



# EXAMINATION OF THE REASONS THAT LEAD TEACHERS TO ABANDON THE CURRICULUM

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## Abstract

*Educators may occasionally neglect certain parts of the curriculum that they consider relatively unimportant. There are instances when inadequate time and pupils' readiness for central examinations are cited as justifications for these occurrences. The aim of this research was to examine the reasons that lead teachers who teach courses that are tested on the Upper- Secondary School Entrance Exam, which is the central exam for 8<sup>th</sup> graders, to ignore the curriculum according to the opinions of the teachers. The research was designed according to the case study, a type of qualitative research. The study group of the research consists of a total of 15 teachers, 6 of whom work in private schools and 9 of whom work in public schools, in the province of Hatay in the 2021-2022 academic year. A purposive criterion sampling method was used to select the teachers. Research data were collected through a semi-structured interview form and analyzed by content analysis method. It was found that most of the teachers interviewed ignored or abandoned the curriculum because of central exams or external pressures. It was stated that some reasons related to school administrators, parents and students forced teachers to make changes in course teaching methods and processes or forced them to abandon the curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Educational curriculum, commitment to the curriculum, curriculum abandonment, central exams, teacher examinations

## Introduction

The curriculum is defined by some authors as a formal course of study with a content-focused emphasis, while others place more emphasis on the learning process or the teaching approach when they define the curriculum as the culmination of each learner's experiences along with the significance of statements of anticipated learning outcomes or behavioral targets (Lunenburg, 2011). Those outcomes and targets of learners need to be checked and evaluated during the educational process through exams, central exams, or alternative measurement tools within the scope of measurement and evaluation, which is one of the four basic components of the curriculum.

However, up to school age even from the moment of their birth, humans wonder, research, discover, learn, and develop knowledge from all their experience. Learning, which can also take the form of learning from the environment through trial and error or by observing others, needs to be replaced with education because individuals aim to reach more than they already know, and their sense of curiosity does not lead them to the systematic information they seek. Ertürk (2017) defined education as the process of intentionally creating desired behavior change in an individual's behavior through his/her own experience. Demirel (2020) defined

education as the process of changing behavior in the individual, and Demirel and Kaya (2020) defined it as the sum of the processes in which the individual acquires skills, orientation and other behavioral patterns that have the value of practice in the society s/he lives in. Kiroğlu (2020) defined education as nurturing people with knowledge and raising them in order to bring out the possibilities in people.

Based on the different definitions emphasizing that education is a process, assessment and evaluation are needed to determine the point reached in the process, to decide on the quantity and quality of progress and learning, and to determine at what level the goals have been achieved. Semerci (2015, p. 2) stated that “assessment and evaluation studies are needed in order to determine the knowledge, skills and competencies that individuals have gained in the learning-teaching process and the effectiveness of teaching practices”. The data obtained as a result of assessment and evaluation form the basis of decision-making on subjects such as teaching, grading processes, student selection and placement, and the effectiveness of curricula.

Central examinations, one of the tools of assessment and evaluation, provide information about the students' success and are also conducted in order to place students in certain institutions by evaluating them in terms of academic success. In other words, central exams aim to create more homogeneous environments by ensuring students with similar academic success study in the same institutions or departments. The central examination, defined as the preparation of exam questions and the national implementation of standardized tests, is one of the tools used in the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the performance of central and national education systems, schools, and students (Eurydice, 2009).

In China, France, Israel, Georgia, Japan and Turkey, central selection and placement exams are held to select students for higher education institutions. Namely, a secondary school student has to take the test to study in an upper-secondary school, or an upper-secondary school student has to take it to be able to study in a university. These examinations are organized by the Student Selection and Placement Centre (OSYM). The entrance examinations are carried out by the Ministry of National Education (MEB). Students with high scores are selected for central upper-secondary school, for example, Science Upper-Secondary School, Social Sciences Upper-Secondary School, and Anatolian Upper-Secondary School. These schools are referred to as qualified upper-secondary schools for secondary school students,

The names of the central exams 8th-grade students in the secondary school entered and the way they are implemented have undergone some changes in the last 15 years. In order to place 8th-grade students in upper-secondary schools after secondary school, the Secondary Education Institutions Selection and Placement Exam (OKS) was applied as a central exam until 2007. In 2008, this exam was replaced by the Placement Examination (SBS). In 2013, the name and application were changed as the Transition from Basic Education to Upper Secondary Education (TEOG) exam, which includes one exam in each semester and two exams in total in an academic year of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In 2017, the Upper-Secondary School Entrance Exam (LGS) was introduced, in which only secondary school students who want to study in qualified upper-secondary schools enter, and there is no obligation to participate in the exam.

This system also allows students who do not want to take the exam or who do not have sufficient success level in the exam to make a school choice based on their residence address. In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade central exam (LGS), candidates are asked a total of 90 multiple-choice questions from 6 courses: Turkish, Mathematics, Science, Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge, Social Studies, and English (MEB, 2022).

Güler (2019, p. 71) defined the type of test as a multiple-choice test, in which the answers are not given by the respondents; the correct answer is given among the options by the test preparers and the respondents are asked to find the correct answer, among options. Yılmaz (2015, p. 153), on the other hand, defined multiple-choice tests as tools that are designed to measure certain characteristics of the individual and consist of a certain number of items (ques-

tions) or procedures for everyone who takes it. High reliability and validity, ease of scoring and objective evaluation are among the advantages of multiple-choice tests that enable them to be used in central exams. In addition, when the number of people to whom the exam will be administered is large, multiple-choice tests should be implemented (Güler, 2019). In 2021, “1,038,492 of 1,243,830 students studying in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade of secondary school applied to enter the central exam (LGS)”, (MEB, 2021).

The fact that the number of students taking the exam has reached levels that cannot be estimated may mean that it is getting harder and harder to gain access to a qualified upper-secondary school. The importance attributed to central examinations is in terms of the successful entry to an upper-secondary school and then university, and opportunities to good business. The high academic achievement expected from students can change the expectations of school administrators, parents and even students from teachers, so everyone who has an interest in exams wants teachers to give exam-oriented lessons. These requests sometimes increase the responsibility of teachers and even create heavy pressure on the teacher. According to Buyruk (2014), since the performance of teachers is evaluated in direct proportion to the success of the students' exams, the exam-oriented expectations of parents and school administration can put pressure on teachers. Due to the expectations and pressures, sometimes teachers can ignore/abandon the curricula that are the guide of the educational process.

However, it can only be through curricula to provide individuals with the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that they may need in their lives, appropriate to the requirements of the age, and to ensure that people are raised in accordance with the desired goals (Kalaycı and Yıldırım, 2020). Because the curriculum is an arrangement of experiences that covers all the activities related to the teaching of a course that is planned to be given to an individual at school or outside the school (Demirel, 2020, p. 6). Görgen (2019) expressed a curriculum as a plan that covers all activities related to the teaching of the course, such as objectives, content, learning-teaching activities, materials, and evaluation. Curricula that serve as a framework by determining the scope and boundaries of educational activities may cause teachers to go out of the framework or abandon the curriculum for some reasons. Some teachers could be flexible in their curriculum implementation, using some parts of the planned curriculum while omitting other parts (Superfine et al., 2015). In other words, teachers may have to give up their commitment to the curriculum due to school management, parents, students or other reasons.

In the literature review on the subject, studies (Buldur and Acar, 2019; Çetin and Ünsal, 2019; Kahraman, 2014; Ormancı et al., 2018; Özkan and Özdemir, 2014; Şad and Şahiner, 2016) that include teachers' views on central exams and their effects on curriculum implementation have been found. In some studies (Buyruk, 2014; Smyth, 2008; Superfine et al., 2015) it has been mentioned that teachers abandoned the curriculum. In some other studies (Bay et al., 2017; Burakgazi, 2019; Bümen et al., 2020), the factors affecting teachers' curriculum commitment have been researched. In some studies (Budak, 2015; Hondrich et al., 2016; McNeill et al., 2016; Piasta et al., 2015), the effect of personal variables on implementing the curriculum has been searched. After reviewing the literature, it was seen that many studies have been conducted about teachers' ignoring, abandoning or partly implementing the curriculum. However, the reasons that drive teachers who teach courses that are tested in the central exams to abandon the curriculum have not been studied. Thus, it was decided to conduct this research.

