respectful of differences and acts fairly (İlter, 2021). Teachers should set an example for students and the environment with their attitudes and behaviors. A teacher who draws the framework of justice and equality correctly and acts in accordance with the adopted moral principles will be accepted as ideal teacher in the eyes of both the student and the environment (Kulaksızoğlu, 1995). Another result of the study is that the perceptions of the students towards the concepts of

good school and good teacher are similar according to the distinction between private and public school types. Based on these similarities, it can be confirmed that private school and public school students have similar cognitive structures.

Based on the results of the research, the following suggestions can be made:

- A similar study can be applied to students at other education levels in order to see the similarities and differences in students' perceptions of a good school and a good teacher.

- Interviews can be conducted in order to obtain more detailed information about the students' perceptions of the concepts of good school and good teacher.

- The study was carried out in a private school and a public school in a city center. The working group can be expanded by including schools in districts and villages in subsequent studies.

References

Ada, S., & Baysal, Z. N., (2010). *Türk eğitim sistemi ve etkili okul yönetimi.* Ankara: Pegem A Yayıncılık.

Ada, Ş., & Akan, D. (2007). Değişim sürecinde etkili okullar. *Atatürk Üniversitesi Kazım Karabekir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 16, 343-373.

Bahar, M., & Özatlı, N. S. (2003). Kelime iletişim test yöntemi ile lise 1. sınıf öğrencilerinin canlıların temel bileşenleri konusundaki bilişsel yapılarının araştırılması. *Balıkesir Üniversitesi Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü Dergisi*, *5*(2), 75-85.

Bahar, M., Nartgün, Z., Durmuş, S., & Bıçak, B. (2008). *Geleneksel-tamamlayıcı ölçme ve değerlendirme teknikleri: Öğretmen el kitabı*. Ankara: Pegem Akademi.

Balcı, A. (1988). Etkili okul. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, *12*(70), 21-30.

Balcı, A. (2014). *Etkili okul ve okul geliştirme*. Ankara: Pegem Akademi.

Ball, S. J. (1997). Good school/bad school: paradox and fabrication. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *18*(3), 317-336.

Can, N. (2004). Öğretmenlerin geliştirilmesi ve etkili öğretmen davranışları. *Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, *1*(16), 103-119.

Çobanoğlu, F., & Badavan, Y. (2017). Başarılı okulların anahtarı: Etkili okul değişkenleri. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 26, 114-134.

Dewar, K. (2002). On being a good teacher. *Journal of hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism education*, *1*(1), 61-67.

Dewey J. (2019). *Okul ve toplum.* (Trans. H. A. Başman). Ankara: Pegem Akademi.

Döş, İ. (2013). Mutlu okul. *Eğitim ve Bilim, 38*(170), 266-280.

Gökçe, F., & Kahraman, P. B. (2010). Etkili okulun bileşenleri: Bursa ili örneği. *Uludağ Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, *23*(1), 173-206.

Grazia, V., & Molinari, L. (2021). School climate multidimensionality and measurement: A systematic literature review. *Research Papers in Education*, *36*(5), 561-587.

Güler G., Çıkrıkçı R. N., & Akçay, P. (2020). Öğretmenlerin etkili okul algıları ve mesleki aidiyet düzeyleri

arasındaki ilişki. *Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, *20*(3), 1499-1511.

Güngör, A. A. (2018). *Etkili okul özelliklerinin dönüşümsel liderlik ve öğretmen bağlılığıyla ilişkisi* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Ege University, İzmir. https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/

Helvacı, M. A., & Aydoğan, İ. (2011). Etkili okul ve etkili okul müdürüne ilişkin öğretmen görüşleri. *Uşak Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, *4*(2), 41-60

İlter, İ. (2021). Ortaokul öğrencilerinin algılarına göre iyi öğretmenler. *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, *22*(2), 1169-1206.

Karakelle, S. (2005). Öğretmenlerin etkili öğretmen tanımlarının etkili öğretmenlik boyutlarına göre incelenmesi. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, *30*(135), 1-10.

Karasar, N. (2009). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemi.* Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım

Kızıltepe, Z. (2002). İyi ve etkili öğretmen. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, *27*(126), 10-14.

Kulaksızoğlu, A. (1995). Öğretmenlik mesleğinin ahlak ilkeleri konusunda bir deneme. *Marmara Üniversitesi Atatürk Eğitim Fakültesi Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, *7*(7), 185-188.

Kuyumcu, F. N., & Özsarı, İ. (2016). 5. ve 6. sınıf öğrencilerinin öğretmen ve okul kavramlarına ilişkin algılarının değerlendirilmesi. *Eğitim ve Öğretim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, *5*, 396-407.

MacNeil, A. J., Prater, D. L., & Busch, S. (2009). The effects of school culture and climate on student achievement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *12*(1), 73-84.

Malikow, M. (2005). Effective teacher study. *National Forum of Teacher Education Journal*, *16*(3), 1-9.

Miller, P. (2012). Ten characteristics of a good teacher. *English Teaching Forum, 50*(1), 36-38).

Sarpkaya, P. Y. (2007). Okul disiplini ve bileşenleri. In A. M. Sünbül (Ed.), *Eğitim, gelişim ve değişim* (pp.141-147). Konya: Eğitim Kitabevi Yayınları.

Seferoğlu, S. S. (2004). Öğretmen yeterlikleri ve mesleki gelişim. *Bilim ve Aklın Aydınlığında Eğitim,* 58, 40-45.

Şahin, A. (2011), Öğretmen algılarına göre etkili öğretmen davranışları. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Kırşehir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 12*(1), 239-259.

Şişman, M. (1997). Eğitimde toplam kalite yönetimi ve kültür. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, *21*(105), 60-69.

Topçu, İ. (2019). *Okul iklimi ve kültürü.* Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.

Watkins, D. A., & Zhang, Q. (2006). The good teacher: A cross-cultural perspective. In D. M. McInerney, M. Dowson, & S. V. Etten (Eds.), *Effective schools* (pp. 185-204). Greenwich, CT: IAP-Information Age Publishing.

Yagız, M. S. (2016). *İlkokulların etkili okul özelliklerine sahip olma düzeylerinin incelenmesi* (Unpublished master's thesis). Hasan Kalyoncu University, Gaziantep. https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/

Yılmaz, A., & Güven, Ö. (2015). Üstün yetenekli öğrencilerin beden eğitimi dersi ve beden eğitimi öğretmeni kavramlarına yönelik algılarının çizme yazma tekniği ile incelenmesi. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Education, 3*(3), 55-77.

Yüksel, S. (2004). *Örtük program.* Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım.