



Turkish Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes about Teaching and
Their Pedagogical Practices: An Analysis Based-on the
Outcomes of the Teaching and Learning International Survey
(TALIS)*

Türk Öğretmenlerin Öğretim Konusundaki İnanç, Tutum ve
Eğitsel Uygulamaları: Uluslararası Öğretme ve Öğrenme Anketi
Sonuçlarının Analizi
(TALİS)*

Şener Büyüköztürk^a, Sadegül Akbaba-Altun^{b†}, Deniz Deryakulu^c

^aGazi University, Faculty of Education, Turkey

^bBaşkent University, Faculty of Education, Turkey

^cAnkara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Turkey

Abstract

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) is the first international survey to focus on the working conditions of teachers and the learning environment in schools. The main purpose of this study was to examine the Turkish teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching and their pedagogical practices based-on the outcomes of TALIS-Turkey data. Participants were 3637 teachers from 191 lower secondary schools (6-7-8 grades). TALIS Teacher Questionnaire consists of nine subsections with 43 questions. This study reports on only the outcomes of two subsections: (1) Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching, and (2) Teachers' Teaching Practices subsections of TALIS Teacher Questionnaire. Results showed that almost all the Turkish teachers were both inclined to regard students as active participants in the process of acquiring knowledge, and to see the teacher's main role as the transmission of information. Besides Turkish teachers put greater emphasis on ensuring that learning is well structured than on student-oriented activities which give them more autonomy. Females were less likely than males to see teaching as the direct transmission.

Keywords: TALIS, Teachers' beliefs, teaching practice.

Öz

OECD tarafından uygulanan TALIS raporu öğretmenlerin çalışma koşulları ve okuldaki öğrenme çevresini araştıran ilk uluslararası rapordur. Bu çalışmanın ana amacı Türkiye'deki öğretmenlerin öğretim hakkındaki inanca ve tutumları ile öğretim uygulamalarının TALIS verisine dayalı olarak incelemektir. Araştırmacının katılımcıları 6-8 sınıflarını okutan 3637 öğretmendir. TALIS anketi 43 sorudan oluşmaktadır. Ancak bu araştırma sadece TALIS anketinin Öğretim Uygulamaları, Öğretim İnanç ve Tutumlarına odaklanan soruları ile sınırlıdır. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına bakıldığında bütün Türk öğretmenlerinin hem bilginin ediniminde öğrencilerin aktif katılımını istedikleri hem de öğretmenin temel

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† ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Sadegül Akbaba-Altun, Department of Educational Sciences, Baskent University, Ankara, Turkey, E-mail address: akbabas@baskent.edu.tr / Tel: +90312 24666121

rolünün bilgi aktarımının kendilerinin rolü olduğunu düşünmeleridir. Buna ek olarak, Türk öğretmenleri öğrenmenin iyi yapılandırılmasının öğrenciye daha fazla özerklik veren öğrenci yönelimli etkinliklerden daha etkili olduğunu düşündükleri görülmüştür. Kadın öğretmenler erkek öğretmenlere göre öğretimin doğrudan aktarım olduğunu daha az düşünmektedirler.

Anahtar kelimeler: TALIS, öğretmen inançları, öğretim uygulamaları.

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1. Introduction

The OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) has been developed as part of the OECD Indicators of Education Systems (INES) project (OECD, 2009). TALIS is the first international survey to focus on the working conditions of teachers and the learning environment in schools (OECD, 2009). The main aim of TALIS is to help countries to review and develop policies that create the conditions for effective schooling. Therefore, TALIS looks at key aspects of teachers' professional development; teacher beliefs, attitudes and practices; teacher appraisal and feedback; and school leadership in the 23 participating countries. Countries participating in the first round of TALIS (2007-2008) are as follows: 1- *OECD Countries*: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Spain, and Turkey; 2- *Partner Countries*: Brazil, Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta and Slovenia. Southern hemisphere countries were administered TALIS Questionnaires in 2007 and Northern hemisphere countries were administered TALIS Questionnaires in 2008.

Teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes are important for understanding and improving educational processes. They are closely linked to teachers' strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life and to their general well being, and they shape students' learning environment and influence student motivation and achievement (TALIS, 2009, 89).

In TALIS reports teachers' beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning were explained under two headings: "direct transmission beliefs about teaching and learning and instruction" and "constructivist beliefs about learning and instruction". Both will be explained how it was described (2009, 92) in TALIS report.