### *Aim*

The aim of this research was to examine the reasons that lead subject teachers (Turkish, Mathematics, Science, Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge, Social Studies, and English) who teach in the 8<sup>th</sup> grades of secondary school to abandon the curriculum. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with the teachers to examine the reasons that pushed them to ignore/

abandon the curriculum. Also, the following questions were intended to be examined to clarify the reasons that lead teachers to abandon the curriculum.

1. What are the central exam-based reasons that lead teachers to abandon the curriculum?
2. What are the curriculum-based reasons that lead teachers to abandon the curriculum?
3. What are the student-based reasons that lead teachers to abandon the curriculum?
4. What are the reasons stemming from school administrators that lead teachers to abandon the curriculum?

## Research Methodology

### *Model*

This is a qualitative research study examining the reasons that lead the 8th-grade teachers to abandon the curriculum. The qualitative research process includes developing questions and processing steps, collecting data from the participants' own environments, performing inductive data analysis by reaching general themes from specific situations, and interpreting the meaning of the data by the researcher (Creswell, 2017). The research was shaped according to the case research pattern, which is one of the qualitative research types. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2021, p. 70), “the most basic feature of qualitative case research is the in-depth analysis of one or more cases”. In other words, factors related to a situation (environment, individuals, events, processes, etc.) are studied with a holistic situation.

### *Study Group*

The study group consists of 15 teachers working in two separate secondary schools, one of which is affiliated to the private sector and the other is an official state school, in the 2021-2022 academic year under the Hatay Provincial Directorate of National Education. Criterion sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used to determine the study group. As a criterion, teachers of 6 courses for which students are responsible for in central examinations (LGS) were selected. In addition, the weighted average coefficients of the courses in the exam were accepted as another criterion for the number of teachers interviewed. Information showing the weighted coefficients of the courses in the exam is given in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Subtest Weight Coefficients When Calculating Weighted Standard Score (LGS)*

Section	Subject	Number of questions	Weight Coefficient
Verbal	Turkish	20	4
	T.R. Revolution History and Kemalism	10	1
	Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge	10	1
	Foreign language	10	1
Numerical	Maths	20	4
	Science	20	4

Codes such as T1., T2., T3., ... T15 were used for the participating teachers in order not to include the personal information of the teachers in the study group or to keep their identities confidential in terms of ethics. Information showing the demographic characteristics of the study group is given in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Demographic Information of the Study Group*

Code	Gender	Subject	Years of Service
T1	Female	English	10
T2	Female	Social Sciences	18
T3	Male	Science	8
T4	Female	Turkish	12
T5	Female	Turkish	9
T6	Female	Maths	14
T7	Male	Science	5
T8	Male	Maths	7
T9	Female	Religious C. and Moral K.	3
T10	Male	Science	4
T11	Female	Turkish	15
T12	Female	Maths	4
T13	Female	Maths	2
T14	Female	Science	6
T15	Female	Turkish	11

Table 2 shows the gender, subject, and years of service of a total of 15 teachers who participated in the research.

#### *Instrument and Procedures*

In the research, data were collected through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. While preparing the interview questions, first of all, the literature on abandoning the curriculum was meticulously scanned, then interviews were held with the teachers who teach the courses related to the situation, and then a draft interview form was prepared. The questions in the prepared draft form were finalized by taking the opinions of 3 faculty members working in the education programs and teaching department and making the necessary corrections in terms of meaning. Afterwards, a pilot scheme was conducted with 2 field teachers in order to confirm that the questions in the interview form were clear and understandable. School administrators and teachers were also consulted in terms of time and place suitability, and interviews were held with the participants in the teachers' room and in the rooms determined by the school administration. In order to create an atmosphere of trust before the interview, the participants were given preliminary information about the subject of the research. Each interview lasted 10-15 minutes. After the interview, the answers given by the participants were written down and read to the participants for confirmation.

