

The Opinions of the Multigrade Classroom Teachers on Multigrade Class Teaching Practices (Multiple Case Analysis: Netherlands-Turkey Example)

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Abstract

In this study, the opinions of 20 classroom teachers who work in multigrade classes in İzmir, Turkey and Rotterdam, Netherlands were received via an interview form prepared by the researcher. The study was designed as a multiple case study. Descriptive and content analysis were applied to the data obtained from the study. The data obtained from the analysis were grouped under three main themes: difficulties faced in multigrade classes, solution suggestions regarding the problems of multigrade classes, effective practice examples in multigrade classes. The study has revealed that there are difficulties stated by the classroom teachers as the excessive effort of the teacher, high expectations from the student, lack of time, difficulty in reaching the aims, non-teaching roles, not being supported, lack of education, physical conditions, and language problems. It has been seen that the solution suggestions suggested by the teachers are openness, assistant personnel, improvement of the physical conditions, increasing the quality and quantity of training services, and legal regulations. At the end of the study, significant practice examples which can be easily applied by the multigrade classroom teachers have been reached. These practice examples have been tried to be introduced. The results of the study were discussed comparatively in terms of the opinions of Turkish and Dutch teachers. Suggestions were made in accordance with the results of the study.

Keywords: Multigrade Class, Teaching in Multigrade Classes, Multigrade Class Teaching Practices

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Introduction

Multigrade teaching is a practice in which students from different age, skill and class level continue their education and training together in the same class, are taught by one teacher because of various reasons such as lack of teacher, lack of school, low number of student (İlter, 2015; Gürel, Çapar and Kartal, 2014; Köksal, 2005; Brown, 2010). When reviewing the literature, it is seen that various studies have been conducted on longstanding multigrade class practice (Göksoy, Arıcan & Eriş, 2015; Uygur & Yelken, 2010; Yıldız & Köksal, 2009; Taşdemir, 2014; Şahin, 2003; Sumak, Sumak & Gelebek, 2011; Saraçoğlu, Büyük & Tanık, 2012; Sağ & Sezer, 2012; Sağ, Savaş & Sezer, 2009; Palavan, 2012; Karakuş, 2016; Kuzu & Aslan, 2011; Külekçi 2013 etc.). Multigrade class teaching practices are not peculiar to Turkey, it is possible to see multigrade class practices in numerous countries all over the world (Kuzu & Aslan, 2012; İzci, Duran & Taşar, 2010; Brown, 2010; Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015; Thomas & Shaw, 1992; Bergersen, 2004).

When the multigrade class literature is reviewed, it is seen that the studies mention the advantages (Proehl, Douglas, Elias, Johnson & Westsmith, 2013; Köksal, 2005; Kucita, Kivunja, Maxwell & Kuyini, 2013; Gürel et al., 2014 etc.) and disadvantages of these practices (Mulryan-Kyne, C. 2007, Sumak et al. 20011; Köksal, 2005; Veenman & Raemaekers, 1995; Göksoy et al., 2015; Uygur & Yelken, 2010; Saraçoğlu et al., 2012; Sağ et al., 2009; Palavan, 2012; Kaya & Taşdemirci, 2005; Gürel et al., 2014 etc.). It is possible to see studies which mention the disadvantages of the practice such as the heavy burden of the teacher, lack of time, difficulty in showing individual attention to the students, difficulty in planning the teaching, careless parents, language problem, lack of material, not being able to receive in-service training and consultancy, dealing with non-teaching tasks, not being able to comply with the environmental conditions, not being able to individualize the teaching, not gaining necessary competency in teacher training education. As for the advantages, it is seen that some points such as an increase in cooperation between students and learning from each other, improvement of self-regulated learning skills, taking responsibilities and sharing the leadership, increase in in-class respect, peer tutoring and latent learning from upper or lower class lecture are mentioned.

The success of the multigrade class teaching practices has been regarded as important both in our country and all over the world (Göksoy et al., 2015, Uygur & Yelken, 2010; Yıldız & Köksal, 2009; Taşdemir, 2014; Şahin, 2003; Sumak et al., 2011; Saraçoğlu et al., 2012, Miller, 1991; Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015 etc.). For this purpose, it is definitely so significant to determine the problems, advantages and disadvantages of these practices. However, it is clear that we need the studies that suggest concrete and applicable suggestions for the problems stated clearly in numerous studies. The number of the studies which present multigrade class practice examples is considerably low and it is necessary to include studies that will meet the deficit in this field (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015). Some studies which include suggestion regarding the sustainable practices in multigrade classes will be mentioned below.

Thomas & Shaw (1992) emphasized that the teacher training programs for multigrade class teaching should focus on effective teaching practices. According to them, peer tutoring, self-regulated learning, teacher preparation (planning, organization and distribution methods), maintenance of an orderly environment, evaluation and feedback skills should be emphasized in order to perform an effective teaching in multigrade classes. Thomas & Shaw (1992:32) addressed the necessity of well-designed lesson plans that support peer tutoring and self-regulated learning, the necessity of preparing productive learning environments and providing the students with effective feedback and revision in the learning process. But these are not enough. The school and class environment should be appropriate for success. These schools should have libraries and the teachers should be able to easily reach the materials they need.

Bergersen (2004) has contributed regarding the effective process in multigrade classes by making use of Bacharach et al. 1995. She made suggestions regarding how the multigrade classes

generally look, methods and approaches that can be used in the learning and teaching process in these classes and the evaluation. According to her, multigrade classes are seen as a child-centered and active process for the learner. These classes focus on the process and include learning by experience, activities which allow the children to experience. The classrooms include students of different age, level, skill and readiness. Thus, the value of these classes comes from diversity. These practices give self-regulation skills to the students who have to organize their individual studies. Methods and approaches which can be used in accordance with the multigrade classroom in educational process are defined as process writing, literature-based reading, thematic teaching, learning centers, math manipulatives which help students understand math easier, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, computer assisted instruction, team teaching, project papers, outdoor learning activities, problem-based instruction, use of story-line method and entrepreneurship. She saw the evaluation as a consistent, ongoing process and defined it as authentic and multidimensional. She emphasized that following the instructions, the effort for cooperation and the portfolios created can be taken into account in the evaluation (cited by Bergersen 2004:13 from Bacharach et al. 1995).

In his study, Miller (1991:10-11) included 6 main variables that affect the success in multigrade classes stated by Wragg (1984). These variables were classified as classroom organization, classroom management and discipline, instructional organization and curriculum, instructional delivery and grouping, self-directed learning and peer tutoring in the study. Classroom organization means preparing both the physical environment of the classroom and the instructional sources in accordance with both the individual and interactive studies for the students to have an effective learning experience. Classroom management and discipline title includes clarifying the schedules and routines that will help students to take responsibilities. Instructional organization and curriculum title emphasizes educational strategies that are followed in the planning, improvement and application of the individual and group studies which enable using the time effectively. Instructional delivery and grouping mentions the use of effective teaching methods that will also increase the interaction between class levels which need the mutual commitment and cooperation of the students. Self-directed learning includes the student's self-adaptation in order to have independent studying skills, structure his/her own learning and take advantage of the process in group learning. Peer tutoring means that the students help each other like teachers. In the light of these, Miller (1991) emphasized that every teacher who wants to take into account the individual needs of the students and monitor their development in multigrade classes should make a great effort and spend a lot of time on the planning and organization of teaching. One of the most significant points of succeeding in this is to clarify the rules and routines by talking to the students. Determining correctly the subjects appropriate for the whole class instruction will provide high level learning and saving on time. For instance, there is no harm in brainstorming for writing or discussion subjects with the whole group. Based on the discussion, everyone can create their own text.

In a study conducted in Virginia, the United States of America, OERI (1990) defined 102 strategies that the multigrade classroom teachers thought to be effective in multigrade classes. These strategies were organized according to the frequency of the teachers' answers. The categories obtained from the strategies were stated as classroom management, time management, grouping, parent relationships, getting started and socialization. In order to teach more effectively in multigrade classes, teachers were suggested to give significant tasks to a group while working with another group to keep them active, state the academic and behavioral expectations clearly and consistently, help students to understand that they are a class even though all students have different groups, provide awards such as outdoor trips, design sitting arrangements which mix the classes and are appropriate for learning, prepare the task before the students arrive, determine the appropriate students for peer tutoring, be a role model by adopting a positive attitude toward the school, class and the environment, give information about the process to the parents by organizing a parents meeting before the school starts, give information to the parents by sending the related development files or calling them for a meeting (OERI, 1990).

A study conducted in Netherlands with multigrade classroom teachers stated that there were problems in effective use of teaching time, designing the teaching effectively, classroom management,

organization of the activities that should be done individually, definition of the multigrade classes' purposes (cited by Veenman & Raemaekers, 1995 from Veenman, Lem, Voeten, Winkelmolen & Lassche 1986). It is seen to be important to train teachers about the teaching time. Because students' being able to manage their learning time, determining the time period needed for learning, sparing time, determining the success levels of the students, providing the task convenience are related to teaching time and highly significant in both multigrade and mixed-age classes (Veenman & Raemaekers, 1995). It shouldn't be forgotten that the effectiveness of teaching refers to the content and the providing well-defined skills. For this purpose, the teachers should give information to the students about the objectives and remind them of the prerequisite learning. Providing the new information by small steps in an organized way, providing feedback and revisions by enabling every student to experience, supervising the students even when they work individually are the duties that should be done to increase the teaching effectiveness of the teacher (Raemaekers, 1995). Increasing the in-class participation, cooperation and attention of the students and providing the necessary conditions for them to study in an effective and productive way are indicators of a good classroom management. A very good classroom management and organization in multigrade classes are one of the requirements of success (Veenman & Raemaekers, 1995). Another important point in multigrade classes for the students who spend most of their time with individual activities is the need for understanding what to do while studying individually. So, it is important to be sure that the students are ready for the task, explain the duty to the students in detail and guide them when they have a problem (Veenman & Raemaekers, 1995). School climate is another important subject. In order to be able to increase the success of multigrade class practices, it is important to share the mutual problems with the teachers and the personnel, help each other for planning and work together to realize the objectives of the program (Veenman & Raemaekers, 1995).

In their study, Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher (2015) tried to define the teaching practices performed in multigrade classes in Austria and Finland. The data collected in the study of Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher (2015:108) were investigated under 3 categories. These categories were (1) student group formation and subject organization, (2) peer tutoring and (3) differentiation. The first main category, student group formation and subject organization, is thought to provide opinions to in-class practices. The sub-categories of this main category are based on the definitions of the multistage practices suggested by Kalaoja (2006) and Cornish (2006b). These practices are defined as below (cited by Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015:108).

Parallel curriculum: the students learn the same themes or subjects. But each group follows their own syllabus. In this practice, each grade is taught in turn.

Curriculum rotation: The whole class studies the curriculum of one grade for a year. They follow the other grades curriculum next year. In this practice, all groups are taught together.

Curriculum alignment and spiral curriculum: Similar subjects are defined in the different grade curricula and all students in the class share the same themes or subjects. The main concepts or ideas taught in lower grades are deepened or expanded in upper grades.

Subject stagger: Different subjects are taught at each grade level. In this practice, the teaching time for each grade differs. The teacher studies with all classes in turn.

Whole class teaching: The grades study the same subject at the same time using the same materials. (Cited by Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015:108).

The suggestions stated by the studies above regarding the multigrade classes are thought to guide the teachers who will perform them. It is inarguable that the number of this kind of studies should increase and suggestion regarding the solution of the problems defined should be developed. Multigrade practices are used in Turkey and all over the world. Then, instead of complaining that this practice should be stopped, we should think and research what to do to provide a more effective teaching.

The aim of this study is to determine the opinions of classroom teachers who teach in the multigrade classes in Rotterdam, Netherlands and Izmir, Turkey about the problems of the multigrade classes and to understand, define and explain the in-class practices they use in order to make the learning-teaching process efficient. For this purpose, the answers to the research questions below have been sought.

- 1) What are the problems of multigrade class practices according to the teachers who work in multigrade classes in Rotterdam and Izmir?
- 2) What are the solution suggestions regarding the problems of multigrade classes according to the teachers who work in multigrade classes in Rotterdam and Izmir?
- 3) What are the effective practices the teachers who work in multigrade classes in Rotterdam and Izmir use in order to increase the performance of the multigrade classes?

Method

This chapter includes the information about the study model, study group, data collection tools, data collection and analysis.

Study Model

In order to collect detailed data about the multigrade classes which continue to be relevant and have a place in life, this study was conducted as a multiple case study with place and time restriction (Izmir-Rotterdam/2016-1017 school year), by defining a mutual subject (multigrade classes) in different conditions (Turkey-Netherlands multigrade classroom teachers) (Aydm, 2013:98). Case studies are expected to be particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. The case studied was stated clearly in this study. The findings regarding the multigrade classes were tried to be described clearly. A detailed reporting was done in order to provide a better understanding of multigrade class practices and to think about the practices in the study (Karadağ, 2015:43-44).

Study Group

The data of the study were collected from 20 teachers in total; 10 multigrade classroom teachers who work in Rotterdam and 10 multigrade classroom teachers who work in Izmir. Being voluntary to participate in the study and being easily accessible were taken into account in the selection of the teachers. The data regarding the teachers who participated in the study were stated in Table 1.

Table 1 Features of the Teachers Who Participated in the Study.