The *direct transmission* view of student learning implies that a teacher's role is to communicate knowledge in a clear and structured way, to explain correct solutions, to give students clear and resolvable problems, and to ensure calm and concentration in the classroom. On the other hand, a constructivist view focuses on students as not passive recipients but as active participants in the process of in the process of acquiring knowledge. In this study, Turkish teachers' beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning was examined based on TALIS data.

Classroom teaching practices in this study was also examined to understand the profile of Turkish teachers' classroom practices. In TALIS report, classroom teaching practice was given under three topics: structuring practice, student-oriented practice and enhanced activities. *Structuring activities* include stating learning goals, summary of earlier lessons, homework review, checking the exercise book, and checking student understanding during classroom time by questioning students. *Student-oriented activities* include ability grouping, self-evaluation, and student participation in classroom planning. *Enhanced activities* include making a product, writing an essay, and debating arguments. Teachers were asked to report their teaching practices for a particular class that they teach in one of their main subject matter areas.

Researchers (Brophy and Good, 1986; Wang, Haertel and Walberg, 1993) found that teaching practices were related with effective classroom learning and student outcomes. On the other hand, other researchers such as Levitt (2001) and Wilcox-Herzog (2002) report that there was no link between teachers' beliefs and their practices. In this research, Turkish teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching and their pedagogical practices were studied based-on the outcomes of the Teaching and Learning International Survey.

2. Method

This descriptive study, using TALIS-Turkey data, examined Turkish teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching and their pedagogical practices. The findings derived by the TALIS are based on self-reports from teachers, thus they should be interpreted as reflect teachers' opinions, perceptions, beliefs and their accounts of their activities.

2.1 Participants

TALIS-Turkey data gathered from 3637 lower secondary teachers. Of the teachers 55% were female, 45% were male; 73% were below 40 years of age; approximately 67% were reported to have 15 years or less teaching experience; 84% were reported to have an undergraduate diploma whereas only 7% were reported to have a graduate degree. Of the teachers 16% were foreign language teachers, 15% were Turkish language and literature teachers, 11% were science teachers, and 10% were social studies teachers. Of the teachers 41% were reported to teach sixth grade students, 29% were reported to teach seventh grade students and 29% were reported to teach eighth grade students. Finally, of the schools that participating to the TALIS from Turkey, 74% were public schools and 26% were private schools.

2.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis

According to the TALIS design, lower secondary education teachers and the principals of their schools were the international target population. All participating countries had drawn 200 schools from their national school pool and 20 teachers in each school to administer separate questionnaires for teachers and the principals of their schools. Minimum target response rate was determined as 75%. Teachers and principals were free to fill questionnaires on paper or online.

In Turkey, the survey was administered by the Ministry of National Education. Data were collected in March-April 2008. All of the Turkish participants preferred to fill the questionnaires online. The response rate of Turkish teachers was 91%. Data was analysed by using descriptive statistics and t-tests.

3. Findings

3.1 Beliefs about the Nature of Teaching and Learning

Teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes have been considered to be important for understanding and improving educational processes (OECD, 2009). In TALIS design, the constructivist versus direct transmission beliefs on teaching and learning were measured. In direct transmission view of student learning implies that a teacher's role is to communicate knowledge in a clear and structured way, to explain correct solutions, to give students clear and resolvable problems, and to ensure calm and concentration in the classroom (OECD, 2009). In contrast, a constructivist view focuses on students as not passive recipients but as active participants in the process of acquiring knowledge (OECD, 2009).

Table 1.

Turkish Teachers' Direct Transmission Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

We would like to ask about your personal beliefs on teaching and learning. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the following statements.	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Effective/good teachers demonstrate the correct way to solve a problem	103	3.3	263	8.4	1678	53.3	1105
Instruction should be built around problems with clear, correct answers, and around ideas that most students can grasp quickly	109	3.5	417	13.3	1748	55.7	863	27.5
How much students learn depends on how much background knowledge they have – that is why teaching facts is so necessary	60	1.9	437	13.9	1990	63.5	647	20.6
A quiet classroom is generally needed for effective learning	87	2.8	551	17.5	1594	50.7	913	29.0

As in the seen in table 1. Turkish teachers' views about direct transmission were mainly "agree" level. 53.3 % Turkish teachers agree on that effective/good teachers demonstrate the correct way to solve a problem. 55.7% Turkish teachers thinks that instruction should be built around problems with clear, correct answers, and around ideas that most students can grasp quickly. 63.5 % teachers agree on that how much students learn depends on how much background knowledge they have-that is why teaching fact so necessary. More than 50% thinks that a quite classroom is generally needed for effective learning.