### *Data Analysis*

All of the data collected in the research with written or audio recordings were transferred to the computer. All the data collected in the research were analyzed in depth using the content analysis technique. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011) defined content analysis as presenting the data obtained by revealing unspecified themes, categories, and codes, and presenting them in a way that the reader can understand by bringing them together within the framework of themes and codes. In the research, the codes were obtained in detail with the researchers, 2 lecturers and 2 teachers, and appropriate themes were created within the framework of the codes obtained.

### *Reliability and Validity*

The prerequisite for ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research is to conduct the research in an ethical manner (Merriam, 2013). For this reason, interviews were held with the participants on a voluntary basis without any coercion in order to fulfil the ethical requirements. The necessary information about the research was explained, and the personal information of the participants was kept confidential. T1, T2, T3, ..... T15 codes were given to the teachers participating in the research according to the order of the interview. The codes obtained from the interview data were converted into tables and the answers given by the participants to the questions in the interview form were used as direct quotations in order to present the research situation as it was. In the research, 2 researchers coded independently and the compatibility between the codes was determined by the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994);

$$\text{Reliability} = \text{Consensus} / \text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement}$$

By using the formula, the agreement between the coders in the research was calculated as 0.85. Reliability calculations over 70% are considered reliable for research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Therefore, the result obtained in the research can be accepted as reliable for the research.

### **Research Results**

When Table 3 is examined, the teachers participating in the research stated that they deviated from the curriculum due to the fact that the students took the central exam (LGS). The teachers mentioned that they did exam-oriented studies in their classes, solved new generation questions, and repeated the subject through multiple-choice questions, they said that the exam was an anxiety and stress factor for students, the exam was challenging for students, it measured only cognitive abilities and prioritized academic achievement. In addition, in the findings obtained, one participant mentioned that the central exam was necessary, while another participant expressed that the exam served its intended purpose.

**Table 3**  
*Central Exam-related Reasons that Lead Teachers to Abandon the Curriculum*

Theme	Code	Participant	f
Central Exam	Exam-oriented studies	T1,T2,T3,T4,T5,T7,T8,T10,T12,T13	10
	New generation questions	T4,T5,T6,T11,T12,T13,T15	7
	Retests	T1,T4,T5,T7,T14	5
	Affective domain, anxiety, stress	T1,T4,T8,T11	4
	Compelling	T2,T4,T6	3
	Cognitive skill, academic success	T11,T12	2
	Exam required	T2,T15	2
	The exam is suitable for the purpose	T9	1

Some of the teachers’ views on the issue are as follows:

*“Although the Science is an experiment-oriented course, we do more exam-oriented studies than experiments.” (T7).*

*“Since it is an important exam for their future, I take the exam in the center and do studies according to that.” (T12).*

*“I am trying to ensure that students solve a lot of new generation questions because the exam they will take is multiple choice.” (T11).*

*“I teach them how to solve the new generation questions that are too long, and I make them solve the sample questions that come out monthly.” (T6).*

*“I am trying to make sure that my students succeed in the exam, so I try to repeat the topic and give information about the type of question.” (T1).*

*“The exam is important for students to have a better future, but this creates extreme anxiety in children in this age group. This anxiety can also prevent exam success.” (T8).*

*“I think the exam is very difficult for students. They prepare the exam very difficult, causing students and parents to worry and feel anxious.” (T4).*

*“Although the exam is difficult, I believe that it is necessary for a good student to go to a good school.” (T2).*

*“I think the exam distinguishes well between those who know and those who don’t.” (T9).*

Based on the responses provided by the teachers in the initial question of the interview, it can be concluded that the teachers abandoned the curriculum in order for the students to achieve high academic success in the LGS exam, which is one of the most important central exams that shape the future of their students.