Country	Gender	Professional experience	Professional Experience in Multigrade Classes
Netherlands	N1	10	4
Netherlands	N2	6	5
Netherlands	N3	38	5
Netherlands	N4	6	6
Netherlands	N5	40	20
Netherlands	N6	9	1
Netherlands	N7	25	5
Netherlands	N8	1	1
Netherlands	N9	10	5
Netherlands	N10	10	5

Turkey	T1	14	5
Turkey	T2	5	3
Turkey	T3	15	12
Turkey	T4	11	4
Turkey	T5	11	3
Turkey	T6	14	14
Turkey	T7	7	6
Turkey	T8	3	3
Turkey	T9	15	8
Turkey	T10	9	4

Data Collection Tools

A questionnaire which consisted of purpose-related personal information and open-ended questions related to the subject was prepared. This form includes five questions related to personal information and 19 questions which are thought to be helpful in getting an answer to the research questions. The questionnaire form was formed by receiving opinions from 3 instructors who gave 'teaching in multigrade classes' lesson in the department of classroom teaching. 3 multigrade classroom teachers were asked to answer the questionnaire in order to check the functionality of the form. It was evaluated if the answers received are understandable enough to answer the research questions and the questionnaire took its final form. This questionnaire form was translated into Dutch by two multigrade classroom teachers who are dual citizens and then its linguistic validity was checked by discussing a Dutch teacher.

Data Collection

The data of the study were collected in 2015-2016 school year. The teachers who work in Izmir were reached via telephone calls, the questionnaire form was sent to their e-mail addresses with their permission and the answers were gathered via the same way. The teachers who work in Rotterdam were reached via a multigrade classroom teacher and the form was sent to their e-mail addresses with their permission and the answers were received. The answers received in Dutch were translated into Turkish by 3 teachers who work as classroom teachers in Netherlands; the teachers who helped the translation of the questionnaire form and one of their colleagues. The answers given to the questionnaire questions were investigated and related teachers were asked to take photographs of the good examples of the in-class practices in multigrade classes and the photographs were shared via e-mail.

Data Analysis

The descriptive analysis which enables using exact quotations and is frequently used in qualitative studies, and content analysis which helps readers to understand the subject better and is used for combining the related concepts and themes were used together in the analyses of the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2000). After the first classification in the scope of the research questions, the related data were classified in detail and divided into sub-codes. The raw study data and their analyses were sent to two experts who are experienced in qualitative research and the analyses took its final shape with an evaluation in accordance with the experts' opinions.

Findings

This chapter includes the findings of the study and comments. The findings of the study were divided into three main themes in accordance with the study questions and investigated. The first main theme is the difficulties faced in multigrade classes. The second main theme is the solution suggestions regarding the problems of multigrade classes. And the third main theme is the examples of the effective practices in multigrade classes.

1) *The findings related to the difficulties faced in multigrade classes theme*

Table 2. Sub-themes and Frequency Distributions of the Difficulties Faced in Multigrade Classes Theme

THE DIFFICULTIES FACED IN MULTIGRADE CLASSES		
Theme	Frequency of Mentioning of the Dutch Teachers (f)	Frequency of Mentioning of Turkish Teachers (f)
Excessive Effort of the Teacher	10	10
High Expectations from the Student	10	10
Lack of Time	10	10
Difficulty in Reaching the Aims	0	10
Non-teaching Roles	0	7
Not Being Supported	4	6
Lack of Education	1	10
Physical Conditions	0	8
Language Problem	0	3

As seen in Table 2, 9 sub-themes were created under the difficulties faced in multigrade classes theme. When looking at the frequency distributions, it is seen that the Dutch multigrade classroom teachers did not mention the difficulty in reaching the aims of the curriculum, non-teaching duties, lack of physical conditions and language problem. The excessive effort of the teacher, high expectation from the student and lack of time were stated as problems by both the Dutch and the Turkish teachers. Difficulty in reaching the aims of the curriculum, lack of education and physical conditions were frequently stated as problems by Turkish teachers.

All of the Dutch and Turkish teachers mentioned the *Excessive Effort of the Teacher* sub-theme. Some of the statements of the teachers are listed below.

N1: *"I have to work a lot... I have to make a very good classroom organization. It takes a lot of time to work with different levels. The children also learn from each other in this process."*

N10: *"Multigrade class means planning for me. It means preparing for the lesson two, even three times harder. It means working 45, sometimes 50 hours and never being sad... Being a teacher in a multigrade class really requires working too much. I usually do the school work also at home. I do not have difficulty in giving the learning outcome in my in-class practices but sometimes I realize I run out of time when I want to do different activities."*

N4: *Teaching in a multigrade class is a very heavy burden for a teacher. A teacher is expected to do so much. Your teaching knowledge should be appropriate. You have to be good at classroom organization. And you have to be very patient."*

T5: *"It is an environment in which the teacher has to make a tremendous effort in order not to have more than one responsibilities."*

T8: *"The most difficult part of teaching 2 classes together is the classroom control. We need to try different methods in order to achieve this. Another important point is to plan similar lessons together and teach it to two classes. Choosing the subjects appropriate for both grades' levels and exemplifying it so that also the lower grade can understand it is one of the difficulties of teaching in a multigrade class. I think I gained experience in this subject in time."*

As it can be understood from the statements of the teachers, all teachers who participated in the study think that a teacher should spend a lot of effort to be able to teach in a multigrade class.

All of the Dutch and Turkish teachers mentioned the **high expectation from the student** sub-theme. Some of the statements of the teachers are listed below.

N8: *"The children should always have sufficient homework. They should never be left unattended. Everything must be in sight. The rules, the homework they have to do. You should define the rules properly with children. The children should know how to obey the rules. Ask opinions of the children when setting these rules. Because they will apply them. They need to study hard and they will usually do that on their own."*

N10: *"I compare me and my students to a bee. Because we all learn, produce and study with discipline as a team. The children start their weekly homework after they finish their daily homework and they define how they will use the time. They follow the signs in the classroom (for example the colors of the traffic light, timer (chronometer), a symbol of a friend who needs help etc.). They are expected to be easy going students who help their friends and obey the rules."*

T10: *"... Sometimes you have to assign higher grades for peer tutoring to control lower grades."*

All of the Dutch and Turkish teachers mentioned the **lack of time** sub-theme. Some of the statements of the teachers are listed below.

N4: *"I don't have difficulty in teaching a lesson. But I usually have a problem related to time. Sometimes the time is not enough."*

N9: *"I have no problems related to the lessons. I am able to give every lessons without difficulty but the time can sometimes be a problem. I am not always able to do the things I want in that short time. Sometimes you cannot give the attention a child demand from you."*

T4: *"... The Ministry does not privilege multigrade classes about this subject. However it is too difficult for the teacher to teach all curricula of all grades."*

T2: *"A teacher who teaches a multigrade class cannot achieve all aims that are achieved in independent classes. Because the lesson duration spared for the class levels differs."*

As can be understood from the opinions of the teachers, teachers frequently face time problems when they teach more than one group at the same time.

None of the Dutch teachers mentioned the **difficulty in reaching the aims** sub-theme, on the contrary, they stated that it is possible to achieve the aims of the curriculum. All Turkish teachers stated that reaching the aims of the curriculum is a problem. Some of the statements of the teachers are listed below.