Table 2

Turkish Teachers' Constructivist Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

We would like to ask about your personal beliefs on teaching and learning. Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the following statements.	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
My role as a teacher is to facilitate students' own inquiry	69	2.2	218	6.9	1796	57.0	1067	33.9
Students learn best by finding solutions to problems on their own	81	2.6	89	2.8	1177	37.3	1810	57.3
Students should be allowed to think of solutions to practical problems themselves before the teacher shows them how they are solved	72	2.3	54	1.7	1204	38.2	1822	57.8
Thinking and reasoning processes are more important than specific curriculum content	54	1.7	162	5.2	1699	54.2	1220	38.9

Table 2 shows that Turkish teachers' views about constructivist beliefs about teaching and learning were mainly "agree" and "strongly agree" level. Turkish teachers' direct transmission and constructivist beliefs about teaching and learning can be seen in Table 1 and 2 respectively. Although the two views are supposed to be contradictory in nature, the results of TALIS-Turkey showed that the two approaches are quite commonly integrated by Turkish teachers (Büyüköztürk, Akbaba-Altun, & Yıldırım, 2010). Namely, Turkish teachers are both inclined to see the teacher's main role as the transmission of information, and to see the teacher's main role as allowing students to play active role in instructional activities. When the participants' responses in the category of "strongly agree" and "agree" were combined, Turkish teachers' level of agreeing for each statement regarding beliefs on direct instruction was found over 80% whereas Turkish teachers' level of agreeing for each statement regarding beliefs on constructivism was found over 90%.

3.2 Classroom Teaching Practices

Three indices were established to identify different profiles of teaching practices in TALIS design. Turkish teachers' structuring, student-oriented and enhanced teaching activities can be seen in Table 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

Table 3
Structuring Activities of Turkish Teachers

How often do each of the following activities happen in this <target class> throughout the school year?	Never or hardly ever		In about one-quarter of lessons		In about one-half of lessons		In about three quarters of lessons		In almost every lesson	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I explicitly state learning goals	71	2.3	859	28.0	419	13.6	391	12.7	1331	43.3
I review with the students the homework they have prepared	331	10.9	1202	39.6	405	13.3	311	10.3	785	25.9
At the beginning of the lesson I present a short summary of the previous lesson	131	4.3	766	24.9	231	7.5	287	9.3	1663	54.0
I check my students' exercise books	535	18.2	832	28.2	415	14.1	424	14.4	741	25.1
I check, by asking questions, whether or not the subject matter has been understood	39	1.3	373	12.2	377	12.3	396	13.0	1872	61.2

In table 3, it is seen that majority of Turkish teachers thinks that they explicitly state learning goals (43.3 %). In addition 54.0 % of Turkish teachers thinks that at the beginning of the lesson they present a short summary of the previous lesson. Again, 61.2 % of the Turkish teachers thinks that they check, by asking questions, whether or not the subject matter had been understood. More than 25% Turkish teachers thinks that they review with the students the homework they prepared and they check their students' exercise books.

Table 4
Student-Oriented Activities of Turkish Teachers

How often do each of the following activities happen in this <target class> throughout the school year?	Never or hardly ever		In about one-quarter of lessons		In about one-half of lessons		In about three quarters of lessons		In almost every lesson	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Students work in small groups to come up with a joint solution to a problem or task	533	17.5	1109	36.4	586	19.2	372	12.2	450	14.8
I give different work to the students that have difficulties learning and/or to those who can advance faster	478	15.6	919	30.0	533	17.4	408	13.3	723	23.6
I ask my students to suggest or to help plan classroom activities or topics	394	12.8	951	31.0	556	18.1	395	12.9	771	25.1
Students work in groups based upon their abilities	811	26.9	738	24.5	595	19.8	378	12.6	488	16.2

Table 4 shows that 36.4 % Turkish teachers, in about one-quarter of lessons, think that students work in small group to come up with a joint solution to a problem or task. More than 30% Turkish teachers they give different work to the students that have difficulties learning and/or to those who can advance faster and they ask their students to suggest or to help plan classroom activities or topics in about one-quarter of lessons. 24.5 % Turkish teachers think that students never or hardly work in groups based on their abilities.