According to Table 4, the participants described the curriculum as a reason not to stick to the curriculum. The participants mentioned that the curriculum was insufficient for the exam, the questions asked in the exam were different from the ones intended to be taught in the course. Additionally, the curriculum was found to contain an excessive amount of intense and superfluous information, resulting in time constraints for the participants, so they had time problems in keeping up with the curriculum, and they focused on the topics that might be asked in the exam and taught other subjects quickly. In addition, they stated that they could not do the activities that should be done according to the curriculum because the physical and financial resources of the school were not suitable, and therefore, they had to make changes in the learning and teaching processes. One participant stated that the curriculum exhibited a lack of flexibility and failed to accommodate modifications in the course offerings.

**Table 4***Curriculum-based Reasons that Lead Teachers to Abandon the Curriculum*

Theme	Code	Participant	<i>f</i>
Curriculum	Insufficient	T1, T3, T4, T5, T7, T12, T13, T15	8
	Incoherent	T4, T5, T6, T8, T11, T13	6
	Time constraint	T2, T9, T12, T14, T15	5
	Content selectivity	T1, T6, T8	3
	Physical facilities of the school, learning and teaching process, lack of materials	T3, T14	2
	Rigid, inflexible	T12	1

The views of participants about the issue are as stated below:

*“I think that the curriculum and the central exam do not overlap. While there are questions about interpretation and higher-order thinking skills in the exam, I think that the curriculum is a little shallower in this regard.”* (T13).

*“The fact that the History of Revolution course in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade is two hours per week and the course content is very much creating difficulties in covering all the subjects. If I teach according to the annual plan, there is no time to solve questions and repeat the content.”* (T2).

*“Curriculum and exam are not consistent with each other. Grammar questions are almost not included in the exams anymore, the curriculum should be renewed as there are more questions on thinking and understanding skills.”* (T5).

*“The curriculum is definitely not enough. A student who is preparing for the exam with the books given by the Ministry of National Education has difficulty in solving even half of the questions. Books that are not renewed in accordance with the examination system are too far from the proficiency level.”* (T15).

*“I think that the curriculum is not enough even if the exam is based on it. I consider some topics a waste of time and I don't spend too much time teaching them.”* (T1).

*“The students' prior knowledge is not at the required level. If I don't stick to the program and want to teach prior knowledge first, it is not possible to cover all the subjects this time.”* (T12).

*“I care about my students' active participation in the lesson by making experiments and observations, but unfortunately, I cannot do this due to the lack of laboratories in our school and the lack of materials.”* (T3).

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that the participants did not adhere to the curriculum for reasons related to the students. Teachers stated that as the exam time approaches, students' inclination to acquire new knowledge diminishes, resulting in a reduced capacity to concentrate on instructional material. Some teachers, on the other hand, talked about the students' desire to prove themselves by being successful in the exam, and they stated that certain pupils were consistently subjected to parental encouragement for achievement, often including comparisons with others. In addition, the teachers stated that they wanted to provide assistance to students with low economic income for exams at school, however, they ultimately abandoned the curriculum owing to increased rates of absence coinciding with the onset of warmer weather.



**Table 5**

*Student-based Reasons that Lead Teachers to Abandon the Curriculum*

Theme	Code	Participant	f
Students	Unwillingness to learn	T1,T3,T4,T12,T13	5
	Lack of motivation	T2,T5,T6,T11,T14	5
	The desire for success	T1,T8,T10,T13	4
	External pressure, environmental pressure	T5,T7,T8	3
	Socio-economic level	T9,T2,T14	3
	Absenteeism	T7,T9	2
	Climate effect	T5	1

Some of the teachers’ views on this subject are:

*“As the exam approaches, it becomes harder to teach new subjects because students always think about the exam they are going to take.” (T13).*

*“Students lose their motivation as the weather warms up; they do not want to study. In general, as the exam approaches, we focus on repetition and solve questions.” (T5).*

*“In my experience, as the exam approaches, students get bored, they want different activities instead of studying, but we have to think about the exam as well.” (T1).*

*“We express to our students that the exam is important, starting with the summer courses. They also study really hard because they want to be successful.” (T10).*

*“Working in a private school is more difficult because parents have more expectations from you and students. They want their children to get high scores and succeed, and they tell us this clearly.” (T8).*

*“Most of the students in our school have a bad financial situation, so they have a hard time getting sourcebooks. I also distribute photocopies to prepare students for the exam at my own expense as much as I can.” (T9).*

*“Most students stop coming to school after the second exam. In our conversations with parents, they say that they are studying at home, and now there is very little time left for the exam.” (T7).*

One of the most important reasons that lead teachers to ignore the curriculum is the students, who constitute a significant component of the educational institution. Teachers who work hard for the success of students abandon the curriculum in order to accommodate the individual interests and exam-related demands of their students.