N3: *"I think you can achieve the goals in single grades more easily, you achieve them in multigrade classes, too but it is harder and takes much more time. But you achieve it."*

N7: *"Of course you can reach the aims set by the Ministry. Reaching the aims of two classes is difficult but not impossible. It is easier in single grades."*

T2: *"A teacher who teaches a multigrade class cannot achieve all aims that are achieved in independent classes. Because the lesson duration spared for the class levels differs."*

T5: *"We try to achieve all the goals, we do not have leisure time. But it is obvious that the goals are not achieved completely. Because we use the same books, sources the independent classes do; the aims we should reach are the same."*

None of the Dutch teachers mentioned **non-teaching roles** sub-theme. Seven of the Turkish teachers stated that the non-teaching roles are an important difficulty. Some of the statements of the teachers are listed below.

N2: *"Newly graduate teachers also teach in multigrade classes in Netherlands and every school in Netherlands has a school principal but they are not at school all the time. In some schools, principal of the school also gives lessons but this is not a hard task for them."*

T2: *"Being a multigrade classroom teacher means being responsible for all the school related tasks. In a school, the principal rules the school; deputy principal is responsible for the information and control of the students and teachers; teacher is responsible for the education of his/her own grade; the officer conducts the correspondence related to national education; janitor is responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of the school; security guard (hall monitors) is responsible for the security of the school and the students; so multigrade classroom teacher means the teacher who can do the tasks of principal, deputy principal, teacher, officer and janitor on his/her own."*

T7: *"Yes, I am the principal at the moment and my biggest problem is that I am trying to teach four different grades on one hand, to cope with the maintenance, cleaning, paperwork, meetings and procedures on the other hand."*

Four of the Dutch teachers and six of the Turkish teachers mentioned the **not being supported** sub-theme. Some of the teachers' opinions related to this theme are listed below.

N1: *"There are some institutions we can receive education about the multigrade classes from but they are too expensive."*

N7: *"They did not help me at all. I did not receive education, too. I feel like they put me into an emptiness. In a way, they told me to learn how to do it on my own. I learned it by experience. And I still have difficulties."*

T2: *"The curricula are planned not taking into account the schools with single teachers. For example, while we are writing this lines, we are in the seminar period of the teachers. And I attend these seminars alone in my school. Because the letter received says we have to be in the school. However, I think these seminars which took 2 weeks could be more useful if they were arranged in a way the teachers who work in multigrade classes gather, share information and talk about examples of practices. There aren't any institutions or organizations from which you can receive education on multigrade classes. I think this kind of education will be effective for the teacher because they can see in advance what they can do for their development and for the school..."*

T9: *"We definitely need to be supported. The most important issue is timing and planning. Then, an education should be received about classroom management and official correspondence rules."*

T10: *"More descriptive presentations about the parallel age and developmental characteristics can be done. In other words, you teach 3rd graders this while teaching 4th graders that but you can teach that much because they are not in the abstract thinking period yet etc."*

Only one of the Dutch teachers and all ten Turkish teachers mentioned **lack of education** sub-theme. Some of the statements of the teachers listed below.

N8: *"I did not receive education to teach in multigrade classes in my teacher training (in the collage). I usually went on a training period in multigrade classes in my internship during my education period. I did not receive any help or information from the Ministry. Most schools decide how to teach in multigrade classes themselves."*

T7: *"I received in-service training. I think in-service training never guide a teacher in no circumstances because the ones who taught us were on an ego trip... I would like to change our honorable lecturers who give this lesson (teaching in multigrade classes in the undergraduate program) and take this lesson from the ademicians who are experienced in this subject."*

T8: *"More in-service training should be provided for classroom management, lesson planning and discourse techniques... (Teaching in multigrade classes lesson in undergraduate training) I would be lying if I said I received it, but I would be also lying if I said I didn't receive it. There was a lecturer aged 60+, named x and he didn't teach us anything. He wasn't able to climb up the stairs. We used to remind him that he had a class."*

T6: *"I took this lesson only theoretically. It would be better for the teacher candidates if they apply this practices in the schools which have multigrade classes instead of receiving it theoretically."*

While **physical conditions** sub-theme was not included in the difficulties stated by the Dutch teachers, eight of the Turkish teachers mentioned the difficulties resulted from physical conditions. Some of the opinions of the teachers are listed below.

T1: *"Existence of different level groups in the class as well as the different grade levels, a heavier burden of the teacher than an independent class teacher, lack of material and physical opportunities in the schools with multigrade classes can be disadvantageous... I think a service is needed to provide educational material."*

T3: *"Another factor that affects the academic success is the physical environment. The fact that rural schools don't have computer class, library, sports hall etc. is the biggest disadvantage."*

T5: *"... the opportunities of the school, the physical conditions are always insufficient. The ones who want to help the school want to send the things they don't use, because it is a rural school. As it is a rural area, they often face transportation, heating, power cut problems. When we ask someone's help for anything, they can say it is a rural area, dear teacher, it doesn't worth the fuel I spend to come there. The chance of attendance of National Education authorities to the activities such as exhibition, theatre etc. is higher for the schools in the city center, their chance of attendance is lower for the rural schools as reaching there needs extra effort. We made an exhibition with our preschool teacher and unfortunately no one from Ministry of National Education came. It is not always possible for us to take our students to an activity, trip in the city center. Transportation company owners demand more money because of the distance of the village to the center and a low number of students. Theatrical producers do not want to come as we cannot afford the price of the activity because of the low number of students etc."*

While **language problem** sub-theme was not included in the difficulties stated by the Dutch teachers, three of the Turkish teachers mentioned the difficulties resulted from language problem. Some of the opinions of the teachers are listed below.

T2: *"Different languages spoken in the families cause big problems in literacy education."*

T7: *"I started teaching with 94 students in a classroom, this was very hard for me but two months later a paid teacher was appointed and my number of students decreased to 49, I felt*

comfortable. Not all the relatives of the children knew how to read and write and some of them did not even know how to speak Turkish."

2)The findings related to the suggestions regarding the difficulties faced in multigrade classes theme

Table 3. Sub-themes and Frequency Distributions of the Suggestions regarding the Difficulties Faced in Multigrade Classes Theme

SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE DIFFICULTIES FACED IN MULTIGRADE CLASSES			
Frequency of Mentioning of Dutch Teachers		Frequency of Mentioning of Turkish Teachers	
Theme	(f)	Theme	(f)
Openness	9	Physical Conditions	8
Assistant	2	Education	10
		New regulations	9
		Assistant	2

When the sub-codes regarding the suggestions regarding the difficulties faced in multigrade classes are investigated, it has been seen that the Dutch teachers mentioned from the openness and that an assistant teacher should be present in the class, and the Turkish teachers stated that the physical conditions should be improved, the quality and the quantity of the education should be increased, new regulations should be done for the practice and there should be an assistant teacher in the class like the Dutch teachers mentioned.

It is seen that the Dutch teachers stated their opinions about the **openness** sub-theme. The statements of the teachers are listed below.

N2: *"(In order to increase our success, the employees of the Ministry and the school principals) should be more open and say what they request for certain."*

N8: *"I ask (the ministry) not to put us into an emptiness. They should help us when we need... They should inform us about what they want. They should help the schools."*

Two of Dutch teachers and two of Turkish teachers stated their opinions about **assistant** sub-theme. The statements of the teachers are listed below.

