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THE POWERFUL USE OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER RECRUITMENT EXAM IN THE TURKISH CONTEXT: AN INTERACTIVE QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

Research article

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Abstract

In the face of a growing population in the world, an increase in the number of large-scale or standardized testing practices in various contexts has been observed not only to measure individuals' achievement and proficiency but also to serve political, social, economic and ideological functions. In Turkey, English language teacher recruitment is one of such contexts that utilize large-scale testing. This study provides an in-depth exploration of the powerful use of the KPSS (Selection Examination for Professional Posts in Public Organizations) used for the recruitment of English teachers in the Turkish context with specific reference to its origin of power, effects and consequences. Based on the Interactive Qualitative Analysis Methodology, this case study presents the voice of four test takers of the KPSS on its powerful use in the Turkish context. Firstly, the factors comprising the participants' shared perception of the powerful use of the KPSS were identified. Then, the relationships among these elements in their shared perceptual system were presented, and the findings indicate that the KPSS has led to a set of unintended effects and consequences.

Keywords: power of tests, English language teacher recruitment exam, the use of tests, effects and consequences of tests

1. Introduction

In recent years, a worldwide increase in the number of large-scale or standardised testing practices has been observed though their format and purposes can vary (Menken, 2017). These testing procedures have brought reforms due to their potentials to serve the public and social policies (Shohamy, 2006). Thus, they grant some gatekeeping functions as well as being the criteria for graduation, admission, or grade promotion (Shohamy, 2001b). Such testing procedures commonly turn to high-stakes tests, although there is wide variability in their stakes. At the extreme level, the results from these tests become the sole determiner of individuals' selection.

In order to clarify the consequences and impact of tests on teaching and learning, a relatively new concept, 'backwash' or 'washback' has been utilized (Hughes, 2003). 'Washback' covers "the notion that tests or examination can or should drive teaching, and hence learning" (Cheng & Curtis, 2004, p.4). Since the late 1980s, the attempt to capture the existence of washback guided the discussion on the impact of tests (Cheng, 2008; Cheng & Curtis, 2004). The past ten years have witnessed a growing awareness of the complicated nature of test impact on individuals (Taylor, 2005). Recent research shows that simply introducing a new test or modifying a test does not result in expected changes and impact in the educational context and society (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Andrews, Fullilove & Won, 2002). Instead, a strong

social view of test impact is required emphasising not only investigating the effects and consequences of tests from a critical and wider perspective but also understanding their powerful use in shaping changes at social, economic, and political levels (Taylor, 2005).

The early studies in this respect (Cronbach, 1988, 1989; Messick, 1989) have found a space within the perspective of some validity theories. Despite acknowledging the need to investigate the social dimensions of tests, these studies were limited in the sense that they examined social and socially constructed nature and consequences of tests for validation purposes (McNamara & Roever, 2006; McNamara, 2008). More recent studies (Filer, 2000; ILTA, 2000, 2007; Kunnan, 2004, 2005; Lynch, 2001) deal with the concept of social effects, consequences and use of tests as social act. Shohamy's work (1998, 2001a, 2001b) is worth noting because she regards the use of language assessment and testing procedures as social practice by challenging the existing philosophies of language assessment and testing (McNamara, 2008). She focuses on the role, power and function of tests in a broader perspective. Shohamy (1998, 2001a, 2001b, 2007a, 2008) thinks that assessment practices as tools shaping the lives of individuals might be produced by social, ideological, cultural, political, educational and contexts. In other words, she sees tests as powerful tools in society. Built mostly on Shohamy's critical perspective, McNamara and Roever (2006) also criticize the tradition of focusing on the psychometric features of tests. They, similar to Shohamy, emphasize the social dimensions and contexts of tests in language testing as social practice. For them, the basic problem is the uncertainty about what exactly to do with tests as social practice. To overcome this problem, McNamara (2008) suggests that social theories (Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1995) could shed light on how social identities are constructed in modern societies and the role the tests play as tools of power to control and legitimate social inequalities (Filer, 2000; Shohamy, 2001b).

1.2. The Power of Tests

As Spolsky (2008) states, testing has turned into "big business" (p. 301) because tests have the potential to be utilized to make decisions about individuals, institutions, systems and society at large. In most cases, the powerful authorities introduce tests to manipulate and control educational systems according to set agendas (Shohamy, 2007a, 2007b). Thus, due to the major roles and implications attributed to tests, tests can "create winners and losers, successes and failures, rejections and acceptances" (Shohamy, 2001b, p.15). The only indicators for decisions such as deciding on professions, gaining entrance to universities and jobs, obtaining certificates, and acceptance to programs are test results. In fact, this means one single test has the power to open and close doors for individuals. Tests are also utilized for 'surveillance' to differentiate, judge, classify and standardize individuals. In order to ensure that the individuals confirm to the ideal of how an individual in the society should behave, tests as 'normalizing gaze' involves 'normalizing judgement' establishing standards, norms and values that individuals are expected to meet up to certain level (Foucault, 1995). Inevitably, such potential exercises control and causes change in the behaviours of individuals (Shohamy 2006) and makes them 'the instruments of power' (Shohamy, 2001a, 2001b). According to Shohamy (2001b), the process of exercising the power of tests can be described in four steps (see Figure 1).

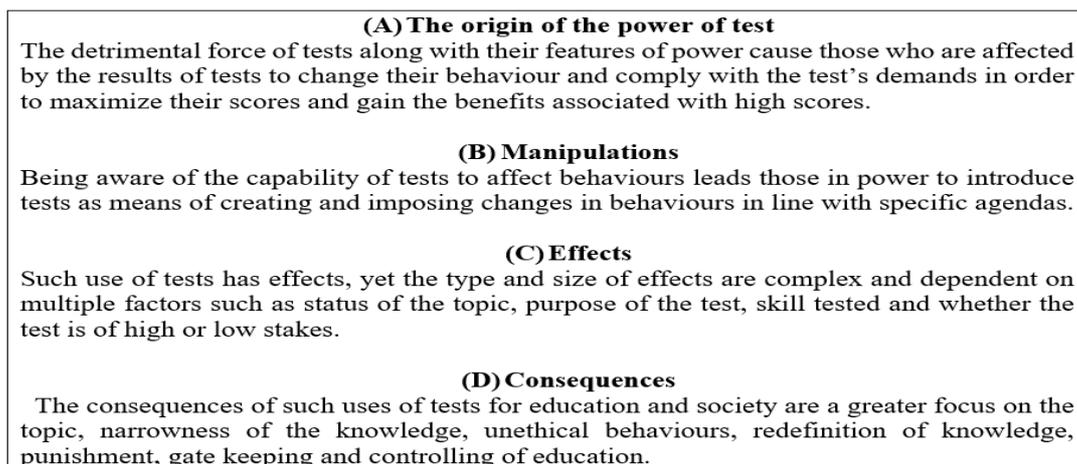


Figure 1. The power of tests- origins, manipulations, effects and consequences

Source: Shohamy, 2001b, p. 107

Driven by the perspective of ‘disciplinary power’ of Foucault (1995), Shohamy (2001b, 2005) states that tests serve the function of a disciplinary tool. They impose behaviours on those who are tested and affected by their results. As test takers place tests in the centre of their lives they develop fear of tests and a sense of helplessness (Shohamy, 2001b). Thus, they develop some tactics to meet the demands of the test as they fear detrimental effects it can have on their lives (Shohamy, 2006). At this point, the power of tests emerges because now they have “the ability to cause a change in the behaviour of those who are affected by them” (Shohamy, 2001b, p. 105).

What also generates the power of tests is the scale of trust and acceptance the test takers and the society in general assign to authorities responsible for the tests (Bourdieu, 1991; Shohamy, 2001b). Therefore, what makes a single test powerful also depends on the meaning and trust individuals attribute to tests, which often results in changes in the behaviours of individuals and society (Shohamy, 2009; Young, 2012).

Additionally, tests do generate power due to their high stakes effects (McNamara, 2008). What is not certain is where test power originates from and what are the effects and consequences of such powerful use in a specific testing context. Therefore, the realities about tests can only be understood by evaluating them in a broader context of use (Brindley, 2008).

