THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO: TIME FOR A FRESH START?

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Abstract
This article is based on the plenary talk I gave at the 2016 GlobELT Conference (Antalya, 14–17 April). I begin by reminding readers of the structure of the ELP and pointing out that although it was greeted with enthusiasm in most Council of Europe member states, it is not widely used in most of them (Turkey and Albania are current exceptions to this general tendency). I then elaborate on the relation between the ELP and the CEFR and sketch the ELP's history from 1998 to 2014. After that I offer answers to two questions: Why has the ELP been a relative failure in most countries? And why did the ELP succeed in Ireland with learners from immigrant backgrounds? Finally, I consider how we might make a fresh start.

1. Introduction

The European Language Portfolio has three parts:

- a language passport, which contains a summary of the owner's experience of learning and using second and foreign languages (L2s), an updatable self-assessment of the owner's proficiency in L2s, and a record of certificates, diplomas and other language qualifications he or she has been awarded;
- a language biography, which is designed to encourage reflection and self-management and contains checklists of "I can" descriptors that are used for goal setting and self-assessment;
- a dossier, in which the learner keeps evidence of his or her language learning achievement and perhaps also work in progress.

The ELP has three pedagogical focuses. It is intended to foster the development of learner autonomy, promote intercultural awareness and intercultural competence, and encourage plurilingualism. And it has a reporting as well as a pedagogical function since it provides concrete evidence of language learning achievement that complements the grades awarded in tests and examinations. The Council of Europe developed the concept of a European Language Portfolio (ELP) in parallel with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001), and the ELP is linked to the CEFR by its "I can" checklists, which are derived from the descriptors in the CEFR's illustrative scales. The idea was that by supporting the development of learner autonomy, intercultural awareness and plurilingualism, the ELP would help to communicate the CEFR's ethos to language learners.

When the ELP was launched in 2001, many language educators in the Council of Europe's member states greeted it with enthusiasm. Between 2001 and 2010, the ELP Validation Committee validated and accredited 118 ELPs developed in 32 different countries and by 6 INGOs/international consortia. In 2011 validation was replaced by registration on the basis of self-declaration, and 22 ELPs were registered between 2011 and 2014, when registration came to an end. This reads like a success story, and yet the ELP has never been used on a large scale in most national education systems and seems to be largely forgotten in some of those that were among the first to develop ELPs and submit them for validation. It is

sometimes claimed that although the ELP as such is not in widespread use, it has had a transformative impact on curricula, textbooks and classroom practice. This claim is difficult to substantiate, however, and I am not aware of any large-scale study that supports it by providing evidence of significant changes in teaching methods and gains in learning outcomes.

Against the general trend, it is important to note that the ELP continues to be quite widely disseminated in at least two countries, Turkey and Albania, which were not involved in the first phase of ELP development. Turkey has eight ELPs, seven validated and one registered, and these are in relatively widespread use – 40,000 copies in public and 30,000 copies in private schools, a further 30,000 copies in private language schools, and 10,000 in universities (Mirici 2015 and personal communication). These figures must be set against the total number of learners estimated to be in full-time education in Turkey (about eighteen million), but they are nevertheless impressive in the broader European context. Albania has four ELPs, three validated and one registered, and these are requested by a growing number of schools (Tatjana Vucani, personal communication). It will be interesting to see whether ELP use in these two countries continues to grow. In any case, one must hope that efforts will be made to gauge the ELP's impact on classroom practice and language learning outcomes using empirical methods that go beyond the questionnaire surveys that have mostly been used to date.

2. The relation between the ELP and the CEFR

The authors of the CEFR explain that "it is not the function of the Framework to promote one particular language teaching methodology, but instead to present options" (Council of Europe 2001: 142). This reminder of its purpose is sometimes taken to mean that the CEFR is methodologically neutral, but this is emphatically not the case. The sentence that immediately precedes the one I have just quoted reads as follows: "For many years the Council of Europe has promoted an approach based on the communicative needs of learners and the use of materials and methods that will enable learners to satisfy these needs and which are appropriate to their characteristics as learners" (ibid.). By treating language learning as a variety of language use (Council of Europe 2001: 9), the CEFR clearly implies that use of the target language should be central to the activities of the language classroom. What is more, its use of "can do" descriptors portrays the user/learner as an autonomous social agent; and recognizing that learners themselves are "the persons ultimately concerned with language acquisition and learning processes" (Council of Europe 2001: 141), the authors commend autonomous learning:

> Autonomous learning can be promoted if "learning to learn" is regarded as an integral part of language learning, so that learners become increasingly aware of the way they learn, the options open to them and the options that best suit them. Even within the given institutional system they can then be brought increasingly to make choices in respect of objectives, materials and working methods in the light of their own needs, motivations, characteristics and resources. (Council of Europe 2001: 141−142)

The ELP was devised partly in order to support these processes.

It is important to point out that the Council of Europe has a long-standing commitment to learner-centredness and the democratization of education, which ultimately derives from its foundation document, the European Convention on Human Rights. In the 1970s its first modern languages projects were carried out under the aegis of the Committee for Out-of-School Education. This meant that they focused on adult learning and were informed by the ethos of the committee's major project, *Organisation, Content and Methods*

of Adult Education. The final report on the project (Janne 1977), argued that adult education could no longer be seen simply as a way of filling in the gaps left by compulsory schooling. Rather, it should be "an integral part of the process of economic, political and cultural democratisation",

> an instrument for arousing an increasing sense of awareness and liberation in man and, in some cases, an instrument for changing the environment itself. From the idea of man "product of his society", one moves to the idea of man "producer of his society" (Janne 1977, p. 15).

By implication these sentences align adult education with two of the Council of Europe's foundational values, democratic governance and human rights.

In accordance with these values, Janne's report argues that adult education should be shaped by four objectives: equality of opportunity, responsible autonomy, personal fulfilment, and democratisation of education (Janne 1977, p. 17). Clearly, the last of these objectives implies the active involvement of the learner, which requires the exercise of responsible autonomy, which in turn entails self-management. This helps to explain the project's belief that adult education should be based on "self-learning", which the report contrasts with "self-teaching". Whereas self-teaching is defined as a solitary process unsupported by an institution or a teacher, self-learning "generally refers to the practice of working in groups, and to the choice by participants of objectives, curriculum content and working methods and pace" (Janne 1977, p. 27). This general orientation helps to explain the interest in self-assessment (Oskarsson 1978) and autonomous learning (Holec 1979) that informed the early modern languages projects; it also explains the official hostility to formal tests and exams (Trim in Little & King 2014). The concern to "democratize" language education underlay pioneering work on needs analysis, the insistence on making learners active agents of their own learning, and the belief that decisions should be taken as close as possible to the point of teaching/learning (Trim 1978).

In 1991 an intergovernmental symposium hosted by the Federal Swiss authorities in Rüschlikon recommended that the Council of Europe should "establish … a comprehensive, coherent and transparent framework for the description of language proficiency which will enable learners to find their place and assess their progress with reference to a set of defined reference points" (Council of Europe 1992: 39), and "set up a working party to consider possible forms and functions of a 'European Language Portfolio' to be issued under its aegis and held by individuals, in which they may record their cumulative experience and qualifications in modern languages" (Council of Europe 1992: 40). The report on the symposium (Council of Europe 1992) indicates that the need for a framework was most urgently felt in respect of assessment and certification, and much of the discussion of a possible ELP focused on its reporting function, though there was one substantial and radical contribution (from Viljo Kohonen of the University of Tampere, Finland) that focused on learner autonomy. Two drafts of the CEFR were published in quick succession in 1996, and the second was presented at an intergovernmental conference held in Strasbourg in 1997, together with a set of proposals for the design and development of the ELP (Council of Europe 1997a). In the conference report, the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project Group, "aware of the need to encourage and recognise a wider range of cultural and language learning achievements than a record of formal qualifications alone can provide" (Council of Europe 1997b: 73), recommended further development of the ELP.

2.1. The ELP from 1998 to 2014

In 1997 the ELP was a concept that had yet to be converted into a practical tool and used in different domains of formal L2 learning. From 1998 to 2000 the Council of Europe's

Language Policy Division co-ordinated a network of pilot projects that developed and implemented versions of the ELP on the basis of the proposals presented at the 1997 conference (Council of Europe 1997a). The pilot projects were carried out in the school systems of fifteen Council of Europe member states (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, France, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom), in private language schools under the aegis of EAQUALS (the European Association for Quality Language Services), and in universities under the auspices of CercleS (European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education) and the European Language Council (for a detailed report on the pilot projects, see Schärer 2000). Altogether some eight hundred teachers and thirty thousand learners were involved in the projects. There was generally a greater focus on learner autonomy than on intercultural awareness/competence and plurilingualism, and English was usually the language taught in pilot project classrooms (though not, of course, in the UK and Ireland). Self-assessment plays a central role in ELP implementation, and feedback from learners indicated that they were generally in favour of setting their own goals and evaluating learning outcomes, though some learners wondered who would pay attention to their judgements (Schärer 2000: 13). During the period of the pilot projects the ELP Principles and Guidelines were elaborated, and guides were written for ELP developers (Schneider and Lenz 2000) and teachers and teacher trainers (Little and Perclová 2000).

In 2000 the Council of Europe established the ELP Validation Committee. The first ELPs submitted for validation came from the pilot projects, and it quickly emerged that the ELP Principles and Guidelines on their own were not an appropriate tool for developing or validating ELPs because they were couched in very general terms that required detailed interpretation. As a result, an annotated version was elaborated and published in 2004 (now available as Council of Europe 2011). When the validation process was nearing its end in 2010, Francis Goullier analysed the documentation generated by eleven years of ELP validation in order to inform future ELP developers (Goullier 2010). He found that the four most persistent problem areas were: the standard and consistency of presentation; the way in which self-assessment was managed; the lack of a clear European dimension; and appropriate acknowledgement of the principle of learner ownership. As Table 1 shows, the great majority of ELPs were developed for the school sector, with a few models serving both upper secondary and tertiary education (the total is more than 118 because some models were assigned to more than one category). Table 2 shows three distinct periods of ELP development. The most sustained covered the first five years of validation and involved countries that had carried out pilot projects or embarked on ELP development when the ELP was formally launched in 2001; the second ran from 2005 to 2010, with peaks in 2006 and 2010, and mostly involved new countries; and the third covered the period of ELP registration, from 2011 to 2014.

Table 1. *Number of ELPs validated and accredited for different educational domains, 2000–2010*

Adolescents/adults	21
Pre-primary	3
Primary	33
Secondary	34
Upper secondary and higher education	21
Vocational	5
Migrants	6

Table 2. *Number of ELPs validated and registered by year*

2000	6	2008	4
2001	18	2009	6
2002	13	2010	15
2003	17	2011	1
2004	11	2012	6
2005	4	2013	3
2006	15	2014	12
2007	9		

2.2. Why has the ELP been a relative failure in most countries?

There are, I think, four reasons why the ELP has failed to establish itself in the education systems of most Council of Europe member states. First, there was a widespread expectation that it would be a "magic bullet", spontaneously providing a universal remedy for the ills of language teaching and learning. To enthusiasts it seemed to offer everything that language education needed, and some of them clearly believed that if only an ELP could be put into the hands of every learner its impact would be unstoppable. This may help to explain why, when funding was provided for ELP development, it didn't always provide for the preparation of teachers and rarely lasted beyond the pilot phase (cf. Stoicheva et al. 2009). In most countries ELP implementation needed much more support than the authorities were prepared to provide.

Secondly, the ELP's pedagogical focuses were alien to the majority of educational systems. Although curricula in many countries have for some time emphasized the importance of critical thinking and independent learning, the practice of learner autonomy in school classrooms remains a minority pursuit. The radical changes it demands in teaching approaches and classroom discourse are simply incomprehensible to the majority of teachers and educational administrators. In much the same way, despite the wealth of theoretical and practical work that has focused on intercultural awareness and the development of intercultural competence, both concepts have had little impact on what happens in most L2 classrooms. And the promotion of plurilingualism – "a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languges interrelate and interact" (Council of Europe 2001: 4) – has still to be widely adopted as a key educational goal. Most L2 education continues to focus on individual languages in isolation from one another.

Thirdly, the ELP encountered problems of integration in at least three ways. Most models were not developed as part of a larger project of curricular reform, which meant that the checklists of "I can" descriptors were often difficult to relate to curriculum goals, especially when the latter were expressed in traditional terms. A further difficulty arose from the fact that most L2 classrooms work with a textbook, and teachers were faced with a great deal of extra work if they wanted to use the ELP and the textbook in tandem with each other. Also, the CEFR and ELP imply an assessment culture in which learners are active agents via self-assessment and the reflective learning on which it depends, but in most educational systems such a culture is unthinkable.

Fourthly, the ELP itself is not without problems. For example, the CEFR defines L2 proficiency in terms that imply a key role for target language use in the language classroom; and if the reflective processes of planning, monitoring and evaluation are to be part of target language use, it makes sense to provide learners with "I can" checklists in the language(s)

they are learning. This, however, may be thought to work against the principle of plurilingualism because checklists in several different languages are likely to reinforce the tendency to see them as entirely separate entities. On the other hand, providing checklists in the language of schooling may support plurilingualism while working against reflective target language use. Also, as it is defined in the Principles and Guidelines the ELP provides a comprehensive embodiment of the Council of Europe's political, cultural and educational ethos; but it seems unlikely that all contexts of learning will be able to respond equally to each dimension of that ethos. Immigrant language learners in Ireland, however, proved to be an exception.

2.3. Why did the ELP succeed in Ireland with learners from migrant backgrounds?

From 1998 to 2008, Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT), a not-for-profit campus company of Trinity College Dublin, was funded by the Irish government to provide intensive English language courses (20 contact hours per week) for adult immigrants with refugee status and to support the teaching of English as an Additional Language to primary pupils and post-primary students whose home language was neither English nor Irish. IILT used six ELPs as key pedagogical tools in this work: 11.2001 rev. 2004 in primary schools; 12.2001 rev. 2004 in post-primary schools; and 13.2001a–c, later superseded by 37.2002, with adult refugees. This last model is the so-called Milestone ELP, developed by an EU-funded project with members in Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden); an updated version is available on the website of the Council of Europe's LIAM (Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants) project (http://www.coe.int/lang-migrants).

If the ELP struggled to establish itself in foreign language classrooms, its relevance to immigrant language learners of all ages was obvious. Learning the language of the host community is not a task that can be accomplished quickly, so developing learners' capacity for autonomous learning has to be a pedagogical priority; a key part of the integration process has to do with understanding a new set of cultural expectations and cultural norms, so the focus on intercultural awareness and intercultural competence was welcome; and for immigrants plurilingualism is part of everyday reality. Also, the lack of established textbooks meant that the ELP could be adopted as the foundation of learning in primary and post-primary schools and in IILT's courses for adult refugees. This gave the ELP a genuine reporting function. Adult learners could show prospective employers practical evidence of what they were capable of not only in English but in the other languages they knew; while the primary and post-primary ELPs informed class teachers, principals, school inspectors and parents of learners' progress in English.

Two more factors contributed to the ELP's success with immigrant learners. First, in IILT's intensive English courses for adult refugees the development of a strong portfolio learning culture coincided with the portfolio assessment used by Ireland's Further Education Training and Awards Council. In FETAC's scheme of things students were individually responsible for maintaining their portfolios, which must include: a learning plan and learning targets; a diary in which reflections, plans and decisions were recorded; for each module, proofs that learning targets had been met; and regular self-assessment. The ELP, of course, imposes the same requirements on learners, so it was easy enough for IILT to integrate work on FETAC modules with language learning based on the Milestone ELP, explicitly linking items in the Milestone ELP checklists to descriptors for FETAC Specific Learning Outcomes. IILT's learners took three FETAC modules, in English as a Second Language, Computer Literacy, and Preparation for Work. Successful completion of the modules gained them credits within the Irish system of adult education that they could build on when they had finished their course with IILT.

In the school sector the *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks* for primary and post-primary learners of English as an Additional Language were the additional factor contributing to the ELP's success. The *Benchmarks* were adaptations of the first three levels of the CEFR presented as a succession of grids. They were not a curriculum in the usual sense but a map of the ground that immigrant learners had to cover in order to communicate fully in the mainstream classroom; effectively, the descriptors specified the extent to which they could participate in mainstream classroom discourse at levels A1, A2 and B1. Because the *Benchmarks* were widely used by teachers to plan their lessons, the checklist descriptors in the ELPs had immediate relevance for pupils and students. The *Benchmarks* and the ELP were supported by an ongoing programme of in-service seminars for English language teachers; and in due course empirical research confirmed that the trajectory of linguistic development hypothesized by the *Benchmarks* was reflected in the language learning of immigrant pupils in primary schools (Ćatibušić and Little 2014).

Unfortunately IILT was closed down in 2008 and use of the ELP with immigrant learners in adult education and schools quickly diminished to vanishing point.

2.4. How do we make a fresh start?

The educational ideals on which the CEFR and the ELP are founded have lost nothing of their relevance and urgency; use of the ELP to support immigrants' language learning in Ireland and the success of pilot projects in other countries confirms that the ELP's pedagogical function can support innovative practice; and the current high level of interest in the ELP in Turkey and Albania shows that it still has the power to inspire language educators. So perhaps it is not entirely fanciful to hope for a return of the ELP in the many countries where it was introduced but failed to take hold. I conclude my article by briefly suggesting five things we need to do in order to secure such a return.

First we should take seriously the CEFR's view of language learning as a variety of language use. This is how that view is summarized:

> Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of *competences*, both *general* and in particular *communicative language competences*. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various *conditions* and under various *constraints* to engage in *language activities* involving *language processes* to produce and/or receive *texts* in relation to *themes* in specific *domains*, activating those *strategies* which seem most appropriate for carrying out the *tasks* to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9; italics in original)

The words and phrases printed in italics, to which "contexts" in the second sentence should be added, refer to the principal dimensions of the CEFR's descriptive scheme. A large part of the CEFR flows from these sentences, of course, but I want to draw attention to just three elements. The first comes at the beginning: "Language use, embracing language learning …". By treating language learning as a variety of language use, the CEFR proposes that proficiency in a language develops from sustained interaction between the learner/user's competences and the communicative tasks whose performance requires him or her to use the language in question. A large body of second language acquisition research confirms this view. Accordingly, success in L2 education depends on using the target language spontaneously and authentically as the preferred medium of teaching and learning. The second element that I want to highlight also occurs in the first sentence: "as individuals and as social agents". Like the rest of the Council of Europe's work in language education, the

CEFR is uncompromisingly learner-centred; its use of "can do" descriptors treats proficiency as a developing capacity of the individual in his or her social context and not as a body of linguistic knowledge to be mastered. "Can do" implies autonomous behaviour; and if language use is autonomous behaviour and language learning is a variety of language use, it follows that language learning should also be rooted in autonomous behaviour. Autonomous learning, in other words, is not an option but an imperative. The third element of the above summary that I want to draw attention to is the last sentence: "The monitoring of [language use] by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences." In the language classroom monitoring begins as a reflective process driven by self-assessment; and using the target language as the channel of explicit monitoring helps to develop our learners' capacity for involuntary and implicit monitoring that is fundamental to spontaneous and autonomous language use. The ELP, with its goal-setting and self-assessment checklists, is designed to support this development.