N3: *"We need an assistant teacher in the classes so much."*

N5: *"... Besides, the classes should include an assistant teacher. I can be more helpful for the children this way."*

T4: *"I don't know if it is called an assistant teacher, trainee teacher or subsidiary teacher but the multigrade classes definitely need that kind of teachers."*

It is seen that eight of the Turkish teachers submitted suggestions on the **physical conditions** sub-theme. Some of these opinions are stated below.

T1: *"I think there should be a service for providing teaching materials."*

T2: *"The school desks and black boards should be handled. The schools should have heating, teaching materials, basically they should have a photocopy machine and internet access. The sports hall, classroom of four grades and the library are the same classroom. The buildings should be reorganized."*

It is seen that all Turkish teachers submitted suggestions regarding the **education** sub-theme. Some of these opinions are stated below.

In-service and pre-service training:

T1: *"Besides, as each multigrade class is an institution directorate at the same time, service should be provided regarding the civil service and administrative services... I only received teaching in multigrade classes lesson in the faculty of education on this subject... This lesson should be supported with the application of it..."*

T2: *"We don't have any idea about the multigrade class practices in the countries higher than us in the educational ranking. The examples of the practices conducted in other countries can be shared."*

It is seen that nine of the Turkish teachers stated suggestions regarding the **new regulations** sub-theme. Some of these opinions are stated below.

T2: *"In my opinion, the traffic security and human rights lessons for 4th grade can be given in the learning outcomes of social sciences. So, we can spare more time for the students. The annual plan can be regulated separately for multigrade classes. Because the lesson periods of the multigrade classes differ from the lesson periods of the independent classes. So, the learning outcomes and the curricula can be simplified."*

The statements of the Turkish and Dutch teachers on the effective practice examples theme presented separately as the statements of the teachers of two countries differed significantly.

3)The findings related to the effective practice examples in multigrade classes

Table 4. Sub-themes and Frequency Distributions of the Effective Practice Examples in Multigrade Classes Theme (Netherlands)

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN MULTIGRADE CLASSES	
Theme	Frequency of Mentioning of Dutch Teachers (f)
Planning	
Weekly homework	10
Daily activities (homework)	10
Organization of the teaching materials before the lesson	7
Preparing a tasks board	10
Time management	
Teaching by joining different groups	9
Using a timer	10
Creating an information board	10
Classroom Management	
Using signal cards	2
Peer support	10
Traffic light	10
Developmental follow-up of students by keeping a developmental journal with the help of a computer program	2
	10

Table 4 includes the themes and frequencies under which the practices that the Dutch teachers think effective in multigrade classes and apply in the class are stated. These practices were divided into four sub-themes, which are planning, time management, classroom management and developmental follow-up of students. Each sub-theme and the teacher opinions regarding the practices used in this sub-theme are stated below.

The Dutch teachers mentioned that a) they prepare weekly homework, b) they richen the daily activities, c) they organize the teaching materials before the lesson, d) they prepare a board on which they announce the tasks to the students under the **planning** sub-theme. Some of the opinions of the teachers are shared below.

- a) N2: "... *The children should always have homework. You can give it as weekly homework. You give the extra homework at the beginning of the week, they do this homework when they finish their daily homework and they always have some homework to do.*"

N10: *"I prepare the homework children will be assigned for the week in advance and hang it on the board. The children choose homework from the board and do it after they finish the homework related to that day's lessons. The number of the homework each child should do in a week is defined but they decide when to do them, so they learn how to use time and regulate their own learning. They don't have any spare time."*

N6: *"The children should always have homework. You can give it as weekly homework. You give the extra homework at the beginning of the week, they do this homework when they finish their daily homework and they always have some homework to do."*

N7: *"If the homework of the children is finished, you teach the other grade as a teacher, the children who study independently should certainly have extra homework. You can give it as weekly extra homework."*

- b) N10: *"I prepare subject-specific activities on different levels for each age group, in other words I prepare basic, medium and difficult activities, at least 3 activities for each level."*

N5: *"Teaching multigrade classes has a lot of advantages. But I have to work a lot as a teacher. Classroom management should be very good. The organization should be very good. And the extra homework should be ready when the children finish their homework. You need to plan well and prepare the homework to assign to children in time."*

- c) N1: *"You have to get ready for the lessons very well, because you don't have much time during the lesson. Classroom organization should be very well. You have to know what is what, how is each student."*

N4: *"As a teacher, your classroom organization should be good. Weekly homework set should always be ready on time. You have to prepare everything in advance. You cannot say "I need to go get that" suddenly. Prepare the material you need daily in advance. You don't have time to get them during the day. The children sometimes make noise when you deal with the other grades. You have to explain the rules very well. The children should know what you expect of them."*

N9: *"Prepare your lessons very well. You have to know what to do with which group. Prepare the material you need during the lesson before you start the lesson."*

- d) N1: *"I definitely hang a text defining the tasks of the children if they will study without a teacher and define what they will do."*

N5: *"If the children finish their homework, they choose homework from the homework wall. This homework is different homework."*

The Dutch teachers mentioned a) teaching by joining different groups, b) using a timer (chronometer), c) creating an information board under the **time management** sub-theme. Some of the opinions of the teachers are shared below.

- a) N9: *"I give the reading classes together to all groups... Because each child reads on his/her own level. You can easily give this lesson to two groups together."*

N10: *"I provide the lessons such as reading and English to all students at the same time. They sometimes take the history and geography classes together, their contribution to each other in terms of general knowledge can be more than my contribution."*

N8: *"In my opinion, you can teach all lessons to all students together. But the point is if you will be able to reach the goals at the end of the year or not. I usually teach the lessons such as history, geography together. Their general knowledge on this subject increases."*

- b) N7: *"We use traffic light and timer at school. It is so important to explain the colors of the traffic light. Timer tells them how long they will study."*

N6: *We use traffic light practice and timer. The timer is also important for the time. The children know how much time they have."*

N5: *"I usually work with small groups. I change the group in a definite time. Thus, I can help each child."*

N4: *"If a group does their homework on their own, I lecture the other group. This process takes approximately 15 minutes. And then I lecture the other group for 15 minutes. After I lecture both groups, I still have 15 minutes to help children. After this 15 minutes, I lecture another group and then the group changes again. This process continues all day."*

- c) N1: *"There is a board in the classroom, the children write what they confuse about the lesson that week and I study the parts they have difficulty in the lesson the next week. The children write the lesson in which they never have difficulty to that board."*

N8: *"The students are informed about the homework at the beginning of the week. The content of the homework differs. And I plan it as at least 30 minutes so that the children can ask me about their homework. The children who don't have any question can choose a homework from the homework list and do that homework during this period. The children can also write the homework they couldn't understand to a piece of paper and hang it on the board. We don't have a discipline problem when they finish their homework because they always have extra homework to do."*

N10: *"They note the things they don't understand, have difficulty in or which are very easy for them during the lessons that day to a board in the classroom, to their own part of it."*

The Dutch teachers mentioned that they use a) symbol cards, b) peer support, c) traffic light under the **classroom management** sub-theme. Some of the opinions of the teachers are shared below.