According to Table 6, there are a multitude of reasons why teachers abandon the curriculum due to school administrators. These are the expectation of high success in the exam from the teachers, the idea of creating a better public opinion on school by the help of the exam, the evaluation of teacher performance on the basis of the exam, environmental pressures from entities such as the National Education Directorates and parents. These pressures exerted by the school administration to teachers in order to attain elevated levels of achievement. In addition, some teachers stated that some school administrators are ambitious due to their personality traits, and they cannot tolerate failure, so they want teachers to do everything possible for success. School administrators who have a tendency to maintain the beliefs and attitudes they have developed towards methods that bring success in their teaching lives expect high success from teachers in the same way.

**Table 6***The Reasons Stemming from School Administrators that Lead Teachers to Abandon the Curriculum*

Theme	Code	Participant	<i>f</i>
School administrators	Expectation of success	T3,T5,T8,T13,T15	5
	Public opinion on school	T2,T4,T6,T11	4
	Performance evaluation	T8,T9,T10	3
	External pressures	T2,T10,T13	3
	Personality characteristics, ego	T12	1
	Beliefs, attitudes, unwillingness to innovation	T1	1
	Traditional approach	T12	1

The participants expressed their views with the following sentences:

*“Our principal says that we need to improve the test averages of the students by holding meetings. At the meetings, we always discuss the test results and talk about ways to help them get higher scores.” (T3).*

*“They see us as a failing school because we have very few students who have won the exam, so we are trying very hard to change this perception.” (T6).*

*“Teachers who apply a lot of practice exams and tests are seen as teachers who try harder in the eyes of both the student and the administration. The decisions of the administration regarding these teachers are different.” (T8).*

*“Our parents always want their students to achieve high success, when there is the slightest decrease in success, they ask us why and then go to talk to the administration immediately. Our administrators also want extra work from us.” (T13).*

*“We are trying hard to avoid confrontation with the administration and parents and to keep the average success rate in the exams at a good level.” (T10).*

*“Our school is not very successful, our opportunities are limited, and the students do not study; although I do my best, our principal is not satisfied with the mathematics average.” (T12).*

*“When we do activities and have fun with the students in the lesson, they come to warn us on the grounds that there is noise. The school administration sees 8<sup>th</sup> graders only as those who need to study for the exam.” (T1).*

When the findings obtained from the interviews are examined as a whole, it can be said that the reasons related to the central exam, curricula, students, and school administrators are the main reasons that lead the teachers to abandon the curriculum.

## Discussion

The current study focused on examining the reasons for the teachers who teach the subjects in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade to abandon the curriculum. Based on the study findings, the majority of the teachers listed central exams as the primary reason for abandoning the curriculum. Zhao et al. (2016) in their study, reported that the College Entrance Exam (CEE) in China was the most significant barrier to curriculum implementation, as well. Regarding the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level, it was concluded in the research that the teachers made alterations in the teaching processes on the condition of preparing students for the central exam, solving new generation questions, and leaving some time for retests, and therefore they abandoned the curriculum. This result obtained from the research matches up with the studies by Kahraman (2014) on the effects of centralized exam practice and the research conducted by Ormancı et al. (2018) about science