The second thing we need to do in order to secure a return of the ELP is work for change from the bottom up. Educational reform is notoriously difficult to implement top-down; the gap between top-level goals and the classroom is simply too great. Educational reform works best at the level of the individual institution (school, college, university) or institutional network (chains of schools, university associations, etc.), in other words, by working from the bottom up.

The third thing we should do is to establish a firm link between the ELP and the official curriculum by restating communicative curriculum goals in terms of the CEFR's proficiency levels and illustrative scales. This is a matter of linking statements of what, for example, learners should be able to read and write to appropriate "can do" descriptors; converting the "can do" descriptors into "I can" checklists; and translating the checklist descriptors into the second/foreign languages of the curriculum. One possible model for such an exercise is provided by the *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks* referred to above, which can be downloaded from the website of Ireland's National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (http://www.ncca.ie/iilt).

The fourth thing we should do is redesign the ELP to suit our particular context, whatever that may be, taking advantage of the new freedom available to ELP developers now that validation and registration have come to an end. It makes sense to retain the language passport in its traditional form, available on the Council of Europe's ELP website (http://www.coe.int/portfolio → Developing an ELP), because it provides a comprehensive but portable summary of language learning experience and achievement and can be carried from one educational sector or level to the next. We should structure the language biography around the checklists, with a reflective focus appropriate to the learners for whom our ELP is intended (again the Council of Europe's ELP website provides templates and sample pages). And the dossier should be designed as a flexible learning journal that reflects the structure and focus of the language course(s) our ELP is designed to support. If we are working in a school context, it may be appropriate to create different dossier sections for different school levels, for bands within each level, or for each year of schooling. Experience suggests that any redesigned ELP should be easily portable; it should also assign a clear central role to goal setting and self-assessment. While designing an ELP it is important to think hard not only about how exactly it will be used in class and outside, but also about how it will be managed. For example: How often will the ELP be used for goal setting and self-assessment? Where will our learners keep their ELP? How often will they discard material they have collected in their dossier? When they discard such material, will it be thrown away or stored in some kind of archive (which could be exploited for a variety of research purposes)? Bearing in mind the principle of learner ownership of the ELP, we should discuss and answer these and other

questions with our learners; and we should ensure that they can impose their individual identity on their ELPs.

Finally, we should redesign our local assessment procedures so that self-assessment, peer, teacher and institutional assessment are all informed by the CEFR's view of language learning as language use. When designing tasks for institutional language exams, we would be well advised to focus on integrated tasks that combine receptive and productive skills: listening/reading in order to speak/write. We should also ensure that the tasks can easily and explicitly be linked to the "can do" descriptors that capture the communicative dimension of the curriculum and the "I can" descriptors of the ELP checklists, bearing in mind that integrated tasks entail a focus on more than one activity. One of the most important of the CEFR's many innovative features is the fact that "can do" descriptors bring curriculum, teaching/learning, and assessment into closer interaction with one another than has usually been the case. Each descriptor can simultaneously embody a curriculum goal, imply a learning activity, and serve as the starting point for designing assessment procedures. As part of our reflective learning strategy, we should involve our learners in task design and discuss with them the criteria by which task performance should be judged. We should also develop rating schemes that can be shared with our learners and used by them for peer and self-assessment.

3. Conclusion

In a globalized world, language learning is more important than ever. Without communication between speakers of different languages there can be no political and cultural exchange and no mutual understanding. In most countries language learning outcomes remain disappointingly low – see, for example, the European Commission's *First European Survey on Language Competences* (European Commission 2012). The CEFR has become the accepted international "metric" for language testing and is widely used by ministries of education to specify the language learning outcomes pupils and students should achieve. But the pedagogical implications of the CEFR's view of language learning, embodied in the concept of the ELP, have mostly been ignored. As I have argued, the CEFR defines language learning as a variety of language use, treats the language user/learner as an autonomous social agent, and assigns a central role to monitoring in the development of proficiency, which implies reflective learning. If we accept this view we shall believe that the most successful language learning environments are those in which, from the beginning, the target language is the principal channel of the learners' agency: the communicative and metacognitive medium through which, individually and collaboratively, they plan, execute, monitor and evaluate their own learning. This is the essence of language learner autonomy. It is also the truth we must embrace if we want our learners to develop a plurilingual proficiency that is part of their identity. The ELP was designed to promote learner autonomy and support the development of plurilingualism and intercultural awareness. Can we afford to do without it?

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STUDENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT COURSE INSTRUCTION IN THE GRADUATE PROGRAMS AND THEIR LEVEL OF BRINGING QUALIFIED EMPLOYEE IN BUSINESS: A STUDY AT GAZI UNIVERSITY

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STUDENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT COURSE INSTRUCTION IN THE GRADUATE PROGRAMS AND THEIR LEVEL OF BRINGING QUALIFIED EMPLOYEE IN BUSINESS: A STUDY AT GAZI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

At the point of monitoring developments taking place in the internal and external environmental conditions of the businesses, gaining the necessary skills is critical. To gain these skills, conscious and visionary individuals are trained in strategic management course in the universities at the associate degree, undergraduate, graduate and doctor's degree. In this study, students' opinions regarding the level of strategic management course's benefits on business with qualified employee were given. To serve this purpose, a research was conducted with students taking a strategic management course at master's and doctoral level in 2015-2016 fall term at the Institute of Social Sciences at Gazi University. With a parametric method analysis, an independent Sample T-Test for comparison was performed on the data obtained. As a result of the study, it was observed that students educated in master's and doctoral level expressed their opinions concerning the strategic management course as an important tool to function in providing qualified employee to business in the middle level. As a result of analysis, it was observed that gaining qualified employee to business in a strategic management course is the level of 3, 32 in graduate students and 2, 63 in doctoral students.

Keywords: Strategy, Strategic Management, Strategic Management Course, Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test.

1. Introduction

Businesses should comply with every aspect of the change (size and quality of the change, activity areas and Dynamics) to be able to protect their existance in the area they engage in (Akgemci, 2008). At the point of fulfilling the obligation in question, businesses need individuals with particular qualifications. Strategic management education is one of the ways in which individuals are allowed to have skills including holding a vision, using resources efficiently and productively, considering opportunities and possibilities revealed by environmental changes, uncovering the possible threats and weaknesses. In this education, students are given information on subjects such as the basic concepts related to strategic management and revealing the strategies that will provide a competitive advantage.

This study will determine students' views related to the degree that strategic management course given brings qualified personnel in an attempt to determine the individuals with strategic consciousness needed by businesses.

Inability of organizations to produce a strategic management approach adequately has its sources in not continuously analyzing the internal and external environment the organization operates in (Ülgen and Mirze, 2004, ss.59). Businesses must analyze the general environment influenced by many factors in society and the industrial environment directly related to the operations particularly in external environment analysis (Longenecker et al., 2005, s.56). Strategies may not be implemented owing to the reasons such as predominance of a top to bottom management approach, uncertain strategies, top, mid and lower level managers' lack of an effective management approach, weak and unhealthy vertical communication, lack of coordination among the departments in business (Beer and Einsentat, 2000, ss.31).

In strategic control subdimension, performance levels of strategic criteria are measured. These measurements involves customer satisfaction criterion, realizing innovations and capability of obtaining them, and the success of reaching quality control standards (Barringer and Öladytuı, 1999, s.426)

Another subdimension related to the strategic management course is strategic leadership subdimension. In this dimension, the role of leaders and managers in developing strategies basicly is focused on. Bennis characterizes these differences as the ones dominating the situation and the ones surrendering the situation (Bennis, 2003, ss.50).

A survey is carried out with 60 students among 173 students in total who are taking strategic management course in master's (130) and doctoral (43) degrees at the Institute of Social Sciences at Gazi University.

2. Strategy And Strategic Management

Strategy is one of the concepts we frequently encounter in the daily life. This concept appears to be defined in different ways in several areas including social, economical, managerial, military and educational areas. The term derives from Latin *stratum* which means way, line and bed (Eren, 2002, s.1). In a military sense, it is defined as an art of designing and managing an array of operations and activities (Ülgen, Mirze, 2010, s.35). Again from a business and management perspective, strategy is organizing the relationships of businesses with their environments and mobilizing resources on hand in an attempt to get the edge over the competitors (Dinçer, 2007, s.17).

In organizational and managerial sense, another concept confronted by us in the second half of the 20th century is strategic management. Strategic management, which was perceived initially as a composition of strategy and management concepts, can be defined today as efficient and productive use of production resources (natural resources, capital, human capital, raw material, machines, etc.) by businesses and organisations to achieve objectives. Strategic management is creating desired future by managing all functions and elements of the organisation from an integrative perspective (Ansoff, 1972). Strategic management is also an integrative perspective involving development of strategic plans, preparation of outcome-oriented budgets, measurement and evaluation of performance and performance management aiming at achieving missions and goals (Kooten, 1989, s.8). To define in another way, strategic management is predominantly interested not in daily and ordinary part of the business management, but in maintaining their lives in a long term and

activities that return competitive advantage and profit above average (Ülgen ve Mirze, 2010, ss.28). According to Dinçer and Fidan, strategic management involves determinations and solutions related to the external environment produced by businesses by asking questions concerning what is going to happen in the long run (1996: 2015). Strategic management is ensuring continuity of organizations and complying with changing environmental conditions so that strategic goals are achieved (Özer, 2008, s.487).

3. Strategic Management Course

One of the important approaches that sustain businesses in the business life is strategic management. Businesses with a managerial consciousness are influenced from severe economical conditions, fierce competition and crisis environment relatively lesser than other businesses in the industry. Strategic management course holds an important place in keeping the degree of this influence at a desired level.

Businesses operating in international area need to consider different cultural, economical, social and legal areas. The importance of a consistent strategic management policy in following the developments in these areas is undeniable. One of the tools which are drawn on in monitoring this consistency and solving the problems is strategic management course (Yelkikalan ve Pazarcık, 2005, s.5). Strategic management course allows different ways of thinking, analysis tools and case study materials to be used in developing general management skills (Barca ve Hızıroğlu, 2009, s.121). Strategic management course also has a role in enhancing qualifications of individuals needed by businesses in areas (http://www.cag.edu.tr/) such as monitoring and analyzing business environment and making strategic decisions (Civan ve Cenger, s.88). From another perspective, strategic management course provides students with a general frame with respect to the ways of developing strategies and the use of these strategies at a corporate and business level (http://www.iky.sakarya.edu.tr/tr/ders_plan_ayrinti/t/6/f/13/b/14/InKod/9980)

4. Purpose, Significance and Limitations of the Study

The goal of this study is to reveal the views of 30 master's degree and 30 phd students registered in Gazi University Social Sciences Institute 2015-2016 fall term and taking the strategic management course with respect to the role of strategic management course in bringing qualified personnel to the businesses. In addition, views with respect to strategic consciousness, strategic analysis, strategic direction, development, implementation, control and leadership as subcomponents of strategic management will be revealed.

In this direction, following hypotheses are developed considering the extent that strategic management course brings students in requested qualifications:

H0: The level at which strategic management cource brings needed qualifications in terms of educational level does not constitute a significant difference.

H1: The level at which strategic management course brings needed qualifications in terms of educational level constitutes a significant difference.

This study is very important in terms of determining students' views on the effective level of strategic management course which has an important place in training individuals with basic qualifications (such as holding a particular vision, revealing possible threats and weaknesses) requested by businesses.

Conducting this study in just one university, with just master's and Phd students, not including distance education students, not having all students in the class while distributing the survey constitutes the limitations of this study.

5. Method and Population of Study

Survey method is adopted in obtaining data. "Survey for levels of gaining relevant qualifications through strategic management course" developed by Gönen (2013, s.116) was used. This questionnaire has 33 items and comprises of two parts: the first one is related to the gender, age, undergraduate program from which participant graduated, working status and second one is related to the values with respect to the level of gaining relevant qualifications in businesses through strategic management lesson.

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 23 software is benefited from in analyzing the data.

Dependent variable of this study was determined as the level of gaining relevant qualifications in businesses. Strategic management course which has an effect on this variable is determined as the independent variable. Descriptive analysis was used in analyzing the effect level of the dependent variable.

Population of the study is 173 students in total who are registered in Ankara City Gazi University Social Sciences Institute 2015-2016 fall semester and take strategic management course. 60 questionnaires in total were implemented to achieve the significance level of the population. Simple random sampling method was applied to ensure that each individual in population falls into the population equally and independently.

The reason of selecting this population was that it was fast and easy to Access the data and that master's and Phd students were taking strategic management course subject to the study.

An Independent Sample T-Test was used to analyze the views of students registered in Gazi University Social Sciences Institute 2015-2016 fall semester with respect to the effect of strategic management course on bringing relevant qualifications in businesses.

6. Data Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient related to the reliability and whether data are normally distributed were determined in this part of the study.

In the analysis of the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.725. According to Kalaycı (2005, s.405) this indicates that the questions in this questionnaire are quite reliable. Variables related to the Cronbach's Alpha analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Findings of Cronbach's Alpha Technique*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
,725	,705	29

Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnow Test were used to determine whether findings obtained from Independent Sample T-Test are distributed normally. When p value in Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test is above 0.05, sample can be accepted to be normally distributed. Following hypotheses related to the Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test are offered, because the data obtained are normally distributed.

H_0: Data on the level of gaining relevant qualifications in businesses through strategic management course are not normally distributed.

H_1: Data on the level of gaining relevant qualifications in businesses through strategic management course are normally distributed.

Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnow Test analysis in the context of the hypotheses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: *Findings of Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test*

Test Statistics[a]

		WORKING STATUS
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,033
	Positive	,000
	Negative	-,033
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		,129
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		1,000

a. Grouping Variable: LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnow Test is generally comprises of two parts as Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z and Asymp. Sig (2-tailed). Second part, Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed), is the part which shows whether data are normally distributed. This value is 1.000 and indicates a normal distribution (Table 2).

7. Findings And Discussion

Data related to demographics (gender, age), the undergraduate program from which student was graduated and working status and interpretations of these were given place to in this part of the study. These data were analyzed with Frequencies analysis as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Distribution of Participants According to Demographics*

Gender		
	Number	Percent
Women	19	31,7
Men	41	68,3
Total	60	100,0
Age		
	Number	Percent
22-27	18	30,0
28-33	12	20,0
34-39	9	15,0
40-45	14	23,3

46 and above	7	11,7
Total	60	100,0

Graduated Undergraduate Program

	Sayı	Yüzde
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	33	55,0
Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	7	11,7
Health Sciences	13	21,7
Other (Please indicate)	7	11,7
Total	60	100,0

Working Status

	Sayı	Yüzde
I am working.	47	78,3
I am not working.	13	21,7
Total	60	100,0

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that 31.7% of participants are women, 68.3% are men. 30% of the participants are between 22-27 ages, 20% are between 28-33, 15% are between 34-39, 23.3% were between 40-45 and 11.7% are above 46.

When we look at the data regarding the undergraduate programs from which the participant graduated, 55% graduated from faculty of economics and administrative sciences, 11.7% from faculty of engineering and architechture, 21.7% from health sciences and 11.7% from other facultees. Other group seem to include participants graduated from Faculty of Trade and Tourism Education (Office administration education and business education) and communication faculty (public relations and publicity) (Table 3).

According to the data regarding the working status of the students, 78.3 of the participants was working and 21.7% was not working in a job (Table 3).

Analysis with respect to the degree of gaining relavant skills in businesses for participants were conducted through Descriptive analysis. Ranges of scores were very low for 1,00-1,80, low for 1,81-2,60, middle for 2,61-3,40, high for 3,41-4,20 and very high for 4,21-5,00 (Gönen, 2013: 97). Findings of these are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. *The degree that Strategic Manament Course Brings Qualified Personnel in Businesses.*

	Number of people	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard Deviation
Strategic Consciousness Dimension	60	1	5	2.97	1,325
Strategic Analysis Dimention	60	1	5	2.87	1.361
Strategic Direction Dimension	60	1	5	2.90	1.225
Strategy Development Dimension	60	1	5	2.71	1.294
Strategy Implementation Dimension	60	1	5	3.08	1.192

Strategic Control Dimension	60	1	5	2.90	1.246
Strategic Leadership Dimension	60	1	5	3.45	1.338
Total	60	1	5	2.98	1.283

As seen in Table 3, students' views with respect to the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in busineseses were in the middle level (2.98). When we look at the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in busineseses in terms of its subdimensions, we see that students scored high in "strategic leadership" subdimension (3.45); middle in strategy implementation (3.08), middle for strategic consciousness (2.97); middle for strategic direction and strategic control (2,90); middle for strategic analysis dimension (2.87) and middle for strategy development dimension (2.71) (Table 4).

It is seen that only strategic leadership dimension were high with respect to the students views of the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in busineseses. This situation indicates that the participants think that strategic management is a management approach which concerns strategic leader, strategic management will be successfull only if they are supported by top management, and characteristics of the strategic leader is not different from the leader.

In strategy implementation subdimension, participants can be considered as not being sufficiently informed and skilled about some areas such as whether there is a difference between strategic planning and strategic management, the relationship of strategic plan development with strategic management course, the importance of employees in strategic management process, in ensuring the consistency of organizational culture and the effect of organizational structure on implementation of plans.

Other subdimension that the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in busineseses were at middle level is strategic consciousness subdimension. According to Betz, this dimension involves the process in which long-term and rational actions (previously planned and entirely future-oriented actions) are developed (2010, 244). In addition, subjects such as the basic difference between strategic management and general management approaches, continuity of strategic management process, and the point that strategic management is not merely about organization's goal and management philosophy fall into this dimension.

8. Analysis of the Degree That Strategic Management Brings Qualified Personnel in Busineseses in Terms of Educational Levels of Participants

In this part of sduty, the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in busineseses were analyzed in terms of educational levels of participants

Table 5. *Distribution of the Degree That Strategic Management Course Brings Qualified Personnel in Businesses Acording to the Educational Levels of Participants*

	Educational Level	Number of People	Average	Std. Dev.	T Value	P Value
Strategic Consciousness Dimension	Master Phd	30 30	3,57 2,38	1,285 0,942	4,177	0,077

Strategic Analysis Dimention	Master	30	3,28	1,379	2,469	0,096
	Phd	30	2,46	1,087		
Strategic Direction Dimension	Master	30	3,08	1,285	1,332	0,440
	Phd	30	2,72	1,100		
Strategy Development Dimension	Master	30	3,32	1,246	4,678	0,089
	Phd	30	2,11	0,873		
Strategy Implementation Dimension	Master	30	3,27	1,306	1,317	0,253
	Phd	30	2,90	0,898		
Strategic Control Dimension	Master	30	3,34	1,272	2,971	0,237
	Phd	30	2,45	0,952		
Strategic Leadership Dimension	Master	30	3,44	1,303	-0,263	0,273
	Phd	30	3,45	1,270		
Total	Master	30	3,32	1,296	2,383	0,209
	Phd	30	2,63	1,017		

When Table 5 is examined, students' views with respect to the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in busineses were scored 3.32 in Phd students and 2.63 in master's students. Rate of gaining necessary qualifications of participants according to the educational levels were higher in master's degree students than Phd level students and there were no statistically significant difference between these two groups in terms of gaining qualified personnel. As can be seen in the Table, t value as 2.383 and p value as 0.209 is influential in this difference.

When looked at the effect levels regarding the subdimensions of strategic management lesson, it is seen that effect levels with respect to strategic consciousness are scored in 3.57 for master students and 2.38 for Phd students. As can be understood from independent sample t-test regarding this strategic management subdimension, strategic consciousness subdimension does not create a significant difference in terms of master's and Phd students (t value 4.177; p value 0.077).

One of the subdimensions of strategic management course which have a higher score Master's students, when compared to Phd students, is strategic analysis. This dimension were scored 3.28 in master's degree students and 2.46 in Phd students and did not generate a significant difference. This difference is understood when we look at t value as 2.469 and p value as 0.096.

Phd students' score in terms of strategic leadership subdimension were 3.45 and this score is 3.44 in master students. However, t and p values can be accepted as not generating a significant difference between two groups (t value -0.263; p value 0.273).

As a consequence, when examined the subdimensions of needed qualifications brought by strategic management course and educational levels of participants did not establish a significant difference.

9. Conclusions And Suggestions

Strategic management course is one of the important tools ensuring that businesses have the individuals with needed qualifications. In this study, master's and Phd students' views regarding the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in

businesses were revealed. To present the level of effect, a questionnaire study was performed with the students registered in Gazi University Social Sciences Institute 2015-2016 fall semester. According to the findings obtained:

- Participants were found to express medium level views of strategic management course in terms of bringing qualified personnel.

- When looked at strategic consciousness dimension according to participants' educational levels, effect rate of the strategic consciousness dimension was higher in master's degree students and lower in Phd students. Thus, phd students can be considered as gaining strategic consciousness dimension as a necessary qualification in business life at a lower level. Students' lack of knowledge regarding the main difference between strategic management and general management approaches and regarding the continuity of strategic management process results in this situation. In addition, participants have different views on the strategic management's connection with organizational goals and management philosophy.

- In analysis of strategic analysis dimension of strategic management course, effect rate of this dimension was higher in master's degree students and lower in phd students. In other words, phd students gain strategic analysis dimension as a necessary qualification in business life at a lower level.

- Phd students gain the qualifications needed in business life at a low level in strategic direction dimension. Organization must ring the changes in mission to maintain its existence or competitive advantage.

- Effect level of strategy development dimension was higher in master's degree students and lower in phd students. Thus, Phd students gain the qualifications needed in business life at a low level in strategy development dimension. Its reason is students' lack of knowledge regarding that main strategies and sub-strategies developed and implemented at lower levels in organization. Resources and competency of organization in different areas must be considered in development of strategies, and responsibility for developing strategies must be held by only top manager.

- Other subdimension in questionnaire regarding strategic management course is strategy implementation dimension. After the analysis in strategy implementation dimension, it was seen that master's degree and phd students expressed middle level views.

- Effective monitoring and evaluation of strategic management process is possible only when proper data and statistics are compiled. Simultaneous control applications may not be necessary every time in strategic management process. Efficiency of strategic control is located on the last stage of strategic management process and comprises of the actions to be taken in the last stage of the process. After the analysis conducted in the context of these issues, this dimension was seen to be higher in master's degree students, and lower in phd students. This rate indicates that master's degree students have higher levels than phd students.

- In strategic leadership dimension of strategic management process, effect level according to the participants' educational levels was found to be lower in master's degree students and higher in phd students. Thus, phd students can be considered as gaining strategic consciousness dimension as a qualification needed in business life at higher levels. Its reason is students' lack of knowledge regarding that strategic

management is a management approach related to only strategic leader, strategic management is successful only when it is supported by top manager, characteristics of strategic leader is not different from a leader.

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PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING ESOL STUDENTS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

During the last several decades, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of English language learners (ELLs) entering American educational settings. One result in the changing demographics of K-12 settings is the stark contrast between the backgrounds of learners found in the classroom settings and their educators. This has resulted in many pre-service teachers being inadequately prepared to meet the unique learning needs of their future learners (Eisenhardt, Besnoy, & Steel, 2012). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of pre-service teachers' beliefs in regards to their abilities to effectively teach ELLs. Analyses of this research revealed significant differences between pre-service teachers who have and have not completed English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) coursework. Pre-service teachers also reported linguistic barriers as the greatest challenge faced when educating ELLs.

Keywords: English Language Learner, ELL, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, CLD, teacher efficacy, teacher education, English for Speakers of Other Languages, ESOL

1. Teacher Education

There has been an unprecedented shift in demographics found in American educational settings over the last several decades (Jimenez-Silva, Olson, & Hernandez, 2012). There are now approximately 50% more English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in American schools in comparison to the prior decade (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2013). Moreover, it is estimated that over 5 million children are English learners which results in more than 10% of the K-12 population being classified as such (Cook, Boals, & Lundberg, 2011).

Over the last several decades, the growing number of ELLs found in American K-12 classrooms has influenced policymakers to change federal and state policies (e.g., No Child Left Behind, Florida Consent Decree) and for administrators to implement required ELL mandates. Through the development of new policies, educators have been provided training and materials regarding appropriate strategies and accommodations for ELLs. In addition, these policies have added university educational requirements for pre-service educators. In fact, 11 states including highly populated states like California, Florida, and New York now require pre-service teachers to complete coursework focused on teaching ELLs in order to obtain English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement or certification in Bilingual Education (Jimenez-Silva et al., 2012).

Given the changes with student demographics and federal and state educational policies it is becoming of upmost importance for pre-service teachers to complete university level ELL coursework during their teacher certification program. Particularly, since these types of courses can help future educators acquire confidence in their ability to facilitate learning for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners. Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) stated that "to be successful with ELLs, teachers need to draw on established principles of second language learning" (p. 362). Furthermore, Fitts and Gross (2012) proclaimed that pre-service teaching candidates need to complete coursework focused on topics such as the social and political aspects of language use, and that these students need to have the opportunity to interact with individuals of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Teacher certification programs should also include at a minimum:

> (a) a strong background and experiences with second language learning principles and practices, (b) knowledge about the differences between conversational language proficiency and academic language proficiency, (c) the importance of access to comprehensible input and opportunities for producing output for meaningful purposes, (d) the role of social interaction for the development of conversational and academic English, (e) the positive impact of strong native language skills on ELLs' achievement, (f) the necessity of a welcoming classroom environment for ELLs, and (g) the need for explicit attention to linguistic form and function (de Oliveira, 2011, p. 59).

It may also be important for this coursework to include experiences outside the classroom setting that provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to apply the skills, content, strategies, and accommodations they have learned in contexts that contain ELLs.

1.1. ESOL Service Learning Experiences

Participants in the Fitts and Gross (2012) study found that pre-service teachers often used words such as "people like that" to describe the bilingual students they were tutoring in an afterschool program. They concluded that the use of these terms signifies the social distance that pre-service teachers feel in regards to their bilingual students. Individuals may experience in-group (*individuals who are similar*) and out-group (*individuals who are different)* perceptions during interactions with diverse groups of individuals. Moreover, one's perception of an in-group preference could depend on group membership and his/her perceptions of his/her in-group as being favorable or not (Chasteen, 2005). If individuals feel discomfort around others who they perceive as *different* from themselves, they may hold bias or prejudice beliefs toward these groups of individuals. Providing pre-service teachers varied service learning experiences can help to ensure that these individuals are offered the opportunity to work with diverse learners and to apply the ESOL strategies and accommodations learned during their teacher certification studies. These experiences can help to dispel pre-service teachers' negative beliefs and perceptions toward others who are culturally and/or linguistically different from themselves.

The present study addresses these recommendations with particular emphasis on the need for interactions with linguistically diverse individuals. Since many university teacher certification programs typically require at least six hours of ESOL coursework, pre-service teachers are able to develop a basic understanding of second language (L2) learning principles. However, simply requiring pre-service teachers to complete theoretical coursework may not be sufficient to help

them develop the necessary skills needed to successfully educate ELLs that are enrolled in their future classes. Likewise, Peter, Markham and Fray (2013) stated:

> Regular classroom teachers are under tremendous pressure to serve their ELL population effectively. However, they are asked to do so with little support and incentives to develop the professional knowledge and skills needed to adequately serve their culturally and linguistically diverse students, (p. 303).

Although pre-service teachers may learn L2 principles and theories in their university coursework, they may have a difficult time generating connections between theory and practice. Fundamentally, pre-service teachers may understand the content acquired during their educational studies, but they may lack the experience or skill of how to effectively implement these accommodations when working with ELLs.

2. Social Cognitive Theory

The theoretical framework of this study encompasses Social Cognitive Theory. Moreno (2010) stated that "sociocognitive theory focuses on learning that is the result of observing the consequences of the behaviors of others" (p. 282). According to Goddard and Skrla (2006) this theory addresses how individuals employ control over their futures and contend that a fundamental assumption of this theory is that the "exercise of agency is strongly influenced by the strength of efficacy beliefs" (p. 218). Basically, individuals who believe they are capable of attaining a desired goal may be more likely to achieve it since they may put forth more effort and persistence. One profession in which individuals' self-beliefs may have profound effects on others is in educational settings. Individuals' beliefs about their ability to produce desired levels of performance are known as self-efficacy (Woolfolk, 2010). Bandura has referenced the construct of one's self-efficacy beliefs as being based on an individual's perceptions of prior experiences and are often context specific (Bandura, 1997).These experiences can include one's emotional and psychological state, mastery of a task, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion within a specific context (Loreman, Sharma, & Forlan, 2013). For example, Lastrapes and Negishi (2012) found that pre-service teachers' levels of self-efficacy increased after completing diverse field experiences. Through these types of experiential learning experiences, pre-services teachers may be able to gain additional knowledge and skills that help to enhance their beliefs of their ability to educate diverse subgroups of learners.

2.1. Teaching Self-Efficacy

We know self-efficacy beliefs are context-specific (Bandura, 1997; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003); therefore, they are likely to change based on "features of the context in which one performs tasks" Kuusinen, Laurermann, McKenzie, & Karabenick, 2013, p. 8). Lauermann and Karabenick (2013) characterized *teacher self-efficacy* as "teachers' confidence in their capabilities to produce desired effects in their classrooms" (p. 13). Educators' beliefs in their ability to effectively influence student learning outcomes may impact their level of teaching effort as well as the types of strategies and accommodations they incorporate into their lessons. A teacher's beliefs in his/her own teaching abilities to effectively educate ELLs or CLD students may significantly impact these learners' academic outcomes.

A study by Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) proposed a social cognitive model of how teacher self-efficacy beliefs influence teacher and student behaviors: task-specificity, goal-reference, and context-specificity. The focus of our study is the context-specificity when pre-

service teachers perceive limited resources (personal ability, time limits, or fiscal resources for tools) available while incorporating ELLs or CLD students into mainstream classrooms. Researchers have found that novice teachers are more likely to identify resources and personal knowledge as predictors of teaching success (Bursal, 2008; Kuusinen et. al, 2013; M. Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). The Kuusinen et al., (2013) study identified high student poverty as an influential factor on teachers' efficacy judgements, "teachers working in high-poverty contexts more frequently felt limited not by the students themselves, but by the larger context surrounding the school" (p. 49). Their study found that this context-specific condition had an influence on efficacy judgements related to instruction, classroom management, and motivation. Essentially, if teachers *do not believe* they are able to provide successful learning outcomes for ELLs, this group of students may fall behind their peers in acquiring grade-level content. In comparison, a teacher who possesses high levels of teaching self-efficacy may believe that his/her students are capable of achieving academic success (Yilmaz, 2009). Novice educators who possess higher levels of self-efficacy may be more persistent in overcoming challenges and remain in the teaching profession (Jamil, Downer, & Pianta, 2012). Moreover, an individual's "perceived mastery of skills" can help to build "self-efficacy through confidence of discipline knowledge" (Lummis, Morris, & Paolino, 2014). However, As a result, pre-service teachers' prior ESOL learning experiences that occur in-class (e.g., content knowledge, tests, and activities) and out-of-class (e.g., service learning and observations) could positively or negatively impact their beliefs regarding their abilities to effectively educate CLD students.

As stated earlier, one problem that may exist for many pre-service teachers is their inability to appropriately apply their theoretical understanding when working with CLD students. This same concern was noted by Téllez (2004) when he stated that L2 content is challenging for many pre-service teachers and can be too theoretical for their practical use. Nevertheless, an individual's past performances (successes or failures) could impact their beliefs about their ability to perform a particular task (Bandura, 1986). As a result, pre-service teachers' prior ESOL learning experiences that occur in-class (e.g., content knowledge, tests, and activities) and out-of-class (e.g., service learning and observations) could positively or negatively impact their beliefs regarding their abilities to effectively educate CLD students. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to develop a more thorough understanding of pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding their abilities to effectively educate ELLs they may encounter in their future classes. Additionally, this research was focused on determining pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding their effectiveness with implementing appropriate accommodations for ELLs.

Specifically, this research investigated:

1. Do pre-service teachers who have completed coursework focused on culturally and linguistically diverse learners report significantly different beliefs regarding the appropriateness of ELL accommodations compared to pre-service teachers who have not completed this type of coursework?

2. Do pre-service teachers who are currently working with English language learners in field experience settings report significantly different beliefs regarding their abilities to teach ELLs in comparison to pre-service teachers who are not currently educating ELLs?

3. What do pre-service teachers believe are the greatest challenges in educating their future ELLs?

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

Students completing teacher certification coursework in the College of Education at a university located in the southeastern United States were contacted and provided a survey link to participate in this research. A total of 199 students completed the survey in its entirety. Participants in this study were either completing undergraduate (90%) or graduate (10%) coursework. The majority of participants in this research self-identified as being White (81%), female (84%), and native-English speakers (94%). Additionally, a minority of the participants (38%) had completed prior coursework focused on teaching CLD learners; whereas, the majority of participants (53%) had prior experiences working with CLD students.

3.2. Instrument

The instrument used to collect data for this study was the *English as Second-Language (ESL) Students in Mainstream Classrooms Teacher Survey* (Reeves, 2006). The survey contains three subscales focused on: (a) teachers' levels of agreement or disagreement of inclusion of ELLs (e.g., The inclusion of ESL students in subject-area classes creates a positive educational atmosphere), (b) the frequency of specific instructional behaviors for teachers with ELLs enrolled in their classrooms (e.g., I provide materials for ESL students in their native languages), (c) anticipated challenges that may be experienced when teaching ELLs (e.g., Please list what you consider to be the greatest benefits of including ESL students in subject-area classes), and (d) demographic and professional teaching experiences (e.g., Have you received training in teaching language-minority/ESL students?). Students responded to survey items based on a 4-point Likert scale (subsection A) ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, a 3-point frequency scale (subsection B) ranging from seldom (or never) to most of the time (or all of the time), and open-ended responses (subsections C and D) with a few forced-choice responses (subsection C). The alpha coefficients obtained in this study included: (a) *teachers' levels of agreement or disagreement of inclusion of ELLs* (⟨ = .90) and, (b) *frequency of specific instructional behaviors for teachers with ELLs enrolled in their classrooms* (⟨ = .85).

4. Results

4.1. ELL Inclusion

We used *t*-tests to analyze if specific differences occurred across pre-service teachers' ratings of their beliefs regarding the appropriateness of ELL accommodations. The *t*-tests revealed a statistical difference between participants who had completed prior coursework that focused on CLD learners $M = 1.78$ (SD = .27) and participants who had not $M = 1.49$ (SD = .33), $t(1,199)$, $p < .05$. Specifically, participants who had completed coursework focused on CLD learners were more likely to provide higher ratings of support for including ELL accommodations in mainstream classrooms.

4.2. Pre-service Teacher Beliefs

We performed *t*-tests to determine if pre-service teachers who are currently working with ELLs in their field experience settings had significantly different beliefs in their abilities to educate ELLs in comparison to pre-service teachers that were currently not working with this subgroup of learners. This analysis resulted in a statistically significant difference between these two groups of participants. Specifically, participants who were currently working with an ELL in their university

field experience reported significantly different ratings in their perceived abilities to effectively educate ELLs M = 1.84 (SD = .27) than participants who had not completed university field experience requirements M = 1.69 (SD = .33), $t(1,199)$, p <.01. In essence, participants who had completed university field experiences were more likely to provide higher ratings in their abilities to effectively educate ELLs.

4.3. Pre-service Teachers' Beliefs of ELL Challenges

Our third research question investigated participants' beliefs regarding the greatest challenges they may face in educating their future ELLs. For this survey item, participants selected the three greatest challenges that teachers face when working with ELLs. Table 1 outlines the percentages of participants who selected each possible item. Specifically, this table illustrates participants' perceptions of the most difficult challenges they may face when working with ELLs. Although a percentage of participants selected each challenge presented, the majority (78.4%) of participants perceived the greatest challenge to be language barriers that may exist between the teacher and the individual ELL student. According to this sample of pre-service teachers, the second greatest challenge was the lack of available time and resources teachers have to devote to ELLs. This item was selected by a majority of participants (55.8%). Thus, the two primary concerns were language barriers and time to work with ELL students within a mainstream classroom context.

Table 1. *Participant percentages of teaching challenges*

Survey item	% of Students
Language barriers between you and your ELLs	78.4%
Cultural differences between you and your ELLs	38.7%
ELLs lack of background knowledge of content area	48.7%
ELL lack of motivation	27.1%
Lack of guidelines and or support system at school levels	28.6%
Lack of time and resources to devote to ELLs	55.8%
Assessment and grading of ELL	24.1%

5. Conclusions

The number of ELLs entering classroom settings is continuously increasing each year. In 2006, there were 55 million ELLs who were enrolled in public and private schools in the United States, and researchers expect an 8% increase in this number by the year 2018 (Hussar & Bailey, 2009). As a result, teacher certification programs incorporate coursework and field learning experiences in order to better prepare pre-service teachers to enter a workforce that may be very diverse in regards to student enrollment. However, Gándara and Santibañez contended that a teaching quality gap normally occurs for ELLs because educators who are considered to be "highly qualified" for ELLs need to possess special skills and abilities (e.g., incorporating cultural knowledge into instruction). By helping pre-service teachers gain these types of skills and abilities during their college/university coursework and field learning experiences, they may feel better prepared to work with their future ELLs.

5.1. Teacher Preparation Coursework and Field Experiences

The purpose of this study was to explore relationships among pre-service teachers' ratings of the appropriateness of ELL accommodations and pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding their ability to effectively educate ELL students especially within a mainstream classroom context. Our analyses conducted in this study found significant differences between pre-service teachers who had completed coursework focused on CLD learners and those who had not. Although CLD coursework may be considered beneficial in helping pre-service teachers gain insight into effectively educating ELLs, Jimenez-Silva et al. (2012) cautioned that this is only the first step in improving instructional techniques. However, Jimenez-Silva et al. (2012) found that participants believed that content and activities focused on CLD learners helped to provide them increased confidence in their abilities to teach their future ELLs. Their findings are similar to this current research in that CLD coursework can be beneficial for enhancing students' self-beliefs in their ability to help students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds gain positive academic success. These findings are also reflective of Bandura's work on self-efficacy since pre-service teachers who received these types of learning experiences felt more prepared to apply appropriate ELL strategies and accommodations into their future teaching experiences (Jimenez-Silva et al., 2012).

Significant findings were found between pre-services teachers who had completed university field experience requirements with ELL students and those who had not. Coady, Harper, and Jong (2011) suggested that characteristics of teachers who performed well with ELLs included (a) teacher background and experiences, (b) teacher knowledge of teaching and learning processes of ELLs, and (c) teacher knowledge of ELLs as learners. Our findings are consistent with the characteristics of high performing teachers with ELLs (Coady, Harper, & Jong, 2011) in that pre-service teachers with exposure to field experiences had significantly higher efficacy with ELL students in a mainstream context. Specifically, pre-service teachers who have knowledge of how to educate ELLs but lack experiences working with this subgroup of learners may feel less confident in their abilities to educate their future ELLs. Furthermore, a study by Brouwer and Korthagen (2005) focused on pre-service teachers and their early occupational socialization processes found that teacher education "can influence beginning teachers' professional performance and competence development … by shaping the opportunities for student teachers to relate practical experience and theoretical study" (p.213). Study participants believed that alternating between practice in the schools and then reflection and revision of their work within college courses was the foundation of their perceived competence.

Providing pre-service teachers multiple opportunities to complete field experiences during their educational studies is paramount. These experiences can help pre-service teachers become more comfortable in developing different perspectives of how to enhance their teaching abilities. In a study conducted by Wyss, Siebert, and Dowling (2012), they found that pre-service teachers comfort levels in teaching increased throughout the course of their practicum experiences. This study illustrates the need for teacher education programs to provide pre-service teachers with hands-on experiences in classroom settings that will help them practice implementing course content with diverse students. Particularly, given that these types of experiences are essential in helping students make valuable connections between theory and practice (Freeman, 2010). Indeed, Eisenhardt, Besnoy, and Steele (2012) discovered that field experiences helped pre-service teachers to challenge their beliefs based on theoretical knowledge in which they expanded their views to become justified teaching beliefs. Furthermore, participants in Eisenhardt, Besnoy, and

Steele's 2012 study shared that their field experiences helped them to "justify their knowledge of the importance of the relationship between knowledge of diverse students and effective instruction" (p. 7). By incorporating multiple opportunities for field experiences into CLD coursework, pre-service teachers may feel better equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet ELLs' unique academic needs which may increase their levels of teaching self-efficacy.

5.2. Perceived Educational Barriers

Analysis of our results also revealed that pre-service teachers believed the two greatest obstacles to educating ELLs were due to language barriers and lack of time and resources to devote to ELLs. Interestingly, Polat and Mahalingappa (2013) found that in-service teachers in comparison to pre-service teachers were more likely to perceive lack of time and resources as an issue when working with ELLs. Specifically, they found that in-service teachers believed that "content area teachers do not have enough time to deal with the needs of ELLs in mainstream classes, that ELLs should be assigned less coursework, and that ELLs should not be expected to do much in regular classes until they have learned to speak English" (Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013, p. 73). These beliefs could be detrimental to pre-service teachers who are working in educational settings with in-service teachers who possess this mindset. Particularly, teachers' levels of self-efficacy could be decreased in working with this subgroup of learners if they do not feel they are able to effectively serve CLD learners enrolled in their classes. This could result in teachers putting forth less effort and commitment when educating these students since they do not feel they have the knowledge or skills to help ELLs achieve successful learning gains.

Participants in this current study also perceived potential educational barriers being related to ELLs' lack of background knowledge (48.7% of participants) and cultural differences (38.7% of participants). These findings are similar to a prior study conducted by Sato and Hodge (2016) who found that teachers perceived barriers in teaching ELLs stemming from pedagogical challenges and cultural dissonance. They concluded that teachers believe that teaching ELLs is a complex and complicated process and that pre-service teachers need to receive professional preparation in how to effectively implement culturally relevant pedagogies. Helfrich and Bosh (2011) also propounded that "the role of the teacher in language acquisition for ELLs is an integral one" (p. 261). Furthermore, Helfrich and Bosh (2011) contended that teachers may face the challenge of trying to provide differentiated instructional methods to ELLs without taking instructional time away from other learners (e.g., native-English speakers). Particularly, educators may find it to be a difficult and complex process in trying to ascertain all students met mandated standards and gain academic success in grade-level content. As such, educators may need to be mindful that there may be barriers to effectively educating all learners regardless of their language background. By educators understanding that learners may have diverse backgrounds and differences in academic performances, they may be able to focus on the individual needs of each learner.

5.3. Disparity between Teachers and Students

Villegas, Strom, and Lucas (2012) suggested that a national survey of minority teachers found that they are more underrepresented in K-12 settings in comparison to prior decades. These findings are also exemplified in our research in which the large majority of participants were White, female, and native-English speakers. The stark contrast between the in-service and pre-service teachers and their students can create educational burdens on learners since educators may not have the skills needed to effectively educate all students enrolled in their classes. For instance,

Fitts and Gross (2012) concluded that prior research conducted with ELLs and pre-service teachers has suggested that future educators often have "negative, simplistic, and often erroneous views of linguistic diversity" (p. 76). Unfortunately, this view may also be held by in-service teachers since they may feel unprepared or ill equipped to work with this subpopulation of learners. Furthermore, Hite and Evans (2006) stated that "in this time of high stakes testing, teachers' work with ELLs becomes itself a high-stakes teaching act" (p. 89).

Another issue that may exist in schools that contain a large number of language minority students is the high turnover rate of teaching staff. Teachers tend to avoid securing employment in schools that contain a significant percentage of students who are classified as low socioeconomic status, minority, and/or low performers (Horng, 2009). This results in teachers avoiding employment in or transferring out of schools that contain high numbers of students who meet these criteria. Unfortunately, this may have negative implications on ELLs who need to receive educational services from effective teachers since they may be beginning their academic careers already a grade-level behind their peers (e.g., may lack content knowledge, low levels of English proficiency skills).

5.4. Benefits of Educating ELLs

ELLs bring a wide array of knowledge and experiences to their classroom settings. Although educators may feel initially anxious about working with this subgroup of learners, they may quickly realize how much insight they are able to gain from them. Particularly, educators may be able to learn about various linguistic and cultural differences as well as how to implement effective teaching practices into their classes. For example, prior researchers have found that ELLs perceive their teachers' attitudes, strategies, support and motivation as all impacting their ability to succeed in their content area classes (Flores & Smith, 2013). Essentially, Flores and Smith, (2013) concluded that ELLs were more likely to ask clarifying questions to teachers who were understanding and approachable in comparison to teachers who showed their frustration when students needed additional assistance. While Flores and Smith's 2013 study was focused on ELLs, the results are compelling in that all students may feel more comfortable seeking help from educators who appear willing to provide extra assistance.

In another study conducted by de Oliveira (2011), she demonstrated through lesson simulations (one lesson lacking appropriate ESOL accommodations and one lesson that incorporated ESOL accommodations) appropriate ELL teaching strategies. Through these simulations, participants were able to notice ELL teaching strategies such as modeling, providing directions in steps, repeating key concepts, paraphrasing of information, and checking for understanding. The strategies that these participants noticed could be considered *good teaching practices* for educators to use with all students. Specifically, many accommodations such as collaborative group work, visuals, and building on background knowledge are strategies that educators may already use (Keenan, 2004). Hite and Evans (2006) further expressed that:

> the research on effective teaching of ELL students, although usually situated within ESOL or bilingual classrooms rather than in mainstream classrooms, reveals features appropriate for all learners; maintaining high expectations, scaffolding learning, building vocabulary and background, using active learning strategies, and providing opportunities for student interaction. (p. 93-494)

As such, many educators may already possess the tools needed to provide help their ELLs succeed in their classrooms. By educators implementing these accommodations into their classes, they could help to improve the academic performance of all students.

5.5. Limitations

One limitation of this study is that the area in which this study was conducted has a relatively low percentage of ELLs enrolled in their schools in comparison to other school districts in the state. However, pre-service teachers who completed their field experiences are able to work with ELLs in this school district and often travel to surrounding countries which contain a high percentage of ELLs. Therefore, students are able to complete field experiences with ELLs, but pre-service teachers may be placed in a school that includes only a few ELLs, which can limit their ability to provide a large number of services to these learners.

A second limitation of this study is that students who completed the survey were in various teacher certification cohorts. As a result, first year student cohorts may not have been afforded the opportunity to complete CLD coursework or ELL field experiences since they had not progressed far enough in their programs to enroll in this coursework. This may have resulted in students who had been enrolled in teacher certification programs for two to four years having a different perspective of ELLs due to having a more thorough understanding of CLD content knowledge and more varied experiences working with ELLs.

5. 6. Future Research

To develop a more comprehensive understanding of how field experiences can impact pre-service teachers' abilities to effectively educate ELLs, researchers can focus on the context of these experiences. Particularly, researchers can investigate the different types of field placements available to pre-service teachers (e.g., school, community) to determine how these contexts effectively prepare future educators to educate diverse subgroups of learners. Moreover, researchers could study the impacts of in-service teacher training focused on ELLs. Essentially, does this training provide sufficient support to current educators? Are mentor teachers of pre-service teachers able to effectively use the resources obtained during these trainings to help prepare pre-service teachers and interns they are supervising?

5.7. Implications for Teaching and Learning

Through the combination of CLD coursework within teacher certification curriculum and ELL-oriented field experiences, pre-service teachers may become better equipped in their knowledge and abilities to provide strategies and accommodations that will help ELLs learn the content being taught. This is particularly important due to the demographics of K-12 institutions in the United States becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse (NCELA, 2011). This creates an additional need for university/college teacher certification degree programs to make certain that they are developing the skills and knowledge needed for pre-service teachers to educate the diverse range of learners they may encounter in their future classes. One way to accomplish this undertaking is to provide pre-service teachers a wide range of experiences working with ELLs. In fact, researchers have found that pre-service teachers who have the opportunity to complete field experience requirements with ELLs in addition to their ESOL coursework had developed a more thorough understanding of second language acquisition concepts (Bollin, 2007; Pappamihiel, 2007; Zainuddin & Moore, 2004).

6. Significance

The result of this study are important since pre-service teachers may enter teacher preparation programs with preconceived notions about teaching (Eisenhardt, Besnoy, & Steel, 2012). Additionally, pre-service teachers may lack experience needed for them to make connections between course content and practical application. As such, providing pre-service teachers the valuable learning experiences in which they are able to make connections between the content they are acquiring in their CLD coursework and their field experience requirements is becoming increasingly more important. Specifically, pre-service teachers need the opportunity to implement the theories and accommodations they learn in their CLD coursework into actual educational settings that have ELLs enrolled. This will become increasingly more important as the percentage of ELLs increases each year in American public educational settings. Furthermore, in 2012, Samson and Collins estimated that one in four children in America live in homes in which a language other than English is spoken. The current and projected increase in ELL enrollment can have significant impacts on schools and especially the quality of teaching that is provided by educators. Therefore, the coursework and field experiences should prepare pre-service teachers to ensure that all students have the prospect of obtaining academic success. Samson and Collins (2012) proclaimed that:

> The fact that [our] nation's teachers are and will increasingly encounter a diverse range of learners requires that every teacher has sufficient breadth and depth of knowledge and range of skills to be able to meet the unique needs of all students, including those who struggle with English. While it is true that there are educational specialists for example, English as a second language and bilingual teachers, who have expertise in supporting ELLs, many teachers do not. (p. 1)

It is imperative that teacher education programs determine how to best prepare future teachers to effectively educate all of their students.

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CONCERNS OF ACCOUNTING TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING GHANA'S 2007 EDUCATION REFORM: REVISITED

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to find out whether time improved the concerns of accounting teachers in the implementation of the senior high school accounting curriculum since the works of Ankomah and Author (2010a) and Author (2009) some 6 years ago. It was a replication of these two studies which drew from the recommendations made by the authors to follow up on their earlier studies. The study drew 159 senior high school accounting teachers from 3 of the 10 administrative regions in Ghana. The 159 participating accounting teachers were surveyed with the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ). Only practicing senior high school accounting teachers were recruited to respond to the SoCQ. The study found that the senior high school accounting teachers were mainly non-users of the accounting curriculum. They had both the primary and secondary concerns at the awareness and informational stages respectively. For that matter, they were not very much involved in the delivery of the curriculum.

Keywords: accounting, education, senior high school, concerns

1. Justification for the 2007 Education Reform in Ghana: Accounting Education

Ghana practices the centralised education system. Accordingly, curricular decisions are centrally made by the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ghana Education Service (GES) and disseminated across all the senior high schools in the country. Therefore, accounting teachers in senior high schools in Ghana have the responsibility of approximating the accounting curriculum as much as possible.

When the accounting curriculum, just like any other curriculum, completes its full cycle, summative evaluation is conducted to determine whether to continue or discontinue it. In Ghana, this is usually done on the basis of external examinations (e.g. West African Examinations) passed and utility of the knowledge and skills students have acquired from the educational process. In part, these express the extent of attainment of curriculum goals. Where the result is not encouraging, the programme may either be modified or replaced.

Having concern for quality in accounting education is not a new phenomenon. To consider it as new ignores the efforts of academics that have long pursued excellence in courses offered to students and in the research they have conducted (Karmel in Watty, 2007).

In pursuant of the quest for quality in education in Ghana, the senior high school accounting curriculum, as a part of the total educational enterprise, was modified. This is what the 2007 Education Reform has left in its wake. Ghana seemed to have noticed what Sampsell (1997) observed that, accounting education saw rapid changes forcing institutions of education to constantly adopt their course materials to suit the work force and external environment. This might have sent a signal to Ghana Education Service to anticipate changes in accounting

concepts and work demands to make provision for such contingencies. Accordingly, the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) revised the accounting curriculum.

The new accounting curriculum as a whole focuses on continuous quality. Students are expected to master the knowledge, applications, and attitudes that will reinforce workplace competencies. The changes in senior high school accounting education in Ghana have emanated largely, but not exclusively, from national government policy that has resulted in educational institutions becoming increasingly accountable to a variety of stakeholders including government, employers, students, quality assurance agencies and professional bodies. A key stakeholder of global accounting education such as the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) is interested in the way accounting students are educated and certificated. To ensure quality and consistency in accounting education around the globe, the IFAC Education Committee has developed International Education Standards for Professional Accountants (IESs) which prescribe the essential elements of accounting education. Failure to comply with such standards implies defiance. This is to ensure uniformity to promote quality of accounting education to guarantee the best service delivery in industry. It was, therefore, prudent for the CRDD to monitor the changes in the IFAC Education Standards so as to adapt the accounting education to enable senior high school accounting students obtain those terminal competencies. Such was the motivation that promoted interest in the revision of the senior high school accounting education.

1.1 Accounting Teachers' Anxiety and Concerns

Even though, the intention of the Reform was good in one direction, it failed to factor in accounting teachers. Yet accounting teachers had the onerous task of translating the curriculum content to functional experiences for the accounting students to go through to bring about the desired learning in the students. In effect, writing off the accounting teachers in the planning and development of the curriculum could militate against the totality of the attainment of the curriculum goals. Whilst some of the accounting teachers may have genuine concerns about lacking knowledge on how the curriculum works others may be malicious to work counter to the success of the curriculum because they were not adequately consulted in the planning process. The culminated feelings, perceptions, beliefs and attitude of accounting teachers about the 2007 accounting curriculum are pertinent to monitor the progress of the implementation of the curriculum.

Some earlier attempts of monitoring such feelings of the accounting teachers were undertaken by some researchers about 6 years ago. For example, Ankomah and Kwarteng (2010a) and Kwarteng (2009) investigated the concerns of accounting teachers in implementing the senior high school accounting curriculum following the 2007 Education Reform. Each of these studies found that accounting teachers were nonusers of the accounting curriculum. According to these studies, the accounting teachers had their primary concerns at the awareness stage. They made little effort to make use of the curriculum. Accordingly, several recommendations were made some of which are outlined below:

1. If possible, accounting teachers should be involved in discussions and decisions about the curriculum and its implementation;
2. School districts should share enough information to arouse interest, but not so much that it overwhelms;
3. Unaware teachers should be encouraged to talk with colleagues who know about the curriculum;
4. Steps should be to minimize gossip and inaccurate sharing of information about the curriculum; and
5. School administrators should be aware of and willing to accept the fact that teachers may replace or significantly modify the existing curriculum.

Although there has not been any direct adoption of any of these recommendations, the Ghana Association of Business Education Teachers (GABET) has met several times since the study to deliberate, among other things, on their improvement in professionalism. These meetings had precipitated the discussions of such teacher concerns the solution of which is expected to improve such concerns. Also, the Ghana Education Service has organised a series of seminars and workshops to capacitate teachers to implement the accounting curriculum in line with plan. Additionally, having had the curriculum in use for some time, collegiality and familiarity might have improved with time. With all these interventions in place, there is need to conduct a follow-up study through replication of the earlier studies (Ankomah & Kwarteng, 2010a; Kwarteng, 2009) to find out whether there have been improvement in their concerns. Accordingly, the sub-problem was posed as;

At what stage, as determined by the Stages of Concern, are accounting teachers in implementing the accounting curriculum?

2. Theoretical Framework

To address this sub-problem, the concerns-based adoption model (CBAM) was used to guide the study. The CBAM is a well-researched model which describes how people develop as they learn about an innovation and the stage of that process. It also predicts probable teacher behaviour as they implement an innovation and participate in developmental activities. The CBAM is a complex multi-dimensional model which comprises the "Level of Use" (LoU), "Innovation Configuration" (IC) and "Stages of Concern" (SoC).

The SoCQ is based on the stages of concern (SoC) that addresses the affective side of change, focusing on people's reactions, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes when implementing an educational innovation. The SoC, which identifies seven stages or levels of concern, is grouped into three sections: Impact, Task, and Self. Impact is sub-divided into the Refocusing, Collaboration, and Consequence stages. Task is generalized into a Management stage and Self is sub-divided into a Personal and Informational stage. A final stage that is not given a category is Awareness. The SoC relates to the personal attitude, perception and activities individual teachers have or undertake in the light of implementing an innovation.

Hall and George (1978) summarized the various stages in the SoC as follows:

Stage 0 – Awareness: Teachers have little knowledge of the innovation and have no interest in taking any action.

Stage 1 – Informational: Teachers express concerns regarding the nature of the innovation and the requirement for its implementation. At this stage, teachers usually show their willingness to learn more about the specific innovation or reform.

Stage 2 – Personal: Teachers focus on the impact the innovation will have on them. At this point, they exhibit concerns about how the use of the innovation will affect them on a personal level. They may be concerned about their own time limitations and the changes they will be expected to make.

Stage 3 – Management: Concerns begin to concentrate on methods for managing the innovation within the classroom. Teachers now express concern over the organisation and details of implementation, and the overcoming of difficulties. Time requirements are among the prime management factors, which creates scepticism on the part of teachers in relation to the adoption of innovations.

Stage 4 – Consequences: Teacher concerns now centre upon effects on students learning. If positive effects are observed, teachers are likely to continue to work for the implementation. *Stage 5 – Collaboration*: Teachers are interested in relating what they are doing to what their colleague are doing.

Stage 6 – Refocusing: Teachers evaluate the innovation and make suggestions for continued improvement or consider alternatives ideas that would work even better.

3. Methodology

In all 159 accounting teachers participated in the survey. These teachers were drawn at random from the Brong Ahafo, Northern and Western Regions of Ghana. Those teachers were recruited because there is an implied term in their contract of employment to implement the 2007 education reform and, in fact, any other directives the Ministry of Education may deem fit. Therefore, only practicing accounting teachers teaching in senior high schools in Ghana were targeted. Additionally, the definition of accounting teacher covered teachers teaching either financial accounting or cost accounting. However, a teacher was recruited only once which implied that any teacher teaching the two subjects participated only once in the study.

The questionnaire used to survey these participating accounting was an adaptation of an English version of Hall, George, and Rutherford's (1986) 35-item Stages of Concern (SoC) questionnaire designed and recommended for Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) of curriculum implementation. The SoCQ is based on the stages of concern (SoC) that addresses the affective side of change, focusing on people's reactions, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes when implementing an educational innovation. The SoC, which identifies seven stages or levels of concern, is grouped into three sections: Impact, Task, and Self. Impact is sub-divided into the Refocusing, Collaboration, and Consequence stages. Task is generalized into a Management stage and Self is sub-divided into a Personal and Informational stage. A final stage that is not given a category is Awareness.

The 35 items on the Likert scale are generalized to cover any innovation and administered with only the name of the innovation changed on the cover page. The typical American expressions used in the questionnaire were replaced with British vocabulary that the average senior high school teacher in Ghana could understand. Thus, where the term *Faculty* was used in the original questionnaire it was replaced with *Accounting Teachers*. For specificity, wherever in the original questionnaire *Innovation* had been used, *Accounting Curriculum* was used instead.

The SoCQ was scored by hand. Each of the 35 statements expressed a certain concern about the accounting curriculum. Respondents placed a number next to each statement indicating the degree to which each concern is true of them at the present moment. High numbers (5-7) indicated high concern, low numbers (1-2) showed low concern and 0 indicated irrelevancy of the statement (Hall, George, & Rutherford, 1986). Each statement corresponded to one of the stages of concern and five statements represented each stage. The responses of the five items on each stage were summed up to obtain a total number. Then, the total score was divided by the number of items to obtain a mean score for each stage. Both means and graphical representations of the statistics were displayed.

4. Results

Concerns of accounting teachers in implementing the accounting curriculum are capable in monitoring the quality of the implementation progress. Accordingly, data was collected from accounting teachers in the form of their concerns with regards to the implementation of the accounting curriculum. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and Figure 1 diagrammatises the results. There is an indication that the accounting teachers surveyed were nonusers of the accounting curriculum. With both the primary and secondary concerns as the awareness and informational stages, there is no doubt that they were not very much involved in the delivery of the curriculum. The least concern which was recorded at the collaboration stage indicates an apparent collegiality in discussing the delivery of the curriculum.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of Total Study Sample*

SoC Value	SoC Description						Total Raw Score	Percentile
0	Awareness	4	4	4	5	4	21	98**
1	Informational	4	5	7	7	7	30	97*
2	Personal	5	5	5	7	5	27	89
3	Management	4	5	5	5	5	24	88
4	Consequence	7	7	7	5	7	33	90
5	Collaboration	5	5	5	7	5	27	76
6	Refocusing	5	5	7	5	5	27	90

** Primary Concern   *Secondary Concern
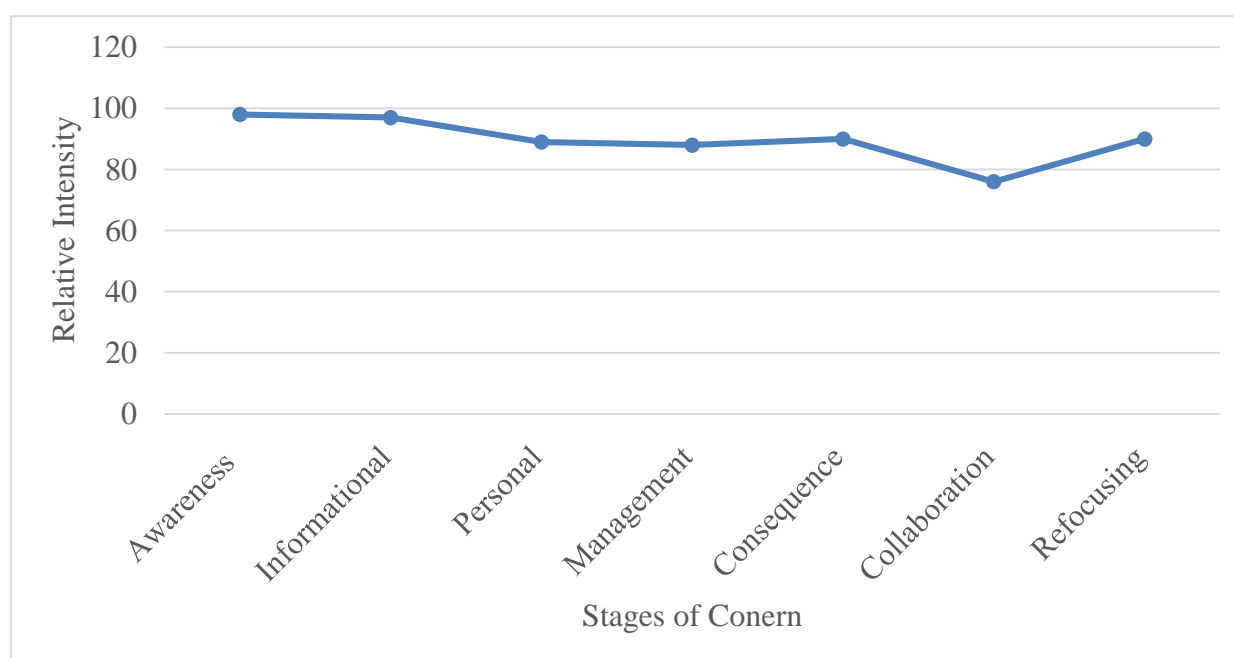
Figure 5.1: *Accounting Teachers' Stages of Concern*

This phenomenon is clearly articulated in the display of the frequency of accounting teachers surveyed over the stages of concern as shown in Table 2. The bulk (n=92) of the accounting teachers had awareness and informational concerns. One could not conclude that these were experienced users of the curriculum who were looking forward to doing something more challenging. Rather, it is clearly evident that a majority of the accounting teachers peaked at the lower level concerns (awareness, informational and personal concerns). The seven stages were further reduced to three. The first three stages (i.e. awareness, informational and personal) were integrated to form the self-concerns; the management stage was labelled task concern; and the last three stages (i.e. consequence, collaboration and refocusing) were impact concerns. Individual respondent's primary and secondary concerns were determined. In effect, the majority (n=117 out of 155; 76%) of accounting teachers were found to be self-concern users of the accounting curriculum.

Table 2: *Frequency of Individual Accounting Teacher's Highest Stages of Concern*

Stages of Concern	Frequency	(N)	Percentage	(%)
Self-Concerns	117		75.97	
Awareness		45		29.22
Informational		47		30.52
Personal		25		16.23
Task Concerns	3		1.95	
Management		3		1.95
Impact Concerns	34		22.08	
Consequence		1		0.65
Collaboration		4		2.60
Refocusing		29		18.83
Total	154	154	100	100

Only about 2% (n=3 out of 155) of the accounting teachers were considering the support materials needed to aid the delivery of the curriculum. These were the task concern users. There, however, were some accounting teachers who were impact concern users of the curriculum and for that matter were in the state of evaluating the curriculum to determine its usefulness in the system.

4.1 Group profiles in relation to some teacher characteristics

To generate comprehensive information of the concerns of teachers in implementing the accounting curriculum, group profiles relating to some independent variables were analysed and studied. Accounting teachers' group profiles in relation to gender, the workload measured by the number of classes taught in a term, type of accounting subject taught, teaching experience and the highest teaching qualification were all studied. The accounting teachers' group profile was analysed in relation to gender as displayed in Figure 2. Males' profile registered their highest concerns (98) at the awareness stage with secondary concern (98) at the management stage. The group profile of the female accounting teachers assumed a similar trend as that of the males. However, whilst the male accounting teachers' profile registered its least intense concern (80) at the consequence stage, the profile of the female accounting teachers recorded their least intense concerns (90) at the collaboration stage.
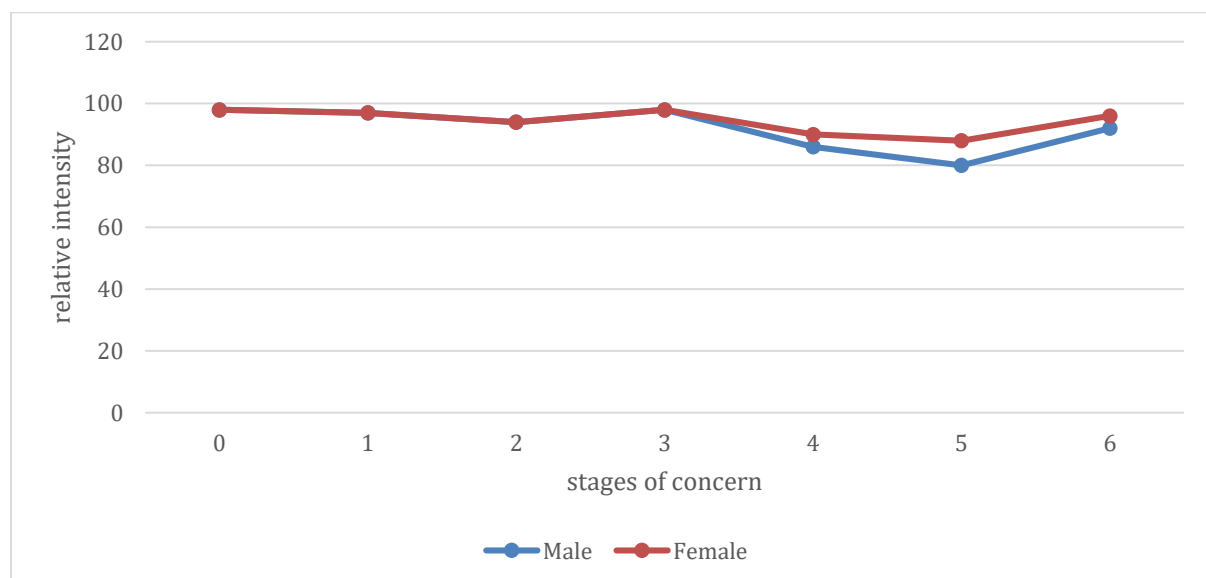
Figure 2: *Accounting Teachers' Gender and Stages of Concern*

The results of the group profile of concerns in relation to gender indicated that the highest concern of both male and female accounting teachers toward the implementation of the accounting curriculum was at the awareness stage. In general, the two group profiles appear similar. The percentile means of the two group profiles are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Female and Male Accounting Teachers' Percentile Means*

Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Male	98	97	94	98	86	80	92
Female	98	97	94	98	90	88	96

On the basis of accounting teachers' workload, it could be realised from Figure 5.3 and the percentile means summarised in Table 4 that across the various levels of workload all the accounting teachers peaked (98) at awareness concern. The only marked differences were in their secondary concerns.
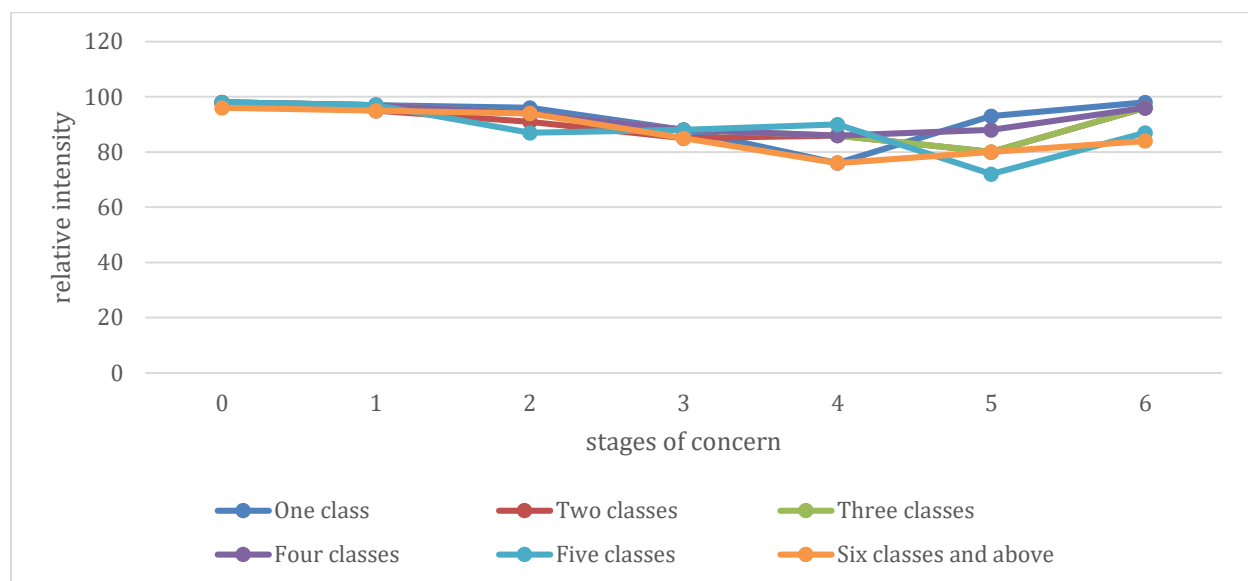

Figure 3: *Accounting Teachers' Workload and Stages of Concern*

Those accounting teachers with fewer than three classes to teach had their secondary concern at the refocusing stage. However, their counterparts teaching more than two different classes had their secondary concern at the informational stage. What created significant differences in the group profiles were the least intense concerns. Accounting teachers teaching in only one and at least six classes had their least intense concern (76 in each case) at the collaboration stage. As well, their counterparts teaching in four classes had their least intense concern (86) at this same stage. However, their other colleagues teaching in two, three, four and five classes had their least intense concerns with varying degrees of intensity at the (80; 80;

Table 4: *Accounting Teachers' Percentile Means Relative to Number of Classes Taught*

Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
One class	98	97	96	88	76	93	98
Two classes	98	95	91	85	86	80	96
Three classes	98	97	94	88	86	80	96
Four classes	98	97	94	88	86	88	96
Five classes	98	97	87	88	90	72	87
Six classes and above	96	95	94	85	76	80	84

Further, the group profile of accounting teachers depending on the accounting subject(s) taught was obtained. The pictorial representation of the results is presented in Figure 4 whilst the descriptive statistics in the form of group profile percentile means are shown in Table 5.
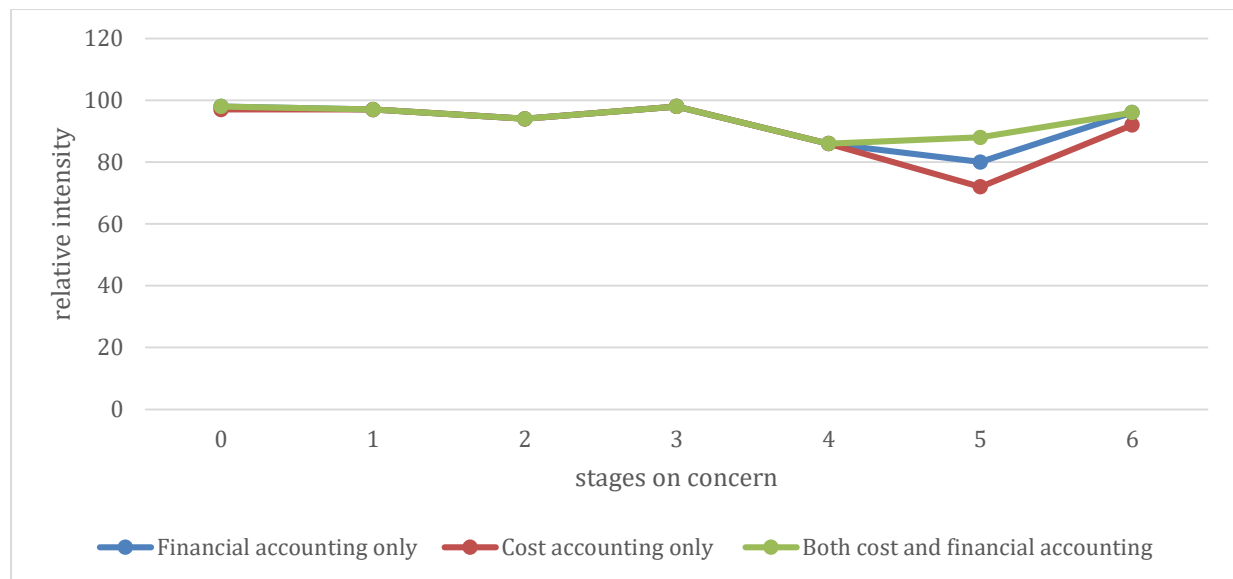

Figure 4: *Group Profile in Relation to Accounting Subject Taught*

Table 5: *Accounting Teachers' Percentile Means Relative to Accounting subject Taught*

Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Financial accounting only	98	97	94	98	86	80	96
Cost accounting only	97	97	94	98	86	72	92
Both cost and financial accounting	98	97	94	98	86	88	96

Teachers teaching cost accounting only had their concern (98) peaked at the management stage with their secondary concerns (97; 97 respectively) at the awareness and informational stages. In contrast, their colleagues teaching financial accounting only and those teaching both financial and cost accounting had their concerns in the complete reversal of those cost accounting only teachers. These two group profiles had their primary concerns (98; 98 respectively for each group profile) at the awareness and management stages and their secondary concerns (97 for each group profile) at the management stage. However, teachers teaching cost accounting only and those teaching financial accounting only group profiles all tailed (80 for financial accounting only; and 72 for cost accounting only) at the collaboration stage. Yet, teachers teaching both financial and cost accounting had their secondary concern (86) at the consequence stage.

Further analysis of the group profiles was undertaken. This involved the analysis of the group profiles on the basis of accounting teachers' teaching experience. In this study, teaching experience is gauged from the length of service in the teaching profession as an accounting teacher in the senior high schools. In effect, the results of the analysis are shown in Figure 5.
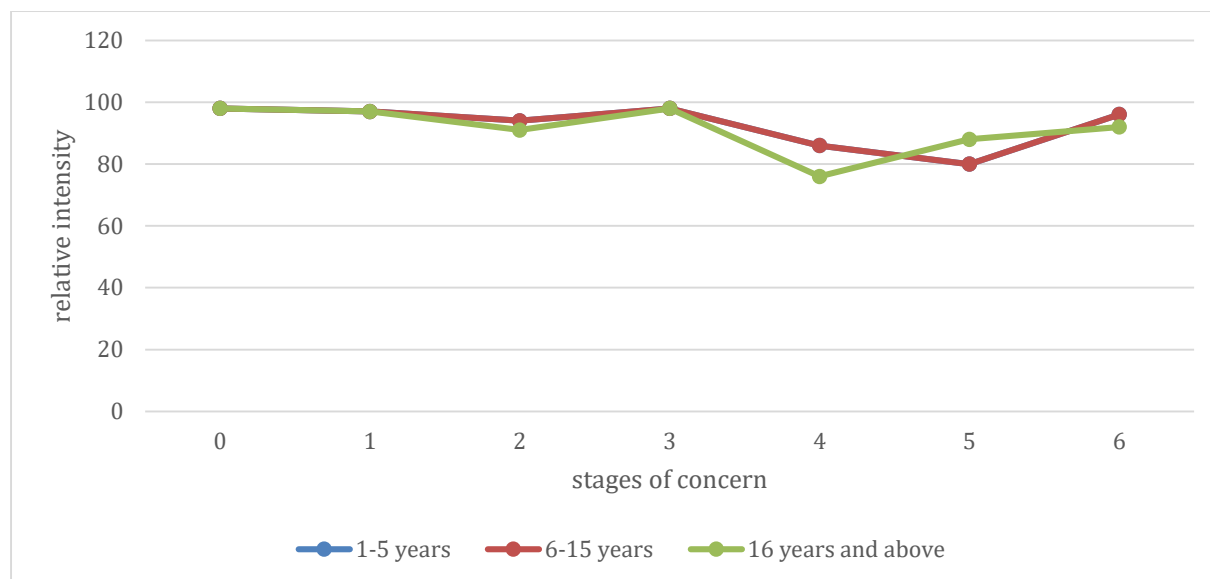
Figure 5: *Group Profile in Relation to Accounting Teachers' Experience*

As well, Table 6 supports the line graph in Figure 6 by presenting the percentile means to support the results. Results from these two summaries indicate that there are three distinct group profiles. The first profile represents accounting teachers with a maximum of five years teaching experience; the second shows the profile of those accounting teachers with more than 5 years but not exceeding 15 years teaching experience; and the last group profile displays the category of accounting teachers with more than 16 years teaching experience. The profile of accounting teachers with a maximum of five years teaching experience displayed similar concerns as their counterparts with more than five but not exceeding years of teaching experience.

Table 6: *Accounting Teachers' Percentile Means Relative to Teaching Experience*

Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1-5 years	98	97	94	98	86	80	96
6-15 years	98	97	94	98	86	80	96
16 years and above	98	97	91	98	76	88	92

Across each of the stages of concern, the two distinct group profiles harboured same concerns with same degrees of intensity. Each of these groups had their primary concern (98; 98) at the awareness and management stages. As well, they all showed their secondary concern (97; 97) at the informational stage whilst both tailed up (80; 80) with collaboration concern. Also, accounting teachers with at least 16 years of teaching experience had their primary concern (98; 98) at the same awareness and management stages. The only difference recorded in the concerns across the group profiles was the minimal concern and the degree of intensity. Whilst the first two group profiles that have been adjudged similar had their least intense concern at the collaboration stage, those accounting teachers with at least 16 years of experience recorded their least intense concern (76) at the consequence stage.

The last of the group profiles explored was the accounting teachers' highest teaching qualifications. Six distinct group profiles emerged out of these results. These included those accounting teachers who had no professional education background; those with Teachers' Certificate 'A'; Diploma of Education holders; others with Post Graduate Certificate in Education or Post Graduate Diploma in Education; some others with bachelor's degree in education; and finally, those with higher professional education such as Master of Education

of Master of Philosophy in education related discipline. The results of the group profiles are summarised in Figure 7 and Table 7.
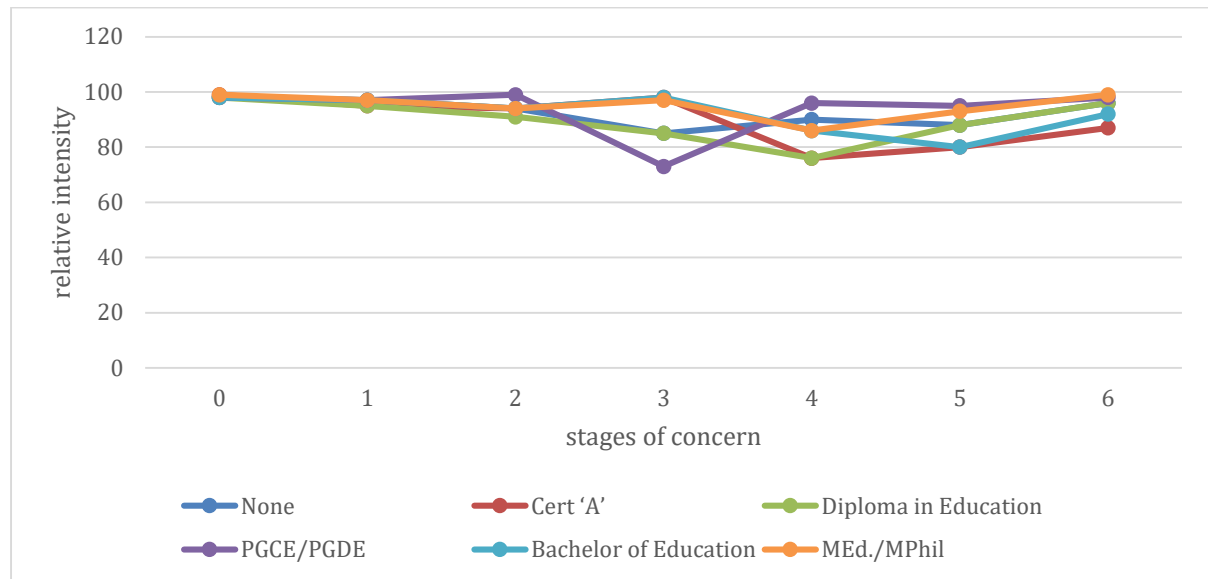

Figure 7: *Group Profile in Relation to Accounting Teachers' Teaching Qualification*

Accounting teachers without any professional teacher education training peaked (98) at awareness stage with their secondary concern (97) at the informational stage. However, their less intense concern (85) was at the management stage. Those accounting teachers with Teachers' Certificate 'A' as their highest professional qualification had their most intense concern (99) at the awareness stage and their secondary concern (98) at the management stage. This profile had their minimal concern (76) at the consequence stage.

Table 7: *Accounting Teachers' Percentile Means Relative to Teaching Qualification*

Stage of Concern	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
None	98	97	94	85	90	88	96
Cert 'A'	99	95	94	98	76	80	87
Diploma in Education	98	95	91	85	76	88	96
PGCE/PGDE	98	97	99	73	96	95	98
Bachelor of Education	98	97	94	98	86	80	92
MEd./MPhil	99	97	94	97	86	93	99

Accounting teachers who were Diploma in education holders had their basic concern (98) at the awareness stage. Interestingly, they displayed their next intense concern (96) at the refocusing stage whilst their least intense concern (76) was at the consequence stage. PGCE and PGDE holding accounting teachers rather had their most intense concern (99) at the personal stage with the secondary concerns (98; 98) at the awareness and refocusing stages. However, this group of accounting teachers had their minimum concern (73) at the management stage. Yet the primary concern (98; 98) of the teachers with bachelor's degree in education recorded their intense concerns at the management and awareness stages whilst having their secondary concerns (97) at the informational stage and least intense concern (80) at the collaboration stage. Finally, accounting teachers with the highest qualification, MEd. or MPhil in education, recorded their primary concerns (99; 99) at the awareness and refocusing stages with their secondary concerns (97; 97) at the informational and management stage. This group profile tailed up (86) at the consequence stage.

4.2 Accounting teachers' pattern of concerns in implementing the senior high school accounting curriculum

A further analysis was carried out to determine the responding accounting teachers' pattern of concern. This was undertaken by mapping individual responding accounting teachers' peak concerns against the second highest concerns. A 3 by 3 grid was developed to match respondents' primary concerns to their secondary concerns to develop patterns of concern. In the columns are the primary concerns which could be any of self, task and impact concerns and similar concerns hereby referred to as secondary concerns are labelled on the first row. This created 9 vacant spaces within, implying 9 different patterns of concern (i.e. self-self, self-task, self-impact, task-self, task-task, task-impact, impact-self, impact-task, impact-impact concerns). However, since mere combination but not permutation was intended the 9 possible patterns were reduced to 6. All other patterns that combined more than one kind of concern were pulled together and given a generic name "mixed concern pattern". This further cut the 6 patterns to only four (i.e. self-self, task-task, impact-impact and mixed concerns patterns. Individual respondents' highest percentile, hereby referred to as the primary concern, and the second highest percentile, thus secondary concern, were obtained, plotted and tallied in the 3 by 3 grid. After exhausting all, the pattern with the highest frequency was adjudged the dominant pattern. The results have been summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: *First Highest SoC in Relation to Second Highest SoC*

Primary Concern	Secondary Concern			Total	Percentage
	Self	Task	Impact		
Self	93	11	13	117	75.97
Task	3	0	0	3	1.95
Impact	26	0	8	34	22.08
Total	122	11	21	154	100

A majority (n=93; 60.39%) of the total participants (N=154) demonstrated self-concern pattern and only eight (5.19%) accounting teachers of the total sample size were oriented towards impact concern pattern. However there was no indication of task concern trend. The mixed concern trend (i.e. self-task concern and self-impact concern) was exhibited by about 34% (n=53) of the total accounting teachers studied. The indication that a majority of accounting teachers showed a self-concern pattern buttresses the point that the accounting teachers were indeed nonusers of the accounting curriculum.

4.3 Measuring influences of accounting teacher characteristics on their SoC

In full appreciation of accounting teacher concerns, further analytical tests were administered using ANOVA to test for statistical evidence to the effect that some teacher characteristics influence accounting teachers' stages of concern in implementing the accounting curriculum. The independent factors tested with the ANOVA on the stages of concern included accounting teachers' gender; highest teaching qualification; teaching experience; and workload.

Almost all of the accounting teachers' characteristics tested had no influence of the teachers' stages of concern. It was only at the collaboration stage that statistically significant differences were noted in the type of accounting subject taught at the senior high school found to be influencing accounting teachers' stages of concern. Relevant excerpts from the entire ANOVA test results in relation to this establishment are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: *ANOVA: Accounting Subject Taught and Collaboration Concern*

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	64.345	2	32.173	3.343	.038
Within groups	1453.265	151	9.624		
Total	1517.610	153			

ρ<.05

5. Discussion

The study sought to unearth the concerns of accounting teachers in their bid to implement the senior high school accounting curriculum. These concerns were necessary to determine the success rate of the implementation progress. Merely descriptive evidence was required to describe such teacher concerns and accordingly the following research question was posed;

At what stage, as determined by the Stages of Concern, are accounting teachers in implementing the accounting curriculum?

The accounting teachers were nonusers of the accounting curriculum. With both the primary and secondary concerns at the awareness and informational stages, there was no doubt that they were not very much involved in the delivery of the curriculum. The teachers were primarily concerned about the rudimentary aspects of the delivery of the curriculum. As such they should be recognized as those who were considering the possibility of using the curriculum. Implicit in this is the fact that as at the time of the survey they were not considered as actual users of the accounting curriculum.

One thing stood out clearly in the various group profile results analysed and studied. Awareness concern featured prominently in all of them. The degree of intensity in each case was phenomenal to authenticate the concern. There, however, were some situations where some other concerns denoting some level of use of the accounting curriculum were reported. Nevertheless, each of the group profiles reported points to the fact that the first three (awareness, informational and personal) concerns were characteristics of the accounting teachers studied. To gauge the concerns very well to permit informed judgements, it was instructive to cultivate the pattern of concerns to determine the structure of concerns of accounting teachers.

Accounting teachers were considered as nonusers of the accounting curriculum. They had awareness, informational and personal concerns. These lower level concerns were indicative of their non-use of the curriculum. This confirms the finding of Tunks and Weller (2009) that many of the teachers' concerns progressed from self/task toward impact rather than focused on the task stage (Christou, Eliophotou-Menon and Philippou, 2004). For the fact that most of the accounting teachers had these self-concerns, they apparently failed to use the accounting curriculum. In fact the situation is not any better than before because Kwarteng (2009) asserted earlier that accounting teachers had their main concerns at the awareness and personal stages but low concern at the refocusing stage.

These were the general concerns, yet the individual peaked at different stages. And thus further validating Donovan and Green's (2010) study that, as a group, teacher participants had high-level of awareness, management, and impact concerns, yet highest concerns for individual teachers vary. Hence there was need to be responsive to individual accounting teacher's needs to encourage adoption of the curriculum. They warned that self, task and impact concerns can occur at one moment in time and return throughout teachers' professionalization, especially if teachers are confronted with new problems and chance upon some opportunities. This implies the strengthening of instructional supervision and monitoring to keep up with developments in teacher development in the light of the implementation of the accounting curriculum.

Hence the idea of centralising the development of the curriculum and disseminating it across senior high schools to be implemented with utmost fidelity is defeated. In a centralized school system as practiced in Ghana the lack of the fidelity of implementation of the curriculum spells phenomenal concerns worthy of discussion. What then do accounting teachers do in the classroom if they fail to employ the basic working tool prescribed for them by the Curriculum Research and Development Division of the Ghana Education Service?

No matter how best the alternative approaches the accounting teachers take to instruct their accounting students, the teachers have caused a fundamental conditional breach of their professional psychological contract with their employers. Compliance with the policy directive that accounting teachers use the accounting curriculum is primarily fundamental to the professional practice. Accordingly, the non-compliance makes it difficult, if not impossible, to assign any practical significance to the accounting instructional engagements in senior high schools in the country.

Quality of the accounting curriculum implementation is more suspicious. The very standard measure which has been established as blueprint for practical guidance has been almost neglected and relegated. The unwarranted freedom awarded themselves by the accounting teachers only creates an atmosphere of disorder in the practice. This could, however, be linked to the level of instructional supervision of accounting instructions. It is just not enough for the supervisor to be physically present but s/he must have adequate knowledge of the subject matter to ensure that the instructional intercourse is focused on the accounting syllabus.

Furthermore, accounting teachers appeared to have a negative view of the accounting curriculum and its implementation. However, this was contrary to the study of Wang (2013) that the teachers held a positive view towards new curriculum, that their concerns were characteristic of three stages - management, personal concerns and consequence. Having all these accounting teachers with negative view of the curriculum still at post leaves no excuse for doubting the fidelity of implementation and success of the accounting curriculum delivery in the senior high schools. Interestingly, if accounting teachers were not using the basic guide for instructional needs, what then did they use to guide their practice? Were school authorities aware of this state of affairs? Even if they were aware, how committed were the authorities in improving patronage of the accounting curriculum in resolving individual teacher's concerns. There seemed to be more questions to be answered.

Indeed, in this state it was suspicious the kind of instructional discourse that proceeded in the senior high school accounting classrooms. The attitude of accounting teachers to the implementation of the curriculum militates against the curriculum's success. Therefore, the instruction was not likely to follow the prescribed accounting curriculum. Consequently, unplanned learning might result. Hence the quest to achieve the desired quality in the senior high school accounting education might prove elusive.

Accounting teachers' collaboration concern was noted to be a function of the nature of the accounting course taught. This finding is consistent with that of Lau and Shiu (2008) where they identified participants' experience as an oral examiner having a significant influence on collaboration concern. However, generally, accounting teacher concerns were not mediated by their gender, highest teaching qualification, teaching experience, or their workload. Thus, accounting teacher stages of concern was noted not to be a function of their gender, highest teaching qualification, teaching experience or workload they execute. Accordingly, the findings of Pigge and Marso (1989) that gender has a significant impact on concerns are debunked. The study rather supports the fact established by Ghaith and Shaaban (1999) that gender has no effect on teachers' concerns. In fact, the study has as well refuted Watzke's (2003, 2007) findings that teacher concerns may not be universal for all teachers, but rather

dependent on the individual teacher's experiences and surrounding contexts. Again, both Guilliaume and Rudney's (1993) and Boz's (2009) arguments failed to obtain the support from this study. Similarly, the findings failed to support the findings of Christou, Eliophotou-Menon and Philippou (2004) who found that there were significant differences in the concerns of teachers across years of teaching experience but not across years of implementation. Yet, the study findings confirmed some findings of other researchers such as Ankomah and Kwarteng (2010b) who found teaching experience to be independent of accounting teachers' concerns in implementing the accounting curriculum; and Alshammari (2000) who noted that teacher concerns are not related to their teaching experience.

6. Conclusions

Accounting teachers merely experiment with the curriculum and satisfice instructional decisions. This creates the suspicion that instructional monitoring and supervision are not judiciously applied in classrooms. The potency of instructional monitoring and supervision could have unearthed the concerns that the accounting teachers had in implementing the accounting curriculum. However, because such concerns are not identified and addressed pre-university accounting education suffers some defects. It only connects to the fact that accounting teachers' physical presence in the classroom does not necessarily translate to the total use of the curriculum. Therefore, this study sends a signal to school authorities to address these unresolved concerns of accounting teachers to boost the success of the implementation of the accounting curriculum.

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THE ROLE OF GENDER IN READING COMPREHENSION: AN ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE-LEVEL EFL STUDENTS' COMPREHENSION OF DIFFERENT GENRES

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to examine the effects of gender on comprehending different types of genre. The study involved 60 first year college students (30 males and 30 females) who were taking an advanced reading course at a government university in Turkey. The students were given three reading passages of different genres such as historical fiction, essay and fantasy and were asked to answer comprehension questions related to the passages. Descriptives statistics, one-way ANOVA and repeated measures ANOVA were employed to analyse the relationship between gender and the test scores for each text type. The results showed that (1) the participants, in general, were significantly better at understanding the essay than historical fiction and fantasy (2) there was not a statistically significant difference between males and females regarding comprehending the different types of genres (3) both the male and female participants were significantly better at understanding the essay than historical fiction and fantasy. The study offers suggestions regarding incorporating different types of genre in the classroom.

Keywords: reading comprehension, gender, genre, English as a foreign language

1. Introduction

Gender has been an area of particular concern to many researchers who work within scholarly disciplines including but not limited to sociolinguistics, anthropology and education, opening new perspectives and questions as to how certain behaviors are shaped by gender alone. In education, for instance, research on gender and classroom interaction identified behaviors different for each gender. According to a study conducted by Swan (1993), it was found that boys tend to be more outspoken, assertive, and talkative than girls; boys receive more attention from their teachers and occupy more space than girls etc. Similar results were also reported in Sommers and Lawrence (1992) and Redpath (1989). However, Swann also notes that as the behaviors of boys and girls may change depending on the context, the findings regarding gender differences should be interpreted as tendencies.

The present study raises the issue of gender differences in reading comprehension that is not only shaped by gender alone but by other factors such as genre. The study draws on research regarding gender and reading in the native language as well as reading in English as a foreign language (EFL). Before referring to such research, it is necessary, at this point, to digress briefly to mention about the factors that are involved in the reading process. Comprehending a text is a complicated process which requires knowledge about certain areas and the usage of a variety of skills. One has to have knowledge about vocabulary, grammar, information structure, and features of genre in order to understand a text. In addition, they should be able to identify the main and specific ideas in a text by skimming and scanning, determine the organization of a text, make inferences from the text, respond critically to the text and analyze the content information.

What is also highly important in understanding a text is using previously acquired knowledge. Referred to as Schema Theory in the literature, it involves using prior knowledge to understand and learn from a text (Rumelhart, 1980). Although the theory has been widely accepted among scholars, how it actually works for reading comprehension is still vague (Grabe, 2012). Scholars

(Carrell 1991; Hudson 1988; Rumelhalt 1980) began using the concept of "schema" in reading comprehension to emphasize that background knowledge plays an important role in understanding a text. Schema was defined as "a data structure for representing the genetic concepts stored in memory" (p.34) or "an abstract knowledge structure" (Anderson and Pearson 1984, p.42). Researchers came to realize that understanding a text well can only be possible if readers can make a connection between the text and their prior knowledge. As Tannen (1993a) states production and interpretation of both spoken and written texts are affected by peoples' previous experiences, expectations and assumptions. When a reader becomes aware of textual stimuli during reading, he/she draws the relevant schema from memory into the text and schema is activated (Li & Cheng 1997).

Researchers (Carrell 1988; Urquhart & Weir 1998) proposed four kinds of schema: *formal*, *content*, *cultural* and *linguistic* and stated that if readers do not possess such background knowledge, they may have serious problems in understanding texts (Carrel & Eisterhold, 1983). Briefly, *formal schema* is associated with the background knowledge of the rhetorical structure of the text. In other words, formal schema refers to having backround knowledge regarding how different types of texts are organized. For example, having knowledge about what novels are made up of i.e. setting, characteristics, events etc. constitues formal schema. *Content schema* is related to the content of a text. It requires readers to know about a certain subject such as making reservations for a trip which involves asking questions, choosing dates, places and paying for the tickets. *Cultural schema* has to do with cultural knowledge in that when a reader reads a text, he/she makes a connection between the content of the text and his/her own beliefs, attitudes and values. Finally, *linguistic schema* refers to a person's grammar and vocabulary knowledge. The more advanced this knowledge is, the better a reader can comprehend a text (Carrel & Eisterhold, 1983).

2. Literature Review

In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on the role that gender plays on comprehending different types of genres both in a native language and in a foreign or second language. Studies that explored this kind of relationship analyzed the reading behaviors of first grade through graduate students coming from different cultural backgrounds. To give an example of younger students' preferences, Chapman, Filipenko, McTavish, and Shapiro (2007) conducted a study to determine the book preferences of first-grade boys and girls studying at four different schools in Canada. Data were collected from 40 students (20 males and 20 females) who were expected to select two books for school or home reading and explain the reasons for their selection. The findings showed that boys preferred to select storybooks and girls, information books. In a more recent study, Gallo and Ness (2013) examined 46 third-grade students' (24 females and 22 males) perceptions of informational text, which the authors define as "factual accounts of social and natural occurrences and answers to questions" (p.111). Data collection occurred at a public school's literacy program and included a student survey, individual interviews, and teacher observations during independent reading time. The results demonstrated that 17 male students chose an informational text, while 20 female students chose a fictional text. Similar results were also evident in Mead (2012) whose study involved a total of 12 students who were between the ages of 9 and 12. Based on the data that included multiple questionnaires and interviews, the author found that girls preferred to read mystery, fantasy, realistic fiction and historical fiction stories more than boys. Boys, on the other hand, preferred to read science fiction and non-fiction stories.

Studies also involved older students. In a study that examined students' attitudes towards reading and writing and their preferences for books, Merisuo-Storm (2006) conducted a study that involved 145 fourth-grade students (67 males and 78 females) at a Finnish comprehensive school. The students' ages ranged from 10 to 11. The students completed McKenna and Kear's

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (1999) according to which boys chose to read texts about comics followed by humor and adventure. The girls also preferred to read the same kinds of texts, however, their first choice was adventure followed by humor and comic. There was a significant difference between boys and girls with respect to reading comic books. Boys also preferred to read books about humor more than the girls but the difference between boys and girls was not significant. Moreover, poems, stories and fairytales were the least preferred texts by boys. The girls had significantly more positive attitudes towards poems than boys. Similar results were obtained by Willoughby (2010) who investigated the effects of gender stereotypes on book selection in a literacy tutoring program at a private college in western New York. Five 10 year old students (2 males and 3 females) participated in this study. The author brought the students to the library and asked them to choose three books that the students were interested in. After the students selected the books, they filled out a short questionnaire about the selection process of each book. The questions in the questionnaire involved the genre and the topic of the book, students' prior knowledge about the book, the author's background and other factors that may have had an effect on the book selection. The results showed that the most favorite types of books for both boys and girls were adventure, humor, followed by comics. Two boys and one girl were especially interested in adventure and comedy.

The effect of gender on understanding different types of genres has been examined in foreign or second language learning situations by many scholars and is increasingly being recognized. Brantmeier (2004b) conducted a study to determine the relationship between topic familiarity levels and reading comprehension of college students who were given two different authentic texts about violence along with a written recall task, a multiple-choice test, and a questionnaire. The results showed that females recalled more idea units and obtained higher scores on the multiple-choice test than the males. AL-Shumaimeri's (2005) study into content familiarity examined the differences between male and female students in terms of text comprehension. 132 college level EFL students (66 female and 66 male) who were enrolled at the College of Languages and Translation at King Saud University, Riyadh participated in the study. The students were expected to answer multiple-choice questions about two gender-neutral texts. The findings showed that content familiarity had a significant effect on participants' test scores. The study also showed that male students had significantly higher scores than female students. Keshavarz and Ashtarian (2008) examined the relationship between the gender of Iranian EFL learners and the reading comprehension of three types of texts including essay, history and short story. Sixty-two EFL students (28 males and 34 females) studying at Razi University in Iran participated in the study and answered a total of 24 multiple-choice items related to the passages. The results showed that females, in general, were better comprehenders of the passages. The results also showed that both males and females were better comprehenders of essay followed by history and short story.

Some studies found no significant differences between males and females with respect to text comprehension. Yazdanpanah (2007) carried out a study involving 187 intermediate-level students studying in Cyprus. The author gave the participants three reading comprehension passages. The topics of the two passages were male-oriented and one was gender neutral. According to the results, males were better at finding specific information in the passage, identifying referential information and matching titles with paragraphs than females while females obtained higher scores than males on identifying main ideas, guessing meaning from context and text coherence questions. Gender did not have a significant effect on reading comprehension. A recent study (Asgarabadi, Rouhi & Jafarigohar, 2015) analyzed whether male and female learners differed from each other with respect to their reading comprehension as well as use of reading strategies in descriptive and narrative macro-genres. A total of 50 EFL intermediate students (21 male and 29 female) were asked to answer questions regarding six

short macro-genre-based reading passages and reading strategies. The authors found no significant difference between males' and females' reading comprehension in the macro-genres.

3. The Present Study

The research discussed so far has been concerned with gender differences and reading comprehension in contexts outside of Turkey. Despite this research evidence that reports on the role of gender in comprehending different types of genres, little progress has been made with respect to investigating the same topic within a Turkish setting and with Turkish learners of EFL. Thus, given that each cultural context presents its challenges, the purpose of the present study is to examine whether or not gender would shape college-level students' understanding of texts of different genres. The following research questions are the foci of the present study.

1. When all the Turkish EFL students in the study are taken into consideration, is there a significant difference among the three types of genres with respect to comprehension?
2. Is there a significant difference between Turkish male and female students regarding understanding the three different types of genres?
3. Considering the Turkish male students only, is there a significant difference among the three types of genres with respect to comprehension?
4. Considering the Turkish female students only, is there a significant difference among the three types of genres with respect to comprehension?

3.1 Method
3.1.1 Participants

The participants were 1st year college students enrolled in the English Language Teaching Department at Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey. Sixty students (30 males and 30 females) between the ages of 18-19 participated in the study. The students in the program are trained to be English language teachers. Students were at the same levels of English language proficiency. Before students enter the program, they have to prove that they have sufficient English language proficiency to continue with their academic studies. Thus, they take a proficiency exam prepared by the School of Foreign Languages at Hacettepe University. Students who pass the exam can take departmental courses whereas those who cannot have to take additional English language courses for a semester or a year at the School of Foreign Languages. The participation in the study was voluntary.

3.1.2. Data Collection

Data collection occurred in an advanced reading course, which is a required course for first year students in the program. In this course students learn how to identify topics, main ideas, details in a text, purpose and tone of the author, facts and opinions, point of views, figurative language, bias, as well as evaluate evidence and analyze arguments.

Data were collected via three reading passages taken from a book called *The Art of Critical Reading* by Mather and McCarthy (2009). The book consists of reading selections that are mostly nonfiction taken from a variety of sources such as books and journals. The topics of passages range from education to psychology to science to art. The passages that were given to students represent three different genres: historical fiction, fantasy, and essay. The first passage entitled "Gilbert's living with art" by Mark Getlein is about art; the second passage is a fable by Aesop and is called "the country mouse and the town mouse" and the third passage is an essay called "black men and public space" written by Brent Staples. The passages were about one page

long. In order to determine if the reading passages are at the correct reading level, Fog's readability Formula was used. The passages had an index of 7, which according to Fog is an ideal score for readability. All the passages were followed by eight multiple choice questions. The participants were expected to read the passages and answer a total of 24 comprehension questions related to the passages. The questions were taken from the book and the test proved to be reliable (0.66) based on Cronbach's alpha formula.

4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS 21.0, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. First, descriptive statistics was conducted to determine whether or not the participants, in general, were better comprehenders of a certain genre. The independent variable here was genre and the dependent variable was participants' reading comprehension scores. The following table presents the results.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics: Means and standard deviations of understanding different genres for all participants

	Genre	N	M	SD
Gender	Historical fiction	30	5,97	1.28
	Fantasy	30	5,65	1,45
	Essay	30	7,45	.76

As can be seen in Table 1, when the whole sample is taken into consideration, the participants were better at understanding the essay *(M= 7.45 SD = .76)* than historical fiction *(M= 5.97 SD = 1.28)* and fantasy *(M= 5.65 SD = 1.45).* Given this result, repeated measures ANOVA was also performed to find out if the mean differences among the genres were statistically significant.

Table 2
Bonferroni Comparison for Genre and all participants

Comparisons	Mean Difference	Std. error	Lower bound	Upper bound
			95% CI	
Historical fiction vs. Essay	-1.48*	.194	-1.96	-1.00
Fantasy vs. Essay	-1.80*	.187	-2.26	-1.34
* p = 0.00				

Table 2 shows a significant effect of genre, Wilks' Lambda = ,34, $F(2,58) = 55,31$, p = .000, multivariate partial eta squared = ,65. There was a significant difference between historical fiction and essay and between fantasy and essay. No significant difference between historical fiction and fantasy was identified.

The third analysis involved comparing the reading performances of male and female participants on the three different text types. For this, first, descriptive statistics was performed.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics: Means and standard deviations of understanding different genres for male and females

Gender	Genre	N	M	SD
Male	Historical fiction	30	5,97	1.29
	Fantasy	30	5,87	1,19
	Essay	30	7,53	.73
Female	Historical fiction	30	5,97	1,29
	Fantasy	30	5,43	1,67
	Essay	30	7,37	.80

Table 3 shows that both male and female participants comprehended the essay *(males, M= 7.53 SD =.73; females, M= 7.37 SD = .80)* better than historical fiction *(males, M= 5.97 SD = 1.29; females, M= 5.97 SD = 1.29)* and fantasy *(males, M= 5.87 SD = 1.19; females, M= 5.43 SD = 1.67).* In addition, a One-way Anova was conducted to determine whether or not there are differences between males and females regarding comprehension of the different genres. The results, which can be seen in the following table, were not significant.

Table 4
One-way Anova: Differences between genders regarding comprehension of genres

Source		df	SS	MS	F	p
	Between groups	1	,00	,00	,00	1.00
Historical fiction	Within groups	58	97,93	1,68		
Total		59	97,93			
	Between groups	1	2,81	2,81	1,33	,25
Fantasy	Within groups	58	122,83	2,11		
Total		59	125,65			
	Between groups	1	,417	,41	,70	,40
Essay	Within groups	58	34,43	,59		
Total		59	34,85			

In order to answer the third and fourth research questions, a One-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to evaluate whether or not there is a difference in understanding the three different genres for male students.

Table 5
Bonferroni Comparison for Genre and male participants

Comparisons	Mean Difference	Std. error	Lower bound	Upper bound
			95% CI	
Historical fiction vs. Essay	-1.56*	.294	-2.31	-,81
Fantasy vs. Essay	-1.66*	.237	-2.26	-1.06

* p = 0.00

According to the results, there was a significant effect of genre, Wilks' Lambda = ,31, $F(2,28)$ = 30,67, p = .000, multivariate partial eta squared = ,68. As the table shows, there was a significant difference between historical fiction and essay and between fantasy and essay for male students. The same analysis was performed for female students.

Table 6
Bonferroni Comparison for Genre and female participants

Comparisons	Mean Difference	Std. error	Lower bound	Upper bound
Historical fiction vs. Essay	-1.40*	.256	-2.05	-,74
Fantasy vs. Essay	-1.93*	.291	-2.67	-1.19

* p = 0.00

Once again, the table shows a significant effect of genre, Wilks' Lambda = ,36, $F(2,28)$ = 24,14, p = .000, multivariate partial eta squared = ,63. There was a significant difference between historical fiction and essay and between fantasy and essay for female students.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to add to our understanding of the role that gender plays in reading comprehension of Turkish EFL learners. The first question involved whether or not there is a significant difference among the three types of genres with respect to comprehending them for all participants. The results showed that all participants were significantly better at comprehending the essay than the others. Some factors may have helped the participants to have a better understanding of this text than the others. In the essay entitled "Black men and public space", the purpose of the narrator is to explain how, as a black person, he is unfairly judged by people and his opinion about this matter. Weidner (2012), in his analysis about the essay, states that readers can emotionally relate to the sentences in the essay. In addition, the organization the essay is one of a chronological type which makes it easier for readers to see the causes and effects.

The second research question was related to the difference between males and females in terms of comprehending the three different types of genres. No significant difference was found between genders. This finding is also in line with Asgarabadi, Rouhi and Jafarigohar (2015) who found no significant difference between males and females with respect to their reading comprehension as well as use of reading strategies in descriptive and narrative macro-genres. The authors attributed this result to the fact that both male and female students were in the same field of study and had a common background in which they dealt with reading comprehension problems in similar ways. The same situation may hold true for Turkish EFL students in the current study. That is, the majority of the Turkish students graduated from the same type of high school but more importantly, in order to pass the nation-wide university exam, they attended a private course in which they are trained to use similar reading strategies. The finding also seems to support the Gender Similarities Hypothesis proposed by Hyde (2005). Hyde conducted meta-analyses to determine whether or not males and females are similar to each other on several psychological variables such as cognitive, verbal or nonverbal communication, social or personality variables, psychological well-being, motor behaviors, along with miscellaneous variables, such as moral reasoning. Her findings showed that males and females were similar with respect to some domains, which included reading comprehension as well.

Finally, the third and fourth research questions required analyzing male and female students' understanding of the different genres separately. According to the results, both males and females were significantly better at understanding the essay than historical fiction followed by fantasy. This finding supports one of the findings of Keshavarz and Ashtarian (2008) in which Iranian males and females comprehended an essay better than history and short story. In the present study, one reason that students had more difficulty in understanding the passages about art and fable might be that the passage about art consists of abstract concepts and the fable, literary devices such as metaphors, which may have made it harder for students to process information.