- a) N10: *"The ones who cannot ask me a question during the lesson (because the light is orange or red) can put a question mark on their table. I handle the question when I am available."*

N1: *"The children do their homework on their own when I teach the other grade. If they have a question, they put the card with the question mark on their table. Thus, I can see that they need help when I walk around the classroom."*

- b) N6: *"I totally use peer tutoring and I pay attention to it. The children usually study together in reading lessons. They read with each other. And sometimes we have projects,*

they work on the projects together. Sometimes, the children who are very good help the children who have difficulties. I usually pay attention to their behavior towards each other. I pay attention to if they listen to each other."

N4: *"I usually use peer tutoring in the lessons. The children help each other. In the lessons such as English, history, geography etc. Such as math. The important thing is that they do it silently. Without disturbing the other children."*

- c) N8: *"The group assigned with homework have to do their homework on their own, if the light is red they can never talk, if it is orange they ask their desk mate..."*

N10: *"We use traffic lamb. If the light is red, the group works on their own silently. If it is orange, they can ask a question to their friends quietly. If it is green, they can ask questions both to their friends and to the teacher."*

The Dutch teachers mentioned that they a) keep a developmental journal, b) they use a computer program under the **developmental follow-up of the student** sub theme. Some of the opinions of the teachers are shared below.

- a) N1: *"I write in the developmental journal every day. I continue meeting parents, children and observing them."*

N10: *"I spare 1,5 hours to fill the student development pages at the end of the day. The program on the computer analyses them. I take precautions if necessary according to the results. I inform the parents."*

- b) N4: *"I give a lecture related to the social development of the children once a week. And I answer the questions regarding the children, their social development and general development twice a year. And the computer program analyses the answers."*

N6: *"We follow the development of the children via a computer program. We write the information about the children here and answer the questions. This program conduct analyses using this information."*

The practices the multigrade classroom teachers in Netherlands stated to use in order to increase the academic performance in class is presented above. Among these practices, dividing the lesson into time periods, joining the groups while teaching, richening the daily activities, providing peer support, keeping a developmental journal and meeting the parents are stated to be used by the classroom teachers in Turkey. It is seen that the Turkish teachers didn't mention the practices all Dutch teachers mentioned such as traffic light (Figure 1), using a timer (Figure 2), weekly homework, symbol cards, information board, tasks board and entering the developmental data to a computer program and analyzing them. The fact that the group with homework interrupts the teachers while they study with a group was frequently stated by Turkish teachers. In order to solve this problem, it has been suggested to use traffic light, timer (chronometer), information board and tasks board and symbol use (Figure 3) used by the Dutch teachers. These practices are tried to be introduced below.



Traffic light consists of three colors.

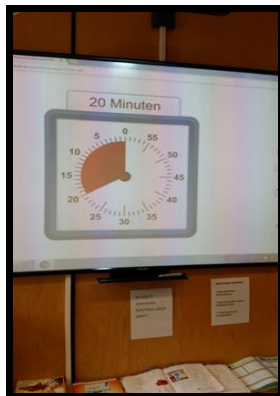
Red light: It means "Do not talk to your friends and teacher. Study on your own." for the student.

Green light: It means "You can ask questions to your friends and teacher." for the student.

Yellow (orange) light: It means "You cannot consult with your teacher but you can consult with your friends." for students.

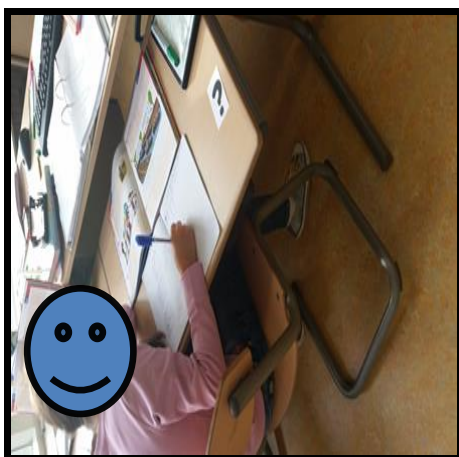
An arrow with the level of the group is stuck to the related color in order to determine which group will study according to which color.

Figure 1. "Traffic Light Practice"



Timer shows the time a group should study with homework or with teacher. The student who cannot handle the problem can put "?" among symbol cards in order to inform the teacher.

Figure 2. "Use of Timer"



The student who cannot handle the problem can put "?" among symbol cards in order to inform the teacher. The teacher writes or hangs what the students will do during the day to the board before the students come. This board also includes the weekly homework. The student see the homework they are assigned for a week and they decide when they will do it. Completing the homework in that week is the important point. This freedom helps them to gain self-regulation competency. Besides, the students can write the problems they have difficulty in or couldn't overcome to the information board. In addition, the computer program which the Dutch teachers enter the personal features of the students help the teachers to follow the development of the students with the analyses it conducts.

Figure 3. "Symbol Cards"

Table 5. Sub-themes and Frequency Distributions of the Effective Practice Examples in Multigrade Classes Theme (Turkey)

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN MULTIGRADE CLASSES (TURKEY)	
Theme	Frequency of Mentioning of Turkish Teachers (f)
1)Practice Examples	
Planning	
Daily activities (homework)	10
Time management	
Teaching by joining different groups	5
Using the duration of some lessons for other lessons	2
Dividing the lesson into periods	2
Classroom Management	
Peer support	8
Developmental follow-up	
Keeping a developmental journal and chart	7

Table 5 includes the themes and frequencies under which the effective practices that the Turkish teachers think effective in multigrade classes and apply in the class are stated. These practices were divided into four sub-themes, which are planning, time management, classroom management and developmental follow-up of students. Each sub-theme and the teacher opinions regarding the practices used in this sub-theme are stated below.

The Turkish teachers mentioned that they richen the daily activities under *planning sub-theme*. Some of the opinions of the teachers are shared below.

T2: *"When the students finish their homework, another homework can be given or they can help their friends who don't understand the subject."*

T10: *"Each group includes students at different paces. I suggest that the students who finish the homework faster help the others in the group with homework. If they don't want to help, I give them extra activities."*

The Turkish teachers mentioned a) teaching by joining different groups, b) using the duration of some lessons for other lessons, c) dividing the lesson into periods under the **time management** sub-theme. Some of the opinions of the teachers are shared below.

a) T8: *"Initially, I had difficulty in the control of class as I wanted to teach the two grades separately. Then, I decided this approach was wrong and it would be better if I teach the lessons except for first-reading and writing and math mutually".*

T2: *"The lessons the students in multigrade classes take together are;*

a. Visual Arts

b. Music

c. Play and Physical Activities

d. Free Activities

I think these lessons can be taught mutually because they are seen as less important. If they had asked me this question during my university education, I would have certainly given a speech on the importance of these lessons and argued it. However, when it comes to the students' learning how

to read and write, reading comprehension skills and written self-expression skills, the other lessons can sometimes be ignored."

- b) T8: *"... I use the lessons such as painting and music for the lessons such as Turkish and math in order to teach them in time."*
- c) T6: *"Yes, there is. I divide a lesson of 40 minutes into definite time periods. I developed studying plans for 10 minutes as I think the attention span of the students is low. In this way, I have the opportunity of conducting the lessons with homework with a teacher."*

The Turkish teachers stated that they use peer support under the **classroom management** sub-theme. Some of the opinions of the teachers are shared below.

T9: *"I receive support the lessons with homework of the 1st grade from the 4th grade. I usually direct the 2nd and 3rd grades by giving them behavior supplementary homework (writing, cut-stick, preparing a board etc.) in their lessons with homework."*

T3: *"Peer tutoring is an effective method applied in the groups with homework. Peer tutoring, namely the student who helps is chosen among the students who are responsible, have a higher academic success and have positive relationships with their friends."*

The literature includes some teachers who state that they do not use peer tutoring which is very appropriate for the nature of multigrade classes. The statements of these teachers are listed below.

T1: *"I don't use peer tutoring."*

T8: *"In peer tutoring, the student of the higher grade does the homework of the lower grade student in order to win the classroom teacher's favor and thinks that when the lower grade student does the homework correctly, he/she will be appreciated. Thus, I think it is harmful to some of the students in the lower grades rather than being helpful."*

The Turkish teachers stated that they use keeping a developmental journal and chart practices under **the developmental follow-up of the students** sub-theme. Some of the opinions of the teachers are shared below.

T5: *"... There are charts to be filled, which includes the criteria and features related to the grades."*

T6: *"We use a behavior and learning outcome observation journal. This enables us to know the students in many ways and obtain various information about them. Thus, we can help the students in every aspect."*

T10: *"I have charts, I also keep a developmental journal for students."*

There are some teachers who stated that they cannot follow the students' development as they wish. The examples of the teachers' statements are listed below.

T8: *"I evaluate with my observations and researches. I would like to prepare a student development file. But I couldn't find time to do that because of the restricted time, intensive lessons and some special cases. I think that the methods and techniques can be used more efficiently in the evaluation and teaching of independent classes."*

T7: *"I use written and verbal methods in the evaluation of the students. The time and environment are not appropriate for using other methods."*

Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

When the results of the study are evaluated, it is seen that there are problems that the teachers face in multigrade class practices both in Netherlands and Turkey. While problems such as the fact that teachers have to show excessive effort, high expectations from the students, time problem and not being able to receive support are stated in both two countries, Turkish teacher stated that not being able to reach the targets in the curriculum, not being able to focus on teaching because of the non-teaching roles, not receiving sufficient education for teaching in multigrade classes, insufficient physical conditions and language problem are bigger problems for them.

Some suggestions for eliminating the problems stated by the teachers were made in the study. Dutch teachers suggested that the authorities should state their expectations and how to continue the practices more clearly and an assistant personnel should be present in multigrade classes to help the teacher. Turkish teachers developed some suggestions such as the improvement of the physical conditions, elimination the educational deficiencies with teacher training programs and in-service training, making the curriculum suitable for multigrade classes by regulations and having an assistant in the class like their Dutch colleagues.

When investigating the literature, it is possible to see studies that mentioned this problems and suggestions. Veenman & Raemaekers (1995) evaluated the efficiency of the personnel development program they prepared regarding the multigrade classes and mixed age groups. After this education, an improvement was detected in the completion of the time-based tasks of the students and in teaching and classroom management skills of the teachers. This finding supports the legitimacy of the teachers to receive education regarding the multigrade classes. Another study conducted in Netherlands with multigrade classroom teachers stated that the teachers have problems in effective use of teaching time, designing the teaching effectively, classroom management, organization of the activities that should be done individually, definition of the multigrade classes' purposes (cited by Veenman & Raemaekers, 1995 from Veenman, Lem, Voeten, Winkelmolen & Lassche 1986). It has been seen that the problems stated by Veenman et al. (1986) are similar to the problems stated in this study. Göksoy et al. (2015) stated that one of the most important reasons of stress the multigrade classroom teachers have is the organizational stress which includes problems related to curriculum, problems related to the use of the sources and the time, problems caused by physical conditions, problems resulted from bureaucratic procedures. It is seen that the stress sources stated as organizational stress by Aksoy, Arıcan and Eriş (2015) coincide with the difficulties stated by Turkish multigrade classroom teachers. Uygur & Yelken (2010) indicated the problems the multigrade class students face in Science and Technology class. Program structure, the physical structure of the school and lack of equipment which are stated among the problems indicated by the study resemble this study. Another study whose findings coincide with this study was conducted by Sağ et al. (2009). In their study, Sağ et al. (2009) stated that the problems of the multigrade classroom teachers who participated in the study are concentrated on the school management, educational status and curriculum. They stated that non-teaching roles, lack of material and long organization time for activities during the homework hours are seen as the problems with regard to effective practices in multigrade classes. Korkmaz, Saban & Akbaşı (2004) stated in their study that the teachers have problems in official correspondence, conducting teaching job, preparing the lesson plans they should decide on and organize as a teacher, choosing and applying the materials and the methods, adapting the school and the environment and teaching some lessons. Kaya & Taşdemirci (2005) stated that the teacher candidates who teach in multigrade classes face more problems in first reading and writing teaching than their colleagues who teach in independent classes. It has been expressed that these problems result from the reasons related to the competency of the teacher candidates as well as the fact that the multigrade classroom teachers don't spare enough time for planning the first reading and writing, have difficulty in following and dealing with the students with different skills, the studying time with teacher is decreased in these classes and the materials are not sufficient. Aybek & Aslan (2014) had results that supported Kaya & Taşdemirci (2005). They stated in their study that some problems occur in the application of the sound-based sentence method and the writing in cursive italic handwriting practice is not readable. It has been seen in the study of

Yıldız & Köksal (2009) that most of the teachers who teach in multigrade classes emphasize that there are not curricula specific to multigrade classes, in other words following the curriculum of independent classes is not suitable, the time is not sufficient, they are not experienced enough, they have too many responsibilities, the opportunities are limited, they are not trained via in-service training or not trained sufficiently. The stated problems were also expressed in this study.

It is possible to see studies which mentioned that the teaching class in undergraduate programs should be supported with practice, teaching practice should be conducted in multigrade classes, curricula should be prepared taking into account the multigrade classes, teachers should be supported via in-service training, physical conditions should be improved, an assistant teacher is needed in the classes in the literature. Taşdemir (2014) has suggested that the teacher candidates can take teaching practice class in the schools which have multigrade classes practically. Şahin (2003) submitted a similar suggestion and said that two hours of practice can be added to the theoretical part of Teaching in Multigrade Classes lesson which is included in classroom teaching the undergraduate program. Sumak et al. (2011) stated in their study that the multigrade classroom teachers have difficulty in giving the learning outcomes to the students in terms of time, there are problems in use the right to spare 10% of the village budget to the multigrade classes in accordance with the law no. 222, the readiness of the children who are educated in these classes is low and suggested that the mobile teaching should be increased and the number of the multigrade classes should be decreased. Besides, they stated that it is necessary to specify the curriculum for the multigrade classes. Sağ & Sezer (2012) stated in their study that the multigrade classroom teachers need professional training. Besides, it is suggested that the curriculum applied in the independent classes can be revised for multigrade classes. They mentioned the problems during the studies with homework, lack of time, problems in preparing the worksheets and other homework, difficulty in managing the homework hours. They stated that the teacher candidates need training in this area. First of all, they suggested a practice-based teaching in multigrade classes' lesson, and the regulation of the Turkish Education System and School Management parallel to this practice. Besides, it is suggested that the curriculum applied in the independent classes can be revised for multigrade classes. Palavan (2012) has stated that there is a significant difference between the 4th grade independent class students and multigrade class students in favor of independent class student in terms of reaching the learning outcomes of social sciences class. It is suggested to increase the number of the teachers who will be sent to multigrade classes to at least two and increase the number of in-service training. Karakuş (2016) suggested a rearrangement of the teaching in multigrade classes' lesson, accepting the teacher candidate to the faculties in accordance with their affective feature as well as their cognitive features, training the teachers also in multigrade classes in teaching practice lesson and organizing trips. Kuzu & Aslan (2013) discovered that the teachers who work in multigrade classes use ready to use plans in free activity classes, need teacher guidebook and try to complete other lessons in this classes. They suggested to develop guidebooks, to provide material and environment (sports hall etc.) in order to teach these classes efficiently. Kılıç & Abay (2009) stated in their study that the new teachers (1 - 5 years of service time) evaluate negatively the opportunities of the school and the structure of the program compared to more experienced teachers (6-10 and 11-15 years of service time) and the teachers who have more experience show more tolerance to the problems than less experienced teachers do. They suggested that inexperienced teachers should not be appointed to multigrade classes in accordance with this finding. They submitted various suggestions such as the informing the parents about the native language problem, doing internship in multigrade classes during teacher training period, organization of in-service training. Külekçi (2012) suggested the differentiation of the curricula of 3rd and 4th grades in multigrade classes. Kuzu & Aslan (2012) stated that the multigrade classroom teachers have problems in teaching social studies lesson. The teachers who participated in the study mentioned that the Social Sciences curriculum should be revised for multigrade classes. İzci et al. (2010) stated in their study that the teachers' level of improvement is not maintained at the desired level in terms of teaching in multigrade classes with the lessons they take during their undergraduate education. Teacher candidates stated that they think this practice will contribute positively to the social development of primary school students. It is suggested that Community Service Practices lesson included in the Classroom Teaching undergraduate programs in Faculty of Education should be evaluated to get experienced in multigrade classes. İzci's study (2008) revealed that teacher candidates think that they cannot prepare to teach in

multigrade classes with the current shape of the teaching in multigrade classes lesson they take in their undergraduate education, their competency is low and can have difficulties when they start teaching. Karcı & Akar Vural (2011) stated that multigrade classroom teachers consider compulsory foreign language (English) lesson in multigrade classes as important but they have difficulties because it is not their professional field, the program is similar to that of independent classes and time restriction causes problems in the preparation of the necessary materials for foreign language teaching. Bilir (2008) tried to reveal the truth about teaching and teacher in multigrade classes. It is stated in the study that the teachers who want to increase the academic success in multigrade classes should pay attention to providing student during individual or group studies and choosing and using appropriate teaching materials. It is stated that practice should be included in the Teaching in Multigrade Classes lesson in undergraduate programs for teachers to prepare better for teaching in multigrade classes. It is also suggested that the appointed teachers should always be supported, the schools should be richened in terms of equipment, the cooperation between family, ministry and faculty should be increased. As is seen, literature includes a lot of studies that stated the problems which are stated in the results of this study before. It has been seen in the examples of the studies that most of the prominent suggestions of this study were defined in the literature before. It is very significant to define these problems and submit suggestions regarding these problems. However, studies that states what the teachers do in order to make this practice more efficient in the class as well as these external suggestions are needed.

The last finding of this study regards the effective practices in multigrade classes. It has been seen that both the Dutch and Turkish teachers try their best to increase the success of multigrade class practices. For example, it has been seen that although all teachers emphasize increasing the number of the daily activities and keeping students busy with a learning activity, Dutch teachers conduct these practices in a more organized way than Turkish teachers. It has been thought that the practices examples submitted by Dutch teachers will contribute to Turkish teachers significantly and be useful examples. Timer, traffic light, information and tasks boards, weekly homework among the practices introduced above are expected to contribute to the multigrade class practices in Turkey. The literature has not included a study which introduces the in-class practices so far.

When the opinions of the teachers who work in Netherlands and Turkey are compared, it can be seen that the Turkish teachers mentioned the issues such as non-teaching roles, problems in undergraduate education and in-service training, language problem, lack of physical conditions which are never stated by Dutch teachers. When taking into account the low amounts of, even lack of teaching materials of the teachers who try to teach in a class consisting of 4 different grade levels, the difficulties students have in understanding and speaking Turkish, absence of the structures such as sports hall, library, theater etc., Turkish teachers have a higher change of having difficulties in reaching the targets than their Dutch colleagues and this difficulty is understandable. It is not surprising that the teachers in both countries demand an assistant personnel in their classes when thinking of the work load of the multigrade classes. It has been thought that the fact that the Turkish teachers demand the regulation of the curricula in accordance with the multigrade classes is related to that they cannot spare enough time for teaching as they deal with the problems peculiar to Turkey. Like their Dutch colleagues, the multigrade classroom teachers in Turkey conduct various practices in order to increase the productivity of the class. We see that these practices include using the duration of some lessons for other lessons unlike Dutch teachers. The problems peculiar to Turkey we see in the first theme are thought as the basis for this situation. It has been thought that the language differences, non-teaching roles which consume most of the time and energy of the teachers are an important factor. Besides, it has been seen that problems such as support and education are mentioned in both countries. It is remarkable that the Dutch teachers stated that private institutions that provide training regarding multigrade classes demand high prices and that most of them went to multigrade classes for practice during their undergraduate education. No information on the existence of this kind of education provided by the special institutions in Turkey with or without payment has been found. Also, the Turkish teachers find the undergraduate education they take before service to theoretical and suggest that practices related to this subject should be included in the programs.

When the results of this study are taken into account, the suggestions below have been submitted.

1. It is necessary to increase the physical opportunities of the schools with multigrade classes and to remove the disadvantageous learning conditions for the students who are in multigrade classes and to teach them in equal conditions with independent classes.
2. The teacher candidates should be provided with the chance of observation and practice in multigrade classes in their training period.
3. Teacher candidates should be informed about the administrative and directorial acts of the school in the teacher training period and they should be provided with the examples of correspondence.
4. The examples on how the teaching in multigrade classes is conducted in other countries should be shared with teachers.
5. Schools with multigrade classes should have at least two teachers.
6. An official website should be created for teachers to reach the information and teaching materials they need.

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