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## Teachers' Views on Student Books Prepared for 1<sup>st</sup> Graders' Adaptation And Preparation Practices (Denizli Sample)

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### Abstract

The rapid changes in the information era have affected education systems. Within this context, new regulations and alterations are often introduced in Turkey as well as in all over the world. Recently, the Ministry of National Education has adopted the new 4+4+4 model which started to be implemented as of 2012-2013 school year. With this change, the structure of the schools and lowering the school starting age have often been discussed in public. The school starting age was lowered to 60 to 66 months old, and primary school was divided into two levels as elementary school and middle school. These regulations mostly affected the 1<sup>st</sup> graders and their teachers. The age for starting 1st grade was lowered to 60 to 66 months old, and a 12-week adaptation and preparation process was added to the program for the students' adaptation to school. Moreover, there were also guide books prepared for use by students and teachers in this process. The aim of this study was to identify teachers' views on coursebooks prepared for 1<sup>st</sup> graders' adaptation and preparation practices, and to form a basis for the future regulations by revealing the deficiencies of the current model. In this study, qualitative research method was employed to collect detailed and in-depth data, learn participants' individual perceptions, experiences and point of views, and to understand and explain the current situations. For this study, case study design within the qualitative method was used to identify elementary teachers' views on the books prepared for the 1<sup>st</sup> graders' adaptation and preparation. Within case study models, Holistic Single Case model was used. The population for the study is 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers teaching at state schools in the central district of Denizli. A total of 75 elementary school teachers of 1<sup>st</sup> graders were reached and given the question forms. The question form included open-ended questions developed by the researchers. The results revealed that according to the teachers' views, the adaptation and preparation books were able to develop students' problem solving skills, the activities in the books caused problems due to not being suitable for the level, and the instructions in the books were not sufficient.

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**Keywords:** Elementary school teachers, adaptation and preparation practices, coursebook, 4+4+4 model

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## 1. Introduction

Today, life conditions and the current state of knowledge go through a rapid change, which in turn affects the information individuals need. The information and technological processes, economical conditions, the interaction of religious rules and modern demands of changes, the differentiations arising in traditions of societies, and global interaction tools and similar phenomena force individuals and societies to change along with the areas they are in (Beycioglu & Aslan, 2010). The change of the information individuals need also affect the education they would receive. In accordance with the changing conditions, the Ministry of National Education has taken on a new education model, called the 4+4+4 model, to be implemented as of the 2012-2013 school year. According to this model, the compulsory education consists of 12 years including four-year elementary school, four-year middle school and four-year high school. In addition, the eight-year primary school was divided into two as four-year elementary school and four-year middle school. The new model also reduced the school starting age to 60 to 66 months for 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

The changes in science, technology, culture and social life have influenced the educational theory and practice, and teachers are expected to adapt to such changes (Celikten, Sanal & Yeni, 2005). In this sense, teachers' adaptation to new regulations in education inevitably affects the quality of education they provide. Starting elementary school is one of the milestones in a child's life. Elementary school is a place that is different from home, and where the child who leaves home for the first time spend most of his/her day with new friends and adults (Erkan & Kirca, 2010). Consequently, ensuring that students who start elementary school adapt to the school and classroom environment would also enhance the quality of education, which particularly more important due to the school starting age being reduced with the new education system.

