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WHAT DO EDUCATIONAL SUPERINTENDENTS THINK ABOUT MATHEMATICS REFORM IN TURKEY?

Abstract:

Starting in 2004-2005 Turkish education system went through a reform starting with elementary school and moving up to all levels. The middle school (grades 6-8) mathematics curriculum in Turkey also changed in terms of its content, emphasis and pedagogy. This study aims to evaluate and compare the current curriculum with that used prior to 2005. Superintendents (n=47) working in Istanbul, participated in the study. Data of the study was collected through a questionnaire developed by the researchers based on related literature and experts' opinions. The questionnaire consisted of 10 open-ended, eight multiple-choice and 31 Likert type questions.

According to the study findings, 80% of the superintendents agreed that with the mathematical activities offered in the new curriculum students develop critical thinking skills. Additionally, 85% of them agreed that the said mathematical activities develop independent thinking skills. Of the superintendents 87% agreed that students engage in higher order thinking skills during these activities. Only 9% of the superintendents thought that various teaching methods are being used in schools. Also 24% of the superintendents and 26% of them agree that teachers and students respectively had adopted to their new roles defined by the constructivist pedagogy. One major finding was that 18% of the superintendents agreed that the national curriculum takes the socio-economic level of students whereas that percentage was 13 with respect to the infrastructure of schools. Compared to the previous mathematics program, 47% of the superintendents thought that the new program was more successful in teaching mathematics. Furthermore 18% of the superintendents agreed that class size does not affect the applicability of the curriculum. Even though, half of the superintendents (49%) thought that teachers followed the new program's recommendations in planning their lessons, 82% of them wrote that the most commonly used teaching method was lecturing. Thus, only 26% of them observed that the recommended teaching methods were used in classrooms. Moreover, 38% of the superintendents mentioned that teachers continued using conventional teaching methods; 15% of them voiced concern that parents, students, principals and even teachers did not truly accept the pedagogy endorsed by the new program. Though the new program puts an emphasis on use of mathematics in daily life, 19% of the superintendents found this aspect lacking in application. The findings of this study might be useful in

future revisions and implementations of the national mathematics program.

Keywords:

Mathematics reform, superintendents, mathematics curriculum evaluation, mathematics education in Turkey

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