One such context is English language education and the process of teacher recruitment. The struggle to set and maintain standards and policies for recruiting and retaining teachers have a direct influence on how to determine and supply the demanded numbers for teaching slots. In most cases, teacher recruitment adopts a competitive approach including various evaluation methods such as exams, interviews, and observations (Adıgüzel, 2013). In Turkey, for example, where the policies are “determined by contemporary political events and governmental policies rather than shaped by a certain educational philosophy” (Nergis, 2011, p. 181), tests might have great potential to generate power not as isolated and neutral acts, but rather as social and powerful instruments. As focusing on social nature and use of testing as social practice leads individuals to evaluate critically their practices (McNamara, 2001), by giving voice to its test takers this study aims at having a deep insight into the powerful use of the KPSS.

1.3. KPSS and English Language Teacher Recruitment Procedure in Turkey

In Turkey, most standardized tests are carried out by the Center for Testing, Selection and Placement (ÖSYM), which is a governmental institution, and the Ministry of National

Education. These tests construct the backbone of Turkish educational system (Hatipoğlu, 2016).

In the face of a growing population in the Turkish context, the number of teacher candidates became more than the number of teachers demanded for recruitment. The KPSS, a highly competitive examination, was adopted in Turkey in 2002 as the selection procedure for teaching slots in the state schools (Kılıçkaya & Krajka, 2013). It is implemented by the ÖSYM and can be taken only once a year. The teacher candidates who want to be recruited in the schools of the Ministry have to take the KPSS. However, according to the subject area of the candidates, its sub-tests can vary. The KPSS is composed of multiple choice questions.

There have been numerous studies on the effects of the KPSS in Turkey (Aküzüm, Demirkol, Ekici & Talu, 2015; Atav & Sönmez, 2013; Baştürk, 2017; Erdem & Soylu, 2013; Gündoğdu, Çimen & Turan, 2008; Güven & Dak, 2017; Karaer, Karaer & Kartal, 2018; Karataş & Güleç, 2013; Karataş & Okan, 2019; Memduhoğlu & Kayan, 2017; Özmen, 2011; Polatcan, Öztürk & Saylık, 2016; Sezgin & Duran, 2011; Turan & Zengin, 2017). These studies report on the opinions of the teacher candidates from various fields. Some highlight psychological problems, high level of anxiety, pressure and stress suffered by test takers (Atav & Sönmez, 2013; Baştürk, 2017; Güven & Dak, 2017; Karataş & Güleç, 2013; Karataş & Okan, 2019; Memduhoğlu & Kayan, 2017; Sezgin & Duran, 2011) and criticise the KPSS for not measuring the candidates' levels of knowledge of the field, instead encouraging them to learn by heart (Güven & Dak, 2017; Karataş & Güleç, 2013; Sezgin & Duran, 2011; Uğurlu & Yörek, 2015). Additionally, the literature also states that student-teachers who are test takers of the KPSS are demotivated to follow the courses offered in ELT department (Gündoğdu, Çimen & Turan, 2008; Güven & Dak, 2017; Karataş & Güleç, 2013; Karataş & Okan, 2019; Memduhoğlu & Kayan, 2017; Özmen, 2011). It is also asserted that the KPSS has the potential to guide educational, social and economic factors in the lives of test takers of the KPSS (Gündoğdu, Çimen & Turan, 2008; Sezgin & Duran, 2011). Driven by the fact that the KPSS is a theory-based examination testing assessing teacher candidates' knowledge in educational sciences, general proficiency and world knowledge, as well along with field tests within the scope of KPSS, it is believed that it might not be adequate to achieve the selection of effective teachers for recruitment (Baştürk, 2017).

Table 1. *The sections and number of questions in the KPSS for prospective teachers of English*

Section	Number of the Questions	Weight in the exam	Time allowed (min)
General Knowledge and ability	60	15%	120
General Culture	60	15%	
Educational Sciences	80	20%	150
The ÖABT	75	50%	120
Total	275	100%	390

Like most of the other test takers, English teacher candidates take the KPSS in three sessions: 1. General knowledge and ability such as Turkish Language and mathematics, general culture such as history of Turkey and geography, 2. Educational sciences such as principles of teaching and learning and 3. The ÖABT (The Field Knowledge Test for English teacher candidates) as seen in Table1. The first two tests are the same for all teacher candidates no matter what field they are studying though the ÖABT varies for each field. The ÖABT for English teacher candidates, subtest of the KPSS is organized around two sections: (1) Subject Knowledge test including questions on language proficiency, linguistic and literature, and (2)

Subject-specific pedagogical knowledge. The ÖABT for English teacher candidates only measures reading, vocabulary and grammar skills of candidates while listening, speaking and writing proficiency of test takers are not assessed.

The number of English language teacher candidates taking the KPSS in last five years (2016-2020) is quite large (13.459, 11.535, 11.917, 12.255 ,15.297). Despite that, the scarcity of research on their perspectives is surprising. In fact, this study aims to fill this void by giving voice to this particular group of test takers.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a case study research design based on Interactive Qualitative Analysis Methodology (IQA) which has a set of systematic data “collection” and “analysis” protocols (Nortcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 44). IQA is not just a framework, but a conceptualized approach to qualitative research, the primary outcomes of which are the determination of elements (affinities) and the identification of relationships among these elements by the ones who are experiencing the problem (Johnson, 2004). Driven by the idea that the ones experiencing the problem are much nearer to the solution of the problem, IQA research flow aims to reach a system presenting individual and group realities or conceptual maps (Nortcutt & McCoy, 2004).

2.1. The Present Study

Thus, with the IQA system, this study aimed to clarify the participants’ shared realities in terms of the powerful use of the KPSS in the Turkish context. To do so, the elements of the origin of power of the KPSS, its effects and consequences and then the relationships among these elements, were identified. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What factors comprise the participants’ shared perception of the origin of the power of the KPSS over test takers?
2. What factors comprise the participants’ shared perception of the effects of the KPSS?
3. What factors comprise the participants’ shared perception of the consequences of the KPSS?
4. How do all factors of the origin of the power of the KPSS, its effects and consequences relate to each other in the participants’ shared perceptual system of the powerful use of the KPSS in the Turkish context?

2.2. Participants

For the IQA Methodology, the people who are experiencing the problem can best clarify the circumstances and know how to solve the problem (Johnson, 2004). Because in the IQA Methodology participants are “a group of people who share some common experiences, work or live within some common structure, or have a similar background” (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 47), the researchers focused on the ‘commonalities’ among the participants while selecting the participants. Thus, purposive sampling was utilized for the selection of the participants. Four 4th year student- teachers of English took part in this study in the second semester of 2017-2018 academic year at Çukurova University. The student teachers who were selected in this phase:

- were test takers of the KPSS in 2018
- were 4th year student- teachers of English at Çukurova University
- stated that the KPSS exercised power over them even before this study was conducted.

Such a sampling was preferred because four participants had first-hand experience with the KPSS as test takers in the Turkish context and had a shared perspective in terms of its powerful

use of the KPSS. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was obtained before commencing the collection of the data. All affinities and relationships among those affinities presented in the findings were named and expressed by the participants. The names of the participants were not mentioned to protect their confidentiality and each participant was assigned a number as P-1, P-2, P-3 and P-4. The demographic information on the participants was presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic data on the participants

Participants	P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age	23	21	22	22
Number of siblings	2	10	3	4
Father's profession	retired	post officer	retired	mukhtar
Mother's profession	housewife	housewife	died	housewife
Average income of the family	6500 tl	3000 tl	2700 tl	3900 tl
Taking private tutoring for the KPSS	Yes	no	yes	no
The way of studying for the KPSS	taking private tutoring, pilot exams, watching videos and dealing with sample questions via Internet.	studying on her own due to financial problems	taking private tutoring, buying some supplemental materials for the KPSS	studying on her own
The way of provision of life	Taking money from his family	Trying to make her life with scholarship she gets (470 tl for each mount)	Taking money from his family	Trying to make her life with scholarship she gets (470 tl for each mount)
The amount of money they spent for the KPSS	3000tl	1000 tl	3000tl	900 tl
The amount of money they paid for the ÖSYM to take the KPSS	180 tl	180 tl	180 tl	180 tl
The time devoted to study for the KPSS in a day	5 hours	5 hours	No definite time	5-6 hours
When did they start to study for the KPSS?	August 2017	September 2017	January 2018	September 2017

2.3. The Roles of the Researchers

In the IQA Methodology, the roles of the researcher are threefold: “1. To interpret, 2. To ensure that the ground of interpretation provides as much epistemological traction as possible, 3. To tread softly on that ground” (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004, p. 44). IQA Methodology is designed to utilize its own data collection and analysis protocols in order to reduce the problems that might be encountered.