Table 5
Enhanced Activities of Turkish Teachers

How often do each of the following activities happen in this <target class> throughout the school year?	Never or hardly ever		In about one-quarter of lessons		In about one-half of lessons		In about three quarters of lessons		In almost every lesson	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Students work on projects that require at least one week to complete	714	24.1	945	31.9	560	18.9	326	11.0	415	14.0
Students make a product that will be used by someone else	981	33.2	789	26.7	515	17.4	318	10.8	350	11.9
I ask my students to write an essay in which they are expected to explain their thinking or reasoning at some length	1324	45.2	763	26.0	414	14.1	219	7.5	209	7.1
Students hold a debate and argue for a particular point of view which may not be their own	1206	41.3	748	25.6	450	15.4	233	8.0	284	9.7

In table 5 Turkish teachers' opinions about enhanced activities are presented. 24.1% Turkish teachers think that students never or hardly ever work on project that require at least one week to complete. 33.2 % teachers think that students never or hardly ever make a product that will be used by someone else. 45.2% of the Turkish teachers think that they never or hardly ever ask their students to write an essay in which they are expected to explain their thinking or reasoning at some length. Again, more that 40% Turkish teachers think that students never of hardly ever hold a debate and argue for a particular point of view which may not be their own.

3.3 Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning, and Their Pedagogical Practices

Correlations between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, and their pedagogical practices were given below.

Table 6
Correlations between Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning, and Their Pedagogical Practices

Belief	Structuring Activities	Student-Oriented Activities	Enhanced Activities
Direct Transmission	.08	.03	.01
Constructivist	.09	.07	.00

Table 6 shows the correlation coefficients between Turkish teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, and their pedagogical practices. Although some correlations between Turkish teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, and their pedagogical practices were statistically significant, any of the correlations were high enough in order to consider being important in practice.

3.4 Gender and Turkish Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

According to the findings, in the classroom, Turkish teachers put greater emphasis on ensuring that learning is well structured than on student-oriented activities which give them more autonomy. Female

teachers are less likely than male teachers to see teaching as the direct transmission of knowledge and are more likely to adopt structuring and student oriented activities.

Table 7
Relationship between gender and Turkish Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Direct Transmission Belief	Female	1790	-0.03	1.03	3251	1.66	0.096
	Male	1463	0.03	1.09			
Constructivist Belief	Female	1790	0.07	0.98	3251	4.20	0.000
	Male	1463	-0.09	1.14			

Table 7 shows the relationship between Turkish teachers' gender and their beliefs about teaching and learning. According to the t-test results, there is no statistically significant differences (p, 0.096) between female and male teachers' direct transmission beliefs about teaching and learning. However, t-test results showed that, female teachers are more likely than male teachers to see teaching as a constructivist activity (p, 0.000).

Table 8
Relationship between Turkish Teachers' Pedagogical Practices and Their Gender

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Structuring Activities	Female	1790	0.15	1.016	3251	9.10	0.000
	Male	1463	-0.19	10.8			
Student-Oriented Activities	Female	1790	0.06	1.03	3251	3.46	0.000
	Male	1463	-0.07	1.09			
Enhanced Activities	Female	1790	0.02	1.02	3251	1.21	0.224
	Male	1463	-0.02	1.10			

Table 8 shows the relationships among Turkish teachers' pedagogical practices and their gender. According to the t-test results, female Turkish teachers are more likely to adopt structuring and student-oriented practices than male teachers. However, there is no significant difference (p 0.224>0.05) between female and male teachers in terms of adopting enhanced activities in the classroom.

4. Conclusion

Teachers who participated to TALIS survey shows that at lower secondary schools have more female teachers than male teachers. At that education level, most of the teachers are young and they have less teaching experience. So, they may need to attend more professional development programs in the future. Unfortunately, most of the teachers have undergraduate diploma whereas only 7% were reported to have a graduate degree.

In TALIS, teachers' direct transmission and constructivist beliefs were also examined. Although these two views are supposed to be contradictory in nature, the results of TALIS-Turkey showed that the two approaches are quite commonly integrated by Turkish teachers (Büyüköztürk, Akbaba-Altun, & Yıldırım,

2010). Namely, Turkish teachers are both inclined to see the teacher's main role as the transmission of information, and to see the teacher's main role as allowing students to play active role in instructional activities. In 2004-2005 the elementary education curriculum had changed and the constructivist curriculum began to apply. This result shows that the transformation of the constructivist curriculum has not completely achieved yet. Turkish teachers are on the way to change.

Of the three teaching practice, Turkish teachers felt more conformable with structuring activities than other activities. Among OECD countries, teachers have tendency to use structured activities than student-oriented activities. In addition, both of these teaching practices are emphasized more than enhanced learning activities (TALIS, 2009). Female teachers are more open to constructivist approach and to adopt structuring and student oriented activities than male teachers. There is no significant difference in terms of enhanced teaching between them.

In conclusion, Turkish teachers have a tendency to use both direct transmission and constructivist approach. Female teachers have a tendency to use more constructivist approach, to adopt structured and students oriented practices.

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