teachers' perspectives on the central exams for the transition to upper secondary education. They concluded in both studies that teachers lack curricular fidelity and shift the teaching process to be exam-oriented. In addition, in a study conducted by Atılgan (2018), the side effects of selection exams were researched, and it was concluded that there are side effects such as loss of purpose of school and curriculum, enrolling in exam preparation institutions outside of school, stress and pressure created by exams. Similar to this current study, in their studies on the negative effects of the central exam, İlhan et al. (2021) deduced that teachers gave priority to the subjects in the exam and the question types related to these subjects by focusing on the test technique instead of the achievements in the curriculum. The reason for this might be that central exam success is regarded as more important than teaching the curriculum. However, in a study carried out by Adedoyin (2013) about university students' viewpoints on high-stake tests in Botswana, it was discovered that high-stake exams had little effect on school assessment or on the subjects included in the test content being prioritized. The unlike results obtained from this study and those of Adedoyin (2013) could indicate different education philosophies or systems of countries.

In light of the findings, another important reason that led teachers to do exam-oriented studies is that teachers realize the anxiety caused by the central exam in students; they also think that the exam is challenging, and the exam aims to measure only cognitive skills, one of the horizontal goals of education. As Spann and Kaufman (2015) put it, what high-stake tests can measure and count are isolated abilities, specific truths and functions, the least interesting and least important aspects of learning. Likewise, Öztürk and Aksoy (2014) and Özdaş (2019) have also reached similar results that support this finding. In addition, Özdaş (2019) mentioned the difficulty of the central exam in his research and concluded that as the demand for schools that admit students through the exam is high, the competition among students and therefore the anxiety levels of students increase, which may indicate that students are overly conditioned about the importance of the exam. Many students, particularly those at risk of failing, are experiencing the unintended repercussions of high-stakes testing at home in the form of stress and anxiety for both themselves and their families (Westfall, 2010).

The literature and this study indicated that some of the teachers found the curriculum inadequate and not very consistent with the exam, which could affect the rest of the students' lives at this level. The curriculum contained a lot of details and was intensive, and they mainly focused on the exam topics in the content selection and skipped the topics that weren't included in the exam. In a similar vein, Çetin and Ünsal (2019) concluded that teachers tend to teach the content of the exam instead of the content in the curriculum. Negative opinions of teachers about the curriculum itself, together with central exams, might oblige teachers to abandon the curriculum. On the other hand, in a study conducted by Kaşıkçı et al. (2015), they reported that the exam questions were generally prepared in accordance with the achievements of the science curriculum.

In the research, it was concluded that the activities in the curriculum could not be carried out due to the lack of physical conditions and materials in the schools. Therefore, changes were made in the learning and teaching processes, ending up with curriculum abandonment by the teachers. Özcan et al. (2018), in their study gathering the perspectives of teachers about the curriculum, concluded that schools exhibit physical and financial inadequacies, namely in areas such as laboratory facilities, availability of materials, and conducive environments for educational activities. Schools with access to sufficient human and material resources and affluent socioeconomic conditions can apply the curriculum to a degree that would be challenging or impossible for schools in low socioeconomic environments (Chaudhary, 2015).

The study revealed that, due to the students' desire for achievement in the major examination and the pervasive influence of parental and societal pressures, students exhibit a reluctance to engage with unfamiliar subject matter, focusing primarily on the classes and subjects

directly relevant to the exam. For this reason, the study showed that in addition to the exam studies done to reduce the anxiety level of the students, the teachers abandoned the curriculum in order to support the students with low socio-economic levels who have difficulty in getting extra resources or books for the exam. The result obtained from this research also coincides with the study conducted by Bümen et al. (2020). In their study, Bümen et al. (2020) emphasized that the socio-economic characteristics of the school deeply affect the commitment to the curriculum. The motivation of teachers for this could be to enable students studying in economically deprived areas to compete with students from better-off backgrounds and boost their test achievement.

The tendency of students to be absent towards the end of the term, their unwillingness to attend classes other than the exam courses or their desire to continue their exam studies at home are also among the reasons that push teachers to avoid the curriculum. Moreover, considering the reasons related to the students, especially towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, students start to be absent from school with the warming of the weather in the province of Hatay, which has a hot climate in summers. It has been determined that there is an increase in absenteeism from school due to reasons such as lack of motivation, reluctance to learn, helping the family at work or finding a job and working in a workplace. Therefore, in the research, it was concluded that the teachers continued their lessons by teaching exam topics and including repetitions in their lessons in order to increase the motivation in the classrooms or to resist the reluctance to learn. Atılgan (2018) reported that the central exams for the transition between grades became a goal and school education became a tool to achieve this goal, and schools gave priority to the preparation of students for the exam, which is parallel to the findings of this study. In addition, in the same study, it was concluded that the school and the education program were ignored, and especially in the years when preparing for the exam, the school absenteeism of the students and the number of sick report absences from school increased.

As revealed in this study, another reason that led teachers to abandon the curriculum was school administration-related. From the data obtained in the research and the interviews with the school administrators, the majority of the school administrators want their students to attend qualified upper-secondary schools in the central exam taken by the 8th-grade students. This may be because school administrators see central exams as a measure of the school's success and believe that this will increase the school's reputation in the region. In addition, in the research, school administrators decide on teachers' performance using the criterion of students' success level in the exam. Similar to this study, in a study conducted by Çetin and Ünsal (2019), it was suggested that school administrators evaluate teachers' success with students' central exam results. Likewise, Buyruk (2014) concluded that central exams serve as an indicator for evaluating the performance of teachers.

The current study made it clear that reasons such as the parents' request from the school administration to focus on the central exam continuously and that they want the students to be constantly tested are among the environmental reasons that lead the teachers to abandon the curriculum. Parents expect school administrators to guide teachers about central exams (Ayaydın and Katmış, 2017). Also, in a study conducted by Yılmaz and Bülbül (2017), they supported the idea that parents demand from school administrators that only certain teachers teach students who will take the central exam and that these teachers attend their classes and prepare them for the exams.

The research also revealed that school administrators have continuous expectations of success from the school, teachers, and students due to their personality traits. It was concluded that school administrators, who aim to achieve success, ask teachers for student success in central exams or make suggestions on this point all the time, which is one of the reasons that leads teachers to abandon the curriculum. In addition, as stated in the findings, teachers abandoned the curriculum because of school administrators who defended the traditional education ap-

proach. This may be due to school administrators' assumption that learning-teaching procedures appropriate for new student-centered approaches that instructors want to incorporate into their lessons are unimportant for central test achievement.

## Conclusion and Implications

The current study showed that there are various reasons why teachers abandon the curriculum. The results pointed to four major reasons, including central exams, students, curriculum, and school administrators based along with a wide range of sub-reasons for teachers to abandon, skip, or ignore the curriculum. The findings were mostly in line with previous studies and literature. In conclusion, teachers pick and decide what to teach from the prescribed syllabus or curriculum. With any intention or reason, no matter what, most of the teachers abandon the curriculum, leading to unintended consequences. Namely, abandonment of the curriculum may cause disruption of creative, critical, and inquisitive thinking skills intended to be acquired by students, and as a matter of fact, the constructivist educational approach, which is at the center of the curriculum, is being ignored.

Depending on the results of the current study, some crucial implications came out. Initially, by taking the opinions of the teachers into account, the reasons for teachers to abandon the curriculum can be eliminated by making the curriculum more functional and fully compatible with the exam content. Secondly, in order to prevent content selectivity in central exams, the content validity of central exams can be increased, and questions can be included from each course and each unit in the exam. Then, under the leadership of the Ministry of National Education, apart from class hours, additional lessons can be given regularly to 8th-grade students or all students who will take the central exams, and regular practice exams can be done without hindering the curriculum. Finally, in order to reduce the problem of absenteeism as much as possible, all students who attend classes almost all the time can be given both grades and privileges in another way to try to eliminate the problem of absenteeism.

## Recommendations

This research was carried out with a certain number of teachers working under the Ministry of National Education in the province of Hatay. The research can be carried out next time within a broader framework in terms of cities or regions.

This research was carried out with the teachers of the courses that have questions in the central exams in the 8th grade of secondary school. The scope of the research can be expanded by conducting the next research with the teachers of the courses that have questions in the central exams in the 12th grade of upper-secondary school.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors declare no competing interest.

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