Thus, firstly the researcher informed participants about the IQA study designs and provided them with the tools used in focus group sessions to identify their group realities. Then, the researcher started with a problem statement dealt within the focus group session, and provided a remarkable degree of freedom to the participants while generating the data. In the focus group sessions, the participants themselves first identified and named affinities (themes) representing their shared experiences, and then articulated their own perceived relationships among the affinities by using a set of rules. During the IQA interviews the researcher stated each affinity by asking the participant to retell what it meant for him/her, and then provided a quick reference to all possible relationships between each pair of affinities stated by each participant to verify them. During the IQA focus group sessions and interviews, the researcher avoided any kind of interference with participants’ responses to enable them to reflect on their personal meaning and experiences related to each affinity and pair relationships.

The researcher’s role in general, therefore, moved from designer to facilitator by first creating a circumstance that invited participants to produce data while minimizing her influence on the content, and then guiding them to generate and analyze their own data with minimal external influence. Thus, all affinities and relationships among the affinities presented in this study were generated, defined, named and analyzed by the participants. The researchers were the ones who used them as the foundation for interpretation and reporting as stated by Northcutt and McCoy (2004).

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The data were collected through four IQA focus group sessions and four IQA focus group interviews. For each research question, an IQA focus group session and an IQA interview were conducted. All focus group sessions and interviews were conducted in Turkish upon the participants’ request. The whole data were translated into English by two researchers. Each focus group session lasted for 45- 90 minutes. Four IQA interviews with each participant, totalling 16 interviews, each of which lasted 10 to 44 minutes, were conducted in this study. These interviews were semi-structured on the affinities and relationships developed by the focus group members.

Table 3. *The flow of the study*

IQA Research phase	Purpose	Research question	Topic
Introducing	-Introduction with participants -Presenting some information about the study and IQA Methodology	-----	Learning how to participate in IQA focus group sessions
Focus Group Meeting 1 IQA Interview 1	-Identification of the elements on the origin of power of the KPSS (IQA inductive coding, axial coding) -Verify the description of the meaning of affinities in Focus Group Meeting 1	Research question 1	The origin of power of the KPSS
Focus Group Meeting 2 IQA Interview 2	-Identification the effects of the KPSS (IQA inductive coding, axial coding) - Verify the description of the meaning of affinities having come out in the Focus Group Meeting 2	Research question 2	The effects of the KPSS
Focus Group Meeting 3 IQA Interview 3	-Identification of the consequences of the KPSS (IQA inductive coding, axial coding) -Verify the description of the meaning of affinities having come out in Focus Group Meeting 3	Research question 3	The consequences of the KPSS
Focus Group Meeting 4 IQA Interview 4	-Identification of the relationships among the affinities gathered in the previous sessions to understand the use of the KPSS in the Turkish context (theoretical coding) -Verify the description of the relationships having come out in Focus Group Meeting 4	Research question 4	The powerful use of the KPSS in the Turkish context

In line with the guidelines of Northcutt and McCoy (2004), Focus Group Sessions 1, 2 and 3 began with a warm up exercise to invite the participants in a group brainstorming session. In this session, they reflected on their experiences, feelings and thoughts on the week's issue. Each participant was given a pen and cards to write down one thought, feeling or experience per card. The participants produced as many cards as they wished. The facilitator taped the cards to a wall and encouraged the participants to come to a shared meaning on each card. Then, the participants were asked to organize the cards into groups of meaning (inductive coding) and to name the affinities (axial coding) in affinity name table (See Appendix A). During inductive coding and axial coding procedures, the participants reached a consensus on the meaning of each affinity through discussion. Then, IQA interviews, which were based on the affinities that came out in the previous week's focus group session, were held to verify and understand the focus group's reality on the issues of the focus group in depth. In Focus Group Session 4, the participants were given all affinities generated in the previous three focus group sessions. Each participant was asked to fill in an affinity relationship table considering all possible pair relationships among all affinities, which was labelled as *theoretical coding*. So as to achieve theoretical coding, some rules were given to the participants:

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (A influences B)

- A < > B (No relationship)

Then, considering the order of the affinities in affinity name table, the participants were asked to go down the list one by one and determine if they thought there might be a relationship (theoretical coding). If there was a relationship, they were to draw an arrow indicating the direction of the relationship as determined with the rules given above. If there was no relationship, they were to do nothing. Each participant recorded their responses separately on an affinity relationship table (ART) (See Appendix B). When four focus group members had finished determining the relationships, they were asked about their results. The facilitator read out each affinity pair to the group. The votes for each relationship were determined and recorded in a theoretical code of frequency table (See Appendix C). Lastly, in order to verify the data identified by the participants, the fourth IQA interview on the relationships stated in Focus Group 4 was conducted.

After collecting the data, the analysis procedure started with the transcription of the IQA interviews. Each line of the interview transcripts was reviewed by looking for the phases and statements associated with the affinities and pair relationships. The axial code data in individual interview (See Appendix D) were transferred to a combined interview axial code tables (ACT) (See Appendix E). The theoretical data in the last interview were firstly presented through theoretical code tables (TCT) (See Appendix F). Then, those tables were moved to a combined interview TCT (See Appendix G). The researcher created a database for the entire set of participants containing all axial codes for all affinities, and all theoretical codes.

In order to create combined SIDs showing the composite of the participants' experience, the data gathered from the focus group sessions were compared with the combined interview ACTs and the combined interview TCT. No conflicts were identified in both data sets. This means that the data gathered from the interviews verified the data gained focus group sessions. Thus, the data gathered from the IQA focus group sessions and interviews were presented together. A group affinity relationship table on the powerful use of the KPSS, showing the frequencies of all pair relationships was produced. Then, the facilitator tried to construct the interrelationship diagram (IRD) (See Figure 3). However, before developing a group composite for the IRD, pareto protocol, a statistical method, was utilized in order to determine which relationships needed to be included in the IRD.

In the pareto cumulative frequency charts, a cut-off point was set on the basis of the MinMax criterion. On the basis of this criterion, the last two columns of the Pareto table (the cumulative percent or frequency and power) were examined to determine the cut-off point. Then, the IRD was created by placing arrows into the table by showing the direction of the relationships. Arrows could only point left or up. Each relationship was recorded twice in the IRD, once with an up arrow and once with a left arrow. The IRD displayed arrows that showed whether each affinity in a pair was a perceived cause or effect. The marker for this was the value of delta. As a next step, the arrows were counted and the value of delta (Δ) which shows the relative position of an affinity within the system was determined according to the rules to calculate delta:

1. Count the number of up arrows (\uparrow) or *Outs*.
2. Count the number of left arrows (\rightarrow) or *Ins*.
3. Subtract the number of *Ins* from the *Outs* to determine the (Δ) *deltas*.
4. $\Delta = \text{Out} - \text{In}$

An affinity with positive delta or number resulting from many *Outs* is a *driver*: a cause that affected many other affinities. However, an affinity marked by a high negative number that showed more *Ins* than *Outs* was regarded as an *outcome* in the system. Thereby, tentative system influence diagram (SID) assignments based on their delta value in each IRD were

determined. Then, SIDs which were visual representations of a system of influences and outcomes were arranged. So as to facilitate the verbal tour on the SIDs, some opportunities to generate different perspectives of the system were looked for by zooming SID in and out. Firstly, Cluttered SID which was a visual representation included all of the links identified by the participants on the powerful use of the KPSS in the group IRD was produced (See Figure 4). Then, based on the data set gathered from the interviews, a theoretical Summary SID including a representative theoretical code for each link stated in the Pareto Reconciled Uncluttered SID was developed and illustrated by eliminating the redundant links in Cluttered SID. Those theoretical codes in the diagram (See Figure 5) were representing the identification conducted by the participants to define each relationship. In order to zoom the SID out, a feedback loop in the uncluttered SID as sub-system was determined and named (see Figure 6). Lastly, substituting the feedback loop as a subsystem in the participants' perception system, the telephoto view SID were obtained and presented (see Figure 7). All tables and diagrams were produced in Microsoft Word.

3. Findings: Group Reality on the Powerful Use of the KPSS

The findings of this IQA study present the group reality of four student teachers of English in terms of the powerful use of the KPSS in the Turkish context. First, the elements or affinities comprising their shared perception were identified, and then the relationships among these elements in their common perceptual system were described.

3.1. Composite Element Identifications

In Focus Group Session 1, 2 and 3, the participants generated a total of 127 responses and categorized them under 17 affinities. Those affinities related to the powerful use of the KPSS are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *The affinities*

Affinity No	Affinities	Themes	
Affinity 1	The roles of the KPSS in our lives		
Affinity 2	The essentiality of the KPSS in the system		
Affinity 3	The roles of the tester (the ÖSYM)	The origin of the power of the KPSS	
Affinity 4	The roles of the society		
Affinity 5	Financial outcomes of doing well or badly the KPSS.		
Affinity 6	The feelings the KPSS evokes		
Affinity 7	Social outcomes of doing well or badly in the KPSS		
Affinity 8	Effects on our ideological, political and cultural point of view		
Affinity 9	Educational effects on test takers	The effects of the KPSS	
Affinity 10	Emotional effects on test takers		
Affinity 11	Effects on our health		
Affinity 12	Financial effects on test takers		
Affinity 13	Effects on our future plans		
Affinity 14	Social effects on test takers		
Affinity 15	Societal consequences of the KPSS		
Affinity 16	The features of the system/policy appeared through the use of the KPSS		The consequences of the KPSS
Affinity 17	Consequences on prospective teachers		

3.1.1. Group reality of the origin of the power of the KPSS

So as to address Research Question 1, ‘What factors comprise the participants’ shared perception of the origin of the power of the KPSS over test takers?’, the participants jointly identified seven affinities on the origin of the power of the KPSS in the Turkish context (see Table 4). *The roles of the KPSS in our lives* was the first affinity. The participants stated that the KPSS was a tool opening the door to gain some identities in their own lives. They attached great importance to the KPSS because the score they got from the KPSS could result in observable and deep changes in their lives. As one participant put it,

I think the KPSS serves important roles in our lives. I think, to a large extent, it determines the way we live our lives, the jobs and the family we will have, the social environments we can take part in. According to the score we take from the KPSS, our future will take shape. (P-1).

They organized their whole lives in a way that they could study for the KPSS. However, the participants believed that in Turkey, an examination for English language teacher recruitment was mandatory to eliminate the candidates of English teacher in an objective manner without nepotism or favouritism. It was because there were a large number of English teacher candidates waiting to be appointed to the schools of the Ministry of National Education. They identified this situation with *the essentiality of the KPSS in the system* as exemplified in the following extract:

There are many English teacher candidates graduated from various universities. What is aimed is not only to eliminate those candidates but also to determine their proficiencies. The KPSS serves the function to select the ones who are educated, moral, can teach English to students, manage and control classrooms. That is why, I believe in the essentiality of the KPSS in Turkish system. In doing so, I think the KPSS has lots of shortcomings. (P-4)

According to the participants, another affinity making the KPSS exercises power is *the roles of the tester (the ÖSYM)*. All of them stated that they were in the hands of the ÖSYM determining what to test, how to test and when to test. The participants believed that because the ÖSYM was authoritarian, it did not have any concern about examining the possible impact of the KPSS as exemplified in the following extract.

The roles of the tester in this context are a bit negative because the standards and limits set and the changes conducted by the ÖSYM result in negative impact on us. Due to the standards and limits set by the ÖSYM various negative effects and consequences of the KPSS have appeared. (P-2)

In addition, all participants agreed that *the roles of the society* were another affinity originating the power of the KPSS. People always compared examinees with each other and always asked questions about the KPSS. They tended to classify and label teacher candidates according to how they had done in the KPSS. Consequently, the participants complained about the domineering attitudes of the society and the pressure it generated. As one student teacher put it:

In the testing discourse of the KPSS, I think the society serves a major role. My family and the others always ask questions about the KPSS to learn whether I am studying for it or not or whether I will get appointed or not. I think they regard the KPSS as the turning point of our lives. Therefore, they create pressure on us, and this pressure increases the feeling of anxiety in us. (P-1)

Thus, the participants agreed that doing well or badly in the KPSS brought some social and financial outcomes for the teacher candidates. They agreed on the fact that when they did well in the KPSS they became appointed as civil servants and that could help them gain their financial independence and social status as teacher. Thus, *social outcomes of doing well or badly in the KPSS* and *financial outcomes of doing well or badly in the KPSS* are other two affinities they used to identify the reasons of the power the KPSS. The last affinity is *the feelings the KPSS evokes*. The participants agreed that the KPSS evoked emotions and mood swings in them. It caused stress, fear and anxiety though how it affects test takers might vary from person to person. “The KPSS evokes various feelings in us. As it approaches, the feelings of anxiety, stress and anger raise in me” (P-1). They added that the KPSS overwhelmingly evoked the feeling of powerlessness and distrust in them.

3.1.2. Group reality of the effects of the KPSS

The findings on Research Question 2 revealed that the participants produced seven affinities comprising their common perception of the effects of the KPSS. Firstly, the participants stated that for the KPSS, they had to follow the current news in Turkey, which generally changed their ideological, political and cultural point of views. They stated it with the affinity *effects on our ideological, political and cultural point of views*. The following excerpt demonstrated this change:

Because the current issues are asked in the exam, we have to read and follow the political events and news. As the time passes, we have started to analyse current news and events from different perspectives. (P- 1)

Additionally, they explained that the content of the KPSS did not fully comply with the content of the courses offered in ELT departments. Thus, KPSS affected their attitudes to the courses in the ELT department as they felt demotivated to follow them and eventually neglected them. Leaving all methods and strategies of learning aside, they tended to go for rote memorization because they needed to cope with a range of information for the KPSS in a short period of time. This was the KPSS’ *educational effects on test takers*. One said:

Since we need to learn a lot subjects in a short time for the KPSS, we have to learn them by heart. There is the belief that the more we keep in mind, the better it is for the KPSS. In fact, most of this information will be useful in our professional life, but we only memorize them for the exam. We have to memorize them because the exam has certain conditions and rules. Otherwise, we cannot cope with the subjects included in the KPSS. (P- 3)

All participants also agreed that the KPSS resulted in some *emotional effects on test takers*. They explained that while studying for the KPSS, they had to change their lifestyle. This put them mostly in negative psychological and emotional moods by evoking stress, anger, frayed nerves and anxiety all of which had detrimental effects on their mental and psychological health. One of the participants put it in the following manner:

KPSS serves a gate keeping function. As we think on whether we will able to do well to open or close the doors for us, we are constantly experiencing stress. We are experiencing the stress because we definitely do not want the second option. This causes anger, stress and anxiety in us, which affects our feelings and health. (P- 4)

Additionally, sleep disorders, sight impairments and irregular heart beat were among the health problems they encountered. They named this situation as *effects on our health*. In addition to those affinities, *financial effects on test takers* was another factor. The participants agreed that the KPSS caused a remarkable rise in their expenses. They paid not only test entrance fee but also for private institutions to be prepared for the KPSS. The extract below expressed one student teacher’s complaint.

We have to go to private institutions. We have to buy books and resources to study for it. Apart from this, for the KPSS we also have other expenses. For example, exam entrance fees are very high. (P- 3)

Since the KPSS was believed to provide a better future, they modified what they spent their money for by limiting their general daily expenses. The affinity *effects on our future plans* came out as another factor. The participants thought that preparing for the KPSS had changed their plans for future. Most of them thought that preparing for the KPSS had negative impact on their social lives, which is described by the affinity *social effects on test takers*. The following excerpt displayed clearly how the KPSS guided their social activities.

We are always in a hurry to go to private institutions. Some of our friends want to meet in cafes. However, we are constantly studying for the KPSS. Therefore, the KPSS always affects our social activities. We cannot make time for our hobbies due to preparing for KPSS. (P-4)

The student teachers agreed that the KPSS had changed their relationships with other people in the society, their hobbies, social activities and daily routines and even where they lived.

3.1.3. Group reality of the consequences of the KPSS

The findings related to Research Question 3 indicated that regarding the participants' shared perception of the consequences of the KPSS revealed three dimensions. According to the participants, the first one is *societal consequences of the KPSS* referring to some societal consequences caused by the social roles attributed to test takers and the other people in the society. One of the participants said that

The exam has major social implications for us. One of our purposes to study for this exam is to gain acceptance in the society. I see it as a step. I don't want to be labelled as jobless in the society. I want to prove myself and get a place in the society. (P-1).

For the participants, the KPSS was a door opening to some social identities and a tool making them subjects for classification, pressure and discrimination in the society.

Another element was *the features of the system/policy appeared through the use of the KPSS*. According to the participants, the hidden policy embedded in the KPSS implicitly influenced and shaped their habits and behaviours in social and educational levels. The participants asserted that the introduction of the KPSS in the Turkish education system generated a hidden policy which popularized the subjects, skills and values included in the KPSS as seen in the following excerpt.

The policy appeared through the test is based on the test, and we have started working on the test. Here, we only do test. We are focusing on the subjects and skills included in the KPSS, or we care to remain at the level of thinking that system has expected from us. This policy only supports finding the right option for the multiple questions in the test and producing nothing. (P-4)

They stated their concerns for the inclusion of the receptive skills and theoretical knowledge rather than the productive skills and practical knowledge in teaching. They asserted that the KPSS implicitly defined and dictated the knowledge, skills and behaviours that English language teacher candidates needed to know and do. To them, the KPSS regulated the access to vocational opportunities for English language teacher candidates by serving as a gatekeeper. They all agreed that the hidden policies imposed through the use of standardized tests having high stakes implications might make language teaching and learning be problematic in the Turkish context.

Consequences on prospective teachers was the last dimension mentioned by the participants. They all agreed that the KPSS changed prospective teachers into test referenced individuals who closed themselves off from innovations, new learning and skills not included in the KPSS, as indicated by the following excerpt.

In fact, KPSS is forcing to do something that you would not do if there was not such a test. Yes, this exam is very necessary, but there are problems about how to apply it. Here, there is more theoretical knowledge than practice. There are not any emphases on speaking in English. In fact, we are behind Europe in speaking English. Of course such tests are the reason. Theoretical and grammar knowledge is taught and measured continuously. (P-1)

This, for example, led them to neglect their practicum process. They asserted that the KPSS standardized them and led them to be stereotypical language teachers knowing just what was included in the KPSS and nothing more. For them, doing well in the KPSS did not mean being an effective English teacher. It simply meant fitting in the mould of the KPSS's standards.

3.2. System Relationships

In order to answer Research Question 4, 'How do all factors of the origin of the power of the KPSS, its effects and consequences relate to each other in the participants' shared perceptual system of the powerful use of the KPSS in the Turkish context?' the pair relations between the affinities comprising the participants' shared perceptual systems of the origin of the power of the KPSS, its effects and consequences were examined. The group affinity relationship table indicated a total of 356 votes and 272 possible relationships in a system of 17 affinities in the participants' composite mindmap on the powerful use of the KPSS in the Turkish context. However, it was not possible to move all pair relations into the Interrelationship Diagram (IRD). Thus, before creating the IRD, a pareto protocol table was designed in order to achieve and document a degree of consensus about which relations needed to be included in the group IRD. In the pareto table on the powerful use of the KPSS, there were 272 pair relationships pertaining to the participants' common system of the powerful use of the KPSS. It was possible to trace 112 different possible pairs for which a cause and effect relation exists. 160 of the possible relationships did not get any votes. Additionally, the relationships between 92 and 112 were considered ambiguous because the arguments on these 21 relationships were not solved in the pareto chart as they received only one vote. Therefore, examination of the value of the cumulative percent (frequency) showed that the possible 112 relationships account for the total variation in the system. In order to set cut-off point to decide which relationships should be included in the group IRD, the power value was checked.

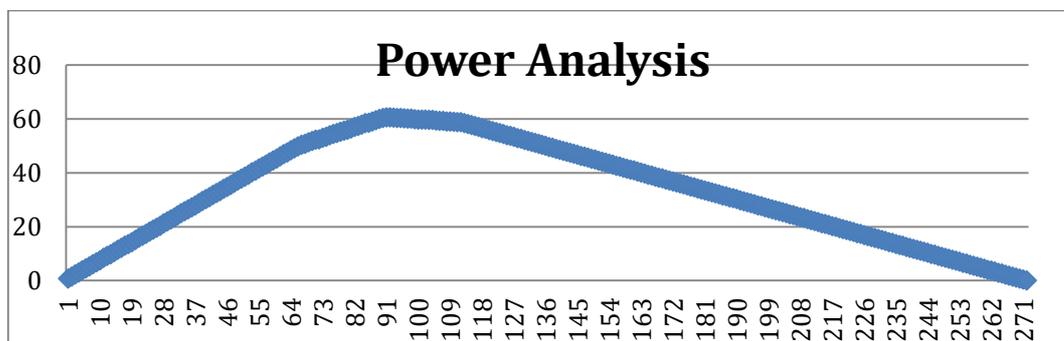


Figure 2. Power analysis graph

The power curved peaks at a value of 60.6 at 91 relationships by explaining 94.1 of the total variation in group system. Accordingly, considering the power value as a base to determine cut-off point (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), the first 91 relationships recorded in the pareto table were moved into the IRD. Each of 91 relationships were recorded twice; once with an up arrow,

and once with a left arrow. After the group IRD was filled in, the seventeen affinities were sorted in descending order of their delta values. The group IRD in which affinities were in descending order of delta was presented in Figure 3.

Group Tabular IRD																					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	out	in	Δ	SID Assignments
3	↑		-	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑		↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	14	0	14	Primary Driver
16	↑	↑	←	↑		↑		↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	-	↑	13	1	12	Secondary Driver
5	↑		←	↑	-	↑	↑			↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑			10	1	9	Secondary Driver
15	↑		←	↑	←	↑				↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	-	←		8	3	5	Secondary Driver
7	↑		←	←	←	↑	-			↑	↑	↑	↑	↑				7	3	4	Secondary Driver
4	↑		←	-	←	↑	↑			↑	↑			↑	←	←		6	4	2	Secondary Driver
2		-				↑										←		1	1	0	Circulator/Pivot
9	↑		←		←		↑	-			←	↑	←	↑		←	↑	5	5	0	Circulator/Pivot
1	-		←	←	←	←	←	←	←	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	←	←		6	7	-1	Secondary Outcome
6	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	←	←	←	6	9	-3	Secondary Outcome
17			←			↑		←				←				←	-	1	4	-3	Secondary Outcome
8			←			←		-	←			←		↑		←		1	5	-4	Secondary Outcome
12	←	←		←		←	←	←	←	↑	↑		-	←	↑	←	←	4	8	-4	Secondary Outcome
11	←		←	←	←	←	←	←	←	↑	←	-		↑	↑	←	←	3	8	-5	Secondary Outcome
10	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←		↑	←	←	↑	↑	←	←	3	9	-6	Secondary Outcome
13	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	↑	←	←	←	↑	-	↑	←	3	9	-6	Secondary Outcome
14	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	←	-	←	←	0	14	-14	Primary Outcome

Figure 3. The group IRD sorted in descending order of Δ on the powerful use of the KPSS

Affinity 3, 16, 5, 15, 7 and 4 had deltas with positive numbers, whereas Affinity 14, 13, 10, 11, 12, 8, 17, 6 and 1 had negative delta values. Through the examination of the Ins and Out columns, the tentative SID assignments on the powerful use of the KPSS were determined. Affinity 3 was determined to be the primary driver by having no Ins, while Affinity 14 with zero Outs was labelled as the primary outcome in the participants' perceived system. Affinities 16, 5, 15, 7, 4 were defined as the secondary drivers, whereas affinities 13, 10, 11, 12, 8, 17, 6 and 1 were named as secondary outcomes in the system. So as to develop the SIDs of the participants' perception system on the powerful use of the KPSS, the affinities were arranged according to the tentative SID assignments. The seventeen affinities were placed in rough order: primary and secondary drivers to the left and the secondary and primary outcomes to the right on the screen. Each affinity number was placed in a square shape with arrows connecting 91 affinity pairs in the group IRD. The cluttered SID of the powerful use of the KPSS is shown in Figure 4.

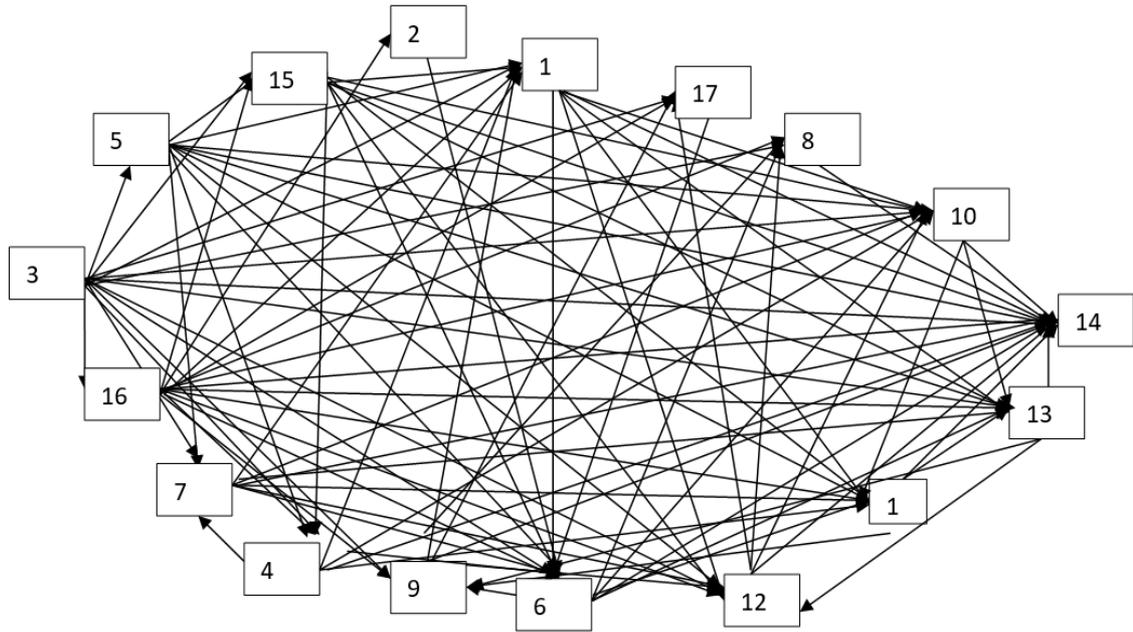


Figure 4. Cluttered SID of the powerful use of the KPSS

Figure 4 includes all of the links identified by the participants on the powerful use of the KPSS in the group IRD. However, the enormity of the number of the relationships makes it hard to interpret it. Therefore, in order to get the participants' final system of the powerful use of the KPSS, the redundant links were removed and a theoretical code onto each link from IQA Interview 4 was presented. The theoretical summary SID of the powerful use of the KPSS in the Turkish context was developed and illustrated in Figure 5.

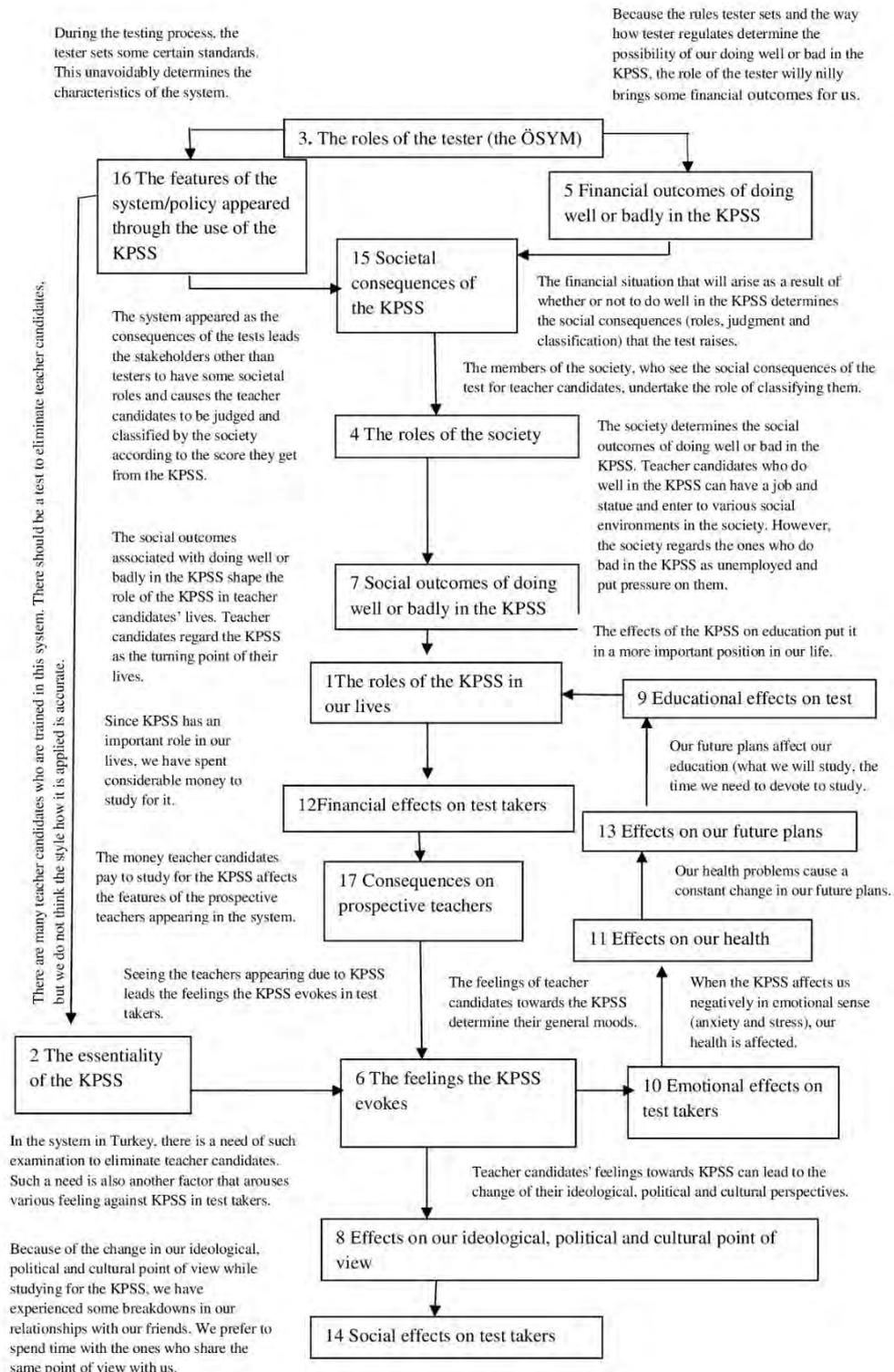


Figure 5. Composite theoretical summary SID of the powerful use of the KPSS

Figure 5 revealed that in the Turkish context, the KPSS started to generate power through the ÖSYM regulations in the testing discourse of the KPSS. The students perceived that the rules and regulations that the ÖSYM expected them to follow had resulted in not only the development of a hidden policy but also the economic results of doing well or badly in the KPSS. This policy, together with the financial results, caused some societal consequences. The participants put forward that when the society became aware of the significance of the KPSS results, it casted itself as the oppressor until teacher candidates did well in the KPSS and got appointed in the schools of the Turkish Ministry of National Education. As a result, the candidates who got appointed would be named and get the identity as teachers in the society, whereas the ones who did not would be regarded as losers. Thus, the KPSS came to have a major and influential role in the lives of teacher candidates. The rest of the system flowed into a feedback loop including Affinities 1, 12, 17, 6, 10, 11, 13, and 9. Based on the axial codes and definitions of the affinities, this feedback loop was named *the cycle of change in teacher candidates' inner worlds* illustrated in Figure 6.