With the school starting age being reduced for 1<sup>st</sup> graders in the 4+4+4 model, a 12-week process named "adaptation and preparation practices" was added to the program to ensure 1<sup>st</sup> graders' adaptation to school. The Ministry explains the rationale for this process as: Elementary 1<sup>st</sup> grade is important for students in many aspects. The reason is that they meet their new friends, teachers and teaching environment for the first time in that classroom. Considering the effects of these firsts on them, both the orientation week and the process during the first three months have to be carefully planned. Variables such as teachers' first communication, teaching methods and classroom environment would cause students feel anxious or comfortable (Ministry of National Education, 2012). According to the Ministry (2012), the primary aims of the adaptation and preparation practices include the following: firstly, to facilitate the adaptation of those who start elementary 1st grade to school, friends, teacher and instructional activities, and secondly, to form the background for reading and writing by doing preparation activities to 1st grade courses, and to a certain extent, yield the outcomes for the courses including Life Science, Mathematics, Visual Arts, Music, and Game and Physical Activities. When these aims are examined, it can be argued that they emphasize students' getting familiar with the school and teaching activities and adaptation to the new environment. One of the main sources that guide teachers and students in teaching and learning activities is coursebooks. Coursebooks play an important role in planning, implementing, evaluating and developing teaching and learning activities (Alkan, 1995). According to Tertemiz, Ercan and Kuyubasi (2004), a coursebook is a tool that is related to both learning and teaching processes due to being a resource that affects what students would learn and what teachers would teach in planned instructional activities. For Toprak (1993), it is a useful teaching material that presents the course content to students, and provide them opportunities for reinforcement, preparing for exams and studying at their own pace (Sahin, 2008). In the Coursebooks and Tools Regulation of the Ministry of National Education, a coursebook is defined as a resource that facilitate the learning of subjects in accordance with the outcomes and explanations in the teaching program, contain various examples, exercises, web addresses related to the units covered, further reading texts and other activities, and include both printed and electronic books supported with environments such as cassette, floppy and CD (Ministry of National Education, 2012). Coursebooks should not deliver information directly, but rather help students structure it (Ocak & Yurtseven, 2009). Likewise, coursebooks and workbooks should not be the information providers, but should help students learn the ways of getting to the information and adapt to the teaching and learning processes. According to Kilic and Seven (2006), the characteristics that coursebooks have include the following:

- They should provide introductory activities to identify students' prior learning related to the outcomes.

- They should provide clues to enable students to change their existing cognitive structures.
- They should include open-ended questions to provide opportunities for students to express their cognitive structures, and for discussions.
- They should include activities to support students' initiatives for re-structuring and reviewing their cognitive structures.
- They should include evaluative options for activities.

For the adaptation and preparation process to be successful, the student workbooks developed in this scope should be prepared in accordance with the process. In this sense, the aim of this study was to identify 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers' views on the adaptation and preparation student book which was developed for students. The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. Are the student book for adaptation and preparation practices able to develop students' skills of solving everyday problems according to the teacher views?
2. Are the student book for adaptation and preparation practices able to develop students' skills of adapting to school and classroom according to the teacher views?
3. What are the problems experienced while using the student book for adaptation and preparation practices according to the teacher views?

## 2. Method

In this study, qualitative research method was employed because the teachers' views related to an issue would be identified (Cemaloglu, 2009; Ekiz, 2009; Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). Case study design was preferred in accordance with the research aim. Among the case study designs, "holistic single case design" was used. In single case designs, there is a single analysis unit (an individual, an institution, a program, a school, etc.) (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008).

### 2.1. Participants

The study was conducted with 1st grade teachers working in the centre of Denizli province in the spring term of 2013-2014 school year. The sample of the study was determined based on "maximum variation sampling" which is one of the purposeful sampling methods (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008: 108). The list of schools in central Denizli for 2011-2012 school year was obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education. These schools were gathered in three socio-economic groups as low, middle and high according to the neighbourhood of schools, income level of students, parents' jobs and students' level of attendance. 75 elementary teachers at schools selected randomly participated in the study.

### 2.2. Data Gathering Tool

The open-ended questions related to the student book for adaptation and preparation activities and the personal information form were developed. The semi-structured interview form consisting of the personal information form and the open-ended questions were presented to four faculty members and three elementary teachers to take their opinions. The form was finalized based on the expert opinion, and it contained four questions and personal information form. The qualitative dataset obtained from 75 teachers were carefully read by the two researchers and transcribed. The data were coded by the researchers and an agreement percentage was calculated for each question. The calculation was done using the formula " $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Agreement}}{\text{Disagreement} + \text{Agreement}} \times 100$ ", and the values calculated for the four questions are as follows: the first question .85; the second question .94, the third question .95, the fourth question .94.

## 3. Findings

When the teacher views were examined in related to the first research question of the study, the theme "books developing problem solving skills" was reveal, and this theme consisted of the following codes: 1. Books being able to develop students' problem solving skills, 2. Books not being able to develop students' problem solving skills.

Some of the quotations from the participants' statements related to the first code are provided below. 54 teachers stated that coursebooks contributed to students' development of problem solving skills.

Table 1. Teacher views on the code "books being able to develop students' problem solving skills"

Teacher views	f	Teachers' Personal Characteristics
The activities in the books are able to develop students' problem solving skills.	39	(5, F), (6, M), (10,M), (12,F), (13,M), (14,F), (15, M), (19,F), (20, M), (21, M), (22, M), (25,M), (26,M), (27, F), (28, F), (29, M), (33,M), (35,M),(41,F), (42,M), (45, M),(46,M), (48, F), (49,M), (50,F), (51,M), (52, M), (53, M), (55, F), (56, M), (57, F), (58, M), (61, M), (62, M), (65, M)(66,M), (67, F), (73, M), (74, F),
They somewhat contribute to problem solving skills.	9	(2, F), (17, F), (31, M), (34, F), (43, F), (47, F), (63, M), (64, M), (70,M),
Yes, but students are bored by the activities.	3	(23, F), (44, M), (60,M).
Yes, but the activities and skills are not suitable for the characteristics of the neighbourhood.	3	(8, F), (36, M), (37,M).
TOTAL	54	

Some of the statements for the second code "books not being able to develop students' problem solving skills" are given below. In the study, 21 elementary teachers expressed an opinion towards books not contribution to the development of problem solving skills.

Table 2. Teacher views related to the code "books not being able to develop students' problem solving skills"

Teacher views	f	Teachers' Personal Characteristics
They don't contribute to problem solving skills at all.	11	(1, F), (4, F), (7, M), (16,M), (18, F), (32, F), (38, F), (39, M), (40,F), (71, F), (72,F),
Since the activities are too boring, they don't attract students' interest and contribute to their development of problem solving skills.	3	(3, F), (30, F), (54,F).
Since the books were developed really simply, they are below students' levels and thus don't develop their problem solving skills.	3	(11, F), (24, F), (59,F).
Since students don't understand the content of the activities, the books don't contribute to their problem solving skills.	2	(69, M), (75, F).
The old program and coursebooks were adequate in terms of problem solving skills, but not the new books.	2	(9,F), (68, M),
TOTAL	21	

When the teacher views related to the second research question "Are the student book for adaptation and preparation practices able to develop students' skills of adapting to school and classroom according to the teacher views?" were examined, the theme "views on books' contribution to students' skills of adaptation to school and classroom" emerged and it consisted of the following codes: 1. Adequacy of the books. 2. Inadequacy of the books. Some of the quotations for the code "adequacy of the books" within the theme "views on books' contribution to students' skills of adaptation to school and classroom" are provided below. In the study, 40 elementary teachers stated that the student coursebooks in the adaptation and preparation process were adequate in developing students' skills of adaptation to school and classroom.

Table 3. Teacher views related to the code "adequacy of the books"

Teacher views	f	Teachers' Personal Characteristics
Adaptation and preparation coursebooks facilitate students' adaptation to school and classroom.	28	(2, F),(5, F), (6, M), (16,M),(17, F), (21, M), (23, M), (28, F), (31, M), (32, F), (33,M), (37, F), (45, M),(38, F), (43, F), (46,M), (50,F), (54, F), (57, F), (58, M), (61, M), (62, M), (64, M),(65, M)(66,M), (67, F), (73, M), (74, F),

Although it is not adequate alone, it is effective.	6	(10,M),(40,F), (47, F),(53, M),(59, F),(70,M),
Coursebooks are very effective in adapting to school, classroom and friends, and make student love the school.	3	(48, F), (49, M), (75,M).
It is very beneficial for those who didn't go to preschool, but for those who did, it is not effective since they get bored.	3	(3, F), (34, F), (44,M).
TOTAL	40	

Some of the quotations for the code "inadequacy of the books" within the theme "views on books' contribution to students' skills of adaptation to school and classroom" are provided below. In the study, 35 elementary teachers stated that the student coursebooks in the adaptation and preparation process were not adequate in developing students' skills of adaptation to school and classroom.

Table 4. Teacher views related to the code "inadequacy of the books"

Teacher views	f	Teachers' Personal Characteristics
The coursebooks don't include any activities to ensure students' adaptation to school or classroom.	22	(1, F), (9, F), (11, F), (12, F), (13, M), (14, F), (15, M), (18, F), (19,F), (20, M), (22, M), (24,F),(25,M), (26,M), (30, F), (39,M), (51,M), (56, M), (60, M), (69, M), (71, F), (72, F),
Since the activities are in preschool level, they don't attract students' attention and facilitate their adaptation.	8	(4, F),(7,M),(8, F),(27, F), (29, M),(36,M), (52, M),(63, M),
Since the activities don't have any functionality, they don't enhance students' adaptation to school.	5	(35,M),(41,F),(42,M),(55, F), (68, M),
TOTAL	35	

When the teacher views regarding the third research question "What are the problems experienced while using the student book for adaptation and preparation practices according to the teacher views?" were examined, the theme "problems experienced in using the books" was revealed, and it included the following codes: 1.I don't have any problems while using the books 2.I have problems while using the books. Some of the quotations for the code "I don't have any problems while using the books" are presented below. In the study, 35 elementary teachers stated that they did not experience any problems while using the adaptation and preparation student books.

Table 5. Teacher views related to the code "I don't have problems while using the books"

Teacher views	f	Teachers' Personal Characteristics
I don't encounter any problems.	22	(2, F),(6, M),(12,F), (13,M),(15, M), (16,M),(17, F), (21, M), (22, M),(29, M),(31, M), (32, F), (33,M), (35,M), (49,M),(53, M)(54, F), (55, F), (56, M), (58, M), (61, M), (62, M),
Although I don't have any problems, the activities should be revised.	6	(3, F), (27, F),(44,M),(57, F), (64, M),(66,M)
I haven't encountered any problems, but basic skills are not sufficiently covered.	4	(4, F),(20, M),(47, F),(75, F).
I don't have any problems, but the coursebook being both the book and the notebook is not convenient; there should be a separate notebook.	3	(8, F),(46,M), (74, F),
TOTAL	35	

As revealed in the analysis, some of the quotations related to the code "I have problems while using the books" are provided below. In the study, 40 elementary teachers stated that they did experience problems while using the

adaptation and preparation student books.

Table 6. Teacher views related to the code "I have problems while using the books"

Teacher views	f	Teachers' Personal Characteristics
The activities being too boring and not being suitable to the level causes problems.	15	(5, F),(9, F), (23, M), (26,M),(28, F),(30, F),(37, F),(38, F), (40,F), (41,F), (45, M), (69, M), (70,M), (71, F), (72, F),
The biggest problem is time. The books don't have enough activities for the 12-week process, so the number of activities should be increased.	8	(10,M),(14,F),(19,F),(24,F),(25,M),(51,M),(59, F),(60, M),
The activity instructions in the book are not sufficient, I sometime don't get any idea how to implement.	7	(39,M), (42,M),(43, F),(50,F), (52, M),(63, M), (65, M)
The biggest problems is that the books are not delivered in time.	5	(7,M),(11, F),(48, F),(68, M), (73, M),
The books are not adequate and that's why we refer to extra books or photocopied materials.	3	(1, F), (18, F), (67,F).
Since I teach a multi-grade class, the coursebooks are inefficient and not adequate.	2	(34,F), (36, M),
TOTAL	40	

#### 4. Result, Discussion and Suggestions

According to the results of the study, the number of teachers ( $n=39$ ) who stated that the workbooks develop students' problem solving skills is higher than those ( $n=11$ ) who stated that they do not develop such skills. The coursebooks for the adaptation and preparation process should be able to develop students' skills and help them solve the problems they encounter. Based on this result, it can be argued that the adaptation and preparation coursebooks are able to develop students' problem solving skills. According to the views of the 40 teachers, the activities in the workbooks facilitate students' adaptation to school. However, 35 teachers stated the books were not effective in ensuring students' adaptation. Most of the teachers who thought the books were effective stated that the activities were suitable for those who did not receive preschool education and made them love school. As for the teachers who argued that the books were not effective, the activities were boring for students since they were related to preschool education. 34 of the teachers who participated stated that they did not have any problems while using the student workbooks. On the other hand, 39 teachers asserted that they had various problems. Although the teachers reported that they did not encounter many problems related to the books, they also mentioned the following: The activities should be revised, and the books are not sufficient to develop students' basic skills. The teachers who reported to have had problems had the following views: Extra resources and photocopied materials are used due to the inadequacy of the books. Since the activities are not suitable for the level, students get bored. The number of activities is not enough for the 12-week period. The books are not suitable for multi-grade classes. The instructions regarding the activities in the books are insufficient. These results overlap with the previous research on this issue. Gozutok et al. (2014) examined the adaptation and preparation books using document analysis, and emphasized that they contained significant errors, and for this reason, should be revised from a scientific point of view. The following suggestions can be offered based on the findings of the study: The student workbooks should be revised by the Board of Education and Discipline for their suitability for students' levels. The number of activities in the books should be increased so as to be sufficient for 12 weeks. The conditions of multi-grade classes should be considered while designing the activities. The support of child psychology experts should be received while designing such activities. More studies should be conducted to evaluate the coursebooks for the adaptation and preparation process.

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