As a consequence, more important than providing this group of students texts that are gender-oriented, instructors should enable students to interpret abstract concepts and have students work on activities that require students to notice literary devices and use them. A primary means to accomplish this is to bring into the classroom interesting and contemporary texts of different genres that would attract students' attention. As Merisuo-Storm (2006) states "One has to know what texts appeal to pupils to be able to motivate them to continue reading." (p.7)

In conclusion, the results of the present study can at the moment be generalized to all Turkish EFL students who would be dealing with the same types of texts included in the study. However, given that gender differences are culturally influenced (McKay and Hornberger, 2009) and cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes may change over time, the study of the relationship between gender differences and genre should remain as a research area that should receive renewed interest from scholars.

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YOUNG ADOLESCENT EFL LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES ON CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

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Abstract

Critical Thinking Skills (CTs) are among the 21st century learning skills, and schools are expected to equip the students with these skills. Turkey has been restructuring the educational system in order to improve the quality of education which enables students to acquire such learning skills as critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. The present study based on the perspectives of young adolescent EFL learners presents findings on the students' awareness of CTs, and whether or not they apply them to a given task, and if there is any conflict between knowledge and application of CTs. The findings showed that the students, despite their quiet well awareness, did not effectively apply CTs. The problems they encountered were assumed to be resulted from lacking in metacognitive knowledge.

Keywords: Critical Thinking Skills, Declarative and Procedural Knowledge

1. Introduction

Preparing students for the abilities and traits which will help them in their future life is the priorities of 21st century skills. The requirements of 21st century forced schools to weave twenty first century learning skills into content area content area teaching so that students can participate in global world. Carneiro (2007) claims that students should be equipped with these skills to "connect knowledge and skills, learning and competence, inert and active learning, codified and tacit knowledge, and creative and adaptive learning and transform them into valuable skills'(p. 156).

As a result of this force schools have been transforming their curriculum into a new form which enables students to acquire such learning skills as critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and collaboration (Carroll, 2007; Fisher & Frey 2008; Trilling & Fedel, 2009; Piirto, 2011). The need to keep up with this transformation has been felt in Turkey as well. Turkey has been restructuring the educational system in order to improve the quality which fulfil the needs of the country and comply with the decisions, developments and practices in international context, in particular, in European Union (EU). Basic skill competencies and knowledge expectations of the past have been replaced by "critical and creative thinking, problem solving creativity and innovation; critical thinking and problem solving; communication; and collaboration.

In the Turkish curriculum, the followings are designated as basic skills in the Turkish primary and secondary curricula: (Ananiadou & Claro 2009) "Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Communication, Problem solving, Decision making." Critical and creative thinking, problem solving and decision making are implicitly given across curricular areas, but they are not formally assessed. There is no in service and pre-service teacher training programmes the objectives of which are these skills and competencies. There are few studies on critical thinking in relation to second/foreign language learning (SL/FL). Critical thinking can best be

developed in SL/FL because the students are facing a different culture, a new way of thinking and living.

Critical thinking should be an important goal of education and students cannot learn well if they do not think well. It has been recognized as one of the main goals in education since it might pave the way to improve the quality of learning (Ennis, 1992: Moore, 2004; Paul, 2004; Arend, 2009). There are many definition of critical thinking, yet educators agree that in language learning critical thinking involves "rational judgment, logical reasoning, analyses, and evaluation of arguments, inference, and deduction" (Floyd, 2011, p. 9). The definition proposed by Halpern can best associate with the aim of the study:

 Critical thinking is the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. It is used to describe thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed—the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions, when the thinker is using skills that are thoughtful and effective for the particular context and type of thinking task (Helpern, 2013 p. 8)

1. Critical thinking skills and Metacognition

Researchers have reported that making use of cognitive skills and strategies is vital for critical thinking (Black 2005; Halpern 1998; Kuhn and Dean 2004). Cognitive skills can best be managed with metacognition which is thinking about how to perform those skills. The relation between metacognition and critical thinking has intrigued many researchers. Halpern (1998) suggests that metacognition enables individual to use the existing knowledge to manage and develop thinking skills. Metacognition is also considered to be the processes (1) involving knowledge of cognition (2) monitoring, control, and regulation of cognition (Flavell, 1979; Bransford & Schwartz, 1999; Pintrich, Wolters, & Baxter, 2000). These processes have been highlighted with the concepts of declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge by a few researchers (Kuhn, 2000; Schraw et al., 2006; Kuhn & Dean 2004)

According to Schraw (1998) "declarative knowledge refers to knowing "about" things. Procedural knowledge refers to knowing "how" to do things. Conditional knowledge refers to knowing the "why" and "when" aspects of (p. 114). Declarative knowledge in this study is accepted as the personal knowledge about oneself as a learner, such as one's strengths and weaknesses, as well as one's knowledge of strategies. Procedural knowledge refers to awareness and management of cognition, including knowledge about strategies. Conditional knowledge involves knowing when and why to use declarative and procedural knowledge.

Turkish education system is criticised since it is examination-oriented and students are expected to gain factual knowledge rather than procedural knowledge (Aksit & Sands, 2006). Examination based systems might enable students to organize the knowledge hierarchically not according to condition- action rules requiring procedural knowledge. For example, if the students store the knowledge of "simple present tense" as S+V+O and learn the other tenses in the same way, this becomes declarative knowledge. If they consciously use "if-then" rules and speculate that if sentence structure is S+V+O in English then all other tenses must have same properties, yet there should be some alteration.

Developing critical and creative thinking among the other skills is one of the aims of the education mentioned in the Turkish curriculum. Thus, equipping students with procedural knowledge is important for problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. Having students use procedural knowledge encourages the use of higher-level cognition, which essential for critical

thinking. However, there are no assessment policies or teacher training programmes specifically targeted to these skills and competencies.

2. Methodology

Using a survey research methodology, researcher of the study utilized an instrument in order to gather valid and reliable findings. This study begins by examining the importance of critical thinking in education. Next, students' perspectives were collected by a questionnaire based on the 35 critical thinking strategies and four reading comprehension questions. According to Paul et al (1990), to learn to think critically is a combination of both affective and cognitive skills. In the last part of the study, the students were presented four reading tasks in which they would be able to make informed judgments by interpreting information analysing the situation and resolving problems.

2.1. Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the Young Adolescents EFL learners' perspectives on critical thinking skills. The following research questions were formulated to achieve this aim.

1. Are Young Adolescent EFL Learners aware of critical thinking skills?

2. Is there any conflict between awareness and application of CTs?

2.2. Participants

The target population of this study was the 7th grade state secondary school students located in different part of Turkey. Totally 387 students whose ages ranged between 12-13 years participated in the study. This group was chosen based on the assumption that this age group start to explore diverse ways of thinking.

2.3. Instruments

A questionnaire and four reading comprehension tasks were used as data collection tools.

2.3.1. Questionnaire

Data regarding students' awareness of critical thinking strategies were collected with a four point Likert scale consisting of 45 items and adapted from different data collection tools based on the 35 Critical Thinking Strategies suggested by Paul, (1990). The questionnaire aimed to measure the students' attitudes and beliefs by asking the frequency "Always, Usually, Sometimes, Never." It aimed to find out the preferences of the participants on Affective Strategies, Cognitive Strategies – Macro Abilities; Cognitive Strategies – Micro Abilities. The value of Cronbach Alpha using SPSS 21.0 was calculated to be 0.785 which shows that the instrument used was reliable.

2.3.2. Reading comprehension tasks

Four reading texts that placed students in realistic situations, where they were expected to reach a decision to select the best alternative were given to the students. They aimed to have students take the advantage of different cognitive processes such as inference, application, analysis and assumptions all of which involve applying the principles of logic and thereby show involvement in the CT process (Helpern 2006).

2. 4. Data Collection and Analysis

We believed that the responses of the participants would not be distorted in anyway due to their deficiencies in English. Thus, the original version of the items was translated into the native language by the researcher and a lecturer from the Turkish Language Department. The vague, incorrect or inappropriate points were discussed until agreement was obtained.

The Turkish version of the instruments was administered by the class teachers, and students were asked to raise questions about the item(s) they had trouble understanding students were. Most of the students took not more than a class hour (40 minutes) to complete the questionnaire and respond to the tasks. Percentage statistics were computed using SPSS version 21.0 to provide information concerning the distribution of responses.

2. 5. Results

2.5.1. Awareness of CT skills

The items in the questionnaire are categorized into three main groups according to the guidelines suggested by Paul (1993): Affective, Cognitive Macro and Cognitive Micro Strategies.

Table 1. *Affective Strategies*

	Alwy. %	Usu. %	Some. %	Nev. %
1. I don't just believe what everyone else does or says.	10,1	22,0	52,7	15,2
2. I am patient enough. Even my homework is hard; I stick to it and finish it.	40,8	31,3	23,8	4,1
3. I don't afraid of making mistakes when answering to a question.	26,1	32,0	32,0	9,8
4. I enjoy finding answers to challenging questions.	37,0	25,3	26,4	11,4
5. I don't become offended or confused when I am questioned.	20,9	37,0	34,9	7,2
6. I try to be the kind of person I expect others to be.	40,3	35,1	15,0	9,6
7. I don't let my emotions direct me when I decide on something.	21,2	28,4	32,3	18,1
8. I can solve problems that I experience in an orderly, organized way.	35,9	38,0	22,2	3,9
9. I keep my mind open to new reasons and evidence, so I will be more easily to correct my prejudiced thought.	35,1	37,7	24,0	3,1
10. Whenever I disagree with people, I try to see things the way they do.	34,1	33,3	25,6	7,0
11. Sticking to a problem is always better than giving up.	46,0	34,1	13,2	6,7
12. I am able to question the reasons behind the rules, activities and procedures	20,4	41,9	32,3	5,4
13. I admit that I am not % 100 rights all the time.	34,1	29,2	23,5	13,2
14. I respect my friends. I am willing to hear their points of view.	51,7	32,3	12,9	3,1
15. I listen carefully what my friends say.	53,5	26,9	17,3	2,3

Affective and cognitive strategies are complementary to each other. According to Paul (1992) affective strategies are associated with the traits of mind, predisposition to critical thinking since they enable learners to be motivated to think critically. Paul (1992) suggests that there are seven interdependent intellectual traits of mind that need to be developed to become a true critical thinker: intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual empathy, intellectual integrity, intellectual perseverance, faith in reason and an intellectual sense of justice.

Based on the finding obtained from the questionnaire, it is noted that almost all of the participants show their positive preferences towards these traits (Table 1). The results are quite encouraging: the majority of the participants agreed that they "always or usually "prefer to use affective critical thinking strategies. However, in the first and seventh items, a substantial number of them strongly agreed that they believe "what everyone else does or says" and "they let their emotions direct them when they decide on something."

Table 2. *Cognitive Strategies – Macro Abilities*

	Alwy. %	Usu. %	Some. %	Nev. %
1. I look up what I don't understand and question what I read until I understand.	17,6	36,7	42,6	3,1
2. I am able to use what I learned in one situation when I meet new situations that need the same skills.	40,1	40,8	17,1	2,1
3. I am able to see which information comes from an honest and trustworthy source and which information could be wrong or misleading.	21,4	36,7	34,6	7,2
4. I ask questions about a topic or subject to learn it deeply.	35,9	31,8	30,0	2,3
5. I can raise appropriate questions to understand and evaluate a situation.	27,1	32,3	32,8	7,8
6. I use everything available to find the best solution.	49,9	33,1	15,2	1,8
7. I am good at getting the main point of a passage or text.	25,6	34,4	30,0	10,1
8. I am able to form a new sentence using the opposite or synonym of a word.	55,0	24,8	17,6	2,6
9. I am able to simplify information to make things more clear and understandable.	30,7	40,1	24,5	4,7
10. I can evaluate both my goals and how to achieve them.	48,1	28,9	19,4	3,6
11. I can categorize and group topics.	27,6	40,8	26,6	4,9
12. After learning new English vocabularies from a reading text, I am able to apply it to other contents.	41,3	25,8	27,9	4,9
13. I ask "why" questions to go beyond the basic information.	38,8	41,1	17,1	3,1
14. There is often a number of ways to solve a problem or reach a goal.	57,4	28,2	13,2	1,3
15. To understand only the definitions is not enough for me. I am also able to supply clear, obvious examples.	32,6	40,3	22,7	4,4
16. I simplify the problems, so I make them easier to deal with.	35,9	38,8	22,5	2,8
17. Questioning is an effective way to get the necessary information.	55,6	27,1	15,8	1,6

18. I ask questions about a topic or subject to learn it deeply.	36,4	35,1	25,6	2,8

According to Bloom (1956) the cognitive domain of learning is associated with the knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. The macro-strategies are usually connected with a cognitive taxonomy consisting of lower level which is the recall or recognition of specific facts and higher order thinking which include critical and creative thinking as well as problem solving, decision making, and information processing. This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills. These are the larger areas of critical thinking skills; more specialized skills are in the last section below. As seen in the table that there the participants stated that they were always and usually using these strategies

The responses displayed in Table 2 indicate that the majority of the students agree that they are aware of cognitive macro strategies, although there seems to be a contradiction between items one and 17. A total of 54,3 % of the students, if always and usually responses are considered together, do not consider asking question for clarification whereas the majority (a total of 82,7%) favour questioning to get necessary information.

Table 3. *Cognitive Strategies – Micro Abilities*

	Alwy. %	Usu. %	Some. %	Nev. %
1. I approach problems realistically.	42,9	32,8	19,1	5,2
2. I can distinguish what I know from what I don't know.	58,7	27,1	11,6	2,6
3. I am able to recognize the gaps between facts and ideals.	31,8	40,8	23,0	4,4
4. I can find the similarities between two or more things.	38,8	37,2	22,2	1,8
5. I can find the differences between two or more things	42,1	37,5	19,4	1,0
6. I am able to compare two or more things to each other.	39,8	38,5	17,8	3,9
7. I can support my answers with reasons and evidence.	36,2	38,8	22,2	2,8
8. I can make inferences about a story, from story titles and pictures.	50,1	31,3	15,8	2,8
9. I create possible solutions in order to find the best one.	37,2	39,3	21,2	2,3
10. I try to choose the most relevant vocabulary to explore my thoughts.	34,6	41,9	21,7	1,8
11. I have realistic ideals and study hard to achieve them.	49,6	33,9	14,0	2,6

According to Beyer (1987) micro thinking strategies are detecting bias, identifying logical fallacies and inconsistencies in reasoning, distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information. Table 3 shows that the overwhelming majority of the students are in the tendency of using cognitive micro strategies, although almost 50 % of them claimed to be always using items 2, 8 and 11.

2.5.2. The application of critical thinking skills

The aim of using short reading text was based on the idea that students must have critical thinking skills, problem solving and decision making skills required as 21 century learning skills. In order to use these skills, the students were expected to elaborate and organize information in meaningful ways which require the usage of procedural knowledge.

Table 4. *Comprehension questions for the application of CT skills*

Questions	CT Skills	%
1. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the above argument?	Interpretation, inference, logical reasoning	12,4
2. What is the minimum range in which the true temperature lies?	Analysis, application, problem solving	15,5
3. Which one of the following best illustrates the principle underlying the argument above?	"interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis, argumentation	23,3
4. Which one of the following conclusions is best supported by the text above?	problem-solving, inference and logical reasoning	24,0

The students were also required to exercise CT skills such as "interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis, argumentation, evaluation, problem-solving, inference and logical reasoning" and find the best one from a set of four alternatives. The responses to the reading tasks were used in the underlying assumptions of why there is a conflict between knowledge and application of CT skills. As seen in Table 4 that the majority of the students exhibited problems with the questions since the percentages of the responses for the best alternative are far less than 50, 0 %. They even had more problems in the first and second questions requiring mostly logical reasoning and problem solving (12, 4 % and 15, 5 % respectively).

3. Conclusions and Discussions

The results of the present study provide valuable information on the nature of critical thinking ability of the students in language classrooms and shed lights on research questions. First, an overwhelming number of students were aware of many of the CT skills although they did not exhibit them during the learning processes.

The results secondly revealed that Turkish young adolescents EFL Learners have sufficient knowledge of critical thinking strategies. However, they have insufficient capacity to knowledge transfer. Most of them have low level of critical thinking, problem solving reflection and anticipation. We assume that students may have developed a variety of CTs without being aware of them. Helpern (1998) states that critical thinking skills are goal and task oriented, and they are not applied in a mechanical or routine, they require conscious judgement, analysis and synthesis.

The results lastly indicated a conflict between students' critical thinking awareness and application of the critical thinking skills. This is assumed to have resulted from the metacognitive knowledge. Bedir (1998) reported that the Turkish students were in the tendency of looking for every unfamiliar word up, and translating sentences word-by-word to figure out the meaning of any text. By doing so, they often refer to using factual knowledge or the information they know, which do require the cognitive process. They often "make little sense of what they have been reading, or they choose to ignore meaning-making completely and give up in frustration" (Booth & Swartz, 2004, p. 22). However, critical thinking is a complex construct, and it is a form of metacognition which include declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and epistemological knowledge (Kuhn, 1999). Lacking in metacognitive knowledge which enables students to be aware of their own thinking process students may have inconsistently applied CTs or they had knowledge transfer. Researchers stated that critical thinking requires knowledge transfer; otherwise it may not be critical thinking (Bransford & Schwartz, 1999; Cobb & Bowers, 1999; Dewey, 1910/1997; Kuhn, 1999).

The implication of the study is that schools do not explicitly encourage the application of critical thinking skills although they are mentioned in the curriculum. Bedir (2011) believes that Turkish Education system, though renovations in curriculum, have prevented students from the use of procedural knowledge since it is an examination-oriented system, dependent on memorizing facts and not on applying concepts. The students from primary to high school and from high to university have to take a few high stake exams which determine their future. In in many cases and particularly in high stakes testing, the content and activities are to a large part adapted and geared in the direction of the exams leading to negative washback. Teachers focus more on the (grammar, reading, and vocabulary) which is tested in the exam and ignore the content based teaching though they have sufficient knowledge of language teaching approaches and methods.

The exam oriented education systems also prevent students from skill development since students are expected to learn everything by heart in order to get good grades. Paul (1992) names this as lower order learning which force students to memorize material without understanding the logic. However, the ultimate goal of education should be to have students use critical thinking strategies which are essential in twenty first century. Choy and Cheah (2009) emphasizes that "although students have a natural ability to think critically, it is important for teachers to guide them in order to refine their skills" (p. 198). Additionally, assessing CTs is difficult, so different tools should be used to collect more reliable data (Swartz & McGuinness 2104).

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