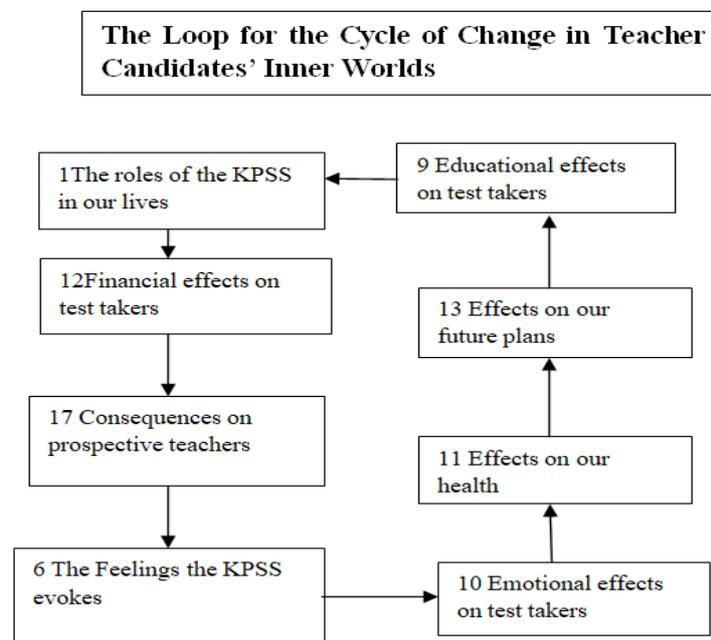


Figure 6. *The cycle of change in teacher candidates' inner worlds* Feedback Loop

In Figure 6, the participants assessed how the existence of the KPSS in Turkish education system affected their inner world. The participants seemed to be convinced that the KPSS had a major role in their lives. They were inclined to pay a large sum of money to prepare for the exam. On the other hand, they also believed that this system generated a certain type of teachers. They were aware of the fact that they would turn into teachers that they did not want to be. They inevitably developed some negative feelings towards the KPSS, which impaired their general psychological and emotional states. Thus, some effects on their health and their future plans and education became visible. Cyclically, all these affinities determined the change the KPSS created within the teacher candidates.

Substituting the feedback loop 1-12-17-6-10-11-13-9 via the subsystem to *the cycle of change in teacher candidates' inner worlds* in the participants' common perceived system of the powerful use of the KPSS, the telephoto-view SID was obtained and presented in Figure 7.

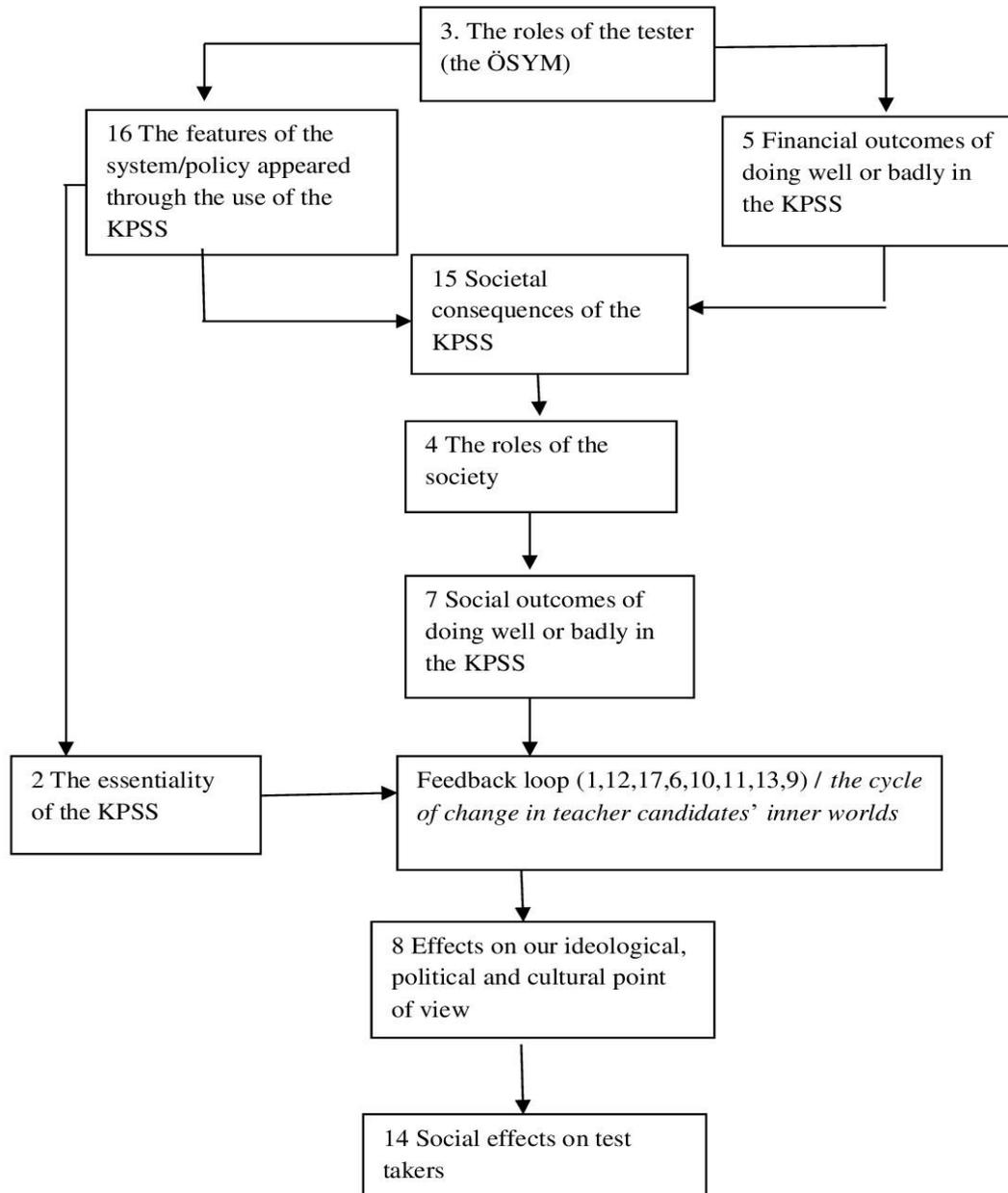


Figure 7. Composite telephoto view SID of the powerful use of the KPSS

The system in Figure 7 was not zoomed out any further in order to present a linear system. It was evident that the participants believed in the essentiality of the KPSS though they did not support the way it was applied in the Turkish context. In fact, in the participants' shared system of the powerful use of the KPSS, the necessity of an examination was one of the driving factors for *the cycle of change in teacher candidates' inner worlds* together with *social outcomes of doing well or badly in the KPSS*. The participants perceived that *the cycle of change in teacher candidates' inner worlds* brought out some effects on their ideological, political and cultural points of views and even caused breakdowns in their social relationships.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The student teachers jointly identified a total of 17 affinities describing the powerful use of the KPSS. A combination of these factors (affinities) was presented by the SIDs (see Figure 4, 5, 6, and 7). In the SIDs, the participants perceived *the roles of tester (the ÖSYM)* as the

main driving force in the testing discourse of the KPSS. This perception clearly corroborates Shohamy's (2001b) assertion that "[o]ne of the important features that grant test power is that they are administered by powerful institution" (p.20). How the ÖSYM sets rules and implements changes drives all of the factors in the participants' mind map on the powerful use of the KPSS. Numerous researchers have agreed on the powerful roles of testers in the development of test power in a particular testing context (Menken, 2008b, 2017; Shohamy, 2001b, 2001c). As Xi and Davis (2016) state, "test consequences can have many different determinants, some of which, such as the design of the test, can be directly controlled by test providers" (p.73). This means how the testers set rules might incur some unintended effects and consequences. Here in our case, the tester (the ÖSYM) made all the critical decisions that could influence and generated the powerful use of the KPSS. The findings highlighted that the power the KPSS exercises was closely connected with the way the ÖSYM administers its testing discourse. Besides, the participants asserted that the demands of the ÖSYM determined not only the development of a hidden policy but also the sacrifices the participants made to get the financial outcomes of doing well or badly in the KPSS.

From the ÖSYM perspective, the findings point to several implications. One might be that the ÖSYM, as the tester, should pay attention not only to tests' technical and psychometric features but also to the impact of those practices on individuals and society at large. It should examine and pay attention to lived experiences and interpretations of people affected from testing practices.

The participants claimed that the KPSS imposed a hidden policy that shaped and affected language education policies and encouraged some learning strategies while discouraging others. As stated by Menken (2008a, 2008b, 2017), unintentionally tests have potentials to become *de facto policies* dictating a narrowing down of curriculum teaching and learning to the skills, knowledge and materials included in the tests. The participants regarded *the features of the system/policy appeared through the use of the KPSS* (affinity 2) as the main driving force that led to the development of the other consequences of the KPSS. The reason might be the potential of high stakes tests to enact not only as 'de facto' policies (Menken, 2008a, 2008b, 2017; Shohamy, 2001b) but also as social policies (Filer, 2000; Shohamy, 2001b; Young, 2012).

Thus, the findings also implied that the policy together with the financial outcomes led to some societal consequences. Once tests have power, they result in societal consequences as "the performance on one single test has the potential of affecting other events for better or for worse" (Shohamy, 2001b, p. 9). For the participants, once the society recognized the financial benefits associated with doing well in the KPSS, they classified student teachers in terms of doing well and badly in the KPSS. Shohamy (2001a, 2009) says it is because tests are regarded by societies as signs of major criteria of worth and quality. It also explains why the participants stated that the society put pressure on them to get appointed in the schools of the Ministry of National Education.

Though the KPSS is administered by a powerful institution, the ÖSYM is not solely responsible for its powerful use. The findings show that the members of the society determine their own subjective positions in the testing discourse of the KPSS by assigning wide acceptance, meanings and roles to the KPSS. Owing to the trust and respect that the KPSS has in the eyes of members of the society, the KPSS serves as proof for a range of judgements and arguments of the society. As indicated by Shohamy (2001b) "the introduction of tests has a strong appeal to the public as it symbolizes social order in areas in which the public normally feels a lack of control, such as education" (p. 39). In other words, as the members of the society other than the tester and test takers attribute major roles and meanings, the KPSS achieves

power in the society. Thus, the findings imply that in recent years, with the growing number of large scale and standardized tests in the Turkish context, the members of the society other than the tester and test takers need to gain great momentum to become testing and assessment literate individuals.

The findings of the IQA study also showed a sub-system the participants had on the powerful use of the KPSS in Turkey (see Figure 6). It was entitled as *the cycle of change in teacher candidates' inner worlds* including Affinities 1, 12, 17, 6, 10, 11, 13, and 9. This sub-system started to appear when the KPSS had a major role in their lives. In addition to the members of the society, test takers also caused such use of the KPSS. The power of the KPSS originated from the trust that those who are affected put on it. This means that what made the KPSS powerful also depended on the meaning and roles test takers attributed to it. As Shohamy (2001b) states, “The power of the test, as expressed in the fear and respect that those affected by the test have for it, guarantees an almost automatic response- behaviours will be changed” (p. 35). In this testing discourse, the KPSS rarely faced any objections from test takers, rather they believed in the essentiality of the KPSS for the selection of teacher candidates in an equal and objective stance. Similar findings were also documented by other studies on the KPSS (Atav & Sönmez, 2013; Baştürk, 2017; Karataş & Güleş, 2013; Karataş & Okan, 2019; Sezgin & Duran, 2011). When teacher candidates were judged on the basis of their performances on the KPSS which had wide trust and acceptance in the society, it potentially turned into a powerful tool playing a central role in their lives. As Young (2012) states, how test takers see themselves against test and testers is highly related with test power. In such a circumstance, “while test takers perceive tests as powerful, they see themselves as powerless” (Shohamy, 2001b, p.13) as is the case in the testing discourse of the KPSS. Though this led to some negative feelings in teacher candidates, without any resistance, they complied with the rules dictated by the KPSS and started to change their behaviour.

The power of the KPSS became more apparent when it manifested itself in the form of daily practices and routines of teacher candidates through which they engaged in self-surveillance and self-discipline to study for the KPSS. In fact, they had come to consider studying for the KPSS as their number one priority, and getting high scores as an issue of life and death. They started to change their behaviour and attitudes in accordance with the identities and knowledge reinforced in the KPSS. This led to the expenses they incurred and then how they turned into teachers they did not desire to be. In doing so, this created some negative feelings in teacher candidates towards the KPSS, which coheres with the previous studies in testing and assessment literature (Atav & Sönmez, 2013; Baştürk, 2017; Karataş & Güleş, 2013; Karataş & Okan, 2019). They even pointed out that their general psychological and emotional state were profoundly affected with some health issues and obligatory changes in their future plans. Despite all this, however, they supported the essentiality of the KPSS in order to prevent nepotism or favouritism. In fact, this belief was one of the driving factors for the appearance of *the cycle of change in teacher candidates' inner worlds* together with the *social outcomes of doing well or badly in the KPSS*. The participants highlighted that *the cycle of change in teacher candidates' inner worlds* resulted in some changes in their ideological, political and cultural point of views. In turn, some social effects of the KPSS became visible in their lives such as breakdowns in their social relationships and changes in their social contexts. In this way, the KPSS served the function of a social tool constructing the identities reinforced in it. At this point, as McNamara and Roever (2006) put forward,

the test taker is understood as a social being whose subjectivity is a function of subject position realized in the test itself. From this perspective, tests become technologies of subjectivity. They act as mechanisms both for the definition of subject positions and for the recognition of subjects. Tests create the identities that they measure (p. 196).

All the data presented so far indicate how powerful the KPSS is in determining particular forms of knowledge for English language teacher education while, at the same time, fulfilling a number of social and economic functions. This is due to English language teacher candidates' belief that the KPSS is a rite of passage for becoming a teacher in the schools of the Ministry of National Education. Though the KPSS is mainly used for selecting teacher candidates, it turns into 'a normalizing gaze' functioning as a disciplinary tool that establishes standards, rules, norms and values that English language teacher candidates are expected to meet. In fact, it is a surveillance tool for selecting, qualifying, classifying and identifying English language teacher candidates as teachers. In other words, teacher candidates believe that doing well in the KPSS will provide them socially and economically brighter futures. However, doing badly will prevent them from attaining their economic freedom, having the prestige and identity as English teacher, or even getting married and having a family. In order to get the financial and social values endowed from a high score in the KPSS, the declared selection function of the KPSS compels students to change their lives and work for the immediate goal of getting good scores in the KPSS. Thus, teacher candidates are subjected to the power of the KPSS which turns into a tool dictating what test takers will study and what will be taught and eventually what they will know. In order to ensure its quality, the KPSS should be reconceptualised to encourage student teachers to express not only their theoretical knowledge, but also their active teaching practices. Though in the Turkish context an oral exam is carried out by the Ministry of National Education for the appointment of teachers, it does not require teacher candidates to present their real teaching practices. Instead, the skills, knowledge and competencies should be carefully specified in accordance with the practices expected from the teachers to achieve in the classroom.

In addition, considering Shohamy's (2005) statement "tests provide a reflection, a mirror, of the complexities and power struggles of society" (p. 110), a closer look at the testing discourse of the KPSS shows that the reconceptualization process of the KPSS should be conducted through the collaboration of the ÖSYM, the Ministry of National Education, the YÖK and English language teaching departments and even in-service and preservice teachers of English. Because the KPSS plays an important role in the Turkish context as the findings show, working collaboratively might promote English teachers' learning and teaching and even English language education.

As a concluding remark, we should note that the results of this study should not be generalized since it is a case study. However, it can be concluded that the KPSS has become a social tool defining, shaping and producing teacher candidates while keeping them powerless and under surveillance. The KPSS is a social practice which creates significant roles and powerful use in the construction and development of knowledge and identities for individuals and the society in the Turkish context. It, to a large extent, shapes the teacher candidate and the society in general.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Affinity Name Table

	Affinity	Meaning
1		
2		

Appendix B. Detailed Affinity Relationship Table

Affinity Pair Relationship	*Example of the relationship either in natural language or in the form of IF/THEN statement of relationships
1 → 2	
1 ← 2	
NOTE: *This column is intended only as a demonstration to provide participants a space to write down the detail of each relationship if it is needed.	

Appendix C. Theoretical Code Frequency Table

Affinity Pair Relationship	Frequency	Theoretical code
1 → 2		
1 ← 2		
1 → 3		
1 ← 3		

Appendix D. Individual Interview Axial Code Table

Individual Interview Axial Code Table			
Affinity	Transcript Line	Axial Quotation	Researcher Notes*
1.			
2.			
3			
4			



Appendix E. Combined Interview Axial Code Table

Combined Interview Axial Code Table			
Affinity	Transcript Line/participant	Axial Quotation	Researcher Notes
1			
1.			
2.			
2.			

Appendix F. Individual Interview Theoretical Code Table

Individual Interview Theoretical Code Table			
Affinity Pair Relationship	Transcript Line	Axial Quotation	Researcher Notes
1 → 2			

NOTE: *The Researcher Notes column is intended only as a demonstration. Research notes are typically much more thought.

Appendix G. Combined Interview Theoretical Code Table

Combined Interview Theoretical Code Table			
Affinity Relationship	Transcript Line/participant	Axial Quotation	Researcher Notes
1 → 2			
1 → 2			

NOTE: *The Researcher Notes column is intended only as a demonstration. Research notes are typically